

HUMAN COMMUNITY

Objectives

- Students will examine the need for services to assist homeless families, and how complicated the solutions to homelessness can be.
- Students will examine their own beliefs about homelessness and the responsibility we all have to help find workable solutions that support families in need.
- Students will create marketing and educational materials for use by a local homeless shelter or food bank, learning what it means to become “part of the solution” and working to end hunger and homelessness for families and children in their community.

Essential Questions for Students

- How do homeless families function in your community?
- What types of aid are necessary to solving daily challenges faced by homeless families?

Outcomes

- Students will recognize their ability to spark change in their local community.
- Students will strengthen their research skills.
- Students will work productively as part of a team.
- Students will enhance their oral presentation skills, including participating in collaborative discussions, assessing claims and evidence, developing explanations, and integrating quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis.

Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts Standards, Speaking & Listening, Grades 9-10

- Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 – Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on graded 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 – Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and task.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6 – Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence and to add interest.

Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects, Writing, Grades 9-10

- Production and Distribution of Writing: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.7 – Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.7 – Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.



Community Connections

- Contact a local homeless shelter serving families to discuss your class's intent to research homelessness. Representatives from the shelter should be able to assist you with your project. Many organizations provide educational materials and general marketing materials.

Materials

- Large sheets of paper or poster board.
- Markers.
- Informational materials about homelessness in your area

Vocabulary Terms

- **Homeless** – Describes a person who has no home or place to live. People without homes considered as a group.
- **Shelter** – Something that provides cover or protection; for example, from heat, cold, or other weather. A refuge. In regard to humans, a place that provides temporary housing for people who are homeless.
- **Poverty** – The state of being poor; a condition lacking in the necessities for living safely, healthily, and comfortably.
- **Poverty Level** – A minimum income level below which a person is officially considered to lack adequate resources for daily life. The 2014 Poverty Guidelines as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services determines that a family of four with an annual income of less than \$23,850 is living in poverty. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/14poverty.cfm>
- **Food Security** – Another official term, used specifically to refer to a person's or family's access to food. A household is said to be food secure when members do not live in hunger or threat of starvation. The United Nations reports that, worldwide, approximately 852 million people are hungry due to extreme poverty.

Lessons

Students will research the homeless situation in their community and create presentations to raise awareness and understanding of the complex issues surrounding this subject and the people affected.

Building Knowledge (approximately one class period)

- Organize students into teams and provide a large piece of paper or poster board and markers for each team. Provide each team with a question surrounding homelessness. Suggestions include:
 - What stereotypes does society have about the homeless?
 - What types of people do you picture when you think of the homeless?
 - What resources are there in the community for homeless families?
 - What do you know about public policies or laws that impact the homeless?
 - Have the teams write or draw their answers on the paper, then present their answers to the class and hang the posters around the room.
 - Ask students how many people they would guess are homeless in their community. How many in the state and country? What percentage of these individuals do they believe are families? What percentage do they believe are children?
 - After students have had the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas, refer to facts for your community and state. How accurate were their initial thoughts? How do they feel about the reality of the numbers presented to them?
 - Introduce the research project in the Building Compassion lesson to students and discuss the partner organization(s) agreeing to participate in the project.

Building Compassion (approximately four to six class periods)

- Students are challenged to research and solve one of the many problems faced by homeless families. Students will be required to develop a solution from a homeless family's perspective and from the community's perspective. Some example situations are included here, but make sure to discuss local challenges with the food bank or shelter with which you have partnered. Having all students use the same "family" can be helpful. A family, for example, might have a mom, a dad, an 8-year-old in the second grade, and a 9-month-old baby.
- This is an excellent project for work in teams of three to four students, with each team selecting a different topic.
- There are numerous ways for students to present their findings to the class. Allow them to use their creativity for presentations. Example situations include:
 - Schooling:
 - Imagining yourself in the role of a homeless parent, how do you provide for a consistent education for your children? Must the children change schools frequently? How do you provide your address to a new school? How do you provide transportation for your children? How do you obtain basic school supplies and materials for special projects, or provide a place for doing homework and studying? How do you provide your children with clean clothes? How do laws regarding school attendance impact your situation?
 - As a community, how do you assist families in providing for the above needs? How do you ensure that students keep up with their classmates while homeless? How do you ensure that homeless students stay in school?
 - Diapers:
 - As a parent of a homeless family, how do you fund and provide an adequate supply of diapers for a 9-month-old baby (approximately eight diapers a day)? What government resources are there, and how many diapers do they supply for a week/month? What other resources are in the accessible vicinity? What are the diaper policies at shelters? What about daycare facilities while the adults in your family are working? What do you do if your baby develops diaper rash?
 - As a community, how do you assist families in providing diapers and closing the gaps? How do you help families keep their babies healthy?
 - Healthy Food:
 - As a parent of a homeless family, how do you provide healthy food for all members? Where do you store food items or prepare food for meals when you have no place to live? Will government-provided meals sustain your family? How accessible are grocery stores from the local shelters? What kinds of foods are easily accessible close to shelters and government housing? How many meals will food stamps or other government subsidies really provide for a family of four?
 - As a community, how do you keep homeless families healthy and fed? How do you provide meals for children when school is not in session? How do you encourage, and make accessible, healthy food choices?
 - Job Search:
 - As a homeless parent searching for work, where do you go to find job openings? How do you manage clean clothing and personal hygiene? How do you get your resume written/typed and distributed to potential employers? What do you use for an address? How do potential employers contact you? How do you travel to job interviews? Where are your children while you interview? What legislation has been put in place to assist homeless parents looking for work?
 - As a community, how do you keep adults employed? How do you provide access to job opportunities? How do you support the interview process?



CAUTION – Do not let students make assumptions they cannot back up. For example, can families really use food stamps for diapers? Do local shelters provide school supplies? Are those resources reasonably accessible in your community? Don't let students assume that everyone has a car!

Taking Action (approximately two to four weeks)

- Create informational displays for the school or community showcasing the challenges faced by homeless families. In addition to the challenges, have students focus on the solutions. Provide information on where families can go for help and how others can influence public policy to make solutions more accessible.
- Empower students to be creative in their presentations. Allow them to utilize different mediums of communication in order to get their ideas across to others.
- Your Roots & Shoots project should end on a day when your students present their displays at an event attended by parents, teachers, your school principal, representatives from local shelters, and members of the community. Consider inviting local media to the presentations.

Extension Activities

- Conduct a food or supply drive for a local homeless shelter.
- Become homeless for 24 hours (on school grounds with an adult sponsor). Video documentary or pictures would be a great addition to this project!
- What projects or fundraisers could be set up on a regular basis to provide for the needs of the homeless in the community?
- How can the students' ideas for solutions be put to use?

Journal Questions

- Many social service agencies were introduced during the Great Depression. Select a focus (e.g., aid for the unemployed, support for public education, food stamps) and relate programs implemented during the Great Depression to the programs that are in existence today in your community.
- How have your attitudes and beliefs about those who are struggling with financial difficulties and homelessness changed during the course of this project?
- What other ideas do you have for helping those in need? How would you implement your ideas? What community resources do you believe may be available to help you implement your plans?

Accommodations/Modifications

- Have students discuss with a representative from a homeless shelter the solutions to one of the main challenges facing homeless families.
- Look at ways to make shelters and food banks more accessible to those with different abilities and physical challenges.

Additional Taking Action Activities

- Start a vegetable garden at your school, or work with a community garden to grow fresh organic vegetables for donation to a food bank or shelter.
- Host a Free Trade Fair at your school to promote livable wages and education in developing nations. (Refer to Bead for Life at www.beadforlife.org or SERRV International at www.serrv.org.)
- Organize a team from your school to participate in a local fundraising walk supporting homeless shelters.
- Look into local art museums or galleries to see if any are hosting an exhibit focused on the faces of poverty. Students can also create their own exhibit using www.animoto.com.
- Visit a local soup kitchen or shelter and volunteer to serve a meal.
- Write your local representatives regarding issues that are affecting poor and homeless families in your community.



Portfolio Development

This is an excellent opportunity for students to showcase their problem-solving abilities and creativity. Encourage students to focus on creating viable, defensible solutions to the problems being faced by homeless families.

Family Connection

- Send an informative letter or email outlining your project to students' families.

