

Lining Up CEOs

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Pre-Reading

Find out what CEO stands for. Discuss what a CEO does and what a production worker does.

Extreme Inequality and the Economic Crisis

Study the graph and the pictograph. Describe what you see and talk it over with others. Do you think income inequality could be a factor in the economic crisis? Why do you think some countries have less inequality than the U.S. does? Should there be any rules or principles that govern CEO pay? If so, what should they be?

Try This “Line-Up” Activity

This version of a “line up” problem was adapted from *Get It Together*. Go to <www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras> to get the instructions and print out the labels you’ll need to do the activity. In classic line-ups, students line up according to height or some other criteria. In this version students have to line up based on the ratio of worker to CEO pay.

Participating in this activity will stimulate discussion about the relative income inequalities of various countries and the huge difference between the U.S. and all other countries. And because the concept of ratio is embedded in the problem, students are motivated to consider more deeply the important mathematical difference between a comparison by ratio and absolute values. In our experience, there is usually an “aha” moment when students realize that an average Venezuelan CEO did not necessarily make more money than a British CEO, just more in relation to an average Venezuelan worker.

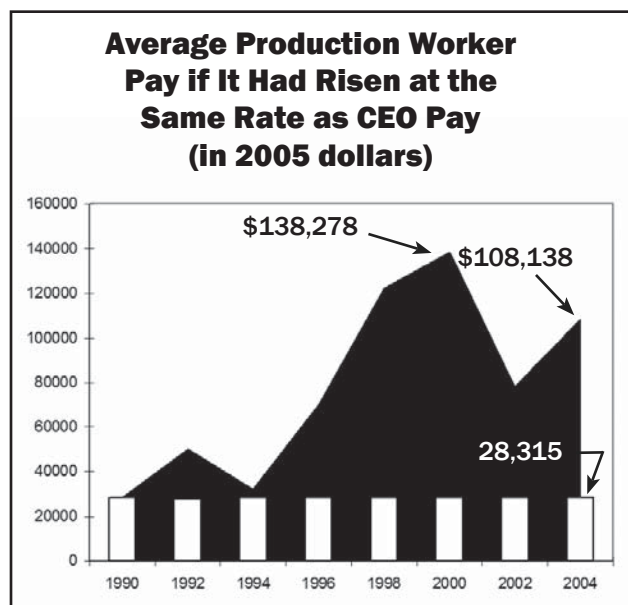
Charles Brover, Denise Deagan, and Solange Farina are members of the Math Exchange Group in NYC. The graph is adapted from <www.faireconomy.org/news/ceo_pay_charts>. The pictograph is adapted from PBS Now.

Listen to This!

Visit <www.extreminequality.org> and watch the video, “The Sound of Wealth Inequality,” which is an ingenious audio illustration that uses the sound of dried beans being dropped into an empty pot to capture wealth disparities.

Take Action

Look up the Income Equity Act, HR3876. Discuss this law with your classmates. Do you support it or not? Write to your congressperson and tell him or her what you think of the bill.



The white columns in this chart show average worker pay in constant dollars from 1990 to 2005. The black area shows what would have happened to worker pay if it had risen at the same rate as CEO pay.