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Developing a Manual for a Middle School Social Action Club

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Developing a Manual for a Middle School Social Action Club

by

Stephanie D. Marando

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2009

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

Developing a Manual for a Middle School Social Action Club

This project is an overview on the process that was taken to incorporate a social action club into a middle school. The project discusses the importance of social action to youth, how it can be incorporated into a middle school, and how to use creative thinking in the process. A draft manual was completed in order to give educators that are interested in beginning a club like this a starting point of where to begin, what should be accomplished, and how. This project is the completion of a journey, which was taken in order to find out more about how to motivate youth, what projects are truly student-centered and meaningful to the youth of the 21st century, and how to structure group meetings in order to make progress.

Your Signature

Date

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

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A Project in
Creative Studies

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Dates of Approval:

Dr. Mary Murdock
Associate Professor

Stephanie Marando

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my mother for all of her support and gentle easing, Charlie for all of your smiles, and encouraging words, my sisters for constantly telling me they are proud. A special thank you is extended to the students I come in contact with, who everyday, in both small and monumental ways, work to inspire me, and keep my creativity alive.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a manual for secondary educators (grades 7-12) to incorporate a social action club into their school while using Creative Problem Solving (CPS, 2001), and creativity tools. I have a great deal of interest in helping young people harness their energy in order to do something great in the community they live in. I also wanted to frame this project around the idea that often times this generation is labeled as “spoiled” and apathetic. One of the main tenants for this type of club is to foster the importance of empathy in all young people. Through the activities and goals that are set during session meetings students will learn that “Empathy involves the ability to extend one’s interest, attention, and energy to others, to recognize their motives, their worries and aspirations, their differences and commonalities, both as individuals and as members of a group” (Boccia, 1997). The goal of this project is to give young people an opportunity to show they care, and help others see that there is so much more to these young people. I have been working towards this project for the past two semesters and have tried out quite a few of the activities that I included in the manual.

Description and Background to the Project

This project involved creating a manual for educators to incorporate a social action club into their school. I knew that the complete guide would not be ready by semester's end; however, the final product is a useable draft manual. The draft manual for creating a social action club in grades 7-12 includes a forward, a description of social action clubs, CPS (2001), divergent and convergent tools (including a "how-to"), and projects and activities that can be used. The Club advisor's role involves the facilitation of the CPS process (2001).

Rationale for Project

Often students feel that they don't have a voice in the world around them, and begin to believe that their worlds aren't any bigger than "lunch-room" gossip and the daily grind. This project will give teachers the avenue to open these young people's minds to invest in the world around them. Many teachers strive to inspire their students and are committed to make sure every student who enters their four walls knows that they are only walls, and they can and should, be blown open with ideas and dreams for our world and community. I ultimately see the results of this project becoming something that my school fully embraces and is proud of. This type of group fully embraces the Youth Empowerment model (Boccia, 1997), which will work to strengthen the community within the school. I know that the students I have worked with to this point are thankful that I am giving them the avenues to become more than "kids". They are energetic, caring, inspired, outspoken, creative people that need a voice, and this group can be their vehicle. One student who has worked on projects employing the use of this model said, "To give us things to think about and then to have us solve them is very satisfying" (Boccia, 1997).

What this project added creatively

This project gave me an opportunity to unleash my creative passion, writing and incorporating inspirational messages for the good of the youth. I was also able to give something back to my school by providing teachers with this manual. Even if teachers do not have the time, energy, or funding to go through with a social action club, at the very least the manual can be used for units in the classroom. This project could improve the quality of life of countless people.

If people open their hearts, souls, and minds to the fact that it is their duty to make this world a better place each of us can work to change the aspects of life we do not like. A student working on my trial run social action group-- F.L.O.A.T--came up with a motto for our club, "The duty of one is to change themselves, the duty of all is to change the world" (L. Kenyon, September, 2008). This message is now posted on the wall in my classroom and my goal through the creation of this manual is to post that message in every students mind.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

This section contains abstracts on the most useful and important resources that I used in the creation of my draft manual and research. These resources should be reviewed by anyone interested in youth empowerment and social activism.

Boccia, J (1997). *Students taking the lead: The challenges and rewards empowering youth in schools*. Michigan: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Boccia took the broad concept of student leadership, and tackled the fact that there was little research on the topic. Boccia broke her book down into 10 easy to read and apply chapters, which described what social action was and how to inspire student leadership. This book was essential for understanding the obstacles one will encounter when trying to inspire youth empowerment. This book is a must read for any teacher that would like their students to be empowered and is useful for understanding how to create that atmosphere.

Hollender, J (1990). *How to make the world a better place: A guide to doing good*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

This book is an essential guide for anyone who wants to work to be part of making this world a better place. The book was broken down into 6 main sections. This book provided the reader with 120 actions that can be taken by just about anyone to improve our world and participate in decreasing the harmful actions we are responsible for taking.

Students taking the lead

Bibliography

Coser, Lewis (1977). *Masters of sociological thought: ideas in historical and social context* (2nd Ed.) Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Graham, J (2005). *Stick your neck out: A street-smart guide to creating change in your community and beyond*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Hoose, P (1993). *It's our world, too! Young people who are making a difference, how they do it-how you can too*. United States of America: Little, Brown and Company.

Lewis, B (1998). *The kid's guide to social action: how to solve the social problems you choose and turn creative thinking into positive action*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Lewis, B (1998). *What do you stand for? A kid's guide to building character*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Miller, B, Vehar, J, & Firestien, R (2001). *Creativity unbound: An introduction to creative process*. Williamsville: Innovation Resources, INC.

Parnes, S, J (Ed.). (1992). *Source book for creative problem solving*. Hadley, Massachusetts: Creative Education Foundation Press.

Puccio, K, Keller-Mathers, S, & Treffinger, D, J (2000). *Adventure in real problem solving: facilitating creative problem solving with primary students*. Waco: Prufrock Press, Inc.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

This section contains the process that I took as I began to prepare and work through incorporating a social action club in a middle school, and how to include creativity in the process. I began thinking about what my Master's Project would entail about a year and a half ago. I knew that I would be teaching and wondered often what I could do to make the project useable in my career as well as make a difference for others. There were quite a few things that I knew as I began this journey: I knew that I wanted to incorporate the tools that I have used and the CPS process that I had a passion for social action, that I wanted a useable product, that it had to be student and teacher friendly, and last but not least, that I wanted to focus my efforts on inspiration. I decided to take all of this and put my efforts towards creating a user-friendly manual on how to incorporate a social action club, using creativity tools and training, into a middle school.

I began my research right away by compiling my insights from a "trial run" social action club, which I held last year, 2007-2008, in a suburban middle school in preparation for this project. I wrote down the obstacles and shortcomings that I encountered throughout this process in order to focus what I would want as a teacher who might pick up the manual. I felt that the largest obstacle was getting the group to understand that they had a real role in making changes occur, that they had a voice in what was accomplished, and I was simply there to help them along, and that they had to have a realistic scope. The Youth Empowerment Model (Boccia, 97) makes it very clear what needs to be done to create this environment.

I decided that I should define what social action was and give a brief overview of the concept. I consulted Lewis Coser's *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context* (2nd Edition) for a working definition of what social action is and how it applies to my club (1977). I then wanted to explain what CPS (Vehar, Firestien, Miller, 2001), was and

develop a “How-To” section on how to use the top five most useable divergent and convergent tools. I decided on the most useable tools by giving overviews on many convergent and divergent tools and using them in brainstorming sessions. I chose the tools that were the most easily explained to a person who does not know what creativity tools are, and the ones that students were able to easily incorporate into our thinking sessions.

The largest and most time consuming aspect of the manual was the last section in which I provided users of the manual with a ten-week run-down of what they can do in each session. I decided on ten weeks, rather than the full forty week school year; first because it would be too large of a scope; second, because I received such an enormous amount of student interest in the club that I broke it into four sessions and held four groups throughout the years. In order get inspiration on what types of projects I should come up with and how I should format my manual I researched many manuals and looked through hundreds of abstracts. The closest example of what my end goal was, was Barbara Lewis’s *The Kids Guide to Social Action* (1998). Lewis did a fantastic job of breaking down essential information for kids who wanted to make a difference. I used Lewis’s book to give me an idea of what information should be included in this type of manual.

John Hollender’s book, *To Make the World a Better Place: A Guide to Doing Good*, was very inspirational as I began creating my manual. Hollender detailed what can be done, why, and in what ways the reader’s goal can be accomplished when setting out to make the world a better place. In the draft manual I created I provided the user with ideas on what projects and activities can be completed, what creativity tools would be used, and what should be done by the end of each session. The completion of this draft manual is something that I am truly proud of, I feel that this is a manual that could be on the shelf of all teachers, and feel that my creative process has truly been worked through

Project Final Timeline

February

- Research of social action and creativity clubs (how to incorporate both)
- Research of divergent and convergent tools and how to briefly explain them as to not overwhelm users.
- Begin drafting the guide, including preface. Work on sections 1,2,3 (compile notes).
- Estimated hours: 20 hours

March

- Put together the initial outline of the guide. Discuss any possible sketches with the art teacher.
- Section 1,2,3: due March 26th
- Complete manual
- Gather notes for section 4,5,6
- Estimated hours: 25 hours

April

- Sections 4,5,6: due April 12th
- Ask teachers to review the manual to check for usability
- Make necessary changes
- Develop PowerPoint summary of key learning's and outcomes
- Project presentation: due May 7th
- Estimated hours: 30 hours

May

- Final project due May 14th
- Created final version of project and presentation in CD form
- Delivered final bound version
- Estimated hours: 30 hours

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

This section contains an overview of the final product, which is a useable draft manual. I am extremely pleased with the outcome of the project; Creativity graduates as well as non-creativity majors who would be interested in incorporating creativity tools into the activities of a Social Action club can use the manual. The manual is a 45-page guide that provides readers with definitions of Social Action and how it originated, CPS, divergent and convergent tools, and a 10-week run-down of what can and should be accomplished in each meeting session. The manual can be used in its entirety for anyone who needs a complete structure of how to facilitate such a student-centered kind of club; however, I also wanted to make sure that the manual could be used in sections if a user simply wants ideas for his or her own sessions.

I gave the final draft manual to two Creative Studies majors and two non-majors, and asked them to tell me if enough creativity skills were incorporated, while still making it useable/understandable to non-creativity majors. All teachers were very pleased with the procedures and gave feedback to incorporate brief descriptions of what divergence and convergence was and to include actual examples of tool handouts. The teachers liked the activities that were incorporated and liked the freedom of how they could alter each session. I incorporated the definitions, but was unable to include handouts due to copyrights found the initial set-up of the manual to be flexible and a great deal of brainstorming and divergence took place. I did begin to get overwhelmed with the scope of the actual manual and decided to cut back on some of the information. I am pleased with this decision because rather than giving the user a fixed outline of what should be accomplished, when and how, the user can read each sections suggestions and use it how it will work best for them.

The final product that resulted from my work is a 45-page useable draft manual entitled: *Jump on the F.L.O.A.T: Future Leaders of America's Tomorrow* (See Appendix 7A). The manual contains four sections: (1) What is Social Action; (2) Definition of CPS; (3) Creativity Tools: Divergent and Convergent tools; and (4) A 10-week run-down of weekly club activities.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

This section contains an overview of my key learning's on social action, student clubs, and incorporating creativity into student-centered social action activities. I found through my research that social action clubs that highlight students, as the participants, must be focused entirely on what the students want to accomplish. If a club leader chooses to simply give the group a list of projects and activities that will be completed, the students will completely check out. The real beauty of a Social Action club was that what does and does not get accomplished was 100% up to the participants. I also found that there should be a fair amount of structure to the sessions, making sure that grandiose plans are grounded in definite progress. (Boccia, 1997)

I was interested in finding out how to incorporate creativity skills and tools into the group sessions. I found that creativity tools are easily incorporated into group sessions with children that are being introduced to the processes for the first time. It was clear that creativity can be taught and the initial teaching of the tools that I chose was not difficult. My findings came from books that were published by professors in the department; therefore, I am still working on finding out if I can refer to tools that I came across in my research, from other manuals for educators.

Many aspects in the creation of the manual worked well; the most successful aspect of the manual creation was the initial divergent idea generation. When I first sat down to begin the project, I began to jot ideas down with a sharpie, with no focus, no set goal, and no idea of what I wanted the product to be. This process was significant for me because I was able to cut what I knew I would not be able to accomplish in the time frame of one semester. I was also able to get a firm grasp on what I wanted to provide for others and why I wanted to do this. Another successful aspect of the project was the actual substance of what I wanted to provide for others, the 10-week complete club run-down. This was also the most difficult part of the manual. I

knew what I wanted to include, but it was challenging to decide what needed to be included, and what I could cut while keeping the most important information. I also needed to make sure that the information was user-friendly and had a process. I was able to informally ask my students questions and run ideas by them to decide on which projects students would like to put their time and energy into. This was extremely successful because I was able to truly incorporate the voice of the generation I am trying to target. I included a quote from one of my students in the manual and when I asked her for permission she beamed with excitement. I received e-mail from her mother the next day in gratitude and sheer elation that her daughter's words would be part of my project. She also explained that her daughter now felt that her words were powerful and has since written several letters to elected leaders, most notable President Barrack Obama. I include this anecdote to show that small acts, or words make a huge difference in life, and my hope is that with this manual people will begin to see that one small action by great numbers of people will change our world.

