

HUMAN COMMUNITY

Objectives

- Students will map their community to determine that food banks and homeless shelters are a resource in need of assistance.
- Students will examine the reasons why food banks and shelters are necessary and reflect on their personal beliefs about families and individuals in need.
- The project will help students recognize the need for services assisting families who struggle to obtain basic necessities such as food and shelter.
- Students will conduct a food or supply drive, learning what it means to become “part of the solution” and work to end hunger and homelessness for families and children in their community.

Essential Questions for Students

- After some reflection and discussion, how accurate were your initial perceptions of homelessness?
- What personal responsibility do you have to assist others in need?

Outcomes

- Students will realize their ability to positively impact the day-to-day lives of others living in poverty in their community.
- Students will develop an understanding of the reasons why families find themselves homeless.
- Students will develop oral and written communication skills, such as engaging in collaborative discussions, writing informative texts, and presenting findings.

Common Core State Standards

English Language Standards, Writing, Grade 6

- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1 – Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Text Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

English Language Standards, Speaking & Listening, Grade 6

- Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.4 – Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Community Connections

- Contact a local homeless shelter or rescue mission serving families in your community to discuss your class's intent to conduct a food or supply drive to help the families in their care. A representative from the shelter should be able to assist you with your project. Many shelters will send out (or post on their website) educational materials about homelessness, as well as general marketing materials.
- General ideas for assisting homeless families and children include:
 - Conducting a food drive.
 - Conducting a clothing drive.
 - Collecting diapers, baby wipes, and other items for babies and toddlers (many food banks also distribute diapers).



- Collecting school supplies.
- Collecting art supplies.

Materials

- Individual journals.
- Educational materials on homelessness
- Materials to make informational posters about the project.
- Know, Want to Know, Predict, Learned (KWPL) chart.

Vocabulary Terms

- **Homeless** – Describes a person with no home or permanent 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** – An income level below which a person is officially considered to lack adequate resources for daily life and to be living in poverty.
- **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 its 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 learn about the issues surrounding homelessness and poverty and engage their peers and adults in conducting a food or supply drive for a local shelter.

Building Knowledge (approximately one to two class periods)

- Develop a KWPL chart focused on homelessness. Ask students what they feel they know about the issue, what they wonder about, and ideas they have to learn more. Hang this in the classroom during the project.
- Review literature from the shelter with which you are partnering or from a pre-selected website
- Ask a representative from the shelter to visit your class and talk about the work that the shelter does and the people it serves. Many shelters have case studies as part of their marketing materials, which can be excellent resources to help students understand the “human” side of the homeless issue.
- Introduce students to the service project and ask them to brainstorm ideas.

Building Compassion (approximately 10 to 15 minutes a day during the project)

Journaling is an extremely effective way for students to get in touch with their thoughts and feelings. By focusing on journaling during this project, students will be able to process their beliefs about homelessness without censure. Throughout the project, encourage students to reflect on the personal aspect of homelessness and free write on an ongoing basis. Topic suggestions include:

- Where would you go if your family lost your home?
- How does it make you feel when friends reveal their families' financial troubles to you?
- How does it feel when your parents/caregivers express financial concerns?
- What could lead a family into homelessness?
- What would it be like to be homeless?
- If you were homeless, how would you obtain food and where would your meals take place?
- How would you stay warm?
- What would you use for transportation? How would you get to school? Jobs?



- What would you do for entertainment?
- How would you stay in contact with your friends?

Taking Action (allow approximately two to four weeks for the food/supply drive)

- Go to work! Host a food/supply drive for a local shelter to benefit homeless families in your community.
- Together with a representative from the shelter and your students, brainstorm a list of items that the students would like to collect to benefit the shelter and the people it serves. You might opt to focus on food—canned items, dry goods, etc.; or on supplies that the shelter needs on a daily basis—clothing, bedding, baby/toddler supplies, activities for children, etc.
- Working with your students, determine:
 - The length of your drive.
 - How you will collect items. For example, will you be collecting canned food in bins in your classroom or in the school lobby? Will you place collection bins in local businesses near your school, as well?
 - The date for your celebration event. This could be the last day of your drive, or shortly after the last day, when students tally the number of items collected and estimate how many people they've helped.
 - The logistics of the celebration event. For example, would students like to deliver the items that they collect to the shelter in person, or would you prefer that a representative from the shelter come to your school to accept the donation?
- Have students create posters and informational flyers to inform the community about your project.
- Have students decorate donation bins with artwork and specific information about where the donations are being sent.
- Reach out to local businesses with suggestions on how they might help with your project
- Contact the media to let them know about your project, including the end-of-project event
- After the students have completed the food/supply drive, complete the KWPL. What did students learn and how have their opinions regarding homelessness changed?

Journal Questions

- Are there any current legislative issues being debated in your community that would impact the homeless? Why should the community be for or against this legislation?
- What other projects that impact the homeless community are you interested in? How could you be of service to this project?

Extension Activities

- Working with a shelter, adopt a family for the school year. What are the needs of that specific family? Does the family have children? If so, would the class like to arrange for gifts for the children on their birthdays and holidays? Do the children need school supplies or specific clothing items such as shoes or coats?
- Research current public policies in your community that impact the homeless. Are there policies in place to help reduce the number of homeless in your community? What are the details of those policies? Do the students think the policies will work? Why or why not?

Accommodations/Modifications

- Allow students multiple options in how to express their feelings about homelessness.
- Partner with another class or grade level to assist with the food/supply drive.

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.
- Research which states have the highest and lowest rates of poverty. What factors contribute to these rankings?
- Develop a poverty budget. What would life look like if you were living at the national poverty line?
- Research how many children are living in poverty in your state. The nation?

Family Connection

- Send an informative letter or email outlining your project to students' families.
- Have students create a thank-you meal for their parents or caregivers at home. Have students plan the meal using the types of food that were collected in the food drive, or food that is distributed by food banks.

