

Students Helping Students

Lesson Plans

Social Entrepreneurship

Lesson #3: Moving Mountains: Big Ideas Start Small

True leaders give people an avenue to act - they open the door for others.

Overview

This lesson introduces students to the story of three young people who reacted to the tsunami in Asia with personal dedication and a will to make a difference. Their story serves to illustrate the potential for big impact with a big idea, but one that starts small. The story also highlights a strategy for powerful team brainstorming. Students read the article, brainstorm ideas, and team up to create their own idea for a solution.

Subject: Social Studies, Language Arts

Grades: 4-10

Time Needed: One to two 50-minute class periods

Materials

- Case study: [Banding Together: How a Simple Fundraiser Turned into a National Fundraiser for Tsunami Relief](#)
- Handout: "[Tips from Successful Youth Entrepreneurs](#)"
- Miscellaneous small items from around the classroom and homes for brainstorming activity, such as paper clips, bookmarks, rubber bands, wire, a sponge, paint brush, etc... (See number 7 below for details.)

Learning Goals

- Students will understand how a small group of people can start a landslide of effort for making a difference
- Students will learn a brainstorming strategy

Introduction

The quote below is from the story of three young students and how they initiated a major campaign to raise money to help rebuild schools in Sri Lanka after the Asian tsunami disaster. A link to the extended case study can be found above, along with a handout about the students' strategies. Print copies and share with your students.

Jacob explained what happened when they first heard about the tsunami: "We were watching CNN and seeing all the terrible things. We couldn't bear to watch it. We decided that we were going to make an effort. We didn't know how, we didn't know what, but we knew we were going to do something."

Danielle felt the same way. "People have to take action and make a difference. We knew that we had to figure out an idea to help other kids," said Danielle. Her brother David added, "We wanted to give people a way to help the victims of the tsunami. We wanted to do something that would show people that helped that they were part of something bigger."

The three kids set out to come up with a popular idea that would sell and would also be symbolic. That first day out by the pool, David looked down at the "Live Strong" cancer awareness bracelet that Jacob was wearing, and the idea was born. The three decided that they would sell \$3 wristbands at their schools and donate the proceeds to tsunami relief.

The three students readily acknowledge that they could not have accomplished the significant results without the help of other community members and schools, and their principals and parents. As your students read the story, emphasize the "ripple effect" of small first actions (Even a very small stone thrown in a pond ripples out until it hits the banks). Students often feel they are "too small" to make a real difference; help students see that any action, even though it may seem small, can have a lasting impact."

All three kids and their parents are amazed by the success of the project, but are very humble in accepting praise. They admit that they could not have done it without the support of family and of their schools and principals. They also readily give credit to all the students and parents who got involved and made this project happen.

Key Concepts and Vocabulary

- Passion, inspiration – barrier-free mentality – it can be done, it's "do-able".
- Social obligation, sense of religious or spiritual obligation
- Recognition of problem through to solution
- Leader versus figurehead
- Vision
- Change agent
- Catalyst

Additional Resources and Learning Connections

Projects and ideas that have inspired others to act:

- Room to Read “Did You Know” section to inspire young students to action www.roomtoread.org
- Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs <http://schwabfound.org/schwabentrepreneurs.htm>
- Ashoka Fellows - www.ashoka.org/fellows/tsunamirelief_fellows.cfm
- YouthVenture – search youth team projects here www.youthventure.org/index.php?tg=topusr&cat=42
- Also, see the other lessons in this set for ideas, suggestions, and resources.

Instructional Procedures

1. Introduce the first lesson with copies of the case study and handout about the three students. Ask students to read silently (or this may be handed out the night before as homework).
2. Ask students the following three questions. Discuss.
 - a. *Why do you think these students acted?*
 - b. *Why were they successful?*
 - c. *What would you have done differently?*
3. Discuss the key concepts and vocabulary words.
 - a. What is a *change agent*?
 - b. Do you think these students had a *vision of what’s possible*?
 - c. Do you consider these young people *leaders*?
 - d. What is the difference between a *figurehead* and a *leader*?
4. One of the lessons of the story is that the students had big dreams but started small. The following activities allow students to experience problem definition, solution development, and idea generation—much like the students in the story.

Put students into groups of three or four and have them list problems around their communities and school. Encourage them to think of problems that matter to them. Some students may suggest smaller issues, like waste at lunch, while others may think more broadly, suggesting large social issues like homelessness.

5. After the lists are generated, post on chart-pak paper or on the board for everyone to read. Note any overlaps or duplicates. Leave time to discuss any surprises or themes that emerge.
6. Ask each group to select one of the issues and try to identify the key sources of the problem. Have them answer the questions:
 - a. Why does this problem exist?
 - b. What caused it in the first place?
 - c. Why does it persist?

