

Democracy-Make a Difference

HSIE/SOSE outcomes

- Illustrates the linkages between rights and responsibilities for members of a community.
- Chooses a suitable technique to achieve a group purpose.
- Describes ways in which innovation and enterprise affect people and the environment.

Subject matter focus

Using the *Make a Difference* interactive, students will learn strategies for being an active citizen.

Implications for learning

In this area of study, students have opportunities to:

- Explore the link between peoples' collective right to enjoy recreation areas and their collective responsibility to look after them.
- Learn how to work co-operatively with others to find and implement an innovative solution to a problem.
- Understand that peoples' actions can affect natural systems.
- Use multimedia strategies to research an issue.

Take home message

People can solve problems in their community by taking informed action.

***Make a Difference* outcome**

Students explore different ways to take effective action including getting informed; getting active and making a difference.

Using the *Make a Difference* interactive

This is a bigger interactive, we suggest that you use the following approach:

- Begin by exploring students' knowledge and understanding of various environmental problems that exist in Australia and around the world.
- When you are finished identifying environmental issues, ask students to describe how they would go about fixing these problems. Accept their responses without judgment.
- Tell the class that today they will explore a plan [or strategy] for taking effective action.
- Set the class up to explore the *Make a Difference* interactive. We suggest at least 15 minutes.
- Now organise students into three groups. One group to focus on each of the three main parts of the interactive: *Get informed*; *Get active* and *Make a difference*.
- Now task students to focus on their designated section of the interactive and to pay close attention to the actions taken by Grooverboy. Note: The journal in the interactive is very useful as a summary of the steps.
- When students are ready, ask each group to report back to the class. Hear the groups in order (first *Get informed*; then *Get active* and finally *Make a difference*). If necessary, prompt each group to name the part of the action plan that they studied; to recall the various steps involved and to comment on the overall effectiveness e.g. could Grooverboy do more?
- After the presentations, freely discuss the strategies offered by the interactive. You might like to use Edward De Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* approach to comprehensively scrutinise the plausibility and potential of the overall strategy.
- Use key questions, class activities and reflection questions to build on key concepts introduced in the interactive.

Key questions

- What are the dangers of not being informed before taking action?
- What is 'getting active'? Is it possible to address a problem without actively doing something? Why/why not?
- Identify a problem in your community. What impact does this problem have on the community? What must happen for this situation to improve? Who needs to be informed? Who needs to become active? What needs to change?
- Who is responsible for solving problems in your family? Your community? Your state? In Australia? (This is an opportunity to discuss three levels of government.)
- Discuss: If you know of a problem in your community, you have a responsibility to do something about it.
- Discuss: There is no point caring about a problem if you have no intention of doing anything about it.

Class activities

- Identify a problem in your community. Use the *Make a Difference* interactive to brainstorm ways to get informed, get active and to make a difference to this problem.
 - As a class, decide on an issue to research and act on because you want to make a difference.
 - When you have decided on what you want to change you will need to create a project management plan. You will need three headings-*Get informed*; *Get active* and *Make a difference*. Under each heading write down an ordered list of tasks and a person or group responsible for each task. You will also need to write down a date for completing each task. Write your goal in big letters at the top of the plan.
 - Set aside some time each day or week (as you see fit) to pursue the action plan. As a class, monitor how your plan is going. Change direction if you need to.
 - Write to the PEO at info@peo.gov.au to tell us about your action plan. We would love to hear about your successes and failures. Tell others too.
- As a class draw a table with three columns with the headings federal government, state government and local government. Under the appropriate headings list issues and problems in your community which you think need attention.
- Create a poster showing the connection between your community and the natural environment. Show evidence of your research. Organise to display posters at the library, local shops and/or local council.
- Write to your federal member inviting him/her to speak to the class about a problem they have tackled in their electorate. Ask the member to explain how he or she researched the issue; to describe the sequence of events that took place and to detail the final outcome. Don't forget to tell your federal member about your own action plan.
- Role-play a federal parliamentary committee who are investigating the problem of river pollution. Find instructions at http://www.peo.gov.au/teachers/diy_committee.html. Choose witness groups to address the committee, such as the Clean Creek Team, the local water board, a cotton/rice farm, a local fertiliser factory etc.
- Use the internet to find out how other kids are making a difference.

Reflection

- Think about different types of problems-problems at home, at school, in your community, facing Australia and/or the world. Try to think of something positive that you can do to address each of these problems. Try to avoid feeling despondent or negative.
- Why do you think Grooverboy said, 'How can I make a difference, I'm only a kid?' Do you believe that kids can make a difference?
- If everyone thought they couldn't make a difference, what might happen to problems such as poverty and discrimination in Australia?

- Sir Isaac Newton said 'For every action there is an equal but opposite reaction'. Can you see proof of this as you look out a window? Cast an insult? Throw litter to the ground? Plant a tree? Or fall over during a game? What relevance, if any, does this scientific law have to this discussion of active citizenship?

Integration

- Art: Connections are everywhere! Use 'connectivity' as the basis for a painting, a sculpture or collage.
- Science: Delve just a little into the subject of *The Butterfly Effect and Chaos Theory*. Can the little things we do have very big consequences?
- Maths: study connections in evolving patterns.
- History: research times when 'people power' has made a difference e.g. 1890s-Constitutional Conventions that directed Australia's push to Federation; 1960s-USA civil rights movement; 1983-Franklin River dam dispute.

Literacy notes

This study provides opportunities for students to: brainstorm ideas; develop and follow an action plan; organise and execute a meeting with an influential person; research information and write and present a report.

Resources

- Local and national newspapers
- *Get Parliament*, magazine available from the Parliamentary Education Office. See http://www.peo.gov.au/publications/get_parliament.html

Links

- Cleanup Australia online: <http://www.cleanup.com.au>
- Millennium kids: <http://www.millenniumkids.com.au>
- Three levels of government factsheet: <http://www.peo.gov.au/students/fss/fss55.html>
- House of Representatives infosheets: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/info/infosheets/index.htm>
- Senate briefs: <http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/pubs/guides/index.htm>