OVERVIEW OF THE SOLUTIONARY FRAMEWORK

The Solutionary Framework
A four-phase process people can use to become solutionaries

I. IDENTIFY

1. Select a big issue to learn more about

2. Identify the problem you want to solve

3. Write your problem statement and initial questions to guide your investigation

II. INVESTIGATE

4. Deepen understanding through collecting/analyzing data, and connecting with stakeholders

5. Use systems thinking to investigate the impacts and causes of the problem

6. Research what has been done to solve the problem thus far

III. INNOVATE

7. Identify leverage points where you can take action and brainstorm possible solutions

8. Choose the solution that addresses the causes of the problem, does the most good and least harm to people, animals, and the environment, and is feasible to implement

9. Create a plan to implement your solution

IV. IMPLEMENT

10. Implement an actionable element of your solution

11. Share your solutionary work with others

12. Assess, reflect, and celebrate

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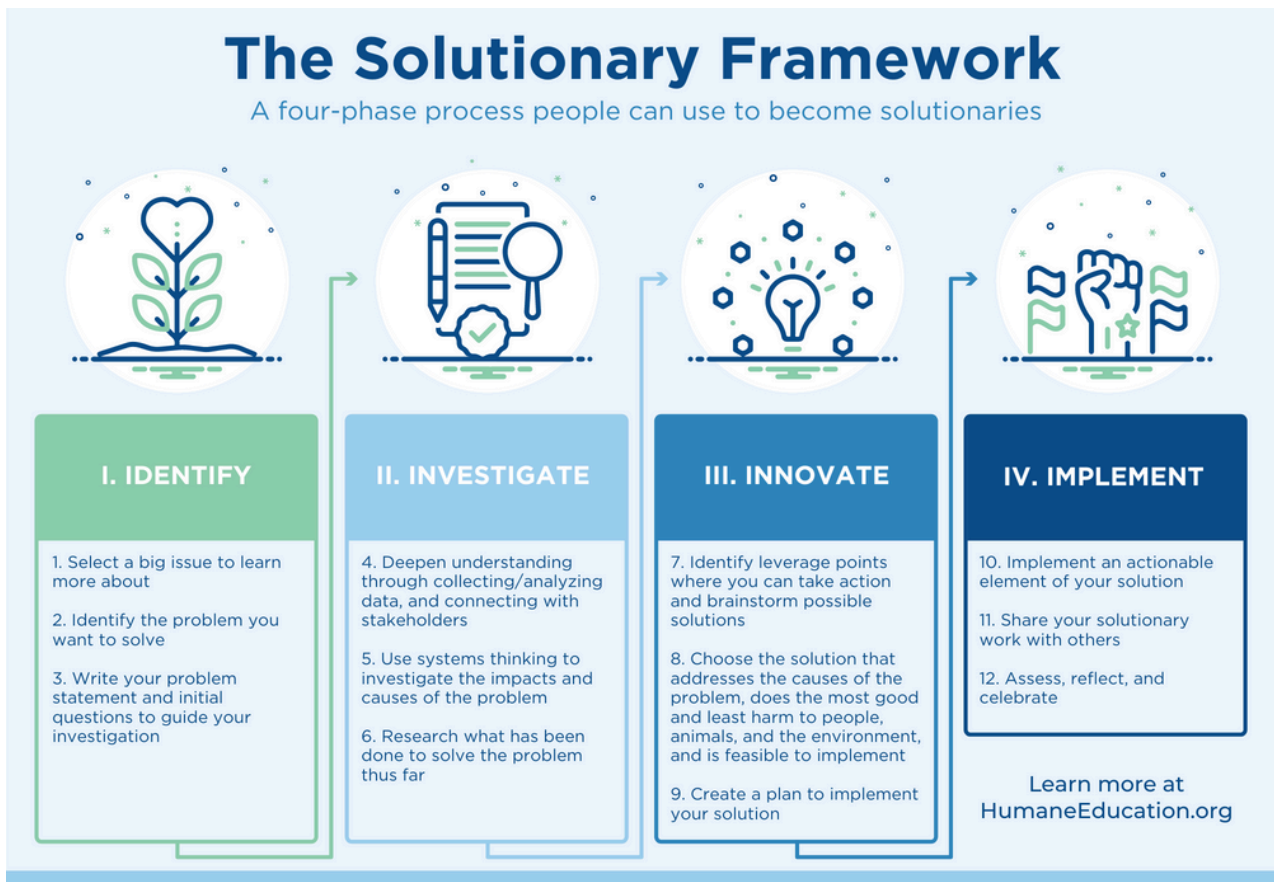
INTRODUCTION: FOSTER COMPASSION, CURIOSITY, AND INSPIRATION

Teaching the Solutionary Framework successfully is dependent on establishing a classroom that fosters a culture of **curiosity** and **compassion**, and **inspires** students to engage and act.

Curiosity: If visitors were to come to such a class they should be able to see and hear that curiosity. They'd observe open dialogue and active listening with students asking thoughtful questions and wondering how things work, why things happen, and how things came to be. They'd see issues related to the classroom community, the larger community, and the world explored and discussed. They'd notice students questioning the reliability of sources and determining facts through careful research. They'd witness students striving to understand multiple perspectives in relation to what they were learning about.

