

# **Adopt A Family**

## **A Eureka City Service-Learning Lesson Plan**

### **Contact Information**

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### **Introduction and Description of the Lesson**

The Adopt-a-Family project runs for a short time during the holiday season. This timing is appropriate. This is a period when a student's attention is diverted to seasonal festivities. The class learns care and attention during an otherwise harried season.

Each year, the Salvation Army receives hundreds of applications from under-privileged families for help with Christmas who would have otherwise had a very bleak holiday. Identified families are often single parent and/or low-income families surviving month to month. Christmas for many of these parents is not a happy time. Participating classrooms are matched with a family in need. The class provides their “adopted family” with a Christmas meal, food staples and personal gifts for each family member.

### **Instructional**

#### **Preparation**

Classrooms can adopt their own individual family. There are many lessons that allow for infusion into all academic areas. Students, parents, interested community members and teachers enjoy a bonding spirit as they gather gifts and food items for their adoptive family. Students gain an intimate understanding of how their individual and collective efforts can contribute to society. The conclusion of the project brings each participant an improved sense of self-worth. Students share in classroom discussions and writings what they have gained and where they might direct their energies in the future.

The Salvation Army has a tremendous workload. They provide to the adoptive group a family who has a Christmas need. Their ability to process requests and information can be difficult due to their reliance on volunteer staff and labor. Individual teachers and participants will need to complete tasks without assistance. It is difficult to locate and identify families in need until the end of November. Teachers should understand the short time period before Christmas break.

Anonymity is important to reduce embarrassment and only first names are released. A personal relationship does blossom when the adoptive group learns names, ages, clothing and shoe sizes, important needs and special wishes of their adoptive family. Teachers need to plan on transporting their Christmas gifts to the Salvation Army building on the given date.

Each classroom is assigned a family in need that does not attend that particular school. Some school discussions may lead to a local family or person in need outside the Salvation Army's program. This would be fine. There are many situations of people in need where the attached curriculum would apply. Be open and keep notes. This project is new to the classroom and will grow and prosper with teachers who care.

### **California State Academic Content Standards**

#### 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts

Writing 1.0 – 1.4, 2.1

Listening and Speaking 1.0 – 1.9, 2.1, 2.2

**Math**

**Science/Health**

**Social Studies**

**Art**

#### **Action**

There are many different activities that tie the content standards to the “Adopt-A-Family” Project. These activities include the following. Friendly and business letter writing formats can be used to announce the project and seek donations from a variety of sources. Consider going beyond the local neighborhood for donations and supplies. Thank you letters to deserving contributors. Develop public speaking techniques as students learn how to present the adopt-a-family to supporters and potential contributors. A daily journal or diary from the beginning of the project allows students to monitor the project and greatly enhances the final conclusions and reflection. A final essay might include a variety of topics (“What is community service?” “How does helping others help me?” “Do our efforts make a difference?”) Compile the cost of different dinner combinations. Estimate the cost of a regular family dinner versus a holiday family dinner. Project those costs for a week, month, year, etc. Consider various cost projections for different presents for each adopted family member. Students can research costs at local stores newspaper ads, catalogs. Project fund raising revenues from all possible contributing sources and develop a financial plan. Measurement and weight can be explored relative to purchases for the adopted family. Several published nutrition curriculums could be employed to analyze the Christmas dinner by health standards. The measured components needed for a nutritional meal could be introduced. Analyze how many additional meals the food drive (if used) has provided. Seek additional food to compliment existing donated food stock. Class research could investigate the Salvation Army and other similar organizations. Identify and examine local humanitarian organizations for community awareness, Students may encounter new areas of interest for themselves or a personal group of friends. Invite Speakers from local organizations to explain how and why they donate (Rotary, Elks, Humboldt Area Foundation). All of the

teacher's favorite holiday art projects can be utilized. Simple modifications can change existing activities into gifts for the adopted family. Students, as gifts for the adopted family, can make Holiday cards, room decorations, and presents. The classroom Christmas tree and decorations can be donated to the adopted family.

Students break into small groups to tally and count the items they have been assigned. Students report to entire class on findings (graphs and charts). Shortages may be located and the class will decide on measures to fill them. After all reports are given and the results summarized on the chalkboard, a class discussion ensues.

