

COMMUNITY, ACTIVISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

LESSON 8: GETTING ACTIVE AND VOLUNTEERING

Lesson aim:

- Raise awareness amongst young people of the different services that are available for people in their community, help them understand why they are needed and inform them of volunteer and activist opportunities.
- To raise awareness among students of voluntary work and activism and what each entails.
- To continue to develop students' key skills such as research and making a presentation.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students should be able to:

- outline the role of and differences between volunteers and activists;
- explain the type of work volunteers and activists are involved in; and
- conduct simple research through basic interviewing and information gathering.

Lesson outline:

Ask students to make a list of all organisations which help people in their community, for example homeless shelters, services for older people etc.

By using the internet and other sources of information, list the voluntary organisations which exist in Ireland and outline briefly the work of two of them.

In-class activity: Group discussion

- Why do you think voluntary organisations exist?
- Why do people volunteer for unpaid work?
- What would be the effect if all voluntary organisations ceased to exist?
- Would you be interested in volunteering? Why?

Student activity: Write a letter

Encourage students to write to a voluntary organisation asking them to outline:

- their aims and objectives;
- how and why they were established;
- the role of volunteers;
- how many and who are their volunteers; and
- how to become a volunteer.

Student activity: Topic for essay writing or subject for debate

"Everyone has a duty in society to pay their taxes to ensure the work of voluntary organisations can continue." Discuss.

In-class activity: Explaining activism

Write on a flipchart/blackboard the words activist and activism and ask students what they mean. Then ask them what they think it would mean to be an activist and what do they think an activist does? (NOTE: Look for words such as community service, trade unionism, injustice, social justice, human rights etc.)

What is the difference between a volunteer and an activist?

Ask groups of students to consider: "What do you need to be a:

- human rights activist;
- trade union activist;
- community activist; and
- political activist."

LESSON 8: GETTING ACTIVE AND VOLUNTEERING (CONTINUED)

In-class activity: Discussions

Discuss with students the experience of taking action to help others or to effect change. Teachers could open with an account of their own experience of activism. The following can be used to stimulate and guide discussions:

- ↘ Have you made a difference in someone's life? Have you ever helped someone with something difficult? Please explain the details of the situation outlining:
 - What you did?
 - How you felt?
 - What problems did you encounter? How were they resolved?
 - What was the outcome of your action?
- ↘ Have you ever become involved in broader issues such as a community problem? Have you raised money for charity, asked people to sign a petition or written to your local councillor or TD? Please give details outlining:
 - What you did?
 - How you felt?
 - What problems did you encounter? How were they resolved?
 - What was the outcome of your action?

Student assignment: Creative design project

Put students into groups and ask them to design a recruitment leaflet (length and detail to be decided by teacher) for an activist of their choice. The leaflet should be designed in such a way that it would encourage their classmates and friends to become involved.

They will then be required to make a presentation to the class to persuade them to join. The presentation should include the use of visual aids such as flipchart, poster or PowerPoint (if resources available).

(NOTE: The internet is a very useful resource for students in this activity however if the internet is not available to students you should arrange to download information for distributing amongst students. PowerPoint is not essential as students can be creative with traditional arts supplies.)

Student activity: Research project and report

Ask students to select an activist involved in workers' rights to research. Areas which should be examined should include their contribution to the workplace, what they achieved, how and why they became involved, the impact on working conditions and workers.

They should then write an essay or report on this activist with a short biographical piece on the individual, such as their background, job, experience, personality and skills.

Students should then share the main points of interest from this activity outlining their own views on the achievements of this individual (any type of medium can be chosen for this presentation).