Compassion: Similarly, it would be obvious that compassion is a core value in the class, shown repeatedly through students' actions, questions, and desire to

understand. Students would demonstrate empathy toward people, animals, and the environment as they sought to uncover the challenges being faced and/or the suffering that is being endured.

Inspiration to Act: Inspiration is also a key component of this work. To inspire students to believe that they can have an impact, teachers will want to share examples of young people making a positive difference in their schools and communities, and young changemakers working on social or environmental issues. Celebrating success along the way is also important to motivate students to dig into the work, to track their progress, and to help them persevere when they encounter setbacks and obstacles.

When educators establish a respectful, collaborative, compassionate and inquiry-based classroom environment, there is fertile ground for solutionary teaching and learning to take root. **Teachers will want to continue to actively foster compassion, curiosity, and inspiration as they guide students through the four phases of the Solutionary Framework.**

SOLUTIONARY FRAMEWORK: PHASE 1

I. IDENTIFY

1. Select a BIG issue to learn more about.
Choose an issue that you feel passionate about, and that you feel is worth putting effort into solving. This can be an issue that you have personally experienced or that has affected someone close to you. Select an issue that fills you with concern. Start to learn about the issue using reliable sources of information.

2. Identify the problem you want to solve.
While exploring the big issue, pay attention to what you already know, what you wonder about, what you are learning, and what questions arise for you as you learn more. Think about local manifestations of the big issue and also what feels like a reasonable and feasible aspect of the problem to solve. When you have a good understanding of the issue and its manifestations, identify a specific and/or localized aspect of the problem that is reasonable for you to address.

3. Write your problem statement and guiding questions.
Describe the problem in a clear, succinct statement. Then, write a set of questions to guide your investigation into the problem. Questions could include: "WHY does [this problem happen or persist]....or HOW could we mitigate [this problem]? The questions should focus on what you need to find out.

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SOLUTIONARY FRAMEWORK: PHASE 2

II. INVESTIGATE

4. Deepen understanding through collecting/analyzing data, and connecting with stakeholders.

To develop a deep understanding of the problem as it exists in your community, you will want to talk to stakeholders with multiple perspectives and you may realize that you need to collect and analyze data. Stakeholders include all people, animals, and aspects of the environment harmed by the problem, as well as those who benefit from the problem or may be invested in systems that keep the problem in place. Connect with and/or collect data from as many stakeholders as you can! Note: There are many experts and advocates with whom you can speak to understand impacts of the problem on animals and the environment.

5. Use systems thinking to investigate the impacts and causes of the problem.

You will want to closely investigate and examine the causes and impacts of the problem with regard to people, animals and the environment. Then, use a systems thinking methodology (e.g., an Iceberg Model) to understand the societal systems that are perpetuating the problem, as well as the deeper causes– beliefs, mindsets, values, etc. – that create and maintain those systems.

6. Research what has been done to solve the problem thus far.

Investigate the different solutions that have already been tried. What's worked? What's failed? Who is harmed and who benefits? Are there unintended consequences? What great ideas could be improved upon? What systems are preventing potential solutions from spreading widely and becoming fully implemented?

SOLUTIONARY FRAMEWORK: PHASE 3

III. INNOVATE

7. Identify leverage points where you can take action and brainstorm possible solutions.

Based on your systems analysis, identify multiple leverage points where an action you could take would have a significant positive effect. Brainstorm ideas for possible solutions to the problem that address each of the leverage points you selected. What could you do to reduce, avoid or mitigate the problem? How can you take action in a way that would actually create a change in what is happening, how people think, or how a system works?

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8. Choose the solution that addresses the causes of the problem, does the most good and least harm to people, animals, and the environment, and is feasible to implement.

Evaluate the degree to which your ideas (a) address deep or root causes of the problem so it won't continue to be a problem AND (b) do the most good and least harm to people, animals and the environment. You do not want to take an action that results in unintended negative consequences to any groups or individuals, whether human or nonhuman. After evaluating how solutionary your ideas are, choose an action that you can take that is both (a) highly solutionary and also (b) practical for implementation. Note: It might be the case that it is only feasible to implement an aspect of your "most solutionary" idea.

9. Create an action plan.

Develop your implementation plan. Remember to get feedback from stakeholders about your proposed solution and plan to make sure you are on the right track.

SOLUTIONARY FRAMEWORK: PHASE 4

IV. IMPLEMENT

10. Implement an actionable element of your solution.

It is time to take informed action! Implement your solution to the greatest degree possible given the constraints you face (time, resources, support.)

11. Share your solutionary work with others.

Share your work with others in the school, to community members, to elected officials, or in a public forum such as a Solutionary Fair or Solutionary Summit.

12. Assess, reflect, and celebrate.

We all become better solutionaries when we carefully evaluate the impact of our solutions, reflect on successes (as well as our failures), and give suggestions to others who might want to work on the same problem. Take time to reflect, collect meaningful feedback and data, and remember to celebrate!

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