

Activity Name: Sad World, Happy World

Description: Brainstorm with students a list of things (real world problems and situations) that make them feel sad and/or happy. The responses can be general and sweeping (such as “violence”) or focused and specific (such as “when someone drinks too much beer and acts crazy.”) This activity is most appropriate for elementary students.

Time Frame: 30 - 40 minutes

Materials: Blackboard and chalk OR flip chart and markers
Objectives – Students will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss various social issues2. Brainstorm possible topics for their service-learning project
Procedures: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Remind students of the focus this year on service-learning. Explain that the purpose of this brainstorming activity is to generate as many ideas as possible for project issues.2. Record students’ responses to the questions: “What in the world makes you sad?” then “What makes you happy?” Ask students to think of issues that affect them on a personal level as well as those that affect the community.3. Invite students to share their responses one at a time. Repeat the response and record it trying to use the student’s exact words.4. After students share their ideas, attempt to categorize the responses. For example, “shooting with guns” might fit into the broader category of “crime,” which, in turn, is a form of “violence.”5. Use the list to discuss possible topics for the service-learning project. Ask students to think about which issues are most prevalent in the community, most important to the class, and most interesting to pursue.
Assessments: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Was there a willingness to share and listen supportively to peers?2. Did the list include a variety of issues?
Curriculum Standards: Speaking, Listening
Extension/Homework: <p>Writing: For older students, use the Sad World, Happy World exercise as a brainstorming activity. Then ask students to write a creative piece (poem, essay, song) describing their “contrasting worlds.” The writing should reflect issues that affect students on a personal level and in their community.</p>