

Joining Hands Service Learning Tool Kit

Poverty and Hunger Intermediate (Grades 4-8)

Community Service-Learning Kit

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Service Project Ideas

POVERTY AND HUNGER - INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

There are three types of service projects: indirect, direct, and advocacy. Indirect projects involve collecting funds or items for a cause but not working directly with others or the environment. When students participate in direct service they work with people, animals, or in an environmental setting to address needs or solve problems. The third type of service, advocacy, involves students in campaigning, lobbying, letter writing, or other activities that promote equity and justice.

INDIRECT

- Make holiday placemats or holiday ornaments for a homeless shelter in the area. When students have completed the project, someone from the local shelter would come to pick up what the students have made and would also discuss the importance of the project with the students.
- Organize a book drive. Students can donate new or used books, and also books which they have made themselves, to the drive. The books collected in the drive can be donated to a local crisis center or to a homeless shelter in the area.
- Organize a food drive. Each student brings 1-2 cans of non-perishable food (or however many they can) to school. Donate what has been collected to a local crisis center's food pantry.
- Develop menu cards for the local food bank's bag of food. These cards will allow the people getting the bags of food to know what exactly is in the bag they have chosen.
- Fundraise. Have a bake sale, car wash, chili supper, etc. After sales have been totaled, use the money earned to buy food for the local crisis center's food pantry. You might choose to donate the money earned to area organizations that support ending hunger and poverty.
- Set up a food donation bin in a local grocery store. Ask the management to match shoppers' donations.
- Put together housewarming packages for families moving from shelters to permanent housing.
- Assemble infant care packages for low income or teen mothers.
- Have a fund-raiser by collecting pop cans and purchase recyclable plates and cups. Decorate the cups and plates and donate them to a local homeless shelter where donated paper cups and plates have to be used because of lack of other resources. You can deliver the items, or someone from the shelter can come and pick them up.
- Collect old, unused eyeglasses and donate them to a local shelter. Set up a donation site at school so that the entire school, and parents, can also contribute their donations.
- Carry out a Mittens and Hats drive. This drive can be done school-wide. Many local shelters do coat drives, but very few receive mittens and gloves to go with the

coats. Focus your drive on mittens and hats for younger children, but don't reject other-sized gloves.

- Organize a benefit sporting events between students and teachers. Use funds raised to purchase sports equipment for a local shelter.
- Establish an ongoing relationship with one organization serving people who live in poverty. Assist with agency programs, fundraising, and public relations efforts.
- Develop a partnership with one low-income preschool. Each month make birthday cards and gifts for preschool children celebrating birthdays.
- Collect clean stuffed animals and donate to children at a shelter.

DIRECT

- Organize a food drive, assemble the food they have collected into food baskets, and deliver the food baskets to a local homeless shelter or to needy families in the area.
- Plan and serve a meal at a local soup kitchen.
- Plant a garden for individuals who are homeless. Donate the produce to local food banks and free meal programs.
- Help build or renovate housing through Habitat for Humanity.
- Bag and distribute groceries at a local food bank.
- Hold a story hour at a local Head start preschool or shelter.
- Set up a book corner for children and adults at a shelter.
- Participate in a weekly or monthly meals-on-wheels route.
- Assist at the Department of Social Services to help people fill out forms.
- Set up and staff child care at the Department of Social Services.
- Provide baby-sitting or errand services for people on fixed incomes.
- Clean up around a local crisis center to make the center feel more inviting. Cleaning up could also be done at senior citizens' homes. Local crisis centers could help get the names of senior citizens who may need the extra help.
- Clean up around a local low-income housing project and its playground. Since paint and supplies would be needed, organize a fundraiser or write to local companies to request donations of supplies.
- Plan and carry out a movie night at a local shelter. This could be organized as an after-school project involving a small group of students once or twice a month so that all students are able to participate.
- Tutor people at homeless shelters in either basic math, reading or writing skills.
- Arrange a Game Night for people at a local shelter, after an evening meal or lunch. Organize a Game Drive through which students can donate games they no longer use. Go to the shelter in small groups and help carry out the program. This program can be done on a regular basis so that all students can participate. Use some of the games donated as prizes for children at the center so that they are left with some games to play after the program has ended.
- Make class quilts to donate to shelters. Do a fund-raiser to buy the materials needed and/or write to local stores to help donate the items for the quilts. The shelter can

either recommend specific families whom they know could use the quilts or they can be donated to the shelter itself.

