



## General questions

Here are 10 questions designed to get discussion going. In every case, there is no single right answer. Your facilitator's guide provides a few possible answers as well as follow up questions that you could use to help the conversation continue and deepen. You certainly don't have to follow this list exactly. If your group gets excited and takes the conversation in another direction – great! If they are especially interested in race, school-based arrests or truancy, you will find question sheets that focus entirely on those issues. You can switch to those questions if you like. Don't worry if you don't get through all the questions.

1. What are some of the common threads you saw running through the lives of kids featured in the film?

*Trauma (Dante's car accident, Brandon's friend getting shot.)*

*Need for a caring adult*

*Problems connecting to school*

*All were minorities*

2. Did the financial cost of incarceration surprise you?

*Recall some of the more startling statistics from the film:*

*It costs an average of \$13,000 a year to educate a child in Connecticut and up to \$350,000 per year to incarcerate that same child in a Connecticut juvenile facility.*

*If the male graduation rate were increased by only 5 percent, the nation would reap an annual savings of \$4.9 billion in crime-related costs.*

3. Where did these kids get help? Was that the best option?

*In every case portrayed in the film, kids got help from a non-profit organization, not from their own schools. Do schools need to get more support from their communities to do a better job? Could schools do things differently to help struggling kids stay engaged? Is there any reason a public school couldn't have a "learning wall" the way Waterbury Youth Services does? Or better follow up when a kid's attendance is poor?*

*Brandon had a lot of family support, but some kids in the documentary don't mention their families at all. Why do you think that might be?*

*(You can refer to the Family Perspective and Educator Perspective sheets to introduce what both groups had to say about these questions.)*

4. A couple of people in the film talked about how many grade levels behind kids in the juvenile justice system are. Governor Malloy said: "Whatever amount of work is required to have a child on grade level in third grade needs to be done." That's probably going to cost money. How can we build support for that kind of investment in this economy? Every dollar spent on early education saves \$16 in costs down the road.

*Last year, more than 9,000 kids were expected to drop out of Connecticut high schools. If safety nets were in place to help every CT child graduate, "would be" dropouts would earn nearly \$2.5 billion in additional income over their lifetimes.*

5. The film talked about how kids' brains keep developing until they are 25. Teens aren't wired to think about the consequences of their actions. Does that resonate with the parents and teachers in the room? And what does that say about the way we should handle teens who make bad decisions?

*There is a separate fact sheet on adolescent brain development that you can refer people to. Audiences may equate taking brain development into account with giving kids "a free pass" to break the law. So ask about even younger kids: Do you punish a four-year-old who acts up in church the same way you'd punish a 10-year old? But aren't you still holding the four-year-old accountable?*

6. Did the film change your idea about what kinds of kids are in the juvenile justice system?

*Most kids are there for minor, non-violent crimes. In fact, anyone 14 or older who commits an A or B felony automatically goes to the adult criminal system. That leads to another question: If these kids are not a danger to society, couldn't we help a lot of them outside the system?*

7. Martha Stone talked about kids failing in school, getting into trouble there and ending up getting arrested. Kids have been arrested in Connecticut public schools for things like having cigarettes, running in hallways and violating dress codes. Is this the best way to handle these kinds of misbehaviors?

*There is a school-based arrest factsheet you can reference.*

*You might also ask the audience if they know what the policy is on school-based arrests in your community. It varies widely across Connecticut. Some schools use arrest commonly – others do it almost never.*

8. We saw that the juvenile justice system was predominately filled with minority kids – even though the majority of youth in Connecticut are white. Factors like being low-income or having special education needs also make it more likely a kid will end up in the system. Even though there's lots of data that unquestionably proves this, people still argue that it can't be true. Why do you think this is?

*Refer to the race factsheet.*

*The state's own studies prove that poverty and location don't explain away the different rate at which kids of color enter the system. Often people argue that minority kids commit more crimes – but national statistics disprove that.*

9. We heard that attendance problems start in the earliest grades and that truancy had a lot to do with delinquency. Are there programs in this community that are aimed at getting kids engaged with school?

*Refer to the truancy factsheet.*

*What makes a school the kind of place where children want to come? If you decided to ditch school, what would have happened to you? What do you think happens today?*

10. Did this film make you want to take any action?

*Refer people to the project website ([ctjja.org/forum](http://ctjja.org/forum)), where they will have lots of opportunities. The easiest way to get involved is simply to sign the Education, Not Incarceration petition. But there is so much more people can do! Find out what ideas your audience members have. See the website or The Essentials for more ideas.*