Community Action Research

Primary Content Area: English I, Social Sciences (Sociology, History, Civics)

Introduction
During this unit, students will identify a problem in their communities and then use research to address this problem. The issue will be student-selected after close examination of both the assets and deficits in the community. In addition, students will work with a community organization to align their research with work that is already being done in the community. Finally, students will present their research to community stakeholders in both a workshop format and a letter. It is highly recommended that the teacher apply for the Mikva Challenge Issues to Action Grant and training (see resources). Mikva provides support for issue research and action. Students work would then be featured at the Mikva City of Chicago Civics Fair in the spring.

Essential Question
- What are the areas of need in our community and what resources can be used to address these needs?

Project Goals
- Students will understand and identify examples of community action research.
- Students will examine both the assets and deficits in their community.
- Students will write proposals for their community action research project and present them to classmates using a peace circle to reach consensus on a research issue.
- Students will generate research questions that will be addressed over the course of the project.
- Students will conduct research to address their guiding questions using interviews, a survey, and expository texts.
- Students will present their research to community stakeholders.
- Students will reflect on their experience.

Procedure/Project Sequence
1. Teacher will introduce the concept of community action research to students.
2. Teacher will share examples of community action research with students.
3. Representatives from local community organization (see list of organizations below) will present their organization’s community plan to students.
4. Students will write a proposal for the community issue they would like to address.
5. A representative from each issue will present their proposal to the class through a peace circle.
6. Students will reach consensus on the issue they would like to research.
7. Students will generate questions to guide their research.
8. Students will conduct research using interviews, a survey, and expository texts.
9. Students will prepare and present their research through a workshop for community stakeholders.
10. Students will write an action letter to community stakeholders that incorporates evidence from their research.
11. Students will reflect through a peace circle on what they learned, what impact they believe the project had on the community, and what next steps could be taken.
Assessment
Teachers will use a rubric to assess students on their participation in the workshop.
Teachers will use a rubric to assess students on their action letter.

Community Partner/Resources

Logan Square Neighborhood Association
2840 N. Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, IL 60618
(773) 384-4370
http://www.lsna.net

Organization of the Northeast
4648 N. Racine
Chicago, IL 60640
773-769-3232
http://www.onechicago.org/

Kenwood/Oakland Community Organization
1005 E 43rd Street
Chicago, IL 60615
(773) 548-7500
http://www.kocoonline.org/

Southwest Organizing Project
2609 West 63rd Street
Chicago, IL 60629
(773) 471-8208
www.swopchicago.org/home.aspx

Lawndale Christian Development Corporation
3843 West Ogden Ave.
Chicago, IL 60623-2451
773.762.8889
www.lcdc.net

Brighton Park Neighborhood Association
4477 S. Archer Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60632
773-523-7110

Greater Southwest Development Corporation
2601 W. 63rd Street
Chicago, IL 60629
(773) 436-1000
http://www.greatersouthwest.org

Albany Park Neighborhood Council
3334 W. Lawrence Ave., 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60625
773-583-1387
http://www.apncorganizing.org/

Mikva Challenge
332 S. Michigan Ave. Ste. 400
Chicago, IL 60604-3123
312.634.6000
www.mikvachallenge.org/problemsolving/

South Austin Coalition Community
5660 West Madison Street
Chicago, IL 60644-3939
(773) 287-4570
www.neighborhoodlink.com/S_Austin_Coalition

Northwest Neighborhood Federation
3249 N. Central Ave.
Chicago, IL 60634
773-282-9807
Materials
Our America: Life and Death on the Southside of Chicago by LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman
Voices of Cabrini documentary by Facets Video
Assorted newspaper articles and expository texts on community issue

Addendum
Standards
This project addresses the following Common Core Standards and Social Emotional Standards:

Common Core Standards – Speaking and Listening
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Common Core Standards – Reading
1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from a text.
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Common Core Standards – Writing
1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.
5. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
6. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Social Emotional Standards
2C.4a. Evaluate the effects of requesting support from and providing support to others.
2C.4b. Evaluate one’s contribution in groups as a member and leader.
3C.4b. Plan, implement, and evaluate one’s participation in a group effort to contribute to one’s local community.

The suggested duration of this project is eight weeks.

Preparation: Reviewing examples of community action research, writing and presenting project proposals, and conducting research (6 weeks)
Action: Planning and conducting workshop; writing action letter (2 weeks)
Reflection: Peace circle reflection (1 class period)