ADVOCACY

- Collect names on a petition to increase the number of shelters for the homeless in the area. Deliver the petition to a community leader, such as the mayor or a city council member.
- Create posters, fliers, bulletin boards, or write letters to the editor of the local paper to increase awareness in the school and the community about the needs of the homeless in the area.
- Make bookmarks with the names and phone numbers of agencies serving people who live in poverty. Distribute through schools, churches, libraries, neighborhood centers, and grocery stores.
- Conduct a demographic and economic impact study of those who are homeless. Publicize the findings through local media.
- Write letters to senators or representatives about the need for low income housing in the area. You might also choose to write senators or representatives about passing laws that will help end hunger.
- Put on a puppet show or skit for families, school, and community about chronic hunger, famine, homelessness, etc. Try to help the audience see how these problems can be alleviated or solved.
- Write to state legislators supporting laws that assist those in poverty.
- Write to libraries about purchasing books that focus on the issues of poverty and hunger. Explain in your letters why you think the requested books are good for children to learn about homeless and poor people, and how everyone can help them.

Reflection

POVERTY AND HUNGER - INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

Reflection is an essential element of service-learning activities. If students are to learn from their service experience, they need to think about themselves, others, service, societal issues, citizenship and the events that take place as they try to make a difference. Reflection activities should be clearly tied to goals and objectives for student learning. Using a variety of reflection methods before, during, and after the actual service experience will help students reach their goals. Following are some ideas for reflection activities that can be used in a variety of different service-learning projects as well as questions specifically related to poverty and hunger that can serve as the focus for reflection exercises.

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

- Discussion - in pairs, small groups, or whole class format
- Writing - journals, poems, creative writing, essays, letters to the editor
- Arts - visual arts, music, theatre, dance, photos, slide show, video
- Presentations - for the school, the general public, a community agency; at a conference or service-learning orientation

QUESTIONS ON POVERTY/HUNGER

Before the service project

- Discuss stereotypes by asking the students what they know (or think they know) about homeless/poor people.
- Have you ever met a homeless person or someone you thought was homeless?
- How do you think homeless people feel about themselves? Why do you think they feel that way?
- How do you think someone becomes poor or homeless?
- What would you like to ask a homeless person? What should you not ask a homeless person? (Discuss the issue of respecting the people's privacy).
- Do you need special skills to work in a soup kitchen?
- What would you like to share with homeless people?
- What could you not share with homeless people? (Stress the importance of privacy).
- What could you offer if you worked at a soup kitchen or shelter?
- Are homeless and poor people "citizens" of the community? Why or why not?
- If you had to leave home because of a disaster, what would you take with you? Why would you choose those specific things? What value do these items have?
- What do you expect to learn from this project?

During the service project

- How's the project going?
- What went well? What has happened that you did not expect?
- How have you tried to solve problems that have come up? What skills did you use? What else can you do?
- What part of this service project do you find most interesting?
- What have you learned about homeless/poor peoples' values, dreams, and beliefs?
- How are you like the people with whom you are working? How are you different?
- Are your ideas about homeless/poor people changing? How?
- What have you noticed about homeless/poor people that you did not expect?
- How are you feeling about working with homeless/poor people?
- Is your project making a difference for homeless/poor people? How?
- What could you do if you worked at the shelter and you ran out of food during an evening meal or lunch?

