

Give Where You Live

Local Issues Lesson Package



SECONDARY LESSON PACKAGE

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Lesson Package

INVESTIGATING LOCAL ISSUES IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

■ RATIONALE

Take a walk through most neighbourhoods and you will see multiple issues. While homelessness, environmental matters and unemployment are concerns around the world, each community has unique issues and ways to address them. Guide students to discover their strengths and interests, and help them apply them to local issues. Giving locally, in time, skills or funds, will provide your students with opportunities to make their community a better place for everyone to live in. They will be personally invested and will see the results of their contributions first-hand. Use this lesson package to open up the local world students may not yet see, and help them make a difference.

This lesson package was created to provide educators with comprehensive lessons to guide students in their understanding of local issues and how to address them. With introductory, core, concluding, extension lessons and a top ten list, there is a diverse range of information to help students understand how they can make a difference in their community. Use lesson plans and assessment rubric to educate, engage and empower your students.

Find an issue and begin changing lives today.

				<i>Look for these icons at the top of each lesson. The icons identify the most relevant core skills developed. To learn more check out the We Act Learning Framework.</i>
CRITICAL THINKING	RESEARCH AND WRITING	INFORMATION LITERACY	ARGUMENT FORMATION	
				
LEADERSHIP SKILLS	ORGANIZATION	ACTION PLANNING	REFLECTION	

■ DETAILS

Level: Secondary

Themes: Character education, economy, empathy, global issues, inspirational figures, local issues, health, poverty, socially conscious living, values and ethics, volunteering, team building.

Estimated time: 235 minutes

Learning goals:

Students will:

- Identify issues affecting their community
- Learn from local experts
- Investigate the root causes of local issues and work to prevent and eradicate the issues
- Create an awareness-raising ad campaign
- Discover ways to get involved with a local issue through volunteerism

Course connections: English, Canada and World Studies, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Health and Physical Education, Math, Computer Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies

Resources required:

- Front Board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computers with PowerPoint capabilities, projector, internet
- Local experts
- Arrangements for volunteering

Resources included:

- Powerpoint presentation

Assessment:

- Appendix 1: Assessment rubric



■ INTRODUCTORY LESSON: LOOKING TO SEE



Purpose: Students will look for and identify the issues that affect their community.

Instructional method(s): Walkabout, class discussion, brainstorming

Differentiated instruction:

- Select one topic for the class to study as a whole.
- Assign local issue topics to groups.

Course connections: Business Studies, English, Career Studies, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Interdisciplinary Studies

Estimated time: 75 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask students if there are any issues like homelessness, poverty, pollution, bullying, environmental concerns, etc. in their community. How do they know what issues affect their community (they see it, hear it on the news, etc.)?
2. Tell students that the class will be going on a community walkabout to look for signs of local issues. In preparation, have students brainstorm a list of indicators they might encounter, symptoms of a larger issue (e.g. run-down housing, many soup kitchens in a specific area, excess litter, etc.).
3. Take your students on a community walkabout. Instruct students to bring a notebook and a writing utensil to use while on the walkabout.
4. While on the walkabout, take time to pause and ask students for observations and allow time for note taking. The point of the walkabout is to look for symptoms of problems usually ignored, so take enough time for a thorough expedition.
5. Upon return, lead a class discussion. Ask students:
 - a. Did you see anything that surprised, shocked, angered or encouraged you?
 - b. What specifically did you see?
 - c. What issue might that be an indication of?
 - d. Are there local programs and facilities in place to help with the issues?
 - e. Are they enough?
6. Hold a class brainstorm session to compile a list of issues that affect the local community, both visible and invisible. These may include examples from the walkabout, as well as examples from local media or other sources. Write the suggestions on the front board. Spend time creating a comprehensive list.
7. Tell students they will now be selecting from the list of topics to examine and become involved with in future lessons.
8. Students may vote on the local issue they feel most passionate about. While selecting one topic will allow the class to work together and concentrate their efforts towards creating a larger impact, if there is more than one topic students want to choose, allow groups to form. It is important that students feel passionate about their cause so they feel invested.



■ CORE LESSON:

DIGGING UP THE ROOTS



Purpose: Using homelessness as an example, students will be encouraged to investigate the roots of problem for the local issue of their choice.

Instructional method(s): Research, class discussion, independent reading, sharing expert opinions

Differentiated instruction:

- Select one topic for the class to study as a whole.
- Assign local issue topics to groups.

