

# TEACHER GUIDE

## Noah's Ark at the Skirball™

Pre-K–Grade 2 School Tour



A Program of the Education Department  
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**Skirball**   
Cultural Center

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# WELCOME

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Skirball Cultural Center! On your school tour of Noah's Ark at the Skirball, you and your students will bring to life one of the world's most well-known stories—one of people and animals experiencing a great flood, creating shelter and community, and finally seeing a rainbow, a symbolic second chance to preserve and improve the world. Storms, Arks, and Rainbows are the “chapters” of our Noah's Ark exhibition. By working together and caring for each other, your class will experience the values of weathering life's storms and building a better world.

## ABOUT THE SKIRBALL

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

## PRE-VISIT CHECKLIST

Before you arrive at the Skirball, please make sure you complete each of the following:

- Print a complete list of student names in case of an emergency.
- Create a readable nametag for each student.
- If your group is larger than thirty students, divide the students into three even groups: Owls, Coyotes, and Elephants.
- Be sure that you have one adult (teacher or chaperone) for every ten students. The maximum number of adults admitted is ten (teachers and chaperones combined).
- Be ready to join the fun! Teachers and chaperones, tuck phones away, unplug, and be active participants with your students. If you need to make a call or check messages during the program, feel free to briefly step away. Otherwise, please always remain with your group in case of an emergency.
- Visit our [FAQ webpage](#) for more information. The Skirball welcomes students of all learning abilities with an ever-expanding list of amenities and services, such as sensory bags and noise-dampening headphones. Please email [education@skirball.org](mailto:education@skirball.org) to request any accommodations.



# BIG IDEAS

COLLABORATION  
COMMUNITY  
CREATIVITY  
DIVERSITY

RECYCLING  
RESPONSIBILITY  
SECOND CHANCES  
SHARING

STEWARDSHIP  
STORYTELLING

## PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT

Before you arrive at the Skirball, familiarize your students with what they can expect during each of the three chapters of Noah's Ark. Then watch this [introductory video](#) about Noah's Ark.

### Storms

Listen and look for changes in the weather. The animals know a great storm is coming, and they are moving to find a safe place.

- Work together to create the storm.
- Collaborate to help finish building the Ark.
- Load up the animals two by two.

### Arks

It is time to get on board the Ark! So move on in, unpack, and explore.

- Climb into the crates to see what the animals are taking on their journey.
- Bring the animals to life using puppetry.
- Work as a team to keep the Ark clean, safe, and peaceful.
- Comfort the animals by cleaning up, feeding, and taking care of them.

### Rainbows

The storm has stopped, and the land is dry. You made it! Look for a sign of hope in the sky. Now is the time to celebrate, innovate, and make the world better together.

- Celebrate the journey by making music with instruments from cultures all over the world.
- Move like the animals under the rainbow.
- Continue making our world a better place!



# LESSON PLAN: COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Duration: 20–40 minutes

### Supplies

- A meaningful object

### Big Ideas

COLLABORATION  
COMMUNITY

SHARING  
STORYTELLING

**Tour Connections:** Use this lesson to reflect on the themes explored during the Noah’s Ark tour: Storms, Arks, and Rainbows. Each chapter introduces different concepts and activities, from working together to overcome challenges, to learning to live as a community, to looking closely to discover something new. Using “council” is a great way to practice community building, listening skills, and public speaking while reflecting on shared experiences.

**Objective:** Introduce the concept of council: a powerful social and emotional learning strategy that promotes an environment of trust and respect in the classroom. Council is a mindful practice that invites students to share personal experiences, memories, and feelings with each other by actively listening and speaking honestly. Council helps students become more aware of themselves, while also establishing connections and appreciation of differences among their peers.

**Set-Up:** On the floor, create a space that is open, nurturing, and without interruption, where students can sit together in a circle.