If I could change anything about my product, I would have cut including information about creativity tools. I feel that due to strict copyright regulations it was difficult to fully explain how useful these tools can be in the process of idea generation. I wish that I could simply include copies of the tools I have used throughout the years and that club leaders, for use in their activities, could easily photocopy them.

The process of my project was quite organized. I was able to take the project in steps in order to not overwhelm myself with too many aspects. I read and researched my chosen texts, most of which were used to give me a better idea of what I wanted to create in the manual. Many of the steps of the final product were from my own creativity. The end goal was to create something that I had planned on creating for a long time and needed guidance in how to put it together. Clearly Brainstorming was a necessity when trying to decide what the manual should

include, why, and who would benefit from my work. I did a great deal of idea generation-- divergence and convergence-- in order to come up with as many outcomes and to make sure that my scope was focused enough.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

This section contains an overview of what I have learned about creativity and change leadership that I did not know when I began my project and next steps for my work. I have learned that creativity is not only *in* all people, but is found in its purest, most potent strength, in the hearts and minds of our youth. I have realized through my research, and convergence after brainstorming, that to help young people become leaders, whether that is in their small community or eventually to the world, is the most creative and important role one can have. To help others to be leaders and be willing to take them on the journey to making their world, communities, schools, and homes a better place. I want students and teachers alike to step back in the end, and realize that the work they have accomplished is the most creative endeavor one can hope to encounter.

My next step for the F.L.O.A.T manual will focus on publication. I would like to see if I could incorporate any tool handouts or how I can abide by copyright laws while keeping open the possibility of being able to sell the manual. I see others using the manual and blogging on a site that I hope to create, leaving comments and suggestions of what can be done above and beyond what I have suggested, as well as new ideas that other people can access and use.

References

Boccia, J (1997). *Students taking the lead: The challenges and rewards empowering youth in schools*. Michigan: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Coser, Lewis (1977). *Masters of sociological thought: ideas in historical and social context* (2nd Ed.). Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Hollender, J (1990). *How to make the world a better place: A guide to doing good*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

Miller, B, Vehar, J, & Firestien, R (2001). *Creativity unbound: An introduction to creative process*. Williamsville: Innovation Resources, INC.

Appendix A: Concept Paper

Social Action: Creativity in Middle School

Name: Stephanie Marando

Date Submitted: 2/22

Project Type: Talent to Improve the Quality of Life for Others

What Is This Project About?

The purpose of this project is to develop a manual/guide for secondary educators (grades 7-12, adaptable for grades 5 and 6 as well), to create/incorporate a social action club in their school that uses Creative Problem Solving (CPS) and the creativity tools. I have a great deal of interest in helping young people harness their energy in order to do something great in the community they live in. I also want to somehow frame this project around the idea that often times this generation is labeled as “spoiled” and apathetic (especially in the school district in which I teach—Williamsville Central School District). My goal is to make young people care, and make others see that there is so much more to these young people. I have been working towards this project for the past two semesters and have tried out quite a few of the activities that I would include in the manual.

Rationale for Choice:

I chose this as my Master’s Project because I as a student felt that I didn’t have a voice in the world around me, and began to feel that there wasn’t anything bigger than “lunch-room” gossip and the daily grind. Now that I have achieved my dream of being an educator, I am committed to making sure every student who enters my four walls knows that they are only walls, and they can, and should, be blown open with ideas and dreams for our world and community. I ultimately see the results of this project as becoming something that my school fully embraces and is proud of. I know that the students I have worked with to this point are so thankful that I am giving them the avenues to become more than “kids”, that they are energetic, caring, inspired, outspoken, creative people that need a voice and I will be there to be their microphone.

What will be the Tangible Product(s) or Outcomes?

The end result of this project will be a solid useable draft manual of how to begin this type of club. In the manual I want to answer some common questions which I asked myself as I began my “practice” creativity club: what materials are needed, what projects should we look into, what do I need to know about creative thinking tools, how long should I spend on each process, and how do I get kids to come? I will prepare an introduction to the manual, set-up steps and materials that will be needed, and include a brief introduction to what CPS is, useable tools, activities, and projects.

What Criteria Will You Use To Measure The Effectiveness Of Your Achievement?

I will plan my success by asking two Creative Studies alumni to look through my draft manual to see if the material is complex enough to ensure that creativity skills are absolutely being employed. I will then ask two teachers who did not go through the Creative Studies program to review the draft manual to make sure they could easily pick up the guide and incorporate it into their club. I will have a complete draft manual at the end of this project. I know it will not be in its “finished” stage; however, it could be accessed and useable. I will stop when I feel that the guide is user friendly enough. If I find that I can take it to the next step of “publishing”, formally or informally, I will decide that as the timeline progresses.

Who Will Be Involved or Influenced; What Will Your Role Be?

I have asked two teachers to participate in looking over my guide (once it is in working order). I have also asked the art teacher at my school to provide some sketches for my guide (of course with illustration credit). I hope to influence a great deal of students and adults that have already shared their interest in being involved in a club like this.

When Will This Project Take Place?

At this point I am planning on completing the draft manual, one part, of the larger piece of a completed manual. I will work throughout this semester to research how to put together a working manual and complete a full draft; therefore, by semester’s end I will have a complete draft of the manual. I would like to publish this guide but do not foresee that I will be able to complete this by the semester’s end.

Where Will This Project Occur?

This project will take place in Williamsville, New York from February through May 2009. I will be using my experiences from teaching in a suburban middle school to incorporate solid experiential data into the manual.

Why Is It Important to Do This?

The potential positive impact of this project is to create a stronger and more aware group of adolescents in a world/country that requires its youth to have a voice. Students will gain a powerful message of empowerment and intrinsic motivation; parents and teachers will see a sense of accomplishment and a stronger community.

Personal Learning Goals:

Personal goals:

- I would like to create a solid, useable manual for teachers to use to incorporate creativity into a social action club.
- I would like to copyright my materials in some way.
- I want to make sure that I incorporate the most beneficial and usable divergent and convergent tools.
- I would like to make sure that students understand what CPS is and why it is useful.
- I would like students to see that being a leader does not mean having the loudest voice.
- I would like to be prepared with enough options to inspire the students, and have a strong teacher backing

How Do You Plan to Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes?

I plan on achieving this outcome by beginning research to find information on both social action clubs, and creativity clubs alike. I plan to begin compiling the information I have already uncovered through my own “trial run” of this type of club, in order to organize what I have found to be important information and jumping off points. I will then put the rough outline together to locate any “holes”. I will then see where I need to go next, and begin putting together my final paper.