Course connections: Business Studies, English, Career Studies, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Interdisciplinary Studies

Estimated time: 120 minutes

Steps:

1. The topic of study will depend on the issue students selected in the introductory lesson. Even though this will be unique to your school community, the example of homelessness is provided here along with general questions to guide students no matter what topic is selected.
2. Learn about the prior knowledge of your students. Distribute index cards or have students use a piece of paper. Write the topic(s) of choice from the introductory lesson on the board. Ask students to write one personal experience, one recent news event and one organization that relates to the topic. Have students hand in the cards once they are finished. Quickly review to assess the knowledge of your students. Have a few students share their ideas with the rest of the class.
3. Share with students the Canadian Living article "[Love your neighbour](#)," an inspiring article about a woman who finds the strength to feed the homeless in Vancouver despite having degenerative arthritis. While this article specifically concerns homelessness, it also shows how someone who identified a local issue, felt passionately about the cause and rose above the barriers she faced to help those in need.
4. Tell students they will investigate the multiple roots that together create the issue. Provide students with fifteen to twenty minutes to research the local prevalence and the severity of the issue using the internet, newspapers, community papers, etc.
5. Hold a class discussion on the topic(s) of choice in an open-forum style to see how students feel the community is addressing the issue (e.g. food banks, homeless shelters, municipal governments, etc.).
6. Extend the discussion to include the issue as it exists in a nation-side context.
7. Ask students to form groups of four to five people. Based on the article, the open forum discussion and the research, instruct students to brainstorm and compile a list of preventative measures for their community to use to address the issue. Have each group share their top three ideas with the rest of the class. Ask students how they can become more involved (e.g. using awareness-raising campaigns, volunteering, being politically aware, etc.).
8. Further the investigation by asking students to organize interviews and/or presentations by local experts (e.g. shelter workers, city councilors, an individual who is currently or has formerly been homeless, police officers, free clinic healthcare workers, etc.) specific to the selected topic(s). Learning about the issues and meeting with those involved in the field, will deepen the understanding and connection students have with the topic(s) that affect their community.



■ CONCLUDING LESSON: RAISING AWARENESS, TAKING ACTION



Purpose: Students will use the technology they know best to create an awareness-raising campaign to encourage action on the local issue of their choice.

Instructional method(s): Marketing ad campaign, memory recall, multi-media presentations

Differentiated instruction:

- The creation of a campaign may be done individually, in groups or as a class.

Course connections: Business Studies, English, Career Studies, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Interdisciplinary Studies

Estimated time: 75 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask students a few questions about ad campaigns and product promotions:
 - a. What ad campaigns are most memorable to you from the past or present?
 - b. What was the medium (e.g. radio, television, print, online, etc.)?
 - c. What made it memorable?
 - d. What was the main message of the ad?
 - e. Was it effective (i.e. did you buy the product, support the cause, etc.)?
 - f. How are ethical motivations used to engage consumers?
2. Tell students they will be creating their own campaign to raise awareness of their selected topic(s) and encourage action.
3. Using the students' knowledge of technology and social media, encourage them to develop a public service announcement that is tailored to employ multi-media resources, solicit an emotional response and encourage their peers to act.
4. Ask students to consider the following elements:
 - a. Cause (the selected topic)
 - b. Slogan (what is an effective pitch?)
 - c. Music (upbeat and fun, slow and moving, etc.)
 - d. Celebrity (think about the celebrity's reputation—are they a good match for the cause?)
 - e. Pictures (positive or negative images?)
 - f. Action Item (what are you asking people to do?)
 - g. Target Audience
5. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to think about the task and create an outline for their campaign. Review and approve the outlines before allowing students to move onto the next step.
6. Once students have approval, allow them to move their ideas into production. Give students thirty to forty minutes to develop their plans. Assign what is not completed for homework.
7. Have students share the campaign with the rest of the class or student body.



■ EXTENSION LESSON: PUTTING IT INTO ACTION



Purpose: Students will have the opportunity to take action through volunteering.

Instructional method(s): Class discussion, volunteerism

Differentiated instruction:

- Students working in a concentrated way for the same cause will have a stronger impact on the issue. However, students may work individually or in groups.