At the end of the service project

- Compare your initial impressions of homeless/poor people with the impressions you had after you saw or met a homeless/poor person. How are your impressions different? How are stereotypes you held at first promoted in society (television, books, stories people tell, seeing people on the street)?
- How can you challenge these stereotypes? In what ways could you discourage others from having these stereotypes?
- How were the homeless/poor people you met similar as a group?
- How were they different as individuals?
- After meeting homeless/poor people, how do you think the people felt about themselves? Why?
- What kinds of survival skills have homeless/poor people had to develop in order to survive?
- What are some of the reasons people become poor or homeless?
- Do you feel your project has made a difference?
- Were your expectations met?
- What did you learn from working on this project?
- In what ways could you continue helping homeless/poor people?
- What would happen in our democracy if everyone helped homeless/poor people? What would happen if no one helped?
- What is a good citizen? Is participating in community service an essential aspect of being a good citizen? Why or why not?

Curriculum Connections

POVERTY AND HUNGER - INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Locate countries currently experiencing hunger crises. Determine possible causes of hunger by studying the location, climate, topography and economic basis of the country.
- Brainstorm what living "at the poverty level" might mean on a day to day basis. Would geographic location have an impact on what is considered poverty? What might determine how a person views their own absolute minimum basic needs?
- Prepare a panel discussion on what role the government and/or individuals should take in alleviating the conditions of poverty and homelessness.
- Discuss the differences between, and reasons for, unemployment and under-employment.
- Discuss the effects of a natural disaster (earthquakes, floods, droughts) on those who are homeless or living at the poverty level.
- Write to local and state legislators to find out their views on homelessness and poverty.

LANGUAGE ARTS/READING

- Write letters to agencies and service organizations to visit the class, and then write thank you notes.
- Create and publish student-made books to donate to a shelter.
- Tape record a book for younger children to "read" at a shelter.
- Write skits and prepare speeches to publicize the project.
- Write articles and letters to the editor to send to local newspapers.
- Write letters to city officials to raise their awareness of issues related to poverty and hunger.
- Interview a homeless person and write a story about his/her life.
- Tutor younger children from a shelter, or those recommended by any of the agencies who work with these families, in reading and writing skills.
- Write logs and reflective journals.

MATH

- Have a food drive - count cans, project and estimate number of cans that will be collected, estimate how many boxes will be needed to contain the cans.
- Estimate amount of fabric or other materials necessary for making a quilt. Figure the dimensions and cost.
- Have a fund-raiser and start a bank account with the money raised. Figure interest rates on the balance.

- Plan a meal at a homeless shelter using recipes from a cookbook. Estimate portions for each person, double recipes, multiply fractions, estimate cost of ingredients.
- Buy bulk toiletries for a shelter. Measure and fill smaller containers. Estimate cost of supplies and determine cost efficiency.
- Discuss the difficulties a family might experience living on a minimum wage. Plan a weekly budget.
- Collect data on the numbers of homeless people in your community or state, their ages, former occupations, etc. Develop a chart of this information. Use to develop story problems.

SCIENCE

- Prepare toiletry kits for a local shelter.
- Research and discuss the relationship between substance abuse and poverty/homelessness.
- Brainstorm: If your family was living in your car, where would you brush your teeth or take a shower? How would you cook meals or keep food from spoiling? Would your options vary depending on climate, season or a rural versus an urban environment?
- Research health care resources for low-income and homeless individuals. What effect does part-time employment (with no benefits) have on a family's or individual's health care resources?
- Plan a menu of appropriate foods from the four food groups, to serve at a shelter or soup kitchen. How would it vary for different ages, populations and seasons of the year?
- What are the most common health problems of poor or homeless people? Are the problems related to diet, environment, or other factors? Write a report on your findings.

FINE ARTS

- Make posters for a food drive and decorate boxes for the collection site.
- Create a display or bulletin board for a central location in your school or public library.
- Make table decorations or placemats for a lunch or evening meal program.
- Design and decorate plastic cups and plates to use at a shelter.
- Make thank you cards for those who help with the project you choose.
- Make birthday cards for children at shelter or soup kitchen.
- Prepare a video documenting a canned food drive or other project to show on the local cable station.
- Make a mural for a shelter or agency.
- Perform skits, songs or plays about needs in the community for other classes or the P.T.O.
- Study folk art traditions.

INDUSTRIAL ARTS/TECHNOLOGY

- Learn some basic carpentry and home repair skills. How would having these skills help you or someone else live on a smaller income?
- Use the computer to develop a newsletter, article, or essay focusing on issues related to hunger and poverty.
- Create a photo display to illustrate the effects of homelessness and poverty. Put up in the school or at a community site.

