Root Causes Lesson Plan

Have students **select and research a problem** before pushing them to develop a solution. Let them get comfortable with the problem first. The more familiar they are with the problem, the easier it will be for them to move toward developing a solution.

CHECKPOINT TWO and Overview of Researching the Problem

- ☐ List all of the possible root causes of the problem
- ☐ Research the most probable root cause(s) of your problem
- ☐ Write your research questions:
  - What has happened or is happening regarding __(your problem in specific terms)__?
  - What needs to happen regarding ___ (your problem in specific terms)__?
- ☐ Choose two methods to research your questions
  - Library and/or internet
  - Interviews
  - Survey
  - Collect Existing Data (from an organization that studies or works on this problem)

To guide this process, you may want to use the following worksheet:

In groups of 3-5 people, complete the following. Be prepared to share your highlights of your discussion.

1. Describe the situation.   *What do you see happening? What has happened or is happening regarding __(your problem in specific terms)__?*

    _____
    _____
    _____

2. Identify the problem. *What needs to change?   What needs to happen regarding ___ (your problem in specific terms)__?*

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. Relate the problem to your experience.   *How have you (and others) been impacted?*

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. Analyze the social or cultural reasons for the problem. *Why does this happen? What are the root causes – those situations that contribute to the problem?* **What is the MOST probable root cause?**

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

5. Seek workable solutions. *What can be done to address the root causes?*

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

We recommend conducting three types of fun and interactive research, they include:

1. **Discussion (Identifying Root Causes)**
   a. Participants discuss problems that they see in their community and identify root causes and possible solutions.
2. **Library and Internet**
   a. Research is an important step that is often overlooked. Students, eager to dive into creating their projects, may have the idea that research is boring or pointless. In truth, research can be the most interesting part of the project as students discover different perspectives, useful facts, and incredible stories that make the problem come to life. Research shouldn't be a chore, it should be a quest.
3. **Interview**
4. **Community survey**

Depending on how much time you have, we recommend complete all four types of research.

Discussion (Identifying Root Causes)
Adapted from C5 Youth Foundation "Identifying Community Issues" lesson plan

1. Using the community need or issue selected above, students will study a specific issue in terms of the root causes and recommend actions and activities to address each root cause.
2. Divide the students into 5 person teams. Each team will take an in-depth look at one root cause of the overall topic.
3. "Name" the specific problems that the students see (and experience) in their community. For example, if "smoking" is identified as a problem it's important to be as specific as possible. Ask the students:
   • What *specific* aspect of "smoking" affects you and your community negatively?
   • What is the "real" problem?
      o Is it teen smoking?
      o Smoking in public places?
      o Second hand smoke? The goal is to identify problems that are actionable and understandable in terms of root causes.
4. Give each student a piece of chart paper or space to write. Ask each team to create a web of root causes for their community need or issues.
5. Ask your students to write the problem in the middle of their flip chart paper. Ask them to brainstorm and ultimately to identify the 5-6 root causes social and cultural factors that contribute to the problem – these are the root causes. They could also think about root causes by trying to answer, why does this problem exist? See example below.
6. Group picks the most probable root cause and brainstorms solutions.
7. On a piece of flip chart paper or blackboard, identify name, root causes, and possible solutions. Reconvene as a large group and share these.
8. Explain that community problem solving depends on critical thinking skills. How do individuals and small groups identify where and how to best focus their limited energy and resources to create positive change? Hint: Ask for help.

Root Cause #1

SAMPLE FLIP
CHART
REPORT

Root Cause #2

Root Cause #3

Root Cause #5

Root Cause #4

Possible Solution(s):

- Petition city council for smoke-free zone around rec. center.
- Present concerns about staff as poor role models to rec. center director.
- Get local health center to provide educ. programs at rec. center.