Careers: How Much Should I Make

Objective:
To think about how society decides how much people earn for different types of jobs.

Time:
15-20 minutes

Materials:
Paper and pen or pencil for each group
Blackboard or dry erase board

Procedure:
Write the following 10 jobs on the board in any order: Fast food worker, doctor, nurse, NFL player, elementary school teacher, farmer (owns a farm), restaurant server (waiter or waitress), janitor, office supervisor, truck driver

Break the students into groups of 3-5 students and ask them to rank the jobs from the job they think should pay the most as (#1) to the job that should pay the least (#10). They should rank the jobs on what they think the jobs *should pay* not what they think the jobs *actually pay.* Some questions they should consider as they work:

1. How long does it take to learn to do the job? Do you have to go to school or have other special training?
2. Is this a job that many people would be good at or only some people?
3. Does the job require special skills or ability?
4. Is this a job that people would like doing or might not like to do?

When the groups are finished, compare the answers. Write the lists on the board if you have enough room to do so. Next, write the list below that has estimated average full-time salaries on it. Explain this is an average across the US- not everyone in each job actually makes that amount. Discuss the group's reactions- were they surprised? Do they think it should be different?

1. NFL Player $2.1 Million
2. Doctor $210,980/yr
3. Farmer (owns farm) $79,940/yr
4. Registered Nurse $75,510/yr
5. Elementary Teacher $62,200/yr
6. Office Supervisor $59,340/yr
7. Truck Driver $45,570/yr
8. Janitor $28,950/yr
9. Food Server $25,830/yr
10. Fast Food Worker $22,260/yr