Creating Our Future

OVERVIEW

How do we create a just and humane world for ourselves and for future generations? Help students identify and plan what they want their future to look like. Using an action-planning model, students visualize their desired future, identify objectives, develop a plan to address local and global issues, and implement their vision through action and service learning.

INQUIRY/CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- How do we envision and create a world we want for ourselves and for future generations?
- What unmet needs exist in our local and global communities?
- How do we identify structural solutions to global issues?
- How can we work together to plan a course of action?

OBJECTIVES

Students will:
- Visualize the future they desire
- Collaborate with their peers
- Identify issues they want to address, and identify and prioritize objectives
- Present their findings

TIME REQUIRED: 1.5 hours

1.5 hours for initial lesson; additional class time for implementing the action plan. Whereas the 1.5 hour lesson can be completed in isolation, ideally, students will have time to research their issues through community interviews, the Internet and books, develop their plans fully, and implement their projects.

KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS

- **Creating a vision**
- **Identifying local and global issues**
- **Action/project planning**
- **Personal and structural solutions**

SUBJECT AREAS

- **Social Studies** (World History, World Cultures, Geography, U.S. History, Civics/Government, Economics, Global Studies, Contemporary World Problems)
- **Science** (Earth, Environmental, Life, Physical)

NATIONAL STANDARDS CONSISTENCY

- **NCSS: 2, 4, 5, 6, 10**
- **NSES: C, F, G**

GRADE LEVEL: 5–12

FTF Related Reading

- Intermediate: Chapters 1 and 9 from *Global Issues and Sustainable Solutions*
- Advanced: Unit 1, Chapter 1-3 and Unit 7, Chapter 1-3 from *It's All Connected*

Materials/Preparation

- Handout/Overhead: *Action Planning Worksheet*, 1 per group of 3-4 students, and make an overhead
- Butcher paper, 1 sheet per group
- Marking pens, colored, 1 set per group

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Activity

Introduction

1. Ask students what they think the world will look like 20 years from now. Have 2 or 3 students briefly describe the future as if it were a picture (they may paint a picture of environmental, social, and economic destruction).

2. Now ask them what they want the world to look like in 20 years for themselves and for future generations (Note: you may need to define the difference between *think* and *want* for this part of the activity). Ask, "If this is the future we want, how do we make it happen?" Ask them to describe what they will see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Explain that in order to create a world we want for ourselves and for future generations, we need to first envision what we want and then create a plan of action. This activity provides a model for doing just that.

Steps

1. Explain that, in order to help focus their vision of the future, it is helpful to think about specific quality-of-life issues that are important to them. Brainstorm and list quality-of-life issues (these may include all or some of the following):

Food	Transportation	Elder care
Water	Education	Child care
Housing	Environment	Recreation
Energy	Security	Spirituality/ Religion
Employment	Healthcare	Entertainment/ Art

2. (Optional) Have students do a 5-minute "free write" describing their vision of the world in 20 years, addressing some or all of the quality-of-life issues identified in the brainstorming exercise. Give them the prompt: "In my vision of the future..." Encourage students to focus on what they want the future to be like, not what they do not want it to be like. For example, rather than saying, "In the future, people will not use polluting fossil fuels," say, "In the future we will use clean, renewable energy sources." Tell them to provide as much detail as possible in describing their vision. Have students read aloud 1 or 2 sentences from their free writes or have them share in pairs.

3. Explain that they will develop an "action plan" to address 1 of the quality-of-life issues in the list (such as food, water, health care, the environment, etc.) using a model called an "Action Planning Sequence". Through this process, they will assess how the issue affects both local and global communities, and develop a plan to address the structural causes of the issue.

4. Give each student a copy of the handout, *Action Planning Worksheet*, and show the overhead of the same worksheet. Explain each step of the action planning process to the students, using the overhead as a guide.

5. Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Assign, or have each group choose, a topic from the list of issues. Give each group a piece of butcher paper and pens.

6. Give them about 20–30 minutes to follow the steps outlined in the handout. They should begin by discussing and agreeing upon a shared vision. Circulate the room and assist students as they are working.

7. After they complete the handout, have each group transfer the information to a piece of butcher paper. Encourage them to include pictures, graphs, quotes, etc.