Evaluation:

I will evaluate my results by first asking two Creative Studies alumni to look over the manual to check for solid incorporation of creative skills, and then have two non Creative Studies teachers to review the material to make sure it is user-friendly.

Project Timeline:

February

- Research of social action and creativity clubs (how to incorporate both)
- Research of divergent and convergent tools and how to briefly explain them as to not overwhelm users.
- Begin drafting the guide, including preface. Work on sections 1,2,3 (compile notes).

March

- Put together the initial outline of the guide. Discuss any possible sketches with the art teacher.
- Section 1,2,3: due March 26th
- Complete manual
- Gather notes for section 4,5,6

April

- Sections 4,5,6: due April 12th
- Ask teachers to review the manual to check for usability
- Make necessary changes
- Project presentation: due May 7th

May

- Final project due May 14th

Identify Pertinent Literature or Resources:

Other than research, I will use Creative Studies majors and my own classroom. I will ask the art teacher at my school to create sketches that I may incorporate into the manual. Personal communication with teachers and students alike will be important for “real-world” insight.

Boccia, J., Ackerman, R., & Harvard Univ., C. (1997). *Students taking the lead: The challenges and rewards of empowering youth in schools. New directions for school leadership.*

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

- Graham, J. (2005). *Stick your neck out: A street-smart guide to creating change in your community and beyond*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Hoose, P. (1993). *It's our world, too! Young people who are making a difference, how they do it how you can too*. United States of America: Little, Brown and Company.
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- Puccio, K., Keller-Mathers, S., & Treffinger, D. J. (2000). *Adventures in real problem solving: Facilitating creative problem solving with primary students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Appendix B: Draft Manual

Jump on the
F.L.O.A.T



Future Leaders of America's Tomorrow

A Guide to Incorporating
Creativity
Into Your Middle School Social Action
Club

By: Stephanie Marando

About the Author

I am a graduate of Buffalo State College with a Master's degree in Creative Studies from the International Center for Studies in Creativity. I also have a bachelor's degree in Secondary English Education, also from Buffalo State College. I began my higher education at Niagara County Community College, where I was blessed to have the opportunity to work with amazing educators who, for the first time in my life, made me thirst for knowledge; I am truly indebted to this intuition for making me the educator I am today. As a student I felt that I didn't have a voice in the world around me, and began to feel that there wasn't anything bigger than "lunch-room" gossip and the daily grind. Now that I have achieved my dream of being an educator, I am committed to making sure every student who enters my four walls knows that they are only walls, and that they can, and should, be blown open with ideas and dreams for our world and community. I know that the students I have worked with to this point are thankful that I am giving them the avenues to become more than "kids". My hope for anyone who picks up this manual will see that young people are energetic, caring, inspired, outspoken, creative people that need a voice, and my hope is that you will be their microphone.

About the Book

From the suburbs to the inner city, young people around the world have the drive, determination and ability to make things happen. The greatest thing about the youthful mind and heart is that young people don't yet allow themselves to think of the possibility of failure. When young people sit down and think about what they have to offer their communities, the ideas are awe-inspiring. This book will offer you ideas on how to start your social action club, and ways to structure your weekly goals and projects; it will provide you with an easy to use model of the Creative Problem Solving process, divergent and convergent thinking tools, and a How-To section for each tool for ease of use in your club. The manual is put together to provide activities for a 10-week club and because most schools operate for 40 weeks, you can have four separate sessions.

How to Use This Book

Chapter One: What is Social Action?

This section explains what Social Action is and why this type of club is well suited in a middle school setting.

Chapter Two: What is Creative Problem Solving?

This section explains what CPS is and how to incorporate the process into your social action challenges.

Chapter Three: "How-To" use Convergent and Divergent Tools

This section explains the use of creativity tools, including "How-To's"

Chapter Four: Activities

This section discusses the possible activities that work well with middle school aged students.

Chapter Five: Weekly Plans (10 weeks)

This section is a 10-week breakdown including plans of what can be accomplished during each session. Quotes to spark discussion and possible activities and projects are included.



GREAT IDEAS... F.L.O.A.T

FUTURE LEADERS OF AMERICA'S TOMORROW

MISSION:

F.L.O.A.T WILL WORK TO HELP AWAKEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHY COMMUNITY AND CHANGE IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS: THE POSSIBILITY OF FINDING SOUND AND PRACTICAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE OUR WORLD AND SOCIETY. WE WILL BEGIN QUESTIONING AND ANSWERING THE MOST BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

VISION:

OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE IS TO MAKE A MARKED CHANGE IN THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE. F.L.O.A.T DOES NOT HAVE SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR WHAT WE WILL WORK TO CHANGE, INFLUENCE, OR INVOLVE OURSELVES IN. OUR GOAL IS TO BECOME INFORMED CITIZENS AND WORK TO OUR POTENTIAL TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

...JUMP ON THE F.L.O.A.T

"YOU MAY NEVER KNOW WHAT RESULTS COME OF YOUR ACTION, BUT IF YOU DO NOTHING THERE WILL BE NO RESULT"

-GANDHI

Chapter 1:

What is Social Action?

What is Social Action?

Social action is a concept that explores interaction between humans in society. The concept of social action was developed by Max Weber who was one of the most profoundly influential thinkers of the twentieth century. Sociology is the study of society and behavior, the heart of interaction, and thus the study of social action. Social action describes a philosophy that believes humans vary their actions according to social context and how it will affect other people. Sociology studies that alteration. Weber distinguished four major types of social action from his sociology. He defines social action (1) as occurring when people engage in purposeful or goal-oriented rational action; (2) their rational action may be value-oriented; (3) they may act from emotional or affective motivations; or (4) they may engage in traditional action.

1. **Purposeful rationality**, in which both goal and means are rationally chosen, is exemplified by the engineer who builds a bridge by the most efficient technique of relating means to ends.
2. **Value-oriented rationality** is characterized by striving for a substantive goal, which in itself may not be rational--say, the attainment of salvation--but which is nonetheless pursued with rational means--for example, ascetic self-denial in the pursuit of holiness.
3. **Affective action** is anchored in the emotional state of the actor rather than in the rational weighing of means and ends, as in the case of participants in the religious services of a fundamentalist sect.
4. Finally, **traditional action** is guided by customary habits of thought, by reliance on "the eternal yesterday" of such action. Behavior of members of an Orthodox Jewish congregation might serve as an example

Chapter 2:

What is CPS?

What is CPS?

CPS is the Creative Problem Solving process. This process is very simple and is really just a step-by-step breakdown used to explicitly state how most people solve problems. Why do you need CPS then? The CPS process makes it very clear as to what the problem is, where you are in the process, and how to go about solving your problem. This process is essential in the frame of a social action club due to the scope of societal problems and the many different obstacles that your groups will encounter.

