

Education and Economic Empowerment

Service Learning—Grades 9–12



Teacher Instructions

Goals: Students will become advocates for education in their community and learn why an educated community is better situated for economic success.

Time Required: About two class periods, not including students' service projects.

Materials: Student Worksheets "Plan!" and "Caring Is Contagious."

Get Started:

1. Begin the lesson by sharing with students that in the last year of his life, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized the Poor People's Campaign, a movement to end poverty and promote economic justice for all Americans regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. In 1968, they drafted a statement given to members of the U.S. government and publicly demanded an economic and social bill of rights to help citizens obtain jobs, income, education, and housing, among other items. Source: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesonthepize/sources/ps_poor.html. Ask: *How might a lack of education contribute to poverty? How might increased education lead to economic prosperity not only for individuals, but also for an entire community?*
2. Tell students that, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers with more education have lower unemployment rates and higher incomes than workers with less education. Some studies suggest that people with higher levels of education are also healthier. Other studies suggest that higher education rates correlate to lower crime. As a class, create a list on the board of some of the ways increased education might economically benefit a community. (Possible answers include increased tax revenue, lower health-care costs, fewer policing costs, and lower spending on incarceration.) Source: https://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/Facts_For_Education_Advocates_Sept.pdf.

3. Dr. King championed education, but he also stressed action. In 1947, he wrote an essay titled "The Purpose of Education." Read aloud the following quote: "Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate." Ask: *What does Dr. King mean? To what worthy objectives might he refer? What is the power of your education? How might you be able to use it to help others?*

Investigate:

4. What are your community's needs? Have students use the Internet and the library to research economic and education statistics for your state or community. Possible topics include: median household income, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, literacy rates, etc. Some possible sources include: your state government's website, the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the National Education Association. Ask: *How does our state compare to others? Have students share their findings with the class.*
5. What educational resources are available for teens and adults in your town or community? Have students conduct research online or by reading a local newspaper. Create a list on the board. Possible answers include: a public library, after-school tutoring, and continuing-education classes. Discuss as a class other educational opportunities your community might provide.

Take Action:

6. Share with students that they will be creating a service project and joining millions of Americans participating in this year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, which takes place on January 18, 2016. Discuss with students the five components of a successful service project: identify local partners, build a team, set a goal, serve your community, and report and celebrate successes. You can view sample Toolkits at

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/days-service/martin-luther-king-jr-day-service/toolkits>.

7. As a class, brainstorm possible service projects that would benefit your school or community. Some suggestions include: mentorship programs, book drives, read-aloud programs, after-school tutoring, English as a Second Language sessions, etc. Have students vote on their five favorite ideas. Divide students into small teams, one for each of the five selected service projects.
8. Have each team work as a group to fill out the "Plan!" worksheet. Remind students to set realistic, measurable goals for their cause. Have each group share their preliminary ideas with the class. Allow students time to update their worksheets with any ideas they have that might benefit their own projects.
9. After students have done their research and decided on what their service projects will be, encourage them to share their service project ideas with education officials, the local media outlets, and other organizations interested in the impact education has on economic empowerment.

Wrap Up:

10. After students have conducted their service projects, discuss as a class how each team's project could potentially benefit the community's overall educational and economic prosperity. Create a cause-and-effect chart on the board to track students' responses.
11. Ask each team to write an argumentative essay about the importance of their cause. Students can use the "Caring Is Contagious" worksheet to help them organize their thoughts. Have students include information they learned while organizing and participating in their service projects. Students should then submit their essays (or letters) to local news outlets, education officials, and outreach groups, and tag social media posts with #MLKDay.

Plan!



Artwork by Sarah, winner of the 2014 MLK Day of Service Poster Contest

Your team name: _____

Your service project: _____

1. Identify local partners: Are there any organizations already working on your cause? Which ones? What advice and support can they suggest? _____

2. Build your team: Many hands make light work. How can friends, family, and community members help you prepare and carry out your project? _____

3. Set a goal: Having clear, measurable goals will help keep you and your team focused. Here's an example: "Our team will hold two after-school tutoring sessions per week." List one to three achievable goals for your team.

4. Serve your community: Are you ready? What materials do you need? Have you confirmed all the details with your team and community? Make a list of what needs to be done and divide up the tasks.

5. Report and celebrate your successes: You'll want to share your experience with your community. Which individuals and groups can you reach out to, to spread the word? _____



CARING IS CONTAGIOUS



Artwork by Beatrice, winner of the 2014 MLK Day of Service Poster Contest

Directions: Spread the word about your cause and service project. Why should other people care? Why is your cause important to the community as a whole? Fill in the sections below to help you craft an essay that will persuade others to support your cause. Send your essay in the form of a letter to a local newspaper or community leaders.

Tip: A good argumentative essay contains three sections: an introductory thesis, body paragraphs that provide evidential support, and a conclusion. As you fill out the worksheet, try to think of transitions that will link the sections—and help readers follow your argument.

1. Briefly describe your service project and its mission. This will help you form your letter's introductory thesis.

2. What's your hook? What information can you include in your introductory paragraph to catch readers' interest? Examples include: a brief anecdote from your service project, a surprising fact, a quote from Dr. King or another prominent person, or a rhetorical question.

3. Your body paragraphs should support your argument. What evidence supports the idea that your cause and service project are important to the community? Evidence can be factual, statistical, or anecdotal. List three to five supporting items here.

4. Are there people who don't believe in the importance of your cause? If so, why? How can you acknowledge—and refute—their claims?

5. Have a strong finish. Wrap up your essay by reminding readers of your main point, but don't just restate it. What are some ways you can leave readers with a strong impression?