For example, homelessness is not *caused* by a lack of housing. Illiteracy is not *caused* by a lack of books in the world. There are a host of inter-connected reasons for any one problem. For this activity, help students choose and focus on only one cause of the problem they have identified. Students may need to use references such as the library or the Internet, time permitting.

7. Tell the students they are going to raise money to help solve their chosen issue. But first they need to brainstorm ideas. Their idea must be feasible, cheap, simple, and something anyone could do or use. The key is that the idea must *start small*. This sounds simple, but can be quite a challenge and should generate some good thinking. To help generate ideas for a product to sell as a fundraiser, the following brainstorming activity is suggested, and includes the following steps:
 - a. Ask each student to bring in a few miscellaneous articles from home – clothespin, coat hanger, hat, bookmark, etc. It should be something small, easy to carry, and not valuable.
 - b. Gather additional materials from the classroom also, to ensure there are plenty of items for brainstorming ideas.
 - c. The story of the students who developed the wristband for tsunami relief is the model for this activity. Remind students in the class of their experience. They experienced a flash of insight as they noticed the “Live Strong” wristband that one of them was wearing. This process of using one thing to generate ideas for another is a smart and proven strategy for creating new products.
 - d. In their small groups, students should have a varied collection of objects. Have each student in turn to pick up an object and suggest something it could be used for, or that it is like, trying for practical yet innovative uses. For example, the old wooden clothespin holds pieces of clothing to a line to hang dry. Recently a local arts store started selling expensive photograph holders that are essentially clothespins, though the classic wooden type had been replaced with a smaller, artistic, chrome version. Another store sells a huge plastic clothespin that serves to hold papers or receipts. A small crafts shop sells hand-painted toys made of clothespins. Share these examples with students to get the juices flowing!
 - e. Ask students to do the same with the objects in front of them. Do any of the objects suggest new products that could be made and sold? What would have to be changed -- its size? The type of materials used? Is there a piece of the object that is more useful than the rest?
 - f. Have students select one object as their choice to work with, and prepare to present their idea to the class. They may work up a formal proposal, design a poster showing its value, create an advertisement, or devise a sample prototype to share. The depth and selection of this activity depends on age and time available.

8. After all the groups have presented, recognize the hard work and good thinking generated by the activity. Discuss the potential and feasibility of each idea, and ask for feedback on their process. The class effort may have resulted in the

development of one or more truly good ideas – one that students wish to take further to create a fundraising plan. If this occurs, extending this lesson to include a full project is possible, given time and interest. The additional lessons offered on this site provide support and resources for this kind of service learning/social entrepreneurial project.

9. In a culminating activity, students should reflect on what they have learned. Depending on age of students and time available, possible activities could include:
 - **Simulation:** Tell students that they have been awarded \$1,000 to invest in a fundraising project. Students teams should develop their “pitch” for a product to sell, then take turns making presentations to the whole class. The class decides on its criteria for selection, then votes on a product (or products) to finance. The same activity could be used to select a cause to support through fundraising. In this case, student teams should research organizations they want to support and take turns making their case to the class.
 - **Reflection journal:** Prompt students to write about how their thinking has changed as a result of this activity. How has reading about the experience of Jacob, David, and Danielle changed what they think “a kid can do”? How do they imagine their life would change if they were to lead a successful fundraising project?
 - **Solutions forum:** Organize students into teams, based on their shared interest in solving a particular problem. Teams should then take turns making a presentation to the class to raise awareness about “their” issue. Expand the audience—and potential impact—by inviting parents or community members to a public forum.

Extensions

- **Organize a project:** Use the resources on this website to organize a real-life fundraising campaign for Room to Read. Support students’ success by facilitating communication and teamwork skills, but be sure to let students take the lead. Engage parent volunteers to help as needed (see the [For Parents](#) section of the Students Helping Students web site for more information).
- **Advertise and advocate:** Help students refine their advocacy skills by having them develop public-service campaigns for their product or for a cause they want to support. Encourage students to use multimedia tools, including music and video, to help carry their message to an audience of their peers. Connect with a media literacy unit to encourage students’ critical-thinking skills about what they watch, hear, and read.
- **Follow the money:** How can you measure the impact of a fundraising effort? In a math extension, students might compare “what a dollar buys” for a variety of nonprofit organizations and in different parts of the world. Students could develop a variety of graphs to track their own fundraising efforts and make the numbers meaningful to them.

These teacher resources were developed by the Learning Innovation and Technology Consortium (LITC). LITC develops educational programs and materials in support of problem solving, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.