

# Virtual Ambassador Unit Plan

Unit Overview
<b>Unit Title</b>
Virtual Ambassador
<b>Unit Summary</b>
What are some of the problems facing people in developing countries? How can foreign and local volunteers help? Students correspond with Peace Corps volunteers working around the world as they tackle these difficult questions. Once students narrow their focus to a particular problem in a specific place, they assume the role of advisors to the U.S. ambassador of a developing nation and create a proposal for a volunteer program.
<b>Subject Area</b>
Social Studies
<b>Grade Level</b>
6–9
<b>Higher-Order Thinking Skills</b>
Analysis, Evaluation, Problem Solving
<b>Approximate Time Needed</b>
3 weeks
<b>Unit Foundation</b>
<b>Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks</b>
<b>Targeted Oregon Content Standards and Benchmarks</b> <b>Social Sciences: Grade 8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the civic responsibilities of United States citizens and how they are met</li><li>• Understand the purpose and function of international humanitarian agencies and special interest advocacy groups, and how the United States interacts with people in other nations through these organizations</li><li>• Understand how people make decisions by analyzing economic conditions and changes</li><li>• Analyze and evaluate the impact of economic, cultural, or environmental factors that result in changes to population of cities, countries, or regions</li><li>• Understand the causes, characteristics, lasting influence, and impact of political, economic, and social developments in world history</li><li>• Define, research, and explain an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon and its significance to society</li><li>• Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon from varied or opposed perspectives or points of view</li></ul>

### Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the economic, cultural, environmental, political, and social factors contributing to a contemporary issue in a developing country
- Research the history, geography, economics, politics, and culture of a developing country
- Understand how the Peace Corps, and other humanitarian agencies, work to provide help to developing countries
- Develop a well-organized and supported argument in favor of or opposed to mandatory national service for young adults
- Work collaboratively to develop a practical and cost-conscious solution to a problem in a developing country based on understanding of the specific needs of the country's citizens

### Curriculum-Framing Questions

#### Essential Question

How can individuals make a difference in the world?

#### Unit Questions

- What are the key problems facing the world's developing countries?
- What are our responsibilities as citizens of the world?
- How can individuals help a developing country solve one of its problems?

#### Content Questions

- What kinds of volunteer agencies exist to assist developing countries and what do they do?

### Student Assessment Plan

#### Assessment Summary

Ask students to take an online survey to determine their prior knowledge and to help them think about what they need to learn during the unit. Informally assess students through questioning and reviewing reflections in student journals. Read journal entries periodically to check for student understanding and redirect teaching as needed. Ask students to complete the project checklist to help them plan and monitor their work on the projects. Have country teams meet weekly to share their processes, give and receive peer feedback, revise products, and offer suggestions. Ask students to use the group process rubric, presentation rubric, and position paper rubric to help guide their work and suggestions. Rotate through groups as they work each day to observe how progress is going, see what questions students might have, and find out what additional support students might need. Assess the committee members as a group using the presentation rubric. Use the position paper rubric to assess the final essay. Ask students to use the group process rubric to assess team effort and group participation. At the end of the unit, ask students to look at the online survey again and discuss what they learned and what they still need to learn.

## Assessment Timeline

Before project work begins		Students work on projects and complete tasks		After project work is completed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online Survey</li> <li>Questioning</li> <li>Journal Entry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Process Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journal Entry</li> <li>Project Checklist</li> <li>Presentation Rubric</li> <li>Anecdotal Notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer Feedback</li> <li>Teacher Conferences</li> <li>Position Paper Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journal Entry</li> <li>Position Paper Rubric</li> <li>Presentation Rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essay</li> <li>Online Survey</li> <li>Questioning</li> <li>Group Process Rubric</li> </ul>

## Unit Details

### Prerequisite Skills

- Basic computer literacy, including use of the Internet
- Ability to research and synthesize information
- Ability to create effective slideshow presentations
- Ability to write cohesive, effective essays

### Instructional Procedures

#### Preparing for the Unit

Four to six weeks prior to beginning the unit, contact the [National Peace Corps Association, Speaker's Bureau](#)\* and invite a Peace Corps alumni panel to speak to the class about the projects they have been involved in and what serving in the Peace Corps is like. Ask speakers to address features and needs of developing countries, and projects they were able to work on that helped address those needs. A few days before the project begins, distribute the [project newsletter](#) to parents and be prepared to answer any questions or concerns they might have.

