

## Unit Three

# Service: You Can Make a Difference



### The Unit at a Glance

This unit flows directly from Unit Two and the enduring understanding *Despite cultural differences, we are all united in a common bond of humanity*. Students will extend their understanding of this principle by exploring the concept of the common good. They will consider such questions as: What is the common good, and how can I contribute to it? How do volunteers in our own community contribute to the common good? How do Peace Corps Volunteers who serve in the Dominican Republic work for the common good? How can I contribute to the common good in my school and community?

Students will go out into the community and conduct interviews with community volunteers. They will explore the ways in which volunteer community organizations work for the common good of their own community. They will identify criteria for conducting service projects, and they will use primary source documents to identify examples of a wide variety of Peace Corps service projects. As a culminating activity, students will plan, implement, and evaluate service-learning projects in their own school or community. The unit is flexible. You can teach the entire unit, you can select particular lessons, or you can adapt the lessons to meet your students' needs. The unit can be adapted for use with students in grades 6–12.

This unit is standards-based and divided into six lessons organized around one or more of the enduring understandings and essential questions listed below. The learning activities are designed to meet the National Council for the Social Studies standards; Service-Learning standards adapted from the Corporation for National & Community Service and the Alliance for Service-Learning Reform; and Language Arts and Civics standards identified by McREL. This unit has a strong interdisciplinary focus, integrating social studies, service learning, and language arts.

### Enduring Understandings

- There is such a thing as the common good, and individuals can strengthen the common good through various forms of citizen action.
- Service matters. People in our community volunteer to make a difference.
- You can make a difference in your community in a number of ways.

## Essential Questions

- What does the common good mean, and why does it matter?
- How do people in our community work for the common good?
- Why serve?
- Why does service matter?
- What can we do to support the common good in our school and community?
- What have I got to give? What have I received from the service of others?
- How far am I willing to go to make a difference?

## Topical Questions

- How have Peace Corps Volunteers serving in the Dominican Republic worked for the common good?
- How did the Dominican people work for the common good in the aftermath of Hurricane Georges?
- How did international volunteer agencies work with the Dominican government for the common good in the aftermath of Hurricane Georges?

## Knowledge and Skills

Students will know

- What is meant by the common good, and how volunteer organizations contribute to it.
- That the common good extends from their family, classroom, school, and community to the entire world.
- That needs exist within and beyond their community—and that they can do something about them.

Students will be able

- To explain the concept of the common good.
- To identify examples of the common good.
- To explain how various voluntary organizations contribute to the well-being of their community.
- To conduct interviews with community volunteers to better understand the meaning of the common good and how needs are met in their community.
- To use primary source materials to identify various ways volunteers have served abroad.
- To explain why existing community and human needs call for action.
- To explain how they might serve their school, neighborhood, or community.
- To apply the service-learning process to the design and implementation of a service-learning project in order to make a difference.

## Assessing Student Understanding

A variety of assessment methods will be used: student journal entries in response to academic prompts; demonstration of interviewing skills; graphic organizers; graphic representations, performance checklists, and rubrics. As a culminating activity, students—guided by a rubric—will plan, conduct, and evaluate a service-learning project that helps promote the common good in their school or community.

# Content Standards Addressed in This Unit

## National Council for the Social Studies

Theme X: Civic Ideals and Practices

- The learner will recognize and interpret how the common good can be strengthened through various norms of citizen action.
- The learner will participate in activities to strengthen the common good, based on careful evaluation of possible options for citizen action.

## Civics Standards *(Identified by McREL)*

- The student understands the role of volunteerism and organized groups in American social and political life.

## Service-Learning Standards *(Adapted from the National Corporation for Service and the Alliance for Service-Learning Reform)*

The learner will be able to design an individual or group project that

- Meets actual community needs.
- Is coordinated in collaboration with a community.
- Is integrated into the academic curriculum.
- Facilitates active student reflection.
- Uses academic skills and knowledge in real-world settings.
- Helps develop a sense of caring for and about others.
- Improves the quality of life for those served.

## Language Arts Standards *(Identified by McREL)*

The student demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process:

- The learner gathers and uses information for research purposes.
- The learner gathers data for research topics from interviews.
- The learner uses a variety of primary sources to gather information.
- The learner demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning.