

**Both Sides of the Issue**

# **Universal Child Care**

*Mini Teacher's Guide*

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## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- paraphrase the central arguments each video makes for and against taxpayer-funded universal child care.
- illustrate how economic incentives shape who benefits from taxpayer-funded child care programs, using examples from both videos.
- contrast the historical, economic, and philosophical evidence each video uses to support its position.
- defend a position on whether taxpayer-funded universal child care would help or harm American families, drawing on arguments from both videos.

## Concepts & Key Terms

The following terms appear across both videos in this pairing. Understanding them will help students follow the arguments and engage in discussion.

**Achievement Gap:** the difference in academic performance between students from higher-income and lower-income families, often visible by the time children enter kindergarten.

**Bureaucracy:** a system of government administration managed by departments and agencies, often associated with complex rules, procedures, and inefficiency.

**Comprehensive Child Development Act (1971):** a bill passed by Congress that would have established taxpayer-funded universal child care centers across the United States, but was vetoed by President Richard Nixon.

**Gender Equality:** the state of equal access to opportunities, resources, and treatment regardless of gender, including in the workplace and in caregiving responsibilities.

**Government Subsidy:** financial assistance provided by the government to reduce the cost of a service or product for consumers, with the remainder funded by taxpayers.

**Head Start:** a taxpayer-funded program that provides early childhood education, nutrition, and health services to low-income families.

**Lanham Act (1940):** a federal law originally intended to fund wartime infrastructure that was expanded to finance thousands of child care centers during World War II.

**Pay Parity:** the concept of equalizing wages between workers in similar roles, such as paying child care workers the same salaries as public school teachers.

**Price System:** an economic mechanism in which the cost of goods and services is determined by supply and demand, with competition creating incentives to lower prices.

**Taxpayer-Funded Child Care:** a child care program financed through tax revenue rather than paid for directly by parents, shifting the cost from individual families to the public.

## Discussion Questions

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

### Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. What is universal child care?
3. More Perfect Union said that universal child care "sounds like an unobtainable progressive dream." Before learning more about it, did the concept of universal child care sound completely unrealistic? Why/Why not?
4. In the Reason video, Liz Wolfe said: "Of course, nothing is free, and government subsidies don't lower the cost of anything. It's just a change in who pays." What did she mean by that? Is it true? Why/Why not?
5. According to the More Perfect Union video, what historical event led to government-sponsored child care in the U.S.?
6. Liz Wolfe said that New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani's "political intuitions are good." What did she mean by that?
7. According to an Arizona State University study cited by More Perfect Union, what were the effects of the government-sponsored child care program?
8. Liz Wolfe said prioritizing families with existing relationships to daycare centers "gives parents a hack." What was that hack? Is it a problem? Why/Why not?
9. More Perfect Union said the starting budget of the 1971 Comprehensive Child Development Act was \$2 billion, and that the defense budget that year was almost \$74 billion. Should the U.S. spend less money on defense? Should it spend more on other programs? Why/Why not?
10. Liz Wolfe paraphrased Milton Friedman, asking: "Why do so many programs tend to benefit middle- and upper-income rather than the poor for whom they are supposedly intended?" According to the video, what was Friedman's answer to that question? Do you agree with his answer? Why/Why not?

11. According to More Perfect Union, Pat Buchanan called the Comprehensive Child Development Act "would be truly a long leap into the dark for the United States...." What did he mean by that? Do you agree with Buchanan? Why/Why not?
12. Liz Wolfe said that under existing programs, New York taxpayers pay for partially empty daycares that parents find undesirable. Why is that?
13. More Perfect Union said: "Now, of course, World War II was a different time in American history, a time of crisis. But look around; is now not a time of crisis?" Are we in a time of crisis? Why/Why not?
14. According to Liz Wolfe, Mayor Mamdani has proposed spending \$6 billion per year on universal child care. Is that reasonable? Why/Why not?
15. More Perfect Union argued that universal child care would fix some issues of inequality. What examples were given to support that argument? Do you agree with the argument? Why/Why not?
16. At the end of the Reason video, Liz Wolfe proposed ideas to cut the cost of child care. What were those proposals? What are the pros and cons of the proposals?
17. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
18. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
19. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
20. What else would you like to learn about this topic?

