
“Solution Strength Training” Activity

Objective:

- Learn about three methods that citizens can use make change in their communities
- Compare and contrast the methods of change used in an example
- Critically appraise the strengths and weaknesses of the three methods of citizen action
- Generate ways to strengthen their own recommended solutions

7th Grade TEKS:

(23) *Social Studies Skills*. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

- (A) Use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of a solution.

Time: 30 minutes

Audience: Middle School, High School

Materials:

- Barbara Brown Video, streamed via Annette Strauss Institute’s American Trustees video website (<http://communication.utexas.edu/strauss/at/american-trustees-video-collection>)
- Projector and screen
- Computer with fast internet
- White board/chalk board

Set Up:

- Make 3 circle Venn diagram on board
- Label the 3 circles
 - Direct Service / Do-It-Yourself
 - Raising Awareness
 - Advocating for Change of Rules/Policies
- Load Barbara Brown Video on computer

Procedure:

- Explain: Going to watch short video about a real Texas teen and a problem she identified in her community. Try to notice the different methods that this young person uses to make change in her community. We’re going to talk about them afterwards.
- Watch video
- Students list the actions of Barbara Brown
- Discuss the three methods on the diagram
- Discuss where Barbara’s actions fit in the diagram and mark them
- Discuss strengths and weaknesses of each method of making change
- Share example of SUSO project
- Teams form small groups and talk about how the example team could have incorporated other methods into their solution to make it even more effective!
- Report out.
- Generalize:

- This is how change is made in communities. People form coalitions, or groups, and then take these approaches, just like you did.
- What about voting? Where does voting fit into this diagram?

An Example SUSO Project:

Once, a group of students got together and did a SUSO project about the bathrooms at their school. They noticed that their bathrooms seemed like they needed repair work. Many of the toilets didn't flush well, many toilet seats were broken, the soap dispensers didn't work and many sinks leaked. They did a great job of establishing that this was a real problem at their school. They surveyed students and found out that lots of students were not using the bathroom while at school because the facilities felt unclean. The students did some research about the health effects of not using the bathroom for 8 hours – NOT GOOD! They talked to the principal about why the bathrooms were in such bad shape. The principal said that this was because the school district had to build another new school across town and was strapped for cash – didn't have much money to spend on renovating old schools. The students decided that it really was a problem that their bathrooms were in disrepair, and it seemed like the solution would have to involve getting more money for their school district to spend on fixing up schools. After some thinking, they decided on this plan: They would organize a car wash to raise money from community members to buy new toilets.