8. Have each group present their displays to the class.

9. Bring the class back together for reflection questions.
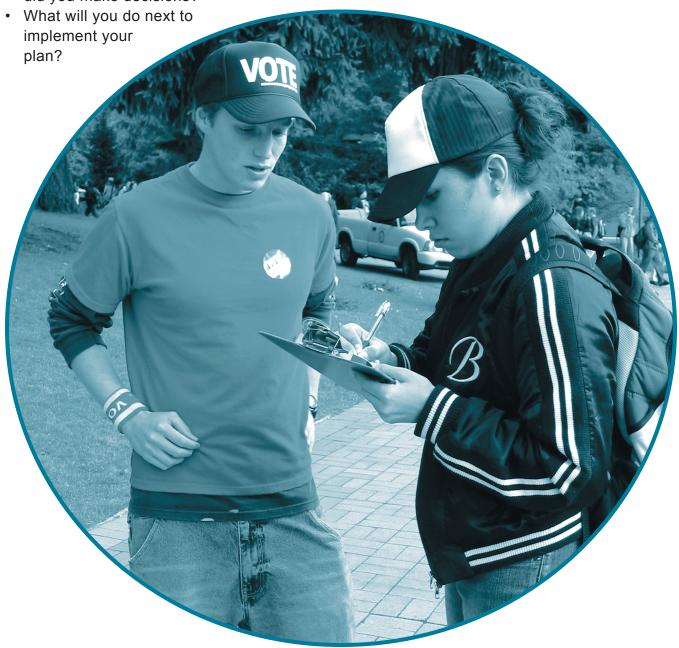
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Assessment
Reflection Questions

For Intermediate and Advanced Students

- Does describing what you want your future to look like help you realize it? How and why is this an important step in creating a world we want?
- Did the action sequence process work? How could the process be improved?
- How well did you work together in your groups? Did everyone participate? How did you make decisions?
- What will you do next to implement your plan?

For Advanced Students

- In what other circumstances could you use this action planning process?
- Once you have taken action on an issue, it changes the dynamics of the issue by producing unintended consequences or by revealing new solutions. What can you do next to address this issue and work toward your vision?

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Writing Connection

- Have students write a letter to an influential entity (government agency, newspaper, etc.) and /or a family member or friend explaining their vision and outlining the steps to realizing it.

Art Connection

- Have students create a mural at the school (or as part of a local community development project) depicting their collective vision of the future.

Action Projects

- Have the class choose 1 topic, refine the action plan for that topic, implement it as a class project, and do a service learning project that addresses the issues.
- Show students your local community's comprehensive plan (available through the city or county planning department) and have the students compare it with their action plans.
- Have the class develop an action project database of local opportunities for youth by researching issues, identifying and contacting organizations, and publishing the information on a website, in the local media, through school networks, etc.
- Have each student commit to taking steps to make their vision of the future a reality by completing the **Facing the Future Pledge** on page 22.
- Visit **www.facingthefuture.org** and click on **Take Action** for more information and action opportunities on global and local issues.

Additional Resources

Films

- *Pay it Forward,* Mimi Leder, 2000, 123 minutes. Feature film about a young boy who attempts to make the world a better place.

Books

- *The Lemming Dilemma: Living with Purpose, Leading with Vision*, David Hutchens, Pegasus Communications, 2000. A charming story about a lemming's quest for meaning, aspiration, and value.

- *The Complete Guide to Service Learning,* Cathryn Berger Kaye, **www.freespirit.com**, 2004. A wealth of activities, ideas, and resources to encourage service learning in K-12 and higher education.

- *The Kid's Guide to Social Action,* Barbara A. Lewis, **www.greenfeet.com/kidguidtosoc.html**, This empowering book includes everything kids need to make a difference in the world: step-by-step directions for writing letters, doing interviews, raising funds, getting media coverage, and more.

Websites

- **www.facingthefuture.org** – For information, research, and website resources on service learning, and a framework for developing service learning projects in your classroom.

Lesson 40 Handout:
Creating Our Future
Action Planning Worksheet - Page 1

Group members:

_____

_____

Issue we are focusing on:

_____

_____

Scope of the Issue
Who or what is currently being affected by this issue?

_____

_____

How does this issue affect our local community?

_____

_____

How does this issue affect our global community?

_____

_____

Visualize Desired Outcome
Brainstorm, discuss, and write a summary of the desired outcome for our specific issue:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Gather Companions
What is already being done to effect change on this issue? Brainstorm, discuss, and list the people and organizations that share a similar vision and can help us meet our vision:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Lesson 40 Handout:
Creating Our Future
Action Planning Worksheet - Page 2

Identify and Prioritize Objectives

What are the steps or parts that will lead to our vision? What does the vision look like? For example, if the vision is "full access to health care for all people," then the objectives might be more doctors per person, more clinics in poor neighborhoods, or more reproductive health care. Discuss, list, and prioritize 2 or 3 objectives that will lead to our vision.

_____

_____

_____

What are some specific things that will need to occur in order to realize our vision and to be sure that we are addressing structural solutions to the issue?

_____

_____

_____

Identify Obstacles

Discuss who or what might get in the way of realizing our vision. List a few obstacles and include ways we might address them:

_____

_____

_____

Identify Resources

What resources will we need to get our vision going? Is it information, money, time? How will we use these resources? Discuss and list information, resources, and other help we will need to realize our vision:

_____

_____

_____

Implement Action Plan and Follow Up

What steps will we take to start working on our vision? Who will be responsible for implementing each step? List the steps we will take to start implementing our vision:

_____

_____

_____

Keep the vision in mind and keep telling the story of the future you desire!