

The Power of Children: Making a Difference

Lesson Idea 2

Make a Difference: Take Action

(adapted from the Youth Activist's Toolkit, Advocates for Youth and The Children's Museum of Indianapolis Power of Children Education Materials)

Grade levels 5-12

Summary:

Using the lives of Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Ryan White as inspiration, invite students to consider ways they can assess a need in their own community (or the world) to make a positive change for the greater social good. Help students identify what they care deeply about, determine a need and/or problem to solve in their own community, and assist each other in taking action through service learning. This lesson models a civic engagement activity as demonstrated by making a plan, collaborating with other community members, and designing a project for the greater social good and for social change.

Objectives:

- Students will discuss community problems or world issues and decide what problem as an individual or as a class group they wish to change.
- Students will research organizations, other non-profits, or community-based endeavors to best determine partners and whom they might serve.
- Students will understand how to design SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely).
- Students will collaborate to plan, engage, and serve.
- Students will discuss and design appropriate communication tools for their cause.
- Students will build critical thinking and persuasive presentation skills.
- Students will become empowered as leaders for implementing a change in their communities or in the world.
- Students will assess if the project was successful.

Materials Needed

- Notebooks and writing tool for recording research
- Internet access for conducting research

The Programming Guide for *The Power of Children: Making a Difference*
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- Information or articles related to local community issues
- Materials for writing letters (stamps, pens, paper, etc.) or for other methods for promoting the cause (markers and poster board for making flyers, posters, etc.)

Lesson Time:

- one class period for viewing the *Power of Children* exhibition
- one class period for a discussion about making a difference and brainstorming ideas (determining what students individually and or collectively care deeply about)
- one class period for sharing students' community organization research, hosting a discussion about potential project directions, and writing a project action plan
- one or several class periods (or devoted out-of-class time) to execute the project
- one class period to reflect and share about successes, challenges, and failures related to the project

Lesson Procedure:

Step one

Engage in a class discussion to help students determine a cause or community problem they might wish to address or solve through action.

- **What problems are you most angry about at home, at school, locally, nationally, or globally?**
- **What things do you care most about at home, at school, locally, nationally, or globally?**
- **Do other people share your frustration or concern? How could you find out?**
- **What are some small things you think you could do or help with that might make a difference at home to improve the lives of others?**
- **What are some small things you think you could do or help with that might make a difference at school to improve the lives of others?**
- **What are some small things you think you could do or help with that might make a difference in the neighborhood to improve the lives of others?**

Use this online quiz to assist students in finding out more what they care about or stand for <http://www.teennick.com/quizzes/what-do-you-stand-for-quiz.html>.

Then, have students complete a time, talent, and treasure worksheet (developed by The Children's Museum in Indianapolis with the Youth Philanthropy Institute of Indiana) to assist them in organizing and inventorying their skills. See the resource section for a sample worksheet.

Discuss with students the type of problem they might wish to resolve or assist with? Using the analogy of a tree, is the issue or problem they wish to solve a “leaf” (a symptom of a bigger problem?), a “trunk” (a structure or practice that repeatedly supports the problem?), or a “root” (the underlying cause of the problem)?

Share with them that “root” problems might be overwhelming and very difficult to change. “Trunk” problems might be best to tackle, as “leaf” problems are often only a band-aid solution to a problem.

Step two

Once the problem or project has been selected by each student (or by the class if a group project), have students conduct some online research to help them locate other organizations or community groups that might also be working toward the same cause. Consult the Youth Service America website to locate national or global partners or resources www.ysa.org.

Have students complete an action plan worksheet (in the resources section of this lesson) to help them shape the project and following through. Be sure that the project is SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely).

Step three

Get busy. Have students choose a date or dates (in consultation with other organizations who might be involved in the project) to do the work and stick to the deadline for completion of the project. If this project benefits from getting others involved, consider ways to promote the project and engaging others (making a poster, putting up a flyer, etc.) for help. Be sure to include the date, time, and other critical details about the project (what to wear if outdoors, who the project benefits, how much time it might take etc.).

Step four

Following completion of the project, assess and evaluate if the goal(s) of the project was attained. Have students reflect upon what worked and what didn't; what was difficult and what was easy; what they might do differently the next time and what might be better to keep the same.

Resources:

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE INVENTORY WORKSHEET

(developed by The Children's Museum in Indianapolis with the Youth Philanthropy Institute of Indiana)

What are some of the things you like to do the most?

What are some of your talents?

Check the activities below in which you think you have talent.

- Writing
- Talking with people
- Using the Web for research
- Using the computer to create graphic design
- Using the computer to write
- Creating artwork
- Taking care of animals
- Taking care of plants
- Taking care of people
- Using books and newspapers for research
- Playing sports
- Organizing activities
- Working with and coaching other people
- other

Which of these is your greatest talent?

What could you do to develop this talent further?

How do you spend your time?

Could you use some of this time to help others?

How much time could you spend helping others on weekdays, on the weekend, during the summer?

What are some of your other assets?

ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

Write down the problem you have selected to address:

Who or what benefits from solving this problem?

List some things you know about the problem.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What more do you need to know in order to address the problem?

List some local or national sources of information about this problem or other local or national organizations that might be helpful to this cause?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is the big goal (or three goals) for this project or resolving the problem?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

CHECK YOUR GOALS . . . ARE THEY SMART?

Is it or are they **S**pecific?

Is it or are they **M**easurable? How will you ensure that you stay on track (think about measurable benchmarks).

Is it or are they **A**ttainable? Is it something you can achieve?

Is it or are they **R**ealistic?

Is it or are they **T**imely? Can you do this in the time allotted?

List the steps needed to take, who is responsible, and when they will be done:

task	person	deadline
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Connections to Common Core Standards (example grade five)

English Language Arts Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
- Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.
- Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes

- Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge

- through investigation of difference aspects of a topic.
- Recall relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
 - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.