What are the Roles?

CPS has three main roles:

Facilitator: This will be the process expert, or the person responsible for keeping the group on track, and knowing what should be accomplished by the end of the session. For your club it would be best that you begin as the project facilitator and see if a student begins to want to take over that role. The facilitator DOES NOT participate in idea generation and should stay out of the process, the job of the facilitator is to take the ideas of the client and resource group and direct where to go in the process. It is important that the facilitator has met with the client to see what their ideas and potential outcomes look like.

Client: The client is the individual or group you have chosen to work with to improve your home, community, school, or world. The client is the owner of the challenge and is responsible for giving the facilitator and resource group background information about the challenge that is being explored. The client is part of the resource group and is there to generate ideas; answer group questions and provides direction to the facilitator if they feel the session needs to move in a different direction.

Resource Group: The resource group is going to be made up of your club members, this is where the youthful imagination of a child should be encouraged to unleash itself and come up with as many ideas as possible to solve the proposed challenge. The job of the resource group is to diverge, come up with tons of ideas and not filter their thinking.

How do I use it?

Follow this simple step-by-step process:

Step 1: **Ownership-**

Before you can begin the process you must first make sure you “own” the problem. You can’t solve a problem that doesn’t belong to you because there is no accountability for its completion. The problem belongs to you if:

- YOU are accountable for the task, and are willing to suffer the consequences if you do not accomplish your goal.
- Others are counting on YOU to implement a solution to the problem.

Step 2: **Statement Starters-**

In order to make sure your group is focusing on idea generation and not shutting down ideas or only accepting certain types of ideas you will need Statement Starters. Statement Starters are set phrases used to spur on piggybacking and new ideas. There are sets of starters for each stage of the problem seen below.

- Now you need to decide where you are in the problem. If you are in the very early stages of exploring a challenge you need to:
 - **Identify the Goal, Wish, or Challenge:**
 - It would be great if...
 - I wish...
- If you know what the challenge is, but are in need of more focus you need to:

Clarify the Problem:

How to...

How might...

In what ways might...

What might be all the ways...

- If you have made it through the previous two stages you must now:

Select and strengthen Solutions:

What I see myself doing is...

What I now see myself doing is...

Step 3: Where am I in the process?

Choose the stage that best fit where you are with your challenge and choose the divergent tool that works best for your group (5 most useable tools are located in Chapter 4).

Step 4: Diverge

Come up with as many solutions to the challenge as possible using divergent thinking tools. The goal is to get out the “vanilla” ideas, and then push for the truly innovative ones.

Step 5: Filter your ideas, which are useable?

Converge and come up with a smaller list of possible options to tackle the challenge.

Step 6: Plan for Action-

Come up with an implementation including who does what, by when, and to whom the completion will be reported to.

Chapter 3:

How to use Creativity Tools

Using Creativity Tools

Creativity tools are tools that are used to free our ideas of what useable thinking is, and then harness those ideas in workable solutions.

Divergent Thinking Tools:

Divergent thinking is to put what you KNOW on paper and then go further taking yourself or your group to the point where what you thought you knew no longer exists. Divergent thinking allows ALL ideas to be taken seriously and often the wacky, wild, and sometimes worrisome ideas elicit the best ideas.

5 most “useable” Divergent Thinking Tools:

- Brainstorming
- Stick ‘em Up Brainstorming
- Forced Connections
- The Idea Box
- Visual Connections

Convergent Thinking Tools:

Convergent thinking tools are used after the flood of ideas that came while using divergent thinking tools. Now of course you will need to weed the garden and come up with the most useable ideas. Using convergent tools your group will sharpen their critical judgment skills and begin to see how to solve the problem.

5 Most “useable Convergent Thinking Tools:

- Highlighting
- Clusters
- Card sort
- PPCO
- Targeting

Divergent Thinking Tools: “How-To”

5 most “useable” tools

1.) Brainstorming:

1. Write down the statement or challenge you are working on
2. Begin thinking of ways to solve the challenge. Set an immediate session goal of 35 options, these will most likely be the “vanilla” options, which are the same ways of solving old problems. New ideas generally don’t surface until the 50 most common ideas are purged. If your group seems to be generating more and more ideas - don’t stop!
3. Record every idea in writing...this is where you will decide what your most useable tool is, i.e. flip chart paper, online document, large scale whiteboard, etc.
4. Be sure that ALL options are visible to the group.
5. Every 20 ideas (approx.) check in with the group to make sure they are on track.
6. Keep going until you’ve met your goal and have enough options to test for action.
- 7.

2.) Stick ‘em Up Brainstorming:

1. This tool requires large flip chart paper, and easel, and tape. If you cannot get flip chart paper ask your art teacher for large pieces of paper that you can tape on the

wall. You should have extra pieces of paper so over-estimate the amount you will need.

2. On the flip chart paper, large enough for everyone to see write down the challenge you will be focusing on.
3. Pass out sticky note packs and a marker (medium tip, dark color) to each member of the group.
4. Begin brainstorming the challenge: If you have an idea write it, large enough for everyone to see, say it out loud and pass it to the facilitator or process buddy to be posted on the flip chart.
5. Every 20 ideas or so check with the elected leader/owner of the challenge to make sure the group is going in the right direction.
6. Keep going until you've met your goal and have enough options to test for action.

3.) Forced Connections

1. If your group is beginning to slow down idea generation use this tool and objects in your classroom to spur on new and unusual ideas.
2. Point to an object or picture that is completely unrelated to the challenge you are focusing on.
3. Ask the group "When you look at this (object/picture), what ideas do you get for solving the problem?"
4. Force a connection between the item and the challenge you are generating ideas for.

5. You will come up with new and interesting ideas that will spur on a second wind of brainstorming!

4.) The Idea Box

1. Use the idea box to combine all of your group ideas into new and unique combinations.
2. Begin by naming the essential characteristics (what is essential to the challenge).
3. Build columns below each characteristic of your challenge, and fill them with relevant ideas produced from your brainstorming session.
4. Combine the options to come up with new, unusual, and fun options!

Characteristics	Characteristics	Characteristics	Characteristics
Fill these blanks with your brainstorming ideas...		...unusual, creative...	
	...and see the new...		...and fun new ideas!

5.) Visual Connections

1. Use this tool when you can tell your group is in need of some “re-charging”.
2. Keep on hand a series of visuals to use as stimulation for your group.
3. The pictures you choose should not be of recognizable images or if well know images.
4. Hold up the images and allow your group to completely relax. Explain to the group that this is a moment to remove yourself from the challenge and simply be part of the image. Soothing images of nature are great to use with this tool.