#### Beginning the Unit

Pose the Essential Question, *How can individuals make a difference in the world?* Elicit student ideas and examples, and record them on chart paper. Save this chart for future reference. Ask students to take a [survey](#) to help them and you determine what they already know about issues in developing countries and the process of doing research.

#### Background on Developing Countries and Service Programs: Days 1 through 3

Two to three days before the guest speakers are scheduled, explain to students that the class will be engaged in a project about the needs of developing countries. Ask students to think about the Unit Questions:

- What are the key problems facing the world's developing countries?*
- What are our responsibilities as citizens of the world?*
- How can individuals help a developing country solve one of its problems?*

To help answer the Unit Questions, explain to students that former Peace Corps volunteers will be coming to speak and share their experiences firsthand. Tell students that prior to hearing the speakers, they need to gain some understanding about the label developing country and issues that the countries might have.

The following Peace Corps activities can be done to introduce students to issues in developing countries:

- The Peace Corps has a program where students can correspond through e-mail with Peace Corps

volunteers called [Correspondence Match](#)\*. Set up this program weeks prior to beginning this unit. Correspondence Match allows your class to correspond with a volunteer directly. This program is part of the Peace Corps' [World Wise Schools program](#)\*.

- In addition, choose from a list of Peace Corps-sponsored [activities](#)\* to give students background information about the Peace Corps and life in developing nations. Geography activities include having students compare the life of a teenager living in Paraguay to their own life, reading letters from Peace Corps volunteers to understand more about the culture of Nepal, and learning about economic development in Senegal and preparing a poster talk for classmates. The many social studies and language arts activities here offer students an opportunity to learn more about developing countries.
- Using [primary resources](#)\* from Peace Corps volunteers, have students look more closely at what life is like for a Peace Corps volunteer in a developing country. Online [multimedia](#)\* including podcasts, videos, slideshows and posters are also available for students to learn more about particular countries. Resources on different subjects with a variety of levels of reading difficulty can address the diverse needs of students. Some materials may also be available in the native language of nonnative speakers.

After students hear from the panel of former Peace Corps volunteers and investigate the needs of developing countries via the Internet and text materials, assign teams consisting of four to six students two tasks. Hand out the group process rubric and have students use this as they work as a team throughout the unit. First, teams should come up with a definition of developing country, and second, they should brainstorm the possible needs of developing countries. Students should have one member of their team record the information on chart paper, and another team member present the team's results to the class. Working together in groups can support students with special needs and provide natural opportunities for nonnative speakers to practice their language. After student teams finish their two tasks, come together as a class to share results. Record the results on the board or a large piece of chart paper, documenting each new idea only once.

### **Becoming an Expert: Days 4 through 6**

Prior to beginning this portion of the project, divide the class into committees of four students each or have students self-select their teams. Introduce the project scenario to students as it is described earlier in the unit summary. Have student committees select a country in the Caribbean, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, Africa, Asia, or the Pacific Islands from the pull-down menus of [Peace Corps countries](#)\*. This site gives an idea of some of the issues facing each country, and shows students the problems that volunteer efforts might address in the various regions.

After teams have selected a country, instruct students to gather information via the Internet or library about the country's geography, people, economics, politics, and cultural aspects. Explain that in the final presentation, they will include this contextual information as a part of their presentation.

Explain to students that they will write reflective journal entries on a weekly basis to illustrate their understanding of what they are learning. Ask them to reflect on differences between their country and the country they are investigating. Have students write an entry from the perspective of a student their age in the country they are learning about. Periodically read student journals to see how well students understand the content and redirect teaching as needed.