Course connections: Business Studies, English, Career Studies, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Interdisciplinary Studies

Estimated time: 20 minutes plus time for volunteering

Steps:

1. Ask students to reflect on what they have learned through the lessons on local issues. Explain that it is easy to feel helpless when learning about the issues that affect your local community because it is difficult to determine how to help.
2. Throughout these lessons students have learned how to see the issues that affect their community, how to identify the roots of the issue and how to create an awareness campaign to encourage action; now is their chance to take action through volunteerism.
3. Keeping in mind all they have learned throughout the course of the lessons, ask students the following questions:
 - a. What are your goals for action?
 - b. Why is it important to take action?
 - c. How can you get involved and put your plan into action?
4. Have students contact local organizations already involved in the issue to set up time to volunteer. Students should also find out the needs of the organization and organize themselves to fill those needs.
5. Volunteer. Encourage your students to become part of the solution by taking action locally.
6. Have students share with the rest of the student body their work and accomplishments through school announcements, the school newspaper, assemblies, posters and class presentations to encourage more to get involved by acting locally.

We365 Tips

Change the world, every day. Suggest students download the We365 app and become part of a community of change makers.

Tell students that throughout the school year they will be creating a portfolio of their social impact with the We365 app. Ask students to choose two causes in the We365 app that relates to the issues that affect their community. Have students develop an action plan and create challenges to support their causes and track their impact. Check in with students periodically throughout the year to learn about their progress.



Reflection: Reflective writing

Encourage students to reflect on everyday impacts with the following directed writing questions. Ask students to select one and write a journal entry answering the question.

- How do you make small impacts in the lives of others?
- What small actions have others taken that have positively impacted your life?
- Who benefits when we take small actions to improve the lives of those around us? (Explain the ripple effect.)



TOP TEN TIPS:

HOW TO MAKE A LASTING IMPRESSION WITH STUDENTS

Learning does not begin and end when you walk through the doors of a classroom. Every educator's goal is to deliver lessons that impact the lives of their students and help them become responsible, knowledgeable and considerate individuals.

Here are a few tips to help you do just that.

1. Share your passion. Showing that you are passionate about a cause models positive behaviour.
2. Go outside! Teach your regular class outdoors. Exposing students to different and new environments creates new learning pathways and helps keep minds refreshed.
3. Allow students to take the lead. Sharing the responsibility of leadership with your students provides them with a safe space to make mistakes and learn.
4. Look to your students for guidance rather than simply following the textbook. Find out what your students are interested in and then shape lessons from their ideas.
5. Leave the classroom. Take field trips where you can facilitate experiential learning. Explore your school for new and shared learning experiences.
6. Bring volunteerism into your lessons. Encouraging students to think of others through action promotes positive life values.
7. Have students share their experiences with each other. Collaborative learning helps students appreciate each other while learning from their peers.
8. Look for information in places other than the internet. There are endless sources of information in our daily lives to learn from. Use restaurant menus, newspaper articles, song lyrics, etc. as resources, and your students will begin to view the world as a resource too.
9. Encourage multi-generational learning. Our elders hold a fountain of knowledge and information.
10. Apply the theory. Students want to know how they can use what they are learning, and teaching through practical application helps them make wider connections.



■ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the lesson plans, share these resources with your students:

- Canadian Living article "Love your neighbor": www.canadianliving.com/relationships/friends_and_social_life/love_your_neighbour.php
- Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca
- Food Banks Canada: www.foodbankscanada.ca
- Free The Children's We Stand Together Campaign: www.freethechildren.com/westandtogether
- Habitat for Humanity: www.habitat.ca
- Human Resources and Skill Development Canada, Homelessness Partnering Strategy: www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/index.shtml
- Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative: www.maei-ieam.ca
- Nature Conservancy Canada: www.natureconservancy.ca
- The Salvation Army Canada: www.salvationarmy.ca

Change the world, every day.

[We365](http://we365.com), an initiative of Free The Children and TELUS, is a digital community that helps students change the world, every day of the year. Students can track volunteer activities, find inspiring content, take daily challenges, and connect with fellow change-makers right on their mobile device.

Using the power of technology, We365 is the one stop shop for students to build their social impact portfolios. Once you've led students through a lesson plan or campaign, look to We365 for related challenges and encourage them to take action. Find out more on we365.com and download the app today!



- Appendix 1

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

This assessment rubric is based on Bloom's taxonomy, a multi-tiered model to classify cognitive levels of complexity to evaluate students' comprehension of issues and participation with the lessons.