5. Tell the group to focus on what it looks like, smells like, sounds and feels like, pay attention to the colors and seasons.
6. Bring the group back to the image and have them write down at least 4 observations or reactions, or thoughts about the image.
7. Write down 4 observations about the image and then make a connection to the challenge.

Convergent Thinking Tools: “How-To”

5 most “useable” tools

1. **Highlighting:** Use highlighting after you have all your ideas from your brainstorming session. Highlighting will help you screen and select the best ideas from your list of many. Highlighting requires you to take the huge list of ideas that your group came up with, and **hit** the ideas that are especially good. **What makes an idea a hit? The idea is: on target, clear, workable, interesting, solves the challenge, and is relevant. After you mark your “hits” create “clusters” of related topics. Clusters will help to make sure you don’t duplicate ideas that were posted more than once.
2. **Card Sort:** Is a tool that helps the group compare, rank, and prioritize options. It can be used to rank ideas, solutions, problem statements, or criteria. This tool is excellent to help a group come to a consensus
 - 1) Write each option on a separate card and arrange in a row.
 - 2) Count how many options you have.
 - 3) Identify the option your group likes least and number it with the last number. For example if you have “10” ideas in total you will label your least favorite idea with a “10”, and put this off to the side.
 - 4) Of the remaining cards label the one you like most with a “1” and put to the side.

- 5) Of the cards remaining label your least favorite card with the second highest number, “9”, and put it off to the side.
 - 6) Of the remaining cards label you favorite idea with a “2”.
 - 7) Continue this process until all options are ranked.
 - 8) You now have a numerical prioritized list.
3. **Targeting**: is a great tool to help your group evaluate and strengthen their ideas. Targeting does just that, targets, you will visually see your current options and compare them to your ideal outcome.
- 1.) Define the bull’s-eye: define your ideal state
 - 2.) Throw your darts: write options on sticky notes and place them on the large visual target. Place your ideas on the target as they are in relationship to your ideal state. Ideas that are close to the ideal state should be near the bull’s eye, while ideas that don’t seem to work should be on the outer rings.
4. **PPCO**: is a four-step technique that is used to evaluate ideas and see how to improve them.
- P: Pluses** – what do you like about the idea right now? Be direct and honest.
- P: Potentials** – What opportunities might the new idea allow for others in the future?
- C: Concerns** – Express any concerns as questions that offer direction for development. Use statement starters “How might...”, “How to”, and “In what ways might...”

O: Overcome Concerns – Review concerns and choose the most important one which you will brainstorm at least a dozen ways to overcome the concerns. Continue with this process with your entire list of concerns until you have overcome each of them.

Chapter 4: Activities

Activities

The activities you choose should be created by each of your student groups, the main point of this club is for the students to choose the changes they want to make in the world, not simply choosing from your pre-made list. The most important thing, despite how big or small your student projects are, is that the group feels they have picked what they want to, they have had a say in how it is going to be accomplished, and that whether the project succeeds or not is up to them. It should be understood by your group that a project that does not succeed is not a failure, if this situation does arise, explain to the group that this is when MOST people stop...but of course you will not! (included is an essay by Lee Pitts on the “blows of life” and what they teach us). It is a good idea to have suggestions to begin the student brainstorming, perhaps local issues that you know the kids are interested in.

10 possible activities to be used during your weekly meetings

- 1.) **Design earth friendly canvas bags (fundraiser):** Purchase plain canvas bags from your local craft store; design the eco-friendly canvas bags to sell for support of your chosen organization.
- 2.) **Social action photo project:** Photograph the top 10 social issues of your generation. Post for the school to comment on. Choose which of these issues you would like to tackle, and brainstorm HOW.
- 3.) **Planting trees/ gardens around your school and community**
- 4.) **Clean-up Your Community**
- 5.) **Potted Pens (fundraiser):** Purchase terracotta pots at your local craft or garden store. Students will paint the pots however they choose. Students can create pots that will appeal to subjects such as ELA, math, social studies, science, foreign languages, etc. This project requires the teacher to notify faculty of the project in order to gain their support to purchase the potted pens.
- 6.) **Pair with a school in need:** Choose a local school that has a large population of students in need. Have students create a drive for needed supplies or holiday giving.
- 7.) **Walk for your choice:** Give students the opportunity to discuss social issues that are plaguing our world. As a group choose the organization of your choice and start a team to walk for that organization. Breast Cancer, Alzheimer's etc. are organizations that have well-know walks; however, the students can create their own local walk for whatever issue they are choosing to tackle.
- 8.) **Write your local politicians:** Each student will write to a local politician about an issue that they feel is hurting their community.

9.) **Stereotypes...you don't see the real me!**: Students will use this session to discuss the role of stereotypes in their world and what they feel it does to change the environment around them. Students can create a photo collage of pictures that embody the stereotype they feel people place them in compared to a photo of how they see themselves.

10.) **Make your Mark: Letters to YOU**: Students will use this session to write a letter to themselves that will be mailed to them the next year. Students should write about what they hope to pursue change in and how they wish to go about that change.

****All of these activities can be tailored to whatever projects your groups decide they want to tackle.**

Chapter 5:

10-Week Session Plan

Week #1: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

Goal: Begin Idea Generation of group goals

Weekly Project: creation of project plan for complete 10-week session.

Creativity Tools Incorporated: Stick 'em up
Brainstorming, Hits, Clusters, and Card Sort.

Optional: You may choose to use the club name **F.L.O.A.T; however, if the group would like a new name use the above tools to create a new club name.

Begin the session: Post this week's quote on the board or PowerPoint. Discuss why each participant chose to be part of this group, and lay down what students should expect as part of this club.

Develop: Pass out sticky notes to each student. Elect one student to take ownership/leadership for today's session. This student will be responsible for choosing the hits and creating the clusters. On your large easel create a sentence starter for the challenge your group is facing. For your first session you will need to try to decide which projects students would like to tackle in their 10-week session. Label the top of your easel with "What might be all the ways we can make a positive impact on our world?"

You are the facilitator; therefore, it is your job to keep the divergence of thinking fresh and constant. It would be ideal to have another adult as a process buddy to keep your sticky notes organized, and make sure students don't have to wait to move on to their next idea.

Introduce to students the rules of divergent thinking (Divergent Thinking handout included in appendix). Begin Stick 'em up Brainstorming. Once you have completed your divergence, begin Hits. After you have made your hits, cluster them into main groups that fall under one umbrella heading per cluster. Then use the Card Sort to prioritize the projects your group would like to work on during their session.

Closure: After your Brainstorming session come up with a plan for action for the entire 10-week session (Initial Plan for Action handout included in appendix). Explain to students that this may change based on the work completed each week, but it is needed to give scope and focus to the group.

Plan for Next week: Bring in Canvas Bags and supplies for your first fundraising project. At this point you can choose to provide these materials, or assign materials to bring to each student.

Week #2: "I shall pass this way but once. Therefore any good that I can do, or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now for I shall not pass this way again." -- William Penn

Goal: Completion of Eco-Friendly Canvas Bags, fundraising plan of action

Weekly Activity: Eco-Friendly Canvas Bags

Creativity Tools Incorporated: Targeting

Begin the Session: Post this week's quote on the board or PowerPoint, and discuss how it can help the group focus on a goal. Discuss the purpose of this week's activity, and how the group hopes to proceed with fundraising. Come prepared with an example of what the canvas bags should focus on i.e. Eco-Friendly, food shelters, peace, etc.

Develop: Pass out photos of canvas bag projects and prepare the room you are in for painting. It would be ideal to ask the art teacher in your building if you can use the art room, and perhaps get some pointers from them on artistic expression.

Use Targeting to decide on what the bags should focus on and the elements that each bag should have in common. Make sure you have a large-scale visual target to post the many ideas.

This entire session will be devoted to the creation of the canvas bags; however a discussion must be had on how much the canvas bags will cost, who will be selling them, and where they will be sold. This process will be discussed through online forums and should be managed by assigned project leaders. You should hold a brief mid-week session to make concrete plans and begin the actual sale at the end of the week.

Closure: Complete the canvas bags, and assign project leaders for the online forums.

These project leaders are responsible for keeping ideas flowing and structuring the group.

A mid-week plan should be scheduled to decide what the plan for fundraising would be.

Plan for next week: Next week we will begin our Social Issues photo project. Ask students with digital cameras to bring them to next week's session. Students should spend the week before the next session paying close attention to the news and societal issues they feel are plaguing their community.

Week #3: “True leadership must be for the benefit of the followers, not the enrichment of the leaders.” –Robert Townsend

Goal: Choose the top 10 societal issues of the time.

Weekly Project: Photo Project

Creativity Tools Incorporated: Brainstorming, forced connections, Highlighting, Card Sort

Begin the Session: Post this week’s quote on the board or PowerPoint and discuss the significance. Explain this week’s project by opening up a discussing about what they wish they could “fix” in our society. You can bring up some of the obvious issues such as poverty, and environmental issues, but push the group to think of issues that plague their age group. Many of the issues that young people deal with are the same as adults just in a different way. Some topics are: drug/alcohol abuse, gambling, violence, etc.

Develop: On your flip chart paper write, “What might be the top social issues of our time”. Remove the quantitative number you are looking for because it will work to hinder idea generation. Encourage the group to have an initial purge of 25-30 ideas. Then use Forced Connections to elicit at least 15 more ideas. Once you have a list of about 45 ideas discuss the strongest ones. Have the group elect an Owner of the challenge to use Highlighting to choose the hits. Once you have your hits and clusters use the Card Sort to prioritize your top 10 social issues of your generation.

Closure: Now that you have your top 10 social issues chosen, you need to delegate who is responsible for aspect of the project. You need to have 10 photographs depicting the

each social issue. You will need photographers, people to be in the images, locations, and writers. The writers will include some sort of writing with the image of the social issue. This can be an original quote, a poem, a paragraph, etc.

Plan for next week: Have drafts of each of the 10 social issues prepared. This includes what the image will look like, how it will be accomplished, and what type of writing piece will accompany it.

Week #4: “The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently.” -Nietzsche

Goal: Complete Social Action Photography Project

Weekly Project: decide on what cause you will be walking for.

Creativity Tools Incorporated: Stick ‘em up
brainstorming, highlighting, card sort

Begin the Session: Post this week’s quote on the board or PowerPoint. Come back to this quote in the development stage of this week’s session. Complete the social action photography project by posting the images on construction paper, you may choose to use a different color for each issue or stay with one color. Post the images and related piece of writing in a prominent spot in the school. Ask your administration if you and volunteers from your group can make daily plugs on the announcement asking students to stop by the piece and comment. Include a large piece of flip chart that reads: What Can We Do? And asks students to write down how to solve the societal issues your group focused on. The hope is advertise what is done in your group, get more people to join, get ideas that will spark your group’s imagination, and make the whole school become part of the process to improve our world.

Develop: Project shift: Explain to the group that you will now begin your next project: Walk for a Cause. Discuss the well-known organizations that currently have sponsored walks i.e. Breast Cancer, Alzheimer’s, or any well-known local organizations etc. Use this as a springboard to use stick em’ up brainstorming in order to come up with a list of possible organizations to join, AND new causes the group would like to create a walk

for. Remind them what Nietzsche said and inspire them to create their own walk for a cause. Complete the stick em' up brainstorming, highlighting and card sort to choose the organization you will be walking for.

Closure: Ask each student to get at least 5 people to sponsor them for the organization they chose to walk for.

Plan for next week: Your job will be to pick up any registration forms that are needed.

Week #5: “Youth is, after all, just a moment, but it is the moment, the spark, that you always carry in your heart.” -Raisa M. Gorbachev

Goal: come up with designs and commonality for this week’s project

Weekly Project: Potted Pens

Creativity Tools Incorporated: Idea box

Begin the Session: Post this week’s quote on the board or PowerPoint, discuss the quote in the frame of the cause they are working towards and how what they do know, for this cause, at this point in their life may change someone else’s life forever. Perhaps use this opportunity to show a clip from the movie Pay it Forward in which a 7th grade class discusses that they aren’t responsible for anything, because no one expects anything from them.

Develop: Introduce this week’s project, which is a fundraiser for the organization you are choosing to walk for. Your group can create a spin on the silk flowers found on many teachers desks and create Potted Pens. The group can make various versions of the pots, single pen pots (as seen in image 1), student pots with pens that students may borrow, and potted pens for the teacher’s desk that center around the subject they teach.



Put an Idea Box on the board and include the essential criteria that you would like the group to include on each pot. Have the group fill in the columns below with unique and interesting ideas, in order to create fun pots to sell.

Pass out terra cotta pots to the group; you can use the leftover paint supplies from the canvas bag project that you completed earlier. Allowing the group to paint the pots using their own creativity; however, make sure they have included the essential characteristics that the group decided on. You will need packs of inexpensive pens, floral tape, floral foam, silk flowers (various types), hot glue, and moss, or stones. Have students wrap the pens with floral tape and attach the silk flowers with hot glue. The pen tips then should be pushed into the floral foam and surrounded with moss or stones.

Closure: Ask the group to divide up when they will be responsible for selling the pots, and how they should handle collection of money.

Plan for next week: Ask the group to begin thinking about stereotypes and how they impact our world.

Week #6: “Action to be effective must be directed to clearly conceived ends.”
-Nehru

Goal: complete brainstorming and decide on a medium to tackle the social issue of stereotyping.

Weekly Project: Stereotypes...you don't know the real me!

Creativity Tools Incorporated: stick 'em up
brainstorming, highlighting, targeting

Begin the Session: Post this week's quote on the board or PowerPoint. Discuss what stereotypes are and how they alter the world we live in. Ask students if they feel they are stereotyped, if they have ever stereotyped, and why they think that stereotyping is a social issue.

Develop: Discuss how students would like to tackle the issue of stereotyping. Begin a stick 'em up brainstorming session with the statement starter on flip chart paper “What might be all the ways we affect stereotyping”. Have students go through brainstorming, highlighting, and targeting to decide what route they would like to take.

Closure: Have students meet throughout the week to create their stereotypes project

Plan for next week: Have the group come prepared with a local issue that they personally would like to work to change.

Week #7: “No real social change has ever been brought about without a revolution - Revolution is but thought carried into action”-Emma Goldman

Goal: discuss formal letter format, and complete a rough draft

Weekly Project: write your local politicians

Begin the Session: Post this week’s quote on the board or PowerPoint. Encourage a lively discussion on local issues that each member is strongly interested and discuss Goldman’s quote about revolution.

Develop: Go over letter format and give the group time to complete a rough draft of a letter to local or state politicians. You can locate this list on your state web page.

Closure: Ask the group to type up their letters and bring them to you to review over the week.

Plan for next week: Ask the group to create a list of local areas they feel need improvement.

Week #8: “If we don't do it, we will be spending far, far more than that to clean up the mess of this humanitarian tragedy . . . This needs to be done and done now.” ~ Bill Clinton

Goal: set up a plan for action to clean up one or more local areas.

Weekly Project: Clean up the community

Creativity Tools Incorporated: brainstorming, highlighting, card sort

Begin the Session: Post this week's quote on the board or PowerPoint. Discuss how if we, as a human race, continue to wait for someone else to come in and rescue us from the mess we have made of our communities we will have much more of a challenge to face.

Develop: Begin the session with brainstorming or stick 'em brainstorming to come up with all of the areas in your local community that members feel they could improve. Remind your group that simple steps made by many people will make a marked difference in their community. After your brainstorming session elect a leader to take ownership of this challenge and highlight the hits from the list, continue to cluster and then continue with a card sort. Once you have your prioritized create a plan of action.

Closure: Put your Plan of Action on a web based program that all members can access and continue planning the specifics of when you as a group will meet and which members will do what.

Week #9: “The Duty of one is to change themselves, the duty of all is to change the world.” ~Lindsey Kenyon (a student)

Goal: Choose a local school that is in need of support

Weekly Project: Pair with a school in need

Begin the Session: Post this week’s quote on the board or PowerPoint. Discuss the power that each member of the group has, and that if we all work together we can improve the lives of those around us.

Develop: You as the group facilitator should bring a list of local schools that are in need of support. This can be a fundraiser or walk that another school is hosting to benefit their programs or families in need. You may want to create a gift drive for the holidays, a pen-pal program, or just a way to connect with schools outside of your immediate area. Decide on the school you will be working with and use brainstorming to come up with ideas of what your group would like to do to work with the chosen school.

Closure: Plan your benchmarks and what should be accomplished by next meeting. Group members should take responsibility for making the connection with the school of their choice and explain what the objective of the group is.

Plan for next week: Plan for closure of your group. This is a nice time to have a pizza party or some sort of culmination.

Week #10: “Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained.” ~Helen Keller

Goal: write a letter to yourself

Weekly Project: Make your Mark: Letters to YOU!

Creativity Tools Incorporated: targeting

Begin the Session: Post this week's quote on the board or PowerPoint and discuss it as a closure activity to your 10-week group session. Ask group members to use a targeting worksheet and label the center with what they hope to have accomplished in one year. Ask the group to label the target levels with activities and efforts they will work on to achieve the bull's eye goal.

Develop: Ask the group to write a letter to themselves discussing where they are now, what they hope for in the future, and what their ultimate goal in order to make their world a better place will be.

Closure: Tell group members to address an envelope and that they will receive the letter back in one year as a reminder to keep on track and that changing their world and community requires a great deal of energy and effort.

Thoughts to leave your group with:

“Here’s to the Crazy Ones” ~ Jack Kerouac

Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes - the ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules and they have no respect for the status quo. You can praise them, disagree with them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing that you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things.

“The Bridge” ~Shel Silverstein

This bridge will only take you halfway there
To those mysterious lands you long to see:
Through gypsy camps and swirling Arab fairs
And moonlit woods where unicorns run free.
So come and walk awhile with me and share
The twisting trails and wondrous worlds I've known.
But this bridge will only take you halfway there- The last few steps you'll
have to take alone.

These Things I Wish For You

| September 6, 1997 | Lee Pitts

We tried so hard to make things better for our kids that we made them worse.

For my grandchildren, I'd like better. I'd really like for them to know about hand me down clothes and homemade ice cream and leftover meat loaf sandwiches. I really would.

I hope you learn humility by being humiliated, and that you learn honesty by being cheated. I hope you learn to make your own bed and mow the lawn and wash the car. And I really hope nobody gives you a brand new car when you are sixteen. It will be good if at least one time you can see puppies born and your old dog put to sleep.

I hope you get a black eye fighting for something you believe in. I hope you have to share a bedroom with your younger brother. And it's all right if you have to draw a line down the middle of the room, but when he wants to crawl under the covers with you because he's scared, I hope you let him. When you want to see a movie and your little brother wants to tag along, I hope you'll let him.

I hope you have to walk uphill to school with your friends and that you live in a town where you can do it safely. On rainy days, when you have to catch a ride, I hope you don't ask your driver to drop you two blocks away so you won't be seen riding with someone as uncool as your Mom.

If you want a slingshot, I hope your Dad teaches you how to make one instead of buying one. I hope you learn to dig in the dirt and read books. When you learn to use computers, I hope you also learn to add and subtract in your head.

I hope you get teased by your friends when you have your first crush on a girl, and when you talk back to your mother that you learn what ivory soap tastes like.

May you skin your knee climbing a mountain, burn your hand on a stove and stick your tongue on a frozen flagpole. I don't care if you try a beer once, but I hope you don't like it. And if a friend offers you dope or a joint, I hope you realize he is not your friend.

I sure hope you make time to sit on a porch with your Grandpa and go fishing with your Uncle. May you feel sorrow at a funeral and joy during the holidays. I hope your mother punishes you when you throw a baseball through your neighbor's window and that she hugs you and kisses you at Christmas time when you give her a plaster mold of your hand.

These things I wish for you - tough times and disappointment, hard work and happiness. To me, it's the only way to appreciate life.

