

Making a Lasting Difference

This modelling the tools is incorporated into critical challenges at grades 2 and 3, however, it can be adapted for use at all grade levels.

Overview

The detailed suggestions that follow help students plan a class project to create a lasting effect on the school or community. The inspiration for the challenge is *A Handful of Seeds*, by Monica Hughes, which tells of a girl in Latin America who helps other street children by providing them with seeds to plant a food garden. Students learn to recognize helpful actions that have a short-term impact and those that have a lasting impact. Using assigned criteria, students assess a list of possible class projects to enhance their school or community. Individually, students recommend and justify their selection. Students share their recommendations and adopt one or more projects the class then plans and implements.

Preplanning

Preview story.

- The story, *A Handful of Seeds*, is an effective way to introduce the idea of making a lasting difference (see References). You may choose to use a different book to introduce this theme.

Session One

Introduce the idea of lasting difference.

- Invite students to share stories of ways in which they have assisted members of their family or community.
- Cut out the cards (i.e., short-term difference and lasting difference) from [Kinds of Differences](#) and paste them on the board. Share a few contrasting examples to help students understand the concepts. For example:
 - doing a friend's homework for him or her versus teaching the friend how to do the work himself
 - giving someone a paper bag to carry his or her lunch versus giving the person a lunch box
 - helping an elderly person walk by holding his or her arm versus giving him or her a cane or walker.
- Print each of these actions beneath the card that best describes the effect.
- Invite students to categorize the helpful actions they shared as short-term or long lasting. It may be interesting to discuss whether making someone happy creates a lasting positive memory or is a short-lived experience. Illustrate this point by contrasting a child's favourite toys, such as the teddy bear that is brought to bed each night, versus a toy that is quickly put aside. Students may suggest that some actions have intermediate-term effects;

if so, print these actions mid-way between the two cards. Emphasize to students that all of their efforts make a difference to someone. Explain that the purpose of categorizing the kinds of differences is to note that some contributions have an ongoing effect.

Read and discuss the story.

- Announce that you are going to read a story about a young girl named Concepcion who makes a lasting difference to children who have no home and are often hungry. Read aloud *A Handful of Seeds*. After reading the story, invite students to identify the problems experienced by the street children, the solutions presented in the story and other solutions that the street children might consider. After a brief discussion, create a chart, as illustrated below, indicating for each problem whether the actual and suggested strategies made a short-term or lasting difference. You may need to offer suggested solutions, which students could then categorize.

Dealing with the Street Children's Problems

Problem	Short-term Difference	Lasting Difference
<i>No food</i>	<i>Eat the seeds for food Steal for food Sell garbage for food</i>	<i>Plant the seeds to grow food Find new families for the street children</i>
<i>Police beat them</i>	<i>Run away and hide</i>	<i>Stop stealing so police won't chase them Talk to the police Find someone to help them</i>
<i>No home</i>	<i>Sleep where they can</i>	<i>Find new families for the street children Build their own homes</i>

Confirm understanding of concepts.

- Distribute copies of [Things We Can Do](#) and [Short-term or Lasting ?](#) to each student or pair of students. Direct students to cut out the cards on the first sheet and paste each pair of cards in the appropriate column on the second sheet. Ask students to explain the difference between the two kinds of effects at the bottom of each column.

Session Two

Introduce the class project.

- Remind students of the difference that Concepcion made to the street kids in the *barrio*. Invite students to consider what the class might do for the school or the community that would make a lasting difference. You may want to narrow their focus by raising a specific problem (e.g., litter on the school grounds, insufficient playground activities for primary students) or an emergent opportunity (e.g., available funds to improve the school grounds, construction of a new seniors' home near the school). You may also encourage students to ask others in the school for ideas. Record students' suggestions on chart paper for later reference.

Develop criteria.

- Discuss how the class can decide which of the suggested projects to undertake. After some discussion, suggest to students that they identify the factors that make some projects better than others. If students have previously developed criteria, ask them to suggest the criteria they might use. Alternatively, guide students by suggesting possible projects that would be obviously inappropriate and invite students to explain why each of these actions would be unsuitable as a class project to the school, e.g.,
 - start a lawn bowling or curling club in the school (not important or meaningful to students)
 - raise a million dollars for new playground equipment (not realistic for the class to do)
 - give a chocolate bar to every student in the school (would not make a lasting contribution).

Record their explanations for rejecting these possibilities. Then, summarize the factors suggested by students as criteria for a thoughtful class project; for example:

A class project should...

- *make a lasting difference to the community*
- *be important to students*
- *be realistic for the class to do.*

Assess the possibilities.

- Draw students' attention to the list of possible projects and number each project for easy reference. Invite students to consider whether or not each action meets the three stated criteria and any other criteria suggested by students. If undertaking this task as a class, create a chart, such as the one outlined below, and indicate with a  or X whether the action meets or does not meet each criterion. If students are to make their assessments individually or with partners, distribute a copy of [Class Contributions](#) to each individual

or group. You may want to demonstrate the procedure for assessing the projects. If more than six projects are suggested, distribute additional copies of the chart or narrow the list down to the six most promising options.

Things We Might Do

Possible Projects	Will it Make a Lasting Difference	Is it Important?	Is it Realistic?	
1.	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗
2.	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗
3.	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗
4.	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗
5.	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗
6.	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗	✓ ✗

Session Three

Introduce the critical task.

- Present the critical task for students to complete individually:

Recommend a class project that would make a lasting contribution to the environment around our school or community.

Explain that students are to choose one of the projects from Session Two to recommend. Distribute copies of [My Recommendation](#) and ask students to draw a picture of their choice, describe it in words and then explain why it meets the identified criteria. (A space is left for students to add a fourth criterion, if desired.)

Share recommendations.

- Direct students, if they have not already done so, to indicate on [My Recommendation](#) the previously assigned number of their proposed project. Post numbers around the room (representing the number of possible projects) and ask students to display their drawing beneath the appropriate number. Invite students to discuss with those who share the same recommendation why their project should be adopted by the class. You may want to help students who are alone in their recommendation to formulate reasons why their choice is a good one. Invite a representative from each group to explain the reasons for its recommendation to the rest of the class. Discuss with the class how a final decision about the class project or projects should be made; e.g., majority vote, group consensus, blind pick from among the top contenders. Select a method and determine which project(s) the class will undertake.

Session Four

Plan the project(s).

- Ask students for ideas about the tasks that need to be done, the materials required to complete each task and who might undertake each task. Record student suggestions on a chart, such as the one below.

Planning Our Project

Things to Do	What We Will Need	Who Will Do It

You may have to prompt students; e.g., Should we let our parents know what we plan to do? How might we do this? Should we get permission from the principal? Do we need to find out more about the nature of the project? For a helpful account of the planning and implementation of a Grade 2/3 project to improve the school playground, consult the article by Surrey teacher, Janice Crawford (see References). As this account suggests, there are many opportunities to integrate various subject areas in the planning and implementation of a class project.

Debrief experience.

- After implementing the project, discuss the experience as a class. Ask students to comment on some or all of the following questions:
 - How did you feel about our project?
 - How did the people helped by the project feel about our contribution?
 - How do we know if our contribution made a lasting difference?

- What might we do differently next time?
- You may want to ask students to individually record their feelings about making a contribution to the school or community.

Evaluation

Assess lasting contribution.

- Assess students' ability to recommend a project that makes a lasting contribution using the rubric [Assessing Lasting Contributions](#). The sources of evidence and the three criteria for assessment are listed below:
 - Use the sorted cards pasted on [Short-term or Lasting ?](#) to assess students' ability to distinguish short-term from lasting differences.
 - Use the responses to the checklist of criteria found on [Class Contributions](#) to assess each group's ability to judge possible projects in light of the identified criteria.
 - Use the recommended option and the accompanying explanation recorded on [My Recommendation](#) to assess students' ability to select a suitable project.

Reaching the basic understanding level on the rubric may be appropriate for many primary students.

References

Crawford, Janice. "Thoughtful, interesting and active... Can this be Social Studies ?" *Primary Leadership*, 4 (1). (2001), pp. 48-52. This edition of the journal is available from RichThinking Resources (<https://public.sd38.bc.ca/RTRWeb/>).

Hughes, Monica. *A Handful of Seeds* (illustrated by Luis Garay). Toronto: Lister Publishing, 1993. (ISBN 1-895555-27-2)

Credits

This lesson adapted from *I Can Make Difference*, edited by Mary Abbott, Roland Case and Jan Nicol (Richmond, BC: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2002, ISBN 0-86491-262-5) pp. 75-87.) Permission granted from The Critical Thinking Consortium for use by Alberta teachers.

Documents

The following documents are referenced in the above modelling the tools. They can be adapted for your needs and re-saved.

Graphic Organizers

- [Short-term or Lasting?](#) 
- [Class Contributions](#) 

- [My Recommendation](#) 

Assessment

- [Assessing Lasting Contributions](#) 

Lesson Material

- [Kinds of Differences](#) 
- [Things We Can Do](#) 