

Chapter 5

Grade Two – People Who Make a Difference

- How do families remember their past?
- Why do people move?
- How can we best describe California?
- How do governments work?
- What makes someone heroic?

Students in the second grade are ready to learn about people who make a difference in their own lives and who have made a difference in the past. They develop their own identities as people who have places in their communities. Students start their study of people who make a difference by studying the families and people they know. Students themselves can make a difference by engaging in service-learning to improve their schools or communities. Teachers should also work collaboratively with their colleagues who teach kindergarten and grades one and three to avoid repetition, as the content themes they begin in kindergarten, such as understanding of and appreciation for American culture and government, geographic awareness, and starting in grade one, economic reasoning, serve as a multi-grade strand that can allow for an extended and relatively in-depth course of study.

Families Today and in the Past

In Standard 2.1, students develop a beginning sense of history through the study of the family, a topic that is understandable and interesting to them. Students are introduced to primary sources related to family history including photographs, family trees, artifacts, and oral histories, in response to the question, **How do families remember their past?** Students engage in the study the history of a family and may construct a history of their own family, a relative's or neighbor's family, or a family from books. Through studying the stories of a very diverse collection of families, such as immigrant families, families with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender parents and their children, families of color, step- and blended families, families headed by single parents, extended families, multi-generational families, families with disabled members, families from different religious traditions, and adoptive families, students can both locate themselves and their own families in history and learn about the lives and historical struggles of their peers. In developing these activities, teachers should not assume any particular family structure and ask questions in a way that will easily include children from diverse

family backgrounds. They need to be sensitive to family diversity and privacy, and to protect the wishes of students and parents who prefer not to participate.

Members of students' families can be invited to tell about the experiences of their families. Literature and informational texts may be shared to spark inquiry and help students acquire deeper insights into life in the past and the cultures from which the families came; the stories, games, and festivals parents or grandparents might have enjoyed as children; the work that students as well as their families would have been expected to do; their religious practices; and the dress, manners, and morals expected of family members at that time. Students are encouraged to compare and contrast their daily lives with those of families who have lived in the past. To deepen student understanding and engagement, students can read *When I was Little* by Toyomi Igus, *Dear Juno* by Soyung Pak, *The Boy with Long Hair* by Pushpinder (Kaur) Singh, and *In Our Mother's House* by Patricia Polacco.

To develop the concept of chronological thinking, students may construct timelines of their school day and important events in their lives. To culminate this unit of study, students may interview older adults or family members about life in the past and then create a timeline of the person's life.

Geography and Mapping Skills: People, Places, and Environments

In Standard 2.2, students learn to describe the absolute and relative locations of people, places, and environments. Students learn to locate specific locations and geographic features in their neighborhood or community using a simple letter-number grid system. Maps should be utilized frequently to provide practice in the use of map elements such as title, legend, directional indicator, scale, and date. Students demonstrate their developing spatial thinking skills and concepts by labeling a North American map with the names of countries, oceans, great lakes, major rivers, and mountain ranges.

Students may utilize world maps to locate places of family origin as part of the study of family history in Standard 2.1 in response to the question, **Why do people move?** This allows the geographic theme of movement to be explored—why people move from place to place, as well as how and why they made the trip. Students gather evidence about the reasons and ways in which people move, by interviewing family members and neighbors, sharing their interviews with each other, and by reading historical fiction and nonfiction accounts of immigration experiences. Historical fiction books such as *Watch the Stars Come Out*, by Riki Levinson, and *The Long Way to a New Land*, by Joan Sandin, allow students to draw comparisons between their families' immigration stories and those of

other people in other times.

Students also compare and contrast basic land use in urban, suburban, and rural environments in California. Maps, photographs, informational books, and Web resources provide evidence of differences in and environmental impacts of land use and help students answer the question, **How can we best describe California?** This standard may be explored as part of the study of farming and moving food from the farm to the market in Standard 2.4.

Government Institutions and Practices

In Standard 2.3, students learn about governmental institutions and practices in the United States and other countries. Students continue to develop their understanding of rules and laws, the role of government, and rights and responsibilities by considering the question, How does government work? To help students deepen their understanding of these concepts, informational books about government and the three branches of government, such as *Our Government: The Three Branches* by Shelly Buchanan and may be utilized. Teachers may carry out a classroom simulation of the three branches of government to teach this concept as well as use literature books such as *House Mouse Senate Mouse* and other books in the series by Cheryl Shaw Barnes and Peter W. Barnes that explain the branches of government in a developmentally appropriate manner. To learn the ways in which groups and nations interact with one another and resolve their problems, the teacher may relate these concepts to familial and classroom rules and structures and how problems are solved in these more familiar settings.

Teachers can also discuss situations in which rules are important at home, at school, in the city, in the state, and in the country and then ask students to explain what happens if someone on the playground refuses to play a game by the rules. Students can select one rule and use language arts skills to create a story about why this rule is important and how life would be different without it. Teachers can discuss school rules with students and how school rules are made. Students use analytic skills to consider questions such as: is the school too large for everyone to discuss and vote on a decision? Students can discuss the major things governments do in the school, community, state, and nation and give a basic description of government at the end of the year.

