

Performance Task: A Few Facts About Jobs

Imagine you are a reporter for your local newspaper, and you've been asked to develop a one-page handout to include in the newspaper on a question raised by a concerned resident: Why aren't there enough living-wage jobs for everyone who wants one? You've been given a working draft of the handout. An editor who reviewed the draft has raised questions that you may need to answer to make the handout complete and ready to distribute.

Working with a partner or small team, start by finding answers to the questions in blue (below). Once you've got those answers in place, you can put your handout together. Your handout should identify the many factors that contribute to unemployment and poverty. The handout must meet the following standards: 1) answer the question, while highlighting the importance of the issue of poverty, 2) provide accurate data and support with facts and 3) be written in a clear, correct and concise manner.

Needs title

ROUGH DRAFT OF HANDOUT

Why aren't there enough jobs for everyone who wants one? The reasons are complex, but here are a few basic ones.

First, many economic leaders believe that a certain level of unemployment is inevitable and acceptable in a capitalist system. So there will likely always be some people without jobs.

Second, there is a mismatch in the United States today between the jobs that are available and the skills of the people who need jobs.

For many decades after World War II, the United States had a lot of jobs that a person could get if he or she had a high-school diploma. Working in manufacturing or construction, such a person could make enough money to enter and stay in the middle class.

But many of those blue-collar jobs are gone. They have left the United States and gone to other countries where goods are manufactured more cheaply. That keeps prices low, but means fewer manufacturing jobs here. Without those blue-collar jobs, people who have not finished college often get stuck in the lowest-paying jobs, jobs that rarely lead to the middle class. For reasons having to do with a long history of discrimination, the people who are most likely to get locked out of higher-paying jobs tend to be people of color.

What is this kind of unemployment called?

What does it mean about people and jobs?

What kinds of jobs are available in the United States today?

In the decades after World War II, what kind of jobs made it possible for many people, including those without higher education, to be part of the middle class? What happened to those jobs?

What happened to the people who used to do those jobs? What has happened to other people who don't have a college degree? What kinds of jobs do they have now?

Members of which groups (e.g., groups based on race, ethnicity, class) are least likely to have a college degree? How do the historical experiences of these groups contribute to the situation today?

What are some of the factors that have made it difficult for members of those groups to rise out of poverty and enter the middle class? [Note: You'll explore this more in the next two lessons, but do some initial exploration here.]