

Volunteers: changing the world

Third-grade differentiation

■ Reading and discussion tips:

- Read “Old problems, community solutions” in class together.
- To help students build background knowledge before reading the interview, show students photos of people volunteering for Habitat for Humanity. Visit the organization’s Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/habitat> or Flickr site at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/habitatforhumanity> to find photos.
- Students may have trouble comprehending some of the vocabulary and information included in “An interview with a volunteer.” Pause during reading to discuss such terms as *reliable*, *architect*, *FEMA*, *receded*, *unemployment*, *logistics* and *burden*. Review with students how to figure out the definitions of unfamiliar words by using the context of the sentence or paragraph.

■ Activity tips:

- Create a template of the e-mail to the Habitat for Humanity affiliate beforehand. Have students complete sections of the template, such as the salutation, a sentence included in the body, and closing, together in class.
- Create job roles for the volunteer project. Assign students to the various roles based on their individual talents.
- Shorten the volunteer project to one week total. This will make the scope of the project more manageable for younger students.

■ Assessment tips:

- Simplify the assignment. Eliminate “Project planning vision” from the rubric.
- Clarify expectations for students. Paraphrase the rubric and share it with students before they begin their work.

■ Optional extension tips:

- Have students write three to five sentences about their experience. Compile their reflections in a class book.

Fifth-grade differentiation

■ Reading and discussion tips:

- If students are interested, share other Habitat for Humanity volunteer stories you can find on <http://www.habitat.org>.
- In your discussion about the interview, ask students to summarize the reasons why Lynn Turner decided to volunteer. Have students draw conclusions as to how volunteering for Habitat for Humanity affected her personally.
- Have students conduct their own research regarding the history and mission of Habitat for Humanity. Ask each student to find three facts about the organization and to share those facts with the class.

■ Activity tips:

- Have students draft the e-mail of inquiry individually. Then allow them to exchange drafts with a partner for editing and revising purposes. Collect e-mail drafts. Choose one e-mail to send to the Habitat for Humanity affiliate or other volunteer or community organization you have chosen.
- Have students take on more than one role in the volunteer project, if possible.
- Encourage students to elicit the help of other classrooms to complete the volunteer project. Students could take on leadership or mentorship roles if, for instance, they are paired with lower-grade classrooms. Allow students to generate ideas as to how they might encourage other students to help their cause.

■ Assessment tips:

- You might wish to have students write a reflection piece. Students should write at least three paragraphs about their experiences planning and implementing the project. You might assess the piece on depth of content, organization, and grammar and punctuation.

Volunteers: Changing the world

Grade four

Objectives

Students will:

- Read general information about volunteerism.
- Read an interview with a Habitat for Humanity volunteer.
- Draft an e-mail addressed to a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.
- Plan and implement one volunteer project to benefit a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

National content standards

Social Studies

- Students use knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history, along with elements of historical inquiry, to inform decision-making about and action-taking on public issues.
- Students explore factors that contribute to one's personal identity such as interests, capabilities and perceptions.
- Students show how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good, and identify examples of where they fail to do so.

Language Arts

- Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Scope

- Three class periods (30 to 45 minutes each).

Materials

- **Article:** "Old problems, community solutions."
- **Interview:** "An interview with a volunteer."
- A class calendar.
- Assessment rubric.

Lesson plan

In this lesson students will learn about volunteering, why people do it, and how volunteering benefits individuals, communities and society at large. Students will then participate in a volunteer project.

■ Preparation:

Before beginning the lesson:

Assign students to read "Old problems, community solutions" as homework for Day 1 of the lesson.

■ Procedure:

Day 1 Introduce and discuss the topic of volunteering. Read "An interview with a volunteer."

1. Discuss the topic of volunteering as described in the article "Old problems, community solutions."

Answer the questions that follow the article. In a discussion, be sure to highlight these points:

- Volunteers come in all ages, races and backgrounds. Some are leaders, and some are support people. Both are important.
- People volunteer for a variety of reasons. In the end, they benefit their communities and themselves by helping those in need.
- There are many areas in which to volunteer. Anyone can find a service project that will suit his or her skills and interests.

2. Introduce Habitat for Humanity. Read and discuss "An interview with a volunteer."

- Review the information about Habitat for Humanity from "Old problems, community solutions."
- Explain that students will read an interview with a volunteer who has worked with Habitat for Humanity.
- Have students take turns reading aloud from the interview. In a discussion, be sure to highlight the following points:

- There are opportunities to help all around you. Everyone can help in some way.
- There are many ways Habitat for Humanity volunteers help communities, from cleaning up after a storm to raising money for new housing.
- The world needs volunteers. Volunteers can make significant improvements.

Day 2 **Draft an e-mail to a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.****1. Explain the purpose of the e-mail.**

- Tell students that they will be participating in a volunteer project to benefit a local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. Explain to students that although they are not old enough to build houses, there are many other ways they can help.
- Tell them that they will be contacting their local affiliate to investigate their current needs through an e-mail sent from the class.

2. Explain proper letter-writing and e-mail etiquette.

- Tell students that this e-mail will include several of the parts of a formal letter, such as the greeting, body, salutation and contact information. Review these terms with students. Also, formal e-mails should be free of spelling and grammar errors.

