TIME SAVER:
Changemaking Action

TIME FOR CHANGE:

DREAM. ACT. CHANGE OUR WORLD.

Your students have learned and practiced Empathy, Teamwork, and Changemaking Leadership. Now it's time to support them in using these abilities to innovate effective and sustainable solutions to problems in their communities. It's time for changemaking action! Sometimes, the hardest part is just getting started. Use this exercise to help students take their first three steps toward changemaking. Note that this is an opportunity to take only the initial steps toward completing a changemaking activity.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP: NEIGHBOURHOOD OR SCHOOL MAPPING

STEP 1

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

1. Divide students into groups of three.
2. Invite students to draw a map of their community, which could be their neighbourhood or school.
3. If students are drawing their school, they should include classrooms, the cafeteria, the library, outdoor areas like fields and tracks, and nearby locations like bus stops and stores. If they're drawing their neighbourhood, they should include all relevant features like bus stops, stores, parks, and buildings. They should draw symbols on the map using the key below and discuss the following questions as they create their map:
   - Who is a part of this neighbourhood or school community?
   - Where do children play? Draw a smiley face to show where they play. ☺
   - Where do people gather? Draw a circle to show where they gather. ◯
   - Where are decisions made? Draw a triangle to show where they make decisions. △
   - What are the assets of this community? This could be in terms of positive places, fun experiences, unique features that make your community special, or something else. Draw a sun to show the community's assets. ☼
   - What are some of the things that could be improved? This could be in terms of safety, cleanliness, equity, accessibility, functionality, appearance, or something else. Draw a cloud to show the areas that could be improved. ☁
4. Each group should identify an area on their map that they want to improve. It could be something that doesn't work well and could be fixed. Or something that is unfair that could be addressed. Or something that works well but could be even better. Allow for brainstorming time!

EXAMPLE: *There's a big crack in the sidewalk outside the school, and kids often trip over it and fall down.*

STEP 2

CONDUCT AN EMPATHY INTERVIEW

Once each group has selected a topic, ask them to identify at least one person who might be affected by the problem they identified. This could be a classmate, friend, family member, or someone else. Each group should prepare 10 questions and then conduct an empathy interview with the person they selected. The empathy interview can be conducted during school or program hours, in the evening, or on the weekend.

What is an empathy interview?

An empathy interview is a way of asking questions that allows the interviewee to share their experiences, feelings, and ideas in a nonjudgmental space. This means asking questions without expecting certain answers and listening with an open mind and heart. Empathy interviews are an important step in changemaking because they help you learn how the problem you identified actually affects the people in the community and allows you to get a broader understanding of the problem.

EXAMPLE:

Find a classmate who has tripped on the crack in the sidewalk and ask them about the experience. Don't make any assumptions about whether they got hurt or think the sidewalk should be fixed. Just ask about their experience and listen to what they say.

Empathy Interview Tips:

Interviewing with empathy is all about...

- **Active listening:** Focus on what the other person is saying without judging or interrupting.
- **Encouraging storytelling:** Instead of asking, "Have you ever ridden the bus before?" try saying, "Tell me about the time you rode the bus. What happened?"
- **Seeking clarity:** If something the person says doesn't make sense to you, ask, "What do you mean by...?" or "Can you tell me more about...?"
- **Avoiding yes or no questions:** Instead, try *who, what, when, where,* and *why* questions.
- **Taking notes:** After you have received permission, take notes so you can remember the details of your conversation later.

Learn more about conducting empathy interviews here.

Examples of Empathy Interview Questions:

- How long have you been a part of this neighbourhood or school community?
- What changes have you seen in this neighbourhood or school community recently?
- What changes would you like to see in this neighbourhood or school? Why?
- What is the greatest asset of this neighbourhood or school?
- What is the greatest challenge of this neighbourhood or school?
- Describe a time when you faced this problem. What happened? How did it feel?
- If you were going to solve this problem, what would you do?
- How would your life be different if the problem were addressed? How would you feel if the problem were addressed?

STEP 3

CREATE A PLAN

After they have gathered information, have each group determine the **first three steps** needed to get their idea off the ground to create a sustainable, positive change.

What are your next three steps?

1. Our first step is_____.
2. Our second step is _____.
3. Our third step is _____.

If students need ideas for their first three steps, suggest keeping the steps simple and actionable. Examples include researching online, journaling, building a team interested in solving the problem, conducting additional interviews, and getting advice from adults like teachers and parents.

EXAMPLE:

Create a survey about the crack in the sidewalk. Then ask your teacher or the principal for help distributing the survey. Once you have the results, make an appointment to talk to the principal. Explain that 20 students have tripped in the last month, and 3 students twisted their ankles. Then ask an adult ally or do research to find out who is in charge of the sidewalk. Is it the school? The city? The district?

Our first step is to create a survey.

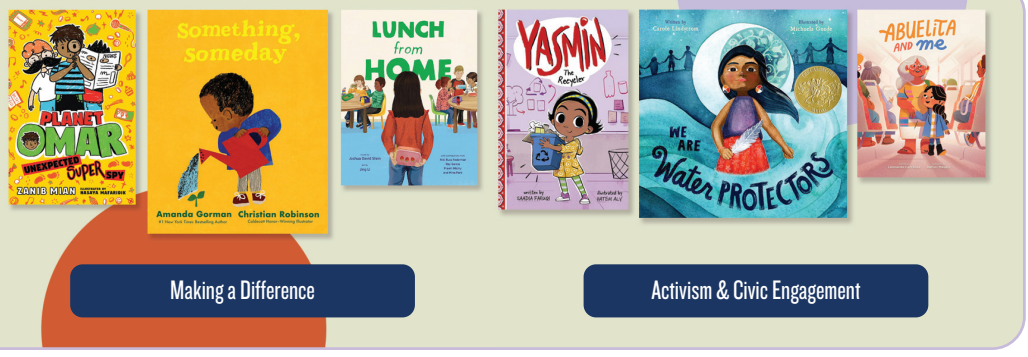
Our second step is to ask the teacher or principal for help distributing the survey.

Our third step is to make an appointment to talk to the principal about the results.

Class Discussion

Ask groups to present their maps and interview findings. Then, discuss the following as a large group:

- What community did you choose to focus on? Who is a part of that community?
- What positive places or features did you identify? What problems or areas for improvement did you identify?
- What did you learn from your empathy interview? How did it feel to talk to someone about this topic?
- **Now that you have thought deeply about your community and how to go about improving it, what, specifically, are you going to do next?**

Share Stories of Changemakers in Action

For more information about Changemaking, visit the First Book Canada website.