	Level 1 50-59%	Level 2 60-69%	Level 3 70-79%	Level 4 80-100%
KNOWLEDGE AND COMPREHENSION	Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of the relationships among facts, ideas and concepts	Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the relationships among facts, ideas and concepts	Demonstrates considerable knowledge and understanding of the relationships among facts, ideas and concepts	Demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the relationships among facts, ideas and concepts
APPLICATION AND ANALYSIS	Uses critical and creative thinking processes and develops examples with limited effectiveness	Uses critical and creative thinking processes and develops examples with some effectiveness	Uses critical and creative thinking processes and develops examples with considerable effectiveness	Uses critical and creative thinking processes and develops examples with a high degree of effectiveness
SYNTHESIS AND EVALUATION	Demonstrates knowledge and makes connections with limited effectiveness	Demonstrates knowledge and makes connections with some effectiveness	Demonstrates knowledge and makes connections with considerable effectiveness	Demonstrates knowledge and makes connections with a high degree of effectiveness
ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATION	Expresses and organizes information while using appropriate language for different audiences and purposes with limited effectiveness	Expresses and organizes information while using appropriate language for different audiences and purposes with some effectiveness	Expresses and organizes information while using appropriate language for different audiences and purposes with considerable effectiveness	Expresses and organizes information while using appropriate language for different audiences and purposes with a high degree of effectiveness

- Appendix 2

TOP TIPS: How to stay safe while you stay connected

Staying connected with friends and family is easier than ever with laptops, tablets and smartphones that receive service in every corner of the country. As with every medium, there is a learning curve to master, but more than that, there is a lot to be learned about using technology appropriately. Use these top tips to keep your personal information safe and secure from falling into the wrong hands.

1. **Be friends with friends.** Social media is the best platform to share stories, photos and experiences with your friends and family; that's the intended purpose. But before accepting an unfamiliar friend request on Facebook and tweeting to unknown followers, stop. Making new friends is great, but you wouldn't go up to a stranger on the street and tell them details of your life and what your plans are for the next few weeks. If you have Twitter followers you don't know and you are sharing information about yourself, that's what you're at risk of doing.
2. **Be your own follower.** Whether you are posting on Facebook, writing a blog post or sending a tweet with Twitter, think critically about what you are writing. With every message you send out, ask yourself: is this engaging and interesting; would I want to read this? Make sure what you write is relevant to your friends and followers. Don't just write about yourself. But if you do, think about what message you are sending. Short messages enter the world of social media often without context and with little emotional perspective. Even with the use of emoticons, emotions like sarcasm are difficult to express.
3. **Google yourself.** Just as you might google the name of your friends or someone famous, it's a good idea to keep track of your online presence. An easy way to do this is by googling your name. Find out where your name shows up and what information on social media platforms is available to the general public. Stay in the know by setting up a Google Alert. Check out google.com/alerts for more information. While this isn't a foolproof method, once you know what's out there, you can learn to manage your digital footprint.
4. **Secure sign-ups.** Every time you go onto Facebook it seems like there is something new to sign up for. Online offers, promotions on T.V., and hand-outs at events all seem to ask you to sign-up for one thing or the other. Before signing up, make sure you trust the company or organization that is asking for your information. Be careful of the information you give and look for the icon that shows you are on a secure site. Usually it is a padlock icon found near the top of the web server. The padlock icon indicates the site is SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certified. Many sites will allow you to sign in using your Facebook or Twitter account. This is a quick and easy way to gain access, but when you allow access, the two parties share information. So before you click approve, be confident in your choice.
5. **Cracking the code.** You know the drill. A unique, more complicated and diverse password for every application and device is more difficult to crack. It might seem like too much unnecessary work, but if you misplace your tablet, you want to know all of your information is secure. Besides, remembering complex passwords is good for your brain. Be sure to lock all your devices with passwords. You never know when your little sister is going to get a hold of your phone. With secure password protection, she won't be able to send that photo of you participating in the family reunion eating contest.
6. **Go underground.** Turn geotagging off. Geotagging identifies your exact location and attaches it to photos, posts, tweets and more. Many smartphones and social media applications geotag automatically. While it might seem like fun to share with everyone where you are, do you really want all of your contacts to know where you are? This setting is typically turned on unless you turn it off.
7. **More than 911.** Know who to turn to in case of an emergency by keeping a list of emergency contacts in your smartphone. While you want to memorize key numbers like your parents' number in case something happens to your phone, a list of other numbers like your local police department, your school and other family members is good to keep in one place.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

This certifies that

has successfully completed the
Give Where You Live workshop
with Free The Children



Date

Educator