3. Draft the e-mail.

- Ask students what they should include in this inquiry e-mail. List their responses on the board. Responses may include: name of the school, name of the teacher, grade level of the class, how the class might help the affiliate, how the affiliate can let the class know what its needs are, and the best way to contact the class.
- Tell them that it also might help the affiliate if the students provide a few examples of what they could do to help. List the following examples of volunteer projects on the board:
 - Create a schoolwide campaign to raise money for your local affiliate.
 - Collect items for a Habitat ReStore (stores that resell construction and household items).
 - Help with office work (e.g., filing or mailings).

- Together, draft the e-mail on the board.
- Call on students to revise and proofread the e-mail, as needed.

4. Send the e-mail to the local affiliate.

Keep students informed of the response you receive from the affiliate. Please note that each affiliate operates on its own and may respond differently to your request. You might wish to visit the youth programs section of the Habitat for Humanity Web site (<http://www.habitatyouthprograms.org>) to find additional activities that will support Habitat's mission.

Day 3 **Plan the volunteer project.****1. List the steps in the volunteer project.**

- Review the needs of the affiliate.
- Take a vote to decide which need the class will fulfill. Together, decide how that need will be fulfilled.
- Plan the steps of the volunteer project, including any preparation involved. Write the steps on the board.

2. Create roles and assignments.

- Have students sign up to be leaders or support people on the project. Each student should volunteer for at least one task.
- Use your class calendar to schedule a series of meetings and activities over several weeks during which you will guide students as they carry out the project.

■ Assessment:

Evaluate students' participation in the planning and implementation of the volunteer project according to the rubric on Page 7.

■ Optional extension:**Share volunteer experiences with the school.**

Invite students to take photographs or video of the volunteer experience. Have them write reflections about what they learned from the project. Arrange for students to give a short presentation about their experience for the school community.

Old problems, community solutions

What is a volunteer?

Volunteers are people who see problems in their communities and want to help solve them. They take action. They are not paid for their work. They feel that helping is more important than money.

There are volunteers in every community, all over the world. People of all ages volunteer. People of all races and backgrounds volunteer. Volunteers visit people in the hospital. They gather food for the hungry. They rebuild houses after natural disasters. They rebuild towns after wars. They care for children. They provide medical care. They teach people how to grow crops. They teach people to read.

Some volunteers are leaders. They think up new solutions to old problems. They get other volunteers together. They plan the steps to solving the problem. Some volunteers are support people. They join groups that already exist. They do specific jobs to solve a problem. Both kinds of volunteers are needed. Both are equally important. Both use their skills and talents to help others.

Why do we need volunteers?

Long ago, most people in the United States lived on farms. In those days, farmers had few machines to harvest crops. They had to bring in many crops by hand. If they took too long, the crops might be ruined by rain or mold. Farm families solved this problem by helping each other. They volunteered to help harvest other farmers' crops. They moved from farm to farm, working as a group. The people worked together to harvest crops and make meals.

Farm families also helped each other build barns. They helped build houses. They kept country roads in good shape. By helping others, rural families also helped themselves.

In rural areas today, both in the United States and around the world, many people live on little money. They

cannot always afford medical care. Rural towns cannot always afford to hire emergency workers. Volunteer doctors, firefighters and paramedics fill these gaps in many rural towns.

Now, more people live in cities than on farms. In cities, not everyone can find jobs. It is difficult for people who are unemployed to feed, clothe and house themselves and their families. Organizations like food banks and soup kitchens are run by volunteers. These volunteers collect and prepare food for people in need. Some volunteers in cities help train people so that they can find good jobs. Some volunteers tutor children and adults. Some clean up the environment.

In the city and in the country, there are people who cannot read and write. There are people who cannot afford health care. There are people who don't know how to use a computer. There are parts of the community that are dirty, run down or dangerous. There are parts of the community that are polluted. There are people who cannot find safe, healthy housing. Sometimes storms, floods and earthquakes cause damage to communities. And there are volunteers who work to solve all of these problems.

Why do people volunteer?

Why do volunteers do it? Why do people work without getting paid? People give their time because they care. They care about other people. They care about solving the problems they see around them. They understand that their time and care make people stronger. They make communities stronger. And stronger communities make a stronger nation and world.

Volunteering also makes people feel good. It feels good to solve a problem. It feels good to give to others. It also feels good to receive kindness from other people. It makes you want to give something back. It makes you want to help, too.

How do people volunteer?

Thousands of people sign up to volunteer every year. Often, they volunteer with an organization to complete service projects. Organizations may specialize in different things. They may focus on education. They may focus on the environment. Whatever your interest, there is probably a volunteer organization for you.

Many organizations focus on ending poverty. Habitat for Humanity is a group that provides housing. Habitat for Humanity builds good houses with families in need in the United States and around the world. The headquarters for Habitat for Humanity is in Georgia. But volunteer leaders in any community can start a Habitat for Humanity group, called an affiliate, in their area.