### Instructions:

- Students and teachers will sit in a circle. The facilitator will present the talking piece and explain that only the person holding the talking piece may speak, while everyone else will listen.
- The facilitator will share the council agreements: that the students will speak and listen from the heart, be respectful of one another, and keep an open mind.
- The facilitator will give a council prompt that allows students to make personal connections to the Noah’s Ark tour concepts and themes. For example, “Share a time when you made a new friend.” Students will have a moment to think of a story, and then they will be asked to share by using one sentence once they receive the talking piece. (Note: The response can be modified for different age levels; students can share one word or phrase, or briefly retell the story.)
- At the end of the sharing round, the facilitator will point out the similarities or diversity in students’ stories. For example, “I heard many different ways of making friends in your stories—over a meal, on the playground, by helping one another, etc. The animals on Noah’s Ark might have also made friends at meals, while playing, and working together.” These connections allow students to get to know their classmates better while also understanding the context of the Noah’s Ark story. Council can also be used in the classroom to better understand course content and/or to resolve conflict.
- End your council with a closing gesture (e.g., a group thank you, cheer, or moment of silence).

## Vocabulary:

**Talking piece:** A meaningful object passed around between participants to identify whose turn it is to speak.

**Council agreements:** Guidelines that all participants promise to keep during the exercise, such as speaking from the heart, listening with the heart, being respectful and open-minded, and keeping answers as short as possible.

**Council prompt:** A simple instruction to encourage participants to reflect on the past, express themselves in the present, and view the future. Prompts often begin with phrases like “Tell the council about a time when ... ” or “Tell a story of a time ... ”

## Sample Prompts:

### Storms

- “In one word, tell council about a time when you experienced a storm.”
- “Tell a story of a time when you had to do something that was challenging or difficult.”

### Arks

- “In one word, share a story about when you made a new friend.”
- “Tell council about a time you went on a trip.”

### Rainbows

- “In one word, tell council about a time you celebrated something.”
- “Share a story about a time you celebrated someone else.”

**Reflection:** Council can be followed by an art project or physical activity to further explore the stories and experience students shared. Drawing, painting, and movement activities give students opportunities to express their thoughts and experiences of council in other ways.



# LESSON PLAN: BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Duration: 20–45 minutes

### Supplies

- “Kids in Action” service-learning article
- “Build a Better World Brainstorm” handout
- “How Our Class Will Build a Better World” handout
- Markers/pencils

### Big Ideas

COLLABORATION  
COMMUNITY  
CREATIVITY  
STEWARDSHIP

Following your Noah’s Ark school tour, this lesson will invite students to think in greater depth about how individuals and communities make an impact on the world and one another and what they specifically can do to improve the world around them.

**Objective:** Students will brainstorm with their classmates about problems they would like to solve in the classroom, school, or community. Teachers will help weigh the importance, feasibility, complexity, and impact of a variety of ideas in order to choose which one they will work on collectively.



## Instructions:

1. Ask students to share what they remember from the Noah's Ark school tour. Facilitate an open discussion about the many ways they were able to help each other and the animals while on the tour.
2. Share some of the highlights from the "Kids in Action" service-learning article, which showcases local schools and student-created service-learning projects.
3. Discuss with your students how they would like to build a better world. Brainstorm what issues they are interested in addressing. The following are potential areas where your students can make an impact:
  - helping others and showing kindness (sending "postcards of positivity" or notes of gratitude to parents/grandparents or initiating a donation drive of books, clothing, food, etc.);
  - taking care of the environment (recycling, cleaning up the beach, planting a garden, etc.);
  - helping animals or wildlife (raising awareness or supporting local organizations);
  - making the classroom or school more beautiful in big or small ways.
4. Provide students with the "Build a Better World Brainstorm" handout and give them time to write and draw one idea for a project that will help build a better world.
5. As a class, choose one project to do together and fill out the "How Our Class Will Build a Better World" handout.
6. Set a deadline, and build a better world!