Economics: People Who Supply Our Goods and Services

Standard 2.4 develops students' economic literacy and appreciation of the many people who work

to supply the products they use. Emphasis in this unit is given to those who supply food: people who grow and harvest crops such as wheat, vegetables, and fruit; workers who supply dairy products such as milk, butter, and cheese; and processors and distributors who move the food from farm to market. Throughout this study, students learn basic economic concepts of human wants, scarcity, and choice; the importance of specialization in work today. In addition, students consider the interdependence of consumers, producers, processors, and distributors in bringing food to market. Students also develop an understanding of their roles as consumers in a complex economy. *Ox-Cart Man* by Donald Hall is an engaging read that can help students develop their understanding of these economic concepts.

To engage students' interest and to help them develop an understanding of the complex interdependence among the many workers in the food industry and how it functions the way it does, graphic organizers or flow charts may be used to illustrate these relationships. Climate and geography affect the crops farmers grow, how farmers protect their crops against frosts or drought, the importance of water, and how irrigation systems work, and how workers are necessary at each of these steps. Students can observe the many linkages between their homes, the markets that supply their food, the places where people work to produce their food, and the transportation systems that move these products from farm to processor to market. Field trips to local businesses and books such as *From Wheat to Pasta* by Robert Egan, *From Cow to Ice Cream* by Bertram T. Knight, or *Farming* by Gail Gibbons are helpful for illustrating the concepts and provide models for students to write their own informational/explanatory texts.

Applying what they know about natural systems and food production, students can focus on strawberries, a major California crop, to learn about the interdependence of producers and consumers in the economic system. (California Environmental Principle I, EEI Curriculum Unit: The Dollars and Sense of Food Production 2.4.2–2.4.3.)

Biographies: People Who Made a Difference

In Standard 2.5, students will be introduced to the many people, ordinary and extraordinary, who have contributed to their lives and made a difference. The teacher may pose a question such as, **What makes someone heroic?** or “Who are some people who have made a difference in our lives?” A picture book, such as *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni, introduces students to an ordinary person, Rosa Parks, whose actions made a tremendous difference in the lives of others. Students learn about a variety of men, women and children whose contributions can be appreciated by young children and whose achievements have directly or indirectly touched the students' lives or the lives of others. Included, for

example, are scientists such as George Washington Carver, Marie Sklodowska Curie, Albert Einstein, Louis Pasteur, Jonas Salk, Charles Drew, and Thomas Edison; authors; musicians, artists and athletes, such as Jackie Robinson and Wilma Rudolph; and humanitarians like Clara Barton, Jane Addams, Henri Dunant, and Florence Nightingale. Teachers may read biographies aloud as well as utilize biographies written at a variety of reading levels, such as the Rookie Biography series, for students to read independently. As students meet these heroes from long ago and the recent past, they understand the importance of individual action and character in one's life. As students identify and discuss the skills and knowledge that helped these people achieve their goals, they have opportunities to cite textual evidence, write informational reports, and create presentations.

**Grade Two Classroom Example: Heroes Making A Difference
(Designated ELD Connected to History/Social Studies)**

In social studies, Mr. Torres's class is learning about the importance of individual action and character and how heroes from long ago and the recent past have made a difference in others' lives (e.g., Dolores Huerta, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, Yuri Kochiyama, Martin Luther King, Jr.). Mr. Torres takes care to emphasize historical figures that reflect his students' diverse backgrounds. The class reads biographies of the heroes, views multimedia about them, and discusses the details of their lives and their contributions to society. Ultimately, they will write opinion pieces about a hero they select.

During designated ELD, Mr. Torres selects some of the general academic vocabulary used in many of the biographies to teach his ELs at the Emerging level of English language proficiency during designated ELD. These are words that he would like for students to internalize so that they can use them in their discussions, oral presentations, and writing about the civil rights heroes, and he knows he needs to spend some focused time on the words so that his ELs will feel confident using them. For example, to teach the general academic vocabulary word *courageous*, Mr. Torres reminds the students where they encountered the word (in the biography they read that morning), provides them with a student-friendly definition (e.g., when you're courageous, you do or say something, even though it's scary), and models how to use the word through multiple examples (e.g., Dolores Huerta was courageous because she protested for people's rights, even when it was difficult). He then assists the students in using the word in a structured exchange with a prompt that promotes thinking and discussion (e.g., How are you courageous at school? Be sure to provide a

good reason to support your opinion). He provides a strategically designed open sentence frame that contains the general academic word so that students will be sure to use it meaningfully (e.g., At school, I'm *courageous* when ____). He prompts the students to share their responses in pairs and then to ask one another follow up questions that begin with the words *why*, *when*, *what*, *who* and *how*.

In social studies and ELA, Mr. Torres intentionally uses the words he is teaching his students during designated ELD so that his EL students will hear the words used multiple times in multiple situations, and he encourages the students to use the words in their speaking and writing about the heroes they are learning about.

CA ELD Standards (Emerging): ELD.PI.2.1, 5, 11, 12b; ELD.PII.2.5

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: SL.2.6, L.2.5, 6

CA HSS Content Standards: 2.5

Students can also make a difference. Students can work together in groups to brainstorm problems that exist at their school and in their community, such as litter or bullying. Students can evaluate and vote on a solution, which for litter might include hosting a clean-up day, increasing recycling, or working to change a rule. Students can create a plan and work in teams to carry it out. Together they can then evaluate their effectiveness. For example, is there less litter? Teachers can invite community members who are making a difference on issues important in the students' lives as guest speakers or partners in student projects to make their communities a better place to live. By meeting local "heroes," students will have role models from their own communities who are making a difference.