

# V

## **Value Your Voice**

Emphasizing student voice by involving young people in choosing the project's focus and shaping its direction has been a hallmark of Need in Deed since the organization's founding in 1987.

An exercise we use with younger children is called the ID (Identity) Plaque. It's a positive, upbeat way to launch the self-discovery process in the class.

# O

## **Outline Your Objectives**

When tackling tough issues such as racism, violence, drug abuse or AIDS, we can sometimes feel quite powerless. Imagine how it feels to a child. Asking good questions that get to the heart of a problem gives students a sense of direction in their exploration.

In this phase of the process, students examine the causes and effects of their chosen issue in order to narrow the range of their exploration and focus on a particular, manageable aspect of the social problem.

# I

## **Investigate The Issue**

Think of a time when you learned an important lesson. Were you sitting in a molded chair in a school classroom, where the desks were all arranged neatly in rows? More likely, you were actively involved in an experience which you yourself helped shape. If it engaged both your head and heart, chances are it was a lesson you will never forget.

In this phase of the process students research and problem solve. Academics come to life for students through collaboration with community partners – meeting and learning from people who have personal experience with the issue, and collecting and analyzing information – applying academic skills to real-world problems.

# C

## **Conduct Meaningful Service**

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Everybody can be great . . . because everybody can serve." Conducting service builds students' sense of purpose and capability. It calls on them to act and speak out on behalf of others.

# E

## **Express What You've Learned**

Here the My Voice process comes full circle. In the first phase, we ask students to name their gifts and talents. Now we invite them to draw on those gifts to express what they've learned. In the expression of their "voice," students showcase the knowledge they've acquired and demonstrate what it means to be an advocate for change.