**Reflection:** Ask your students, "Why is it important to [help others/take care of the environment/comfort animals/etc.]." Discuss how their actions are making a difference.

We always love seeing the impact of the Noah's Ark tour and the ways your students continue making our world a better place. Feel free to share photos, videos, student writing and drawing, or other projects by emailing [buildabetterworld@skirball.org](mailto:buildabetterworld@skirball.org).



# KIDS IN ACTION

The Noah's Ark Build a Better World school program teaches our youngest visitors about empathy and civic responsibility. Each Grade 2 school tour includes a service-learning project focused on one of three themes: helping people in need, taking care of the earth, or comforting animals. Teachers and students then return to their classrooms and create a project of their own. Read on to find out how participating schools helped build a better world!

## Buchanan Street Elementary

Second grade students at Buchanan Street Elementary sold candy grams for fifty cents apiece. In total, they raised \$300 to donate to the [Pasadena Humane Society!](#)

## Beethoven Street Elementary

Beethoven Street Elementary students helped beautify their campus by creating a welcome banner for their auditorium and maintaining their community garden. They further shared their artistry by creating birthday cards for a local senior center.

## Budlong Avenue Elementary

After seeing the repurposed materials used to create the animals aboard Noah's Ark, first graders at Budlong Avenue Elementary created their very own upcycled animals out of items from home. Students then wrote a narrative story, informative article, and opinion piece about their animal.

## Clover Avenue Elementary

Four second-grade classes at Clover Avenue Elementary led a school-wide sock drive, donating more than 180 pairs of socks to [Chrysalis](#), a nonprofit dedicated to helping homeless individuals find and retain employment. Students also created "postcards of positivity," filled with messages of encouragement and support for Chrysalis participants.

## Shirley Avenue Elementary

Shirley Avenue Elementary second graders raised money to adopt AJ the dolphin from the Dolphin Research Center in Florida. This money will provide food, medical care, and maintenance of its beautiful seawater habitat.





Clover Avenue Elementary

## Woodlake Avenue Elementary

Students at Woodlake Avenue Elementary created “comfort bags” for families at LA Family Housing. They filled these bags with donated hygiene items and decorated them with messages of hope and encouragement. Read more about this project and LA Family Housing [here](#).

## BuFord Elementary

BuFord Elementary students studied the environmental impact of plastic straws and created posters to educate their peers, families, and school district. They even made a presentation to the district head of Child Nutrition Services, who pledged to reduce the amount of plastic bags and straws at their school!

## Vena Avenue Elementary School

Vena Avenue Elementary School students created their own motivational artwork—including comic strips, informational pamphlets, and videos—to raise awareness about Monarch butterflies, pesticide use, and the benefits of planting native species. Students then visited the **Theodore Payne Foundation**, where they became “naturalists” who collected information and examined plant life using microscopes, magnifying glasses, and even sometimes their own taste buds!

## Edison Language Academy

As part of their Kindness and Justice Challenge, second graders at Edison Language Academy made Valentine’s Day notes for **The People Concern** in Santa Monica, an organization that provides services to people experiencing homelessness. Staff from The People Concern visited their classroom to share information about homelessness in their community, and students further explored ways they could support people in need.

## Tarzana Elementary

Inspired by the animals aboard Noah’s Ark, second grade students from Tarzana Elementary collected plastic water bottles and aluminum cans. By recycling these items, they raised thirty dollars to donate to the Monterey Park LAMP Optimist Club’s disaster relief fund.

## Norwood Street Elementary

Norwood Street Elementary first graders made cat and dog toys from recycled materials, such as baby socks filled with catnip and plastic water bottles. Students delivered these creative toys, along with donated supplies, to the animals at the South LA City Animal Shelter.

# BUILD A BETTER WORLD BRAINSTORM

Name:

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My idea for building a better world is:

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Here is a drawing of what I will do to make the world a better place:

A large dashed red rectangular box intended for drawing a picture related to the brainstorming idea.