LIFE SKILLS

- Plan a series of meals using only the foods given out at a food pantry. Develop recipes and put copies in with the distributed food.
- Learn basic sewing skills. How would being able to sew help someone live on a smaller income?
- Use your sewing skills to make recycle jeans by adding colorful patches. Donate them to a shelter where children live.

Selected Children's Literature

POVERTY / HUNGER - INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

Armstrong, W. H. (1969). **Souder**. New York: Harper and Row.

This book is a Newbery Medal winner about a dog who tries to save a poor sharecropper family. It explores the life of a young boy and the hardships of being the son of poor black sharecroppers.

Bunting, E. (1994). **A day's work**. New York: Harper & Row.

A boy and his Spanish-speaking grandfather are in search of work in order to put food on the table. The grandfather's lack of English causes him to do the job incorrectly, but out of respect, they are asked to come back tomorrow for a second day of work.

Bunting, E. (1991). **Fly away home**. New York: Clarion Books.

A homeless boy describes how he and his father move from terminal to terminal trying not to be noticed while they live in an airport. He watches a trapped bird find its way out of the airport, providing him with hope that he and his father will be able to do the same.

DiSalvo-Ryan, D. (1991). **Uncle Willie and the soup kitchen**. New York: Morrow Junior Books.

This is a story about a young boy who wonders why his Uncle Willie or anyone would want to work at a soup kitchen. He decides to visit Uncle Willie at work where he helps prepare and serve food for the hungry and make a difference in their lives.

Cleaver, B. & Cleaver, V. (1969). **Where the lilies bloom**. New York: J.B. Lippincott Company.

This book is about a girl in the Appalachian Mountains whose parents die. She is left to fend for herself and her siblings. It is a struggle to keep food on the table and hope in their hearts.

Estes, E. (1974). **The hundred dresses**. New York: Harcourt Brace.

When, Wanda, the poorest girl in class, tells some girls that she has 100 dresses all lined up in her closet, she becomes the subject of ridicule. It turns out that the dresses Wanda has at home are all pictures of other girls' dresses in class which she admired. This is a story about how people often value appearance and can act unkindly toward others who might appear different.

Fenner, C. (2000). **The King of Dragons**. New York: Aladdin.

Eleven year old Ian and his father have been homeless for years. When Ian's father does not return, Ian must survive on his own by remembering what his father taught him.

Guthrie, D. (1988). **A rose for Abby**. Nashville: Abington Press.

A little girl helps out a homeless woman she notices in her neighborhood. She then organizes a meal for the neighborhood's street people.

Hahn, Mary Downing. (1988). **December stillness**. New York: Clarion Books.

A social studies paper on the homeless draws Kelly to Mr. Weems, a displaced Vietnam vet, and she gradually realizes the vast scope of the topic she has chosen

Hamilton, V. (1993). **Plain city**. New York: Scholastic.

A twelve year old girl discovers that her father, whom she never knew, is a homeless man who lives under a bridge. It deals realistically with the issues of self-esteem, racial discrimination, single parenting, homelessness, and emergency shelter services.

Howard, S. & Apple, T. (1992). **Kids ending hunger: what can we do?** Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel.

This book discusses ways in which students can help end hunger. It deals with actual problems, possible solutions, suggests 50 things kids can do to help. It also offers lists of various resources.

Lutzeier, E. (1991). **The coldest winter**. New York: Holiday House.

This book centers on the Irish Potato Famine in 1846. It is a grueling story about a family's struggle to survive the potato blight, which poisoned all the crops, and the freezing winter that followed.

Spinelli, J. (1990). **Maniac Magee**. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

After his parents die, Jeffrey Lionel Magee runs away from his aunt and ends up homeless. This is a tall tale about his adventures as a homeless boy. It encourages kids to think about the topic of homelessness.

Wolf, B. (1995). **Homeless**. New York: Orchard Books.

Mickey, a homeless boy, goes through numerous financial and emotional struggles to find an apartment in the lower east-side of New York City.

Wittlinger, E. (2002). **Gracie's Girl**. New York: Aladdin.

It's bad enough Bess's mother spends all her time working at a community soup kitchen, but her best friend, Ethan wants to volunteer also. Bess soon

befriends Gracie, an elderly homeless woman at the soup kitchen. When her mother spearheads an effort to create a permanent shelter for women, Bess and Ethan try to help Gracie on their own.

Literature Activities

POVERTY/HUNGER - INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

Hahn, Mary Downing. (1988). December stillness. New York: Clarion Books.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

CHAPTERS 1-3 (Pages 1-31)

What do you think? Do you agree or disagree with what Kelly says school is all about? Explain. (p.2)

Why didn't Mr. Poland, Kelly's teacher, like her idea for a current issues paper? What does Kelly's mom do for a living? Kelly admired her, but what would she want to do instead?

Kelly says she can't do anything right according to her dad. What kind of things does he think are important?

Why did Kelly's friends think she was crazy to want to interview the "bagman?"

CHAPTERS 4-6 (Pages 32-57)

Why might a Vietnam War veteran like Mr. Weems have problems after the war? Dad had no sympathy for Mr. Weems. What did he say about him? What do you think about that?

What had Kelly's dad looked like as a young man, how had he kept his apartment, and what kind of music did he like?

CHAPTERS 7-9 (Pages 58-89)

Why did Mr. Weems throw away Kelly's sandwiches, fruit, and coffee?

Why do you think Mr. Weems was in Adelphia (a small suburb) and not a large city like Washington, D.C.?

Why was Brett (in English class) so upset by the war poems?

Why does Mr. Weems like the way he lives? Would you like to live that way?

Why or why not?

CHAPTERS 10-12 (Pages 90-117)

Why do you think the men who were in Vietnam don't want to talk about it?
What is "post-traumatic stress disorder?" Why was Mr. Weems so upset when Kelly tried to show him the magazine article?
What excuse did Keith give Kelly for why Courtney, Julie, and Doug felt the way they did about Mr. Weems?

CHAPTERS 13-15 (Pages 118-150)

What did Uncle Ralph think about Vietnam War veterans?
Mom said Dad was such an "idealist" when he was younger. What is an idealist?
Why do you think he changed as he grew older?
Why doesn't Mr. Weems let Kelly help him?
What had happened (between Mr. Weems and Kelly) at the library that caused Mrs. Martin, the librarian, to blame Kelly for the new rule that didn't allow Mr. Weems into the library anymore? Do you think it was Kelly's fault?

CHAPTERS 16-19 (Pages 151-181)

What kind of things reminded Dad of Vietnam? Give 3 examples.
What did Brett and Doug think could be in Mr. Weems' bags? What did he really keep in his bags?
Dad said he and Uncle Ralph were in Vietnam, came home and lived "normal" lives. What did Mom say to him about that?
Why isn't it easy for Vietnam War veterans to see names of their buddies on the war memorial wall?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

Look up a poem about war and bring it to the class to read. You can use examples from pages 71-74 in the book or find a new resource.

Read about the Vietnam War in the library (at least two sources). Give a written or pictorial history of that war.

Visit a cemetery to look for tombstones of veterans. Take note of at least ten names, dates born and died. Determine what war the veteran was in and how old s/he was when s/he died.

Choose one man (or woman's) name from your list of ten and write a story about his or her experiences in the war.

Interview a war veteran. What kind of questions would you like to ask him or her? Write down at least ten questions before you go. Report back to the class what you discovered. Where would you find a war veteran if you didn't already know one?

Invite a Vietnam War veteran to speak to the class.

What could you do to help the homeless? Brainstorm of list of possibilities. Go to or call a social service agency to find out. Make a plan of action.

Literature Activities

POVERTY/HUNGER - INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

Hamilton, V. (1993). Plain City New York, The Blue Sky Press.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What need does the soup kitchen meet? How does it build a sense of community? What needs does the shelter provide for families and individuals? How does this compare to the programs available in your community?

What response does the community have to those who choose to be homeless? How would you feel if someone told you that they did not want or need a "home", and had made a decision to live like Junior Sims?

