



# in our own backyard

THE HIDDEN PROBLEM OF  
CHILD FARMWORKERS IN AMERICA  
<http://www.ourownbackyard.org>

## Part IV: Teacher Resources

### **Public Policy Paper Outline**

This handout guides students through their exploration of the Web site and can serve as an assignment to help students use the materials provided.

*Source: Modified from an assignment produced by Stephen Schechter, director of the Council for Citizenship Education and professor of political science, Russell Sage College.*



# In Our Own Backyard The Hidden Problem of Child Farmworkers in America

## Public Policy Paper Outline

A public policy paper is a persuasive document intended to be read by government decision-makers. The purpose of such a paper is to recommend a specific course of action in response to a compelling public issue. Treatment of the issue should be thorough and informative, but also concise and purposeful. Government officials are often quite busy, so they must be convinced quickly of why the issue is worthy and capable of resolution.

### Step 1: Describe the Problem and Assess Needs

An appeal for government action requires a clear and convincing statement of a problem that warrants *public* resolution and necessitates governmental response. This section must establish the parameters of the problem and the parties affected. Write a compelling introduction explaining why the problem of child labor in agriculture should be addressed. Consider the following questions in developing your summary:

**Essential Question.** What is the physical, social and human impact of child labor in agriculture in the United States today? Why should this be a matter of broad public concern?

1. What is the size and scope of the child labor problem in U.S. agriculture today?
2. Who is affected by child labor in agriculture?
3. How does child labor affect migrant youth, their families and their communities?
4. Why does this problem persist in our country?

### Step 2: Research Historical/Comparative Background

Next, a public policy paper should identify the causes of the problem and put them in historical and international perspective. Write an informative background section assessing the problem over time and across cultures. Consider the following questions in writing this section:

**Essential Question.** How have history, culture and economics shaped current child-labor policies in the United States? What are the most important lessons to be learned from international child-labor laws?

1. How do U.S. child-labor laws that pertain to agriculture differ from laws in other areas of work?
2. In what historical context did agricultural standards develop differently than standards in other sectors?
3. How do U.S. child-labor laws compare to international labor standards?

### Step 3: Consider Alternatives and Their Impact

The next section of a public policy paper should outline alternative courses of action. The most feasible and desirable alternatives for dealing with the problem should be presented without favoritism in a clear and dispassionate manner. In determining which alternatives to highlight, consider: What is currently being done to meet the needs of child farmworkers? How could U.S. laws be changed to reduce the occurrence of child labor in agriculture? What roles can nongovernmental entities play in addressing this problem. Consider the following in outlining your alternatives:

**Essential Question.** What remedies for agricultural child labor in the United States should be considered?

1. What are the objectives, costs, and benefits of alternative one?
2. What are the objectives, costs, and benefits of alternative two?
3. What are the objectives, costs, and benefits of alternative three?

#### **Step 4: Develop Action Plan with Recommendations**

Last and most important, a public policy paper recommends a specific course of action. The recommended course of action must be one or some combination of the alternatives presented in Step 3. In advancing your recommendation, you must also present an action plan that addresses practical matters. The plan should include considerations such as: How will existing laws have to be changed? Will your recommendation require starting a new program or government agency? If so, describe. If not, which government agencies or programs will your proposal involve? What general level of financial commitment will be required? What other parties will need to cooperate in order for this recommendation to have a positive impact? Consider the following questions in developing your recommendation:

**Essential Question.** What should be done to address the problem of child labor in agriculture in the United States?

1. What policy do you recommend to address the problem?
2. Why is this policy the most feasible and/or desirable alternative presented?
3. What steps need to be taken to make the recommended policy effective, and by whom?