

## Still Teaching Future Teachers About Hunger

By Ava L. McCall

It's been 11 years since I first began using the *Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make a Difference* hunger curriculum in my social studies methods course for aspiring elementary teachers. During this period, I have taught approximately 425 undergraduate preservice teachers about the importance of addressing the issue of poverty and hunger within our communities as part of the social studies curriculum. For the past four years I have offered "free" copies of the curriculum guide to preservice teachers who are interested in having their own copy to use in their classroom teaching, community work, or with church youth groups. At first, only a few teacher education students requested a copy; now, nearly all do. In addition, they receive the "Finding Solutions Newsletter" which provides additional background on the issue of poverty and hunger and how educators and community activists are addressing the issue in their classrooms and through various projects and organizations in their communities.



Although I have not heard that former preservice teachers from my course are using the curriculum guide in their teaching or volunteer work, I believe at some point in their lives, they will draw on this resource. Poverty and hunger are not going away; in fact, it has become a larger problem in the current economic recession. Furthermore, the issue of poverty and hunger is a very relevant topic for social studies. The elementary social studies curriculum often deals with history, geography, economics, and civics and citizenship, including how people can take civic action to contribute to the well-being of the community or the "common good." The overall goal of social studies is to encourage students to become good citizens. What better way to encourage children to become good citizens than to offer

opportunities for them to become aware of such issues as poverty and hunger in their own communities and how they can help to solve the problems that affect so many people's lives?

Overall, my goal is to encourage preservice teachers to become more knowledgeable about current issues, including the problem of poverty and hunger, how they might teach this issue in elementary and middle school classrooms, and social action projects they might undertake with their students as a result of their study. Could I accomplish this goal without the *Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make a Difference* hunger curriculum, the "Finding Solutions Newsletter," and the regular contact I have with Jane and Larry Levine, the KIDS organization founders, as part of my role as a member of the KIDS Advisory Board? Perhaps I could, but not nearly as well as I am able to with these resources. The curriculum guide provides a solid foundation for my teaching, but the newsletter offers additional ideas and encouragement for my focus on the issue of hunger and curriculum in my social studies methods course.

During the past several years, I have implemented a social action project as part of our study of hunger within the community. In addition to reading about how different members of the community are affected by hunger as described in the curriculum guide, preservice teachers listen to the director of the community pantry describe the problem of hunger within our own community and how the pantry offers some relief to our hungry neighbors. Each semester the community pantry director has spoken to the class, the preservice teachers decide on a social action project to donate money to the pantry. We realize our contribution does not solve the problem of hunger nor some of the root causes, such as increased unemployment, jobs which do not pay a living wage, no universal health care, inadequate supply of good child care, and lack of transportation to jobs. However, we can join with other concerned community members who are taking action on this problem.

Finally, as a board member of the "KIDS" organization, I find great encouragement and support to "keep the faith" on the long, rocky road to help eliminate poverty and hunger in the local community and world, enjoy the journey, and laugh along the way. Jane and Larry Levine may officially be

retired, but their devotion and commitment to the “KIDS” organization exceed a retirement hobby. Their lives are devoted to providing resources and leadership in addressing the problem of poverty and hunger, making connections among people concerned about the same issues, and offering humor in the midst of serious work.

Please pass it on.

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