### **Identifying and Selecting an Issue: Day 7**

After students are familiar with their selected country, ask them to consider the problems that most affect it and where help is needed. Before students select an issue, present the Problems and Projects Activity slideshow. Show the first "problem" slide, have students discuss a possible project that might address the problem and then present the next slide that describes an actual Peace Corps project. Continue with the remaining problem/project slides, and then have student committees work with

their groups to choose an issue they would like to investigate further. Give students the project checklist to help them manage their projects successfully.

### **Study the Issue: Days 8 through 10**

Have country committees consider each problem from more than one angle. Usually the problem and the solution are deeply embedded in larger issues of power, resources, and class stratification. Once their problem is identified, students can look to other countries and agencies to see how the same problem has been addressed. Suggest that students ask experts for help (for example, if the problem is health-related, a committee might talk to a nutritionist or public health worker to get expert advice).

Encourage students to analyze data and look for relationships. The following are some key questions for students to consider as they investigate:

- Do countries with poor access to education also have people going hungry?
- Do countries with a primitive infrastructure (such as bad roads and limited public transportation) have issues related to access to health care?
- How do women's rights affect the economy of the country?
- Are health issues affecting the economy of the country?

This is a great time for students to consider the complexities of the problems people face in our world.

Require each country committee to compose a list of possible solutions to the problem they have chosen to address. Then have pairs of country committees convene to offer peer feedback and suggestions on their respective proposals. Allow one class session for this.

Rotate through groups as they work each day to observe how progress is going, see what questions students might have, and find out what additional support students might need. Take anecdotal notes on individual student progress.

### **Creating a Proposal: Days 11 through 16**

During this time, committees put together their proposals. Using the sample Namibia slideshow presentation, explain the components of the proposal, which include:

- Background on the country (geography, economy, and so forth)
- Explanation of the problem
- Project idea to address the problem
- Estimated budget for carrying out the project

Explain that each section of their final presentation should include graphics, statistics, and visuals that give more information about the problem. Hand out the presentation rubric and explain project expectations to students. Check for understanding and encourage students to use the rubric to guide the creation of their work. Have groups receive peer feedback on their proposals and use the suggestions to improve their final presentation.

Describe the roles for the committee members and have students in each group select one of the following roles:

- **Historian:** Using the research gathered during background studies, the historian determines the most pertinent information to include in the group presentation to the ambassador. The historian's job is to educate others about the people, culture, history, geography, government, and economic situation as these relate to the problem the group is addressing.
- **Sociologist 1 and 2:** The Sociologists work together to write an explanation of the problem the group has chosen to address. The explanation describes the big picture of the problem and includes causes and historical context. The sociologists come up with a way to present the solution and convince the ambassador that the group's project idea deserves funding. The solution includes

information about the roles of both foreign and national volunteers in making the project successful.

- **Economist:** As the number cruncher, the economist's job is to convince the ambassador that the group's project is economically sound. The economist determines the estimated project costs. The projected cost analysis should include materials, labor, transportation costs, and any other projected expenses. The economist figures out the numbers and uses a spreadsheet program to make graphs and charts that support the group's analysis.

### **Presenting the Proposal: Days 17 and 18**

Invite community members (parents, community leaders, building and district administrations, fellow teachers, and so forth) to the meeting. Appoint an "ambassador" from leaders in the community—others can serve as interested "delegates." Have each student group make a 15 to 20 minute presentation. Assess the presentations using the presentation\_rubric. At the end, have the assembly ask questions of the groups, discuss the pros and cons of the projects, and offer advice for making the proposals more effective or practical. Have students revise proposals as needed. Hold teacher conferences with each group to help refine proposals and answer any questions groups might have. Review the final documents using the presentation\_rubric, looking for improvement.

Have students fill out the group process rubric to assess their team participation. Use this peer feedback as well as the presentation rubric to help inform final grades.

### **Hot Topic Essay and Debate: Days 19 through 21**

To give students both a national and an international perspective, discuss the various national service programs in the United States today, such as AmeriCorps, Vista, and Teach for America. Ask students to consider how volunteering in a foreign country would compare to volunteering in the United States. Briefly describe the current debate in the United States over whether national service should be mandatory for every young adult. Explain that President Bush would like to see every American "commit at least two years, or 4,000 hours over the rest of a lifetime, to the service of neighbors and the nation."