## Activities

### Activity 1: Evidence Mapping

**Teacher Instructions:** *Distribute copies of the Evidence Mapping worksheet on the following page. Students should complete the worksheet while watching or immediately after watching both videos. Allow 15–20 minutes, then discuss as a class which side presented stronger evidence.*

Students will record specific claims and supporting evidence from each video in a two-column chart, then evaluate which side made the stronger case.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

### Evidence Mapping: Universal Child Care

Directions: As you watch each video, record specific pieces of evidence in the appropriate column. Evidence includes statistics, historical facts, expert quotes, research studies, and real-world examples.

More Perfect Union	Reason

Which video relied more on historical evidence? Which relied more on current economic data? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did either video present evidence that the other side ignored or failed to address? If so, what was it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which single piece of evidence from either video did you find most persuasive?

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 2: Stakeholder Analysis

**Teacher Instructions:** *This activity works well in small groups of 3–4 students. Assign each group a different stakeholder from the list below, or let groups choose. Allow 15 minutes for analysis, then have each group present findings to the class.*

Consider the following stakeholders who would be affected by a taxpayer-funded universal child care program:

- Low-income parents
- Upper-middle-class parents
- Child care workers
- Taxpayers without children
- Small private daycare owners
- Children themselves

Choose one stakeholder and answer the following for that group:

1. According to the More Perfect Union video, how would taxpayer-funded universal child care benefit this stakeholder?
2. According to the Reason video, how might taxpayer-funded universal child care harm or fail this stakeholder?
3. What information would this stakeholder need to form his or her own opinion on the issue?
4. Write a brief statement (3–5 sentences) from this stakeholder’s perspective explaining whether he or she would support or oppose the program.

## Activity 3: Policy Proposal

**Teacher Instructions:** *This activity challenges students to move beyond the binary of "for or against" and design a compromise. It works well as a partner or small-group activity. Allow 20–25 minutes for drafting, then have groups present proposals for class feedback.*

Both videos identify real problems: child care is expensive, quality is uneven, and existing programs have unintended consequences. Your task is to design a child care policy that addresses concerns raised by BOTH sides.

Your proposal must:

1. Address the affordability problem More Perfect Union highlights (child care costing more than college in many states).
2. Address the fairness problem Reason highlights (programs benefiting wealthier families who know how to work the system).
3. Include a realistic funding mechanism (where does the money come from?).

4. Explain at least one potential unintended consequence of your proposal and how you would guard against it.

Write your proposal in one page or less. Be prepared to defend it against questions from classmates.

#### **Activity 4: Perspective Swap Debate**

**Teacher Instructions:** *Divide the class into two groups. Group A will argue IN FAVOR of taxpayer-funded universal child care using ONLY arguments and evidence from the Reason video. Group B will argue AGAINST it using ONLY arguments from the More Perfect Union video. This forces students to find nuance in each source. Allow 10 minutes for preparation and 10 minutes for the debate.*

This is not a standard debate. You must argue the OPPOSITE of the position your assigned video takes, using only what that video actually says.

**Group A (assigned the Reason video):** Find moments where Liz Wolfe acknowledges that child care costs are a real problem, that Mamdani's political instincts are good, or that families genuinely need help. Build your PRO-universal-child-care argument from those concessions.

**Group B (assigned the More Perfect Union video):** Find moments where the video acknowledges limitations, such as the wartime program ending, Nixon's concerns about family structure, or the differences between 1943 and today. Build your ANTI-universal-child-care argument from those concessions.

After the debate, discuss as a class: What did this exercise reveal about the complexity of the issue that a simple "for or against" framing misses?

#### **Activity 5: Then and Now Comparison**

**Teacher Instructions:** *This activity builds critical thinking about whether historical precedents apply to current policy debates. It can be completed individually or in pairs using the worksheet on the following page. Allow 15 minutes for the written portion, followed by class discussion.*

More Perfect Union argues that because the United States successfully ran a taxpayer-funded child care program during World War II, it can and should do so again. Reason argues that modern programs create perverse incentives that benefit the wealthy over the poor. Use the worksheet to examine whether the 1943 precedent supports the case for taxpayer-funded universal child care today.

