

# The Opportunity

## To make a difference

In Peggy Moses' sixth-grade class at Prairie Park Elementary School in Lawrence, Kan., *The American Promise* was used as the theme in all academic subjects for the entire nine-week first quarter. Each week, the students saw one "act" of the series, then discussed the themes and stories.

During the quarter, each student chose a topic to research. Two students decided to interview Shirley Quarmyne, who appears in *Responsibility*. After being contacted by the students, Quarmyne talked to the entire class. Says Moses, "Shirley spoke with us for quite a long time and the conversation was powerful and real. She helped my class to feel that we truly can make a difference, just as she did, by pursuing cracks in the sys-

tem and improving the odds for homeless people as they try to make positive changes in their lives."

The theme of citizenship is spilling over to the rest of the school year. After hearing from a spokesperson for a volunteer center, the class decided to create a volunteering plan for each month of the school year.

Even their class meetings have

changed for the better, says Moses. After they saw the young people in Y.E.S. (Youth for Environmental Sanity) use hand signals to monitor their meetings, the students adopted the signals to use in their own class meetings. According to Moses, using the signals encourages active participation, cooperation, and even risk-taking.

*"With support from The American Promise, the students in my classroom have not only learned about democracy, they have also become responsible citizens with skills to make decisions and the confidence to implement their ideas on real issues that affect our community and our world."*

—Peggy Moses

# The Global Economy

## Our interdependent world

America is part of a world economy. Many students are not aware of how interdependent our global economy is. Here's one way that Steve Shake, a geography teacher at Jefferson Junior High in Caldwell, Idaho, teaches his students about the global economy by having them read the labels on their clothing. As a homework assignment, ask students to check their shoes

and clothing (at least five pieces) for where they were manufactured. Ask them to prepare a list of the items of clothing and their place of origin.

The next day, compile a class list on the board, sorting items by continent of origin. Which continent has the most export nations? Which has the least?

Follow up by discussing why Americans buy so many imported goods.

shoes	Portugal
shirt	Korea
t-shirt	U.S.A.
pants	Lesotho
sweater	Bangladesh

## Class Meetings

In a small group, students solve problems and solve class problems. The teacher sets basic rules for meetings, such as meetings with 10th grade.

1. Start with a compliment. It puts everyone in a positive, problem-solving frame of mind.
2. Make a short agenda. Limit the agenda to five problem items. This helps students keep their focus.
3. The first time a problem arises, the person who created it can choose the strategy to solve it. The second time it comes up, the class chooses the solution strategy. The third time it comes up, the teacher chooses the strategy.