# HOW OUR CLASS WILL BUILD A BETTER WORLD

**We, the students of**

---

[name of teacher(s)]

**From**

---

[name of school]

**have this goal to help make the world a better place:**



**We have these ideas for getting started:**

1. 

---

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2. 

---

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3. 

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# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

## **Children's Hospital Los Angeles | [chla.org](http://chla.org)**

Dating back to 1901, Children's Hospital Los Angeles is the first and largest pediatric hospital in Southern California. CHLA provides compassionate patient care, leading-edge education of the caregivers of tomorrow, and innovative research efforts that impact children at their hospital and around the world.

## **Chrysalis | [changelives.org](http://changelives.org)**

Chrysalis is an LA-based nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a pathway to self-sufficiency for homeless and low-income individuals by providing the resources and support needed to find and retain employment. Since 1984, Chrysalis has served more than 58,000 low-income and homeless individuals.

## **Heaven on Earth Society for Animals | [heavenlypets.org](http://heavenlypets.org)**

Heaven on Earth aims to improve quality of life for homeless cats, particularly those who are often overlooked because of special needs and who may have a low potential for adoption.

## **Heirs to Our Oceans | [heirstoouroceans.com](http://heirstoouroceans.com)**

Heirs to Our Oceans is a rising tide of young leaders around the globe who are taking the ocean and water crisis into their own hands. Educating themselves and others, bringing hope and solutions to the surface, Heirs is creating waves of change that will ensure the health of our blue planet for their generation and for future generations.

## **K9 Connection | [k9connection.org](http://k9connection.org)**

K9 Connection's programs offer teens in continuation high schools the chance to break through learning and life barriers by training and bonding with homeless dogs. Experiential learning enables the teens to build self-esteem, self-determination, and empathy while they in turn enable homeless dogs to develop the skills to be adopted into permanent loving homes.

## **LA Family Housing | [lafh.org](http://lafh.org)**

LA Family Housing helps people transition out of homelessness and poverty by providing a continuum of housing enriched with supportive services. Since 1983, LAFH has become one of the largest comprehensive real estate developers and homeless service providers in Los Angeles and a regional leader providing solutions to end homelessness.

## **Pasadena Humane Society | [pasadenahumane.org](http://pasadenahumane.org)**

The Pasadena Humane Society (PHS) & SPCA provides animal care and services for homeless and owned animals. PHS is dedicated to promoting humane treatment, compassion, and care for all animals. The animals in its care come from eleven animal control contract cities, as well as partner shelters across the Los Angeles area and beyond.

## **The People Concern | [thepeopleconcern.org](http://thepeopleconcern.org)**

The People Concern empowers people to rebuild their lives. They offer an integrated model of care that enables 92% of those placed in permanent housing to remain housed indefinitely. They build self-sufficiency, restore dignity, and help our vulnerable neighbors become contributing members of the community, enhancing the quality of life for everyone concerned.

## **San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center [noestassolonorthhills.org](http://noestassolonorthhills.org)**

San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center welcomes unaccompanied children from Central America seeking refuge in the United States, and offers hope and healing in the form of legal assistance, emotional support, tutoring, and other resources to help meet the basic needs of these children.

## **Theodore Payne Foundation | [theodorepayne.org](http://theodorepayne.org)**

The Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants Inc., established in 1960, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the understanding, preservation, and use of California native flora. Open to all, TPF is one of the longest-running educational, environmental organizations in Southern California.

## **Upward Bound House | [upwardboundhouse.org](http://upwardboundhouse.org)**

Upward Bound House strives to eliminate homelessness among families with children in Los Angeles by providing housing, supportive services, and advocacy. Their goal is to reduce the number of homeless families with minor children and help them access basic resources and successfully transition into their own homes with the capacity to remain there permanently.

To find more organizations near you, please explore our [interactive map](#).