How do you feel about the "no questions asked " policy at the soup kitchen? Some shelters run a quick criminal record check before allowing someone to spend the night. What effect might this have on applicants for services?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

Raise funds to buy bulk toiletries to make kits for a local shelter.

Donate student-made picture books to a shelter.

Make a quilt to donate to a child recommended by a local agency.

Make a commitment to supply a casserole, bread or vegetables to a soup kitchen once a month.

Make table decorations or art work for a shelter or soup kitchen.

Clean up around a local shelter or crisis center to make it more inviting.

Get names of senior citizens who may need help from local agencies.

Spruce up a park or playground in a low-income project.

Arrange game or movie nights at a shelter or evening meal program.

Offer to tutor kids who receive services from family agencies.

Resource Books

POVERTY AND HUNGER -- INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4-8)

- Caywood, S., Sass, C., & Zack, D. (1991). **Citizen Stories: Democracy and Responsibility in American Life**. Alexandria,VA: Close Up Publishing, 44 Canal Center Plaza.
Videocassette tells the stories of five citizens who take action to make a difference in their world; includes interview with activist Ralph Nader.
- Fiffer, S., & Fiffer, S. (1994). **50 Ways to Help Your Community**. New York: Doubleday.
Fifty innovative projects which individuals, families, parent-teacher groups and civic organizations have developed to meet specific needs in their communities.
- Gommels, J., & Remley, J. (1987). **World Population and Hunger**. Iowa City, IA: Iowa City Community School District.
Seventh grade manual on global studies, population, and hunger; includes activities emphasizing student involvement at local and global levels.
- Hatkoff, A., & Klopp, K. (1991). **How to Save the Children**. New York: Fireside Press.
Provides 200 suggestions about how to counter the effects of poverty and neglect; includes names and addresses of contact persons for advocacy.
- Howard, T. (1992). **Kids Ending Hunger: What Can We Do?** Kansas City: Andrews and McNeel.
Stories of children in hunger-stricken countries, hunger facts, resources, and a list of fifty activities for students; appropriate for elementary and junior high students.
- Joseph Feury Productions Inc. (1985). **Down and Out in America**. Oak Forest, IL: YMPI Home Video.
Videocassette reveals the suffering of farmers who cannot hold their farm land, the poor who fill the shelters, and the 20 million Americans who don't have enough to eat.
- Kaye, C. B. (2008). **A Kid's Guide to Hunger and Homelessness: How to Take Action!** Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press.
This guide has practical suggestions for getting involved in your community in regard to poverty issues and makes you feel like you can make a difference in the world whether you are 50 years old or 10 years old. Its message is inspiring and empowering!

- Kroloff, C. (1993). **54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless**. New Jersey: Hugh Levin Associates and Behrman House,
Challenging suggestions for ways to help, stories of interaction with homeless individuals, and facts about homelessness.
- Maryland Student Service Alliance. (1991). **Draft Instructional Framework in Service Learning for Middle School**. Maryland: Maryland State Department of Education. Manual for teachers and administrators to promote service-learning projects which will stimulate student involvement in the community.
- Miller, J. (1974). **Focusing on Global Poverty and Development: A Resource Book for Education**. Washington D.C.: Overseas Development Council.
This book is a response to the need for usable, comprehensive materials to help teachers integrate studies of global development and interdependence into existing curriculum.
- Novelli, J., & Chayer, B. (1991). **The Kids Care Book: 50 Projects that Help Kids Help Others**. New York: Scholastic.
Step-by-step directions for fifty ambitious projects which have been implemented by teachers and their students; organized by category of need.
- Sprinkle, P. (1980). **Hunger: Understanding the Crisis through Games, Dramas, and Songs**. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
Games and activities to help students evaluate lifestyles, simulate situations that may cause hunger, and experience how it would feel to be living in poverty because of circumstances which are beyond control.
- Tower, C., & White, D. (1989). **Homeless Students**. Washington D.C.: National Education Association.
Provides the teacher a guide for recognizing and helping homeless students; also provides ideas to raise awareness of the issues of homelessness.