When the total gift is visually presented, it will demonstrate to the class what they have accomplished. Special note should be given to the combined effort. How working together with many can produce so much more than working alone.

### **Reflection**

There are many reflective components already mentioned and utilized in the lesson plan.

### **Student Assessment**

This project has numerous opportunities for pre and post evaluation in several academic subjects. Writing analysis becomes the most obvious subject area to review. State Academic Content Standards: grades 4-6 writing 1.0-1.4 are met while students write friendly and business letter writing, daily journals, or a final essay.

Students can also develop their public speaking skills and meet Content Standards in Listening and speaking 1.0-1.9 as they learn how to present the adopt-a-family to supporters and potential contributors

### **Project Evaluations and Expansion**

The teachers determine content achievement standards with traditional methods. They may also assess the qualitative impact on self-esteem and civic-mindedness of the students.

After the project, a class discussion may follow. Journals or diaries would be turned in. Essay topics such as those mentioned below might be explored.

- What future projects could the class undertake?
- What projects could students embark on with their friends or clubs?
- What can the individual student accomplish?
- How has this project helped each student?

### **Celebrations and Public Recognition**

Teachers should prepare in advance awards for each student. Unfortunately, the families in need often times do not respond with a thank you letter. Salvation Army thank you letters and teacher awards are needed for young students. Organize to have speakers other than Salvation Army at your awards ceremony (principal, interested community speakers).

The final class lesson begins with an awards ceremony. Certificates should be provided by the teacher or school commending each student for his or her efforts. Additional certificates might be issued by the Salvation Army along with a copy of their thank you letter for each student. School personnel, family, and supporters may be invited and participate.

### **Materials and Staff Development Needs**

- Paper and pencils from regular classroom supplies.
- Student journals may require extra cardstock.
- Art activities will have individual supply requirements.
- Cardboard boxes and space for donated items should be arranged.

### **Funding, Resource Support, and Sustainability**

The resources for this project are readily available in all schools. The Salvation Army is ready to participate in the Adopt-A-Family each year. Their enthusiasm only continues to grow, as schools have added their name to the list of business and corporations who annually support this project.

## **Lesson Profile**

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### **Abstract**

The Adopt-a-Family project runs for a short time during the holiday season. This timing is appropriate. This is a period when a student's attention is diverted to seasonal festivities. The class learns care and attention during an otherwise harried season.

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month. Christmas to many of these parents is not a happy time. Participating classrooms are matched with a family in need. The class provides their “adopted family” with a Christmas meal, food staples and personal gifts for each family member.

### **Degree of Complexity for Implementation of Service-Learning Project**

High

### **Educational Setting and Participant Information**

#### **Educational Institution**

Public

#### **Comprehensive Schools**

4-6

#### **Participant Configuration**

Whole Class Project

#### **School Schedule**

Traditional nine month

#### **Service Provided**

#### **Overview of Service**

#### **Level of Service**

Direct Service

#### **Service Issue Areas**

Education

Human Services and Social Needs

Environment

#### **Duration of Service Activity**

Short Term (2-6 Sessions)

## **Specific Service Activity Areas**

### **Educational**

Literacy Tutoring /**Buddy Reading**

### **Health**

Health Prevention Services

Social Services

Hunger

Nutrition Education

### **Human and Social Needs**

Child Care

Homelessness

### **Environment**

## **Lesson Content**

### **Subject Area(s)**

Visual and Performing Arts

English/ Language Arts

English Language Development

Health Education

Mathematics

California State Academic Content Standards

grades 4-6 writing 1.0-1.4, 2.1, listening and speaking 1.0-1.9, 2.1-2.2,

### **Civic/Social / Personal Responsibility Goals or Standards**

Students will reach-out to less fortunate members of their community during the holiday season. This project will have a qualitative impact on self-esteem and civic-mindedness of the students. Students will be able to visualize how their cumulative and individual efforts have improved their community.

### **Collaborating Partners**

Salvation Army

### **Associations and Agencies**

Human Services Associations (Shelters)

**Educational Institutions**

Elementary

**Corporation for National Service**

Americorps Members & National Corps

Americorps VISTA

Retired Senior Volunteer Programs

Companions

**Individual Partners**

Parents

Grandparents

Mentors

Other

**For-Profit Partners**

Finance and Business

**Reflection**

Journals

Video / Pictorial presentation

Oral presentation