



## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

(45-60 minutes in class; time varies out of class)

### OBJECTIVE

Students choose and complete a service activity designed to address a local community problem.

### MATERIALS

Depends on the service project selected

### GET READY

- ✓ Prepare newspaper articles that discuss community problems: trash, hunger, etc.
- ✓ Consider things that will determine the nature of the service-learning project: money, transportation, supervision, etc.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Have your class brainstorm problems in the community. You may want to bring in a local newspaper, or newspaper articles, and read sections of it to your class.
- ✓ Keep track of the problems mentioned by your class by writing them on the board.
- ✓ Tell your class that they are going to address one of the problems, but they first need to choose a problem. Have them select the problem by a show of hands or a similar democratic process.
- ✓ Now that you have a problem for your class to address, ask your students to come up with possible solutions to the problem. (These ideas represent possible service projects.) List these ideas on the board.
- ✓ In order to identify the correct project for your class, encourage your students to consider the following questions:
  - ✓ How much time do we have for the service activity?

- ✓ What kinds of support do we need (money, transportation, adult supervision) and where can we find this support?

- ✓ Which ideas are likely to have the greatest impact on the problem?

- ✓ Which ideas do we most want to do?

*Note: It is important as the teacher that you “veto” any ideas that the students are advocating but that you find unacceptable or unreasonable. Be sure to explain to the students why that idea will not be included in the final list.*

- ✓ Vote on a service project idea for the class to complete. (If you and your students are ambitious and have the time, you could choose more than one.)
- ✓ Make arrangements to carry out the project, including contacting the people and/or organizations needed for its success. Allow enough time for your class to complete the project.
- ✓ After completing the service project, have students reflect on their experience in writing or discussion.
- ✓ To conclude the experience, celebrate students' efforts to make a difference. This could be as simple as a popcorn party, extra recess, or a pizza picnic to as involved as a public event in the community with guest speakers and student awards.



## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Was it hard to come up with a service project for the class? Why or why not?*
- ★ *What was hard, easy, fun or difficult about the service experience?*
- ★ *Did the class make a difference?*
- ★ *Were we able to influence public opinion regarding the problem?*
- ★ *What did we learn from this experience and how could we apply that learning to future efforts to improve our community?*

### MORE!

If the service idea chosen didn't involve influencing public opinion about the issue, you might also want to include one of the following activities:

- ✓ Writing a letter to the editor or a public official in the community about the problem
- ✓ Organizing a public display with facts, artwork, and any other information you can think of

### SUGGESTED ASSESSMENTS:

*A portfolio assessment for this lesson could include:*

- ★ *List of people and/or organizations contacted for the project.*
- ★ *Compilation of possible solutions.*
- ★ *Summary outline of the project steps completed.*
- ★ *Written reflection by student which includes observations on the challenges and successes of the project.*