Millard and Linda Fuller started Habitat for Humanity in the 1970s. They were once very rich. But the money did not make them happy. They decided to sell everything. They decided to spend the rest of their lives helping people. They saw the poor housing some people lived in. They gathered volunteers to help build houses. They asked companies to donate building materials. So far, Habitat has built more than 350,000 houses around the world. That is housing for more than 1.75 million people in more than 3,000 different communities.

How can I volunteer?

In 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama signed an important law. It is called the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The law urges Americans to volunteer. The act gives money to volunteer programs. “All that’s required on your part is a willingness to make a difference,” the president said. “Anybody can do it.”

Volunteering is good for everyone involved. What problems do you see in your school, neighborhood and community? What special talents do you have that might help solve them? How can you use your skills to help put a smile on someone’s face?

Name two kinds of volunteers.

List three problems that can be found in both rural and urban areas.

What do Habitat for Humanity volunteers do?

How can you help? What are some ways—small and large—that you can think of to help your school? What is one way you could help your neighborhood or city?

An interview with a volunteer

Lynn Turner* lives in Washington, D.C. She is a recent college graduate. She has volunteered for Habitat for Humanity several times.

Describe your volunteer experiences with Habitat for Humanity.

I first volunteered for Habitat for Humanity in high school. I volunteered my time, raised money, and saw an entire project through in one school year. I was able to get to know the family, work on the construction of their house, and work with a committee to fully understand the cost of living and the need for safe and reliable housing. The experience allowed me to use some of the carpentry skills that I had developed as the daughter of an architect.

The next time I was able to get involved was my freshman year of college. After Hurricane Katrina, the Habitat for Humanity chapter at my school made plans to go to New Orleans for spring break. We raised \$2,000, and the school flew us down there to work for a week. We stayed in a church where FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a government agency that responds to disasters in the United States) had donated shower trailers and food.

The scene in New Orleans was something you could not fully describe. Although we arrived eight months after the storm, it looked as if the water had receded just moments before. We were on cleanup duty. We worked in houses, removing everything from wet and ruined personal belongings to the drywall and refrigerators that were moldy and wrecked. We had to wear special suits to protect us from the dangerous mold in and outside the houses. It broke your heart to see a town so lost and destroyed.

After I returned from that experience, my college's Habitat for Humanity team focused on more local projects. My college is located in a very rural area. The

county struggles with hunger, a shortage of affordable housing, and severe unemployment.

I worked on many houses and in many ways: from the initial stages of selecting the work site, to raising money, to helping to choose the family. I also got to see the finished product and see the families so appreciative and emotional, knowing that they finally had a place of their own and a community that cared enough to offer them a helping hand, not just a hand out.

I spent another spring break with Habitat for Humanity in Charleston, South Carolina. We raised money and worked on two different projects that week. During that trip, I played a different role. I was a leader of the student group, not just a volunteer. I worked directly with Habitat for Humanity International to orchestrate all the logistics that go into having a group of volunteers work on a project like that.

Back on campus, I became the treasurer of our college's Habitat for Humanity chapter. As such, I was able to see the financial burden that a home can be on a family and also how much it actually costs to build a home.

What made you decide you wanted to volunteer in the first place? Why did you choose to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity?

I always believed that feeling safe and removed from the outside elements was a basic human need. And when faced with the harsh reality of statistics about the great numbers of Americans who do not have their basic needs met, I felt that the Habitat for Humanity mission was something I had to be a part of. I also felt that it was far better to help people get their independence rather than just collecting money. Habitat for Humanity allowed me to make a connection with a family through an experience that we both benefited from.

**Names have been changed.*

What was the hardest thing about your volunteer work?

The hardest thing is choosing a deserving family for the project. There are so many families in need, so many that deserve affordable, decent homes, but with so few resources, you can only help some of them.

What were the best things about volunteering for Habitat for Humanity?

All the wonderful people who dedicate their time,

money and energy to see projects like this through make the experience very special. It is really a great bonding experience that you don't soon forget.

Why do you think communities need Habitat for Humanity volunteers?

Because everyone deserves a safe, warm, dry place to live, and sometimes people just cannot make that happen by themselves. They need the support of their community.

Rubric: Volunteer project

	5	4	3	2	1
Project Planning Analysis	Student approaches project eagerly and with original thought.	Student displays original thought.	Student shows some original thought.	Student shows little original thought.	Student shows little interest in planning a volunteer project.
Project Planning Vision	Student shows keen awareness of details involved in implementing project.	Student shows awareness of details involved in implementing project.	Student shows some awareness of details involved in implementing project.	Student shows little awareness of details involved in implementing project.	Student shows no awareness of details involved in implementing project.
Project Implementation Participation	Student is highly focused and takes an active, clear role in project.	Student is focused and takes an active role in project.	Student is somewhat focused and sometimes takes an active role in project.	Student is unfocused and has difficulty finding a role in project.	Student shows little interest in or does not participate in project.
Project Implementation Cooperation	Student highly supports the efforts of others and is a strong team member.	Student supports the efforts of others and is a good team member.	Student somewhat supports the efforts of others and is an adequate team member.	Student cooperates with the group but shows little interest in the team's efforts.	Student does not cooperate during the project and does not support the team's efforts.