

Charity Versus Change

Maine Learning Results: Social Studies:A1, A2, A3, B2

Purpose: This activity goes along well with the lesson on local hunger, following a visit to a local soup kitchen, or any other unit on community service and social change.

Key Concepts:

- Two strategies to help solve problems, particularly problems of hunger, homelessness and poverty, are charity, and creating change.
- Both of these strategies are helpful in easing people's suffering, they just go about it in different ways, which are important to understand and recognize.

Activity: Introduce this lesson by explaining why we are talking about it; link it to past lessons, experiences, and current projects. Begin by getting a definition of charity from the class. Write this definition on the board or a large piece of paper for everyone to see. Make a list under it of examples of charitable acts or charity projects that we know about or have participated in.

Move on to do the same process for change. Explain that we are not talking just about change in general, but change as it relates to people's suffering. A good example is that famous quote, "You give a man a fish and he eats for a day. You teach a man to fish and he eats for life." How is it different from charity? What are some good examples of acts that create change? Projects that exemplify it? It's not as easy to identify as charity. One good example of a project that embodies both charity and change is Heifer International (www.heifer.org). They donate livestock to impoverished communities worldwide, which is charity, but they also provide training for how to care for and survive on this livestock for a livelihood, and they require that recipients pass on the gift of livestock and knowledge to others in their community, and this creates change.

Put these definitions of charity and change side by side. If your garden projects aims to donate some food, look at the aspects of your own project that are charity and change. The food that you donate will be charity, but the process of the students learning how to grow it and care for it, and the community relationships built by donating your food, those create change.

Finally, have students break into groups and create skits or murals that illustrate the difference between charity and change. This is also a good activity to follow up with some reflective writing, maybe about the different importances of both charity and change.

Extension activity: Through class discussion or reflective writing ask students to define basic human rights in their mind. Are there such things? If so, what do they think that every human being in the world has a right to? Does every human being necessarily have access to these things? If not, is it our responsibility to do something about that? What should the civic responsibility of people to each other be to ensure that basic human rights are met?