Assign readings of your choice that represent different points of view on the topic of national service (in your country as well as others), and have students write a response to the essay question, Should young adults in the United States be required to commit two years of service to the country? Pass out the position paper rubric to help guide student essays. Each essay should include a strong thesis statement and at least three reasons that support the student's point of view. Some students may wish to create a survey to collect information about the views of friends and family on helping developing nations to use in their essays. After students have submitted their position papers, conduct a classroom debate. Encourage students to send their position papers to the editor of the local newspaper to express their opinions about mandatory national service to a real audience.

Revisit the Essential Question, How can individuals make a difference in the world? by referring back to the original chart created at the beginning of the unit. Have students reflect on the Essential Question now that they have had an opportunity to research, create proposals, and hear stories firsthand. Ask students to share how their ideas have changed or remained the same.

### Accommodations for Differentiated Instruction

<b>Special Needs Student</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limit assignment to essential parts</li><li>• Select Internet sites and other research materials appropriate to the student's abilities</li><li>• Set specific due dates at the beginning of the project for each component to assist the student with organization issues</li><li>• Create templates for the student to use for each role</li><li>• Assign student teams so the student with special needs works with a helpful partner</li><li>• Allow extra work completion time if needed</li></ul>
<b>Nonnative Speaker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preselect reading materials for the student</li><li>• If the student comes from a developing country that is served by the Peace Corps, have the student use the country as the basis of the effort</li><li>• Allow extra work completion time if needed</li><li>• Allow the student to write in a reflection journal in the student's native language, which can be translated later</li></ul>
<b>Gifted/Talented Student</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write and present a commercial for a Survivor-type television series that shows people addressing the problem students identified</li><li>• Create a Web site for the projects</li><li>• Submit a written proposal to the National Peace Corps Director in Washington, DC or to a willing, currently serving Peace Corps volunteer regarding a suggested solution to a problem encountered while researching the country</li><li>• Correspond with a Peace Corps volunteer for the purpose of finding out the kind of support materials they could use, solicit donations for their project, and send what you collect</li><li>• Assign supplemental reading about Peace Corps experiences—see <a href="http://www.peacecorpswriters.org">www.peacecorpswriters.org</a>* for possible readings</li></ul>

## Materials and Resources Required For Unit

### Technology – Hardware (Click boxes of all equipment needed)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera              | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Disk                   | <input type="checkbox"/> VCR                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer(s)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Printer                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Video Camera              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Camera      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Projection System | <input type="checkbox"/> Video Conferencing Equip. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DVD Player          | <input type="checkbox"/> Scanner                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet Connection | <input type="checkbox"/> Television                   |  |

### Technology – Software (Click boxes of all software needed.)

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Database/Spreadsheet   | <input type="checkbox"/> Image Processing                | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Page Development       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop Publishing                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Web Browser | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word Processing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E-mail Software        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multimedia           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encyclopedia on CD-ROM |  |   |

### Printed Materials

- Kempf, S. (1997). *Finding solutions to hunger: Kids can make a difference*. New York: World Hunger Year.
- Wheeler, G., Goekler, J. Hibbard, D., Boyd, D. Wondra, M. & Bush, K. (2002). *Facing the future: People and the planet curriculum guide*. Seattle, WA: Facing the Future

### Supplies

### Internet Resources

- Facing the Future  
[www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org)\*  
A set of resources for educators and students focusing on global issues and service learning opportunities
- Peace Corps  
[www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)\*  
The Peace Corps official Web site defining the mission and offering information
- CARE  
[www.care.org](http://www.care.org)\*  
Information about countries being assisted by this humanitarian organization dedicated to fighting global poverty
- Doctors Without Borders  
[www.doctorswithoutborders.org](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org)\*  
Discover events happening in countries around the world served by this volunteer, nonprofit organization providing emergency aid
- Mercy Corps  
[www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)\*  
Explore their worldwide programs and classroom resources
- Cyberschoolbus  
<http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org>\*  
View statistics on United Nations member states

### Other Resources