



Activity #5 FINDING SOLUTIONS

BACKGROUND

Though we are often assaulted by negative images and stories that make it appear otherwise, people in urban environments all over the world are taking a stand for both healthy ecosystems and healthy communities. We have much to learn from each other, as the list of innovators making incredible strides in environmental and social sustainability is long and varied. Learning about and celebrating each other's successes, sharing hard earned wisdom, and identifying best practices will propel our individual community efforts forward.

A new politics is being born — a **POLITICS OF SOLUTION** that emphasizes multi-issue, solution-oriented change in urban communities. This new politics of hope, achievement and optimism facilitates previously unseen collaborations, creative problem solving, and visionary solutions to urban problems. We can help make just, sustainable cities a reality by cultivating our abilities to solve problems creatively, to envision possibilities, and to take innovative, solution-oriented action.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

In this activity, students have the opportunity to learn about and to celebrate the accomplishments of their own communities and communities around the world in the areas of sustainability and social justice.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- * Students learn about visionary solutions being implemented in their own city and other cities in the world.
- * Students are introduced to the term **POLITICS OF SOLUTION**.
- * Students are encouraged to create their own visionary solutions for their community.

KEY CONCEPTS

- * Politics of Solution

TIME

3 class periods

MATERIALS

- * Butcher paper/Markers OR Chalkboard/Chalk
- * Newspapers (1 per group)
- * Definition of **POLITICS OF SOLUTION**: An orientation that offers a powerful new politics of hope, achievement and optimism. Term suggests visionary urban policies that emphasize multi-issue, solution-oriented change in urban communities.

EXTENSIONS

- 1 Have your class brainstorm problems they see on their campus or in their community. After choosing one “priority problem,” set up teams. Each team is charged with coming up with the best

solution to the chosen problem. Set up a student panel to choose the best solution. (Designing an implementation strategy for the selected solution is a possible follow-up activity.)

- 2 Have a school “solution day” where students present solutions to problems faced on their campus or in their community. Invite local officials or community leaders to listen to student presentations or make presentations of their own.
- 3 Create a “Solutions Zine,” journal, or blog where students can publish and present their creative solutions to common problems, or share innovations that they have discovered from research about other places in the world.

RESOURCES

www.yesmagazine.com (Click on “Education Connection” in toolbar)

www.reclaimthefuture.org

PROCESS

Day One

- 1 Write the definition of “POLITICS OF SOLUTION” on the board. Split class into groups (of 3-6) and give each group a newspaper. (2)
- 2 Tell groups that they have 15 minutes to find as many articles as they can that are “solution-focused,” meaning that the content of the articles is hopeful, optimistic, or visionary, and/or presents some type of pro-active solution to a problem. (See definition on board.) The article could be about a local leader, organization, new technology, etc. Each group should pick their favorite “solution” article to share with the class. (15)
- 3 Ask each group to report on how many solution-oriented articles they found. Record each groups’ amount on chalkboard/whiteboard. (3)
- 4 Have each group share the essence of their favorite article. (10)
- 5 Debrief the experience. Sample questions: Was it easy or difficult to find solution-oriented news? Why do you think that is? What role does the media play in creating problem vs. solution frames? What do you think is really happening in our communities? Were there more solution-oriented stories in certain kinds of newspapers? (10)
- 6 Assign homework: Investigating solutions to sustainability and justice issues around the world. Divide the class equally into those who want to investigate local, national, and international solutions. Each student should prepare a 2-3 minute presentation on a person, organization, technology, policy, or project that is creating (or is designed to create) health and sustainability for both the environment and for people. (5)

*Note: This homework can be a multi-day homework assignment so students can visit the library or school computer lab.

Day Two

- 1 Each student makes his or her presentation to the class. Instruct listening students to take notes on each presentation. (You can collect these notes if desired.) At the end of each presentation ask listening students to share 1 or 2 things that they learned from the presentation. (45)

Day Three

- 1 Finish any remaining presentations
- 2 Debrief the experience. Sample questions: Which reports stood out the most? Which ideas did you like best? Had you heard of any of these things before (if so, where)? How did you choose your solution? Was it hard finding them? Where did you look? Why do you think it's important to know about solutions that exist now? Were there any solutions from the national or international presentations that you think might work in our city? (15)
- 3 Review the definition of POLITICS OF SOLUTION and discuss. Possible questions: What does this definition mean to you now? How is this orientation unique? Why do you think focusing on solutions is helpful? (15)
- 4 Discuss next steps. Consider having students volunteer to write letters to the editors of various newspapers thanking them for publishing solution-oriented articles, or encouraging them to do so.

Finding The Solutions WORKSHEET

NAME: _____

Are you investigating a (circle one):

Local,

National, or

International Solution?

YOUR TASK

Prepare a 2-3 minute presentation on a person, organization, technology, policy, or project that is creating (or is designed to create) health and sustainability for both the environment and for people.

Name of your solution (person, technology, organization, etc.):

Resource (article, book, webpage) consulted:

YOUR FINDINGS:
