Identify/Analyze/Infer Cause-Effect Relations

8ᵗʰ Grade Fiction: Making Progress   Center for Urban Education ©2009

I have lived in Lawndale for thirty years, and during this time I have seen things change, some for the better, some for the worse. Despite the challenges, I believe that my neighborhood is a good place to live; I like it here even though there are problems. I have many friends who live near-by, and my cousins live down the street; we support each other when there is a problem. Now new families are moving in, and there is a lot of construction of new townhomes. I'm optimistic.

Progress starts with hope--that's something I learned a long time ago. You can look at things and complain, or you can ask, "What can we do to make things better?"

My son came home from school in September with a plan that his class made to transform our block. They were going to turn a vacant lot into a garden. I said it would be much more complicated than he knew.

He explained that he had a dream; he wanted to have lots of flowers in Lawndale. He knew there were vacant lots, but he also saw the new construction. He said, "We are making progress, our neighborhood is getting better, and we can make it even better. If we turn the vacant lot across from the school into a garden, it will inspire people. The block clubs can plant flowers and trees, so changing that one vacant lot could lead to a great change--the community can get to be a really beautiful place. My teacher says that everything is interconnected."

I admired my son's idea, but I knew he would face significant obstacles and that they would need a coalition to carry out this vision.   He has always been a thoughtful child. I promised to support the plan, and said that I would ask our cousins and my friends to participate. That way, it would be a school-community collaboration.

His class started by clearing out the trash from the lot, and they needed lots of trash bags for that because they didn't just clear the lot. They cleaned trash from the street, too. The block clubs did join the effort; it was a big cleanup day.

People came by and saw the difference they made. I noticed afterward that people were not littering so much. It seems they got the idea that keeping things clean is not as hard as picking up all the trash if you litter a lot. I know this sounds simple, but if people get into a habit of throwing paper on the ground, it is something they really don't think about. We got some big green trashcans from the city and put them on the street near the vacant lots. People put their trash in those cans instead of littering.

My son's class put bulbs in the ground, and the neighbors helped. I think we planted about 500 bulbs. I think I planted about 30 bulbs myself, and my back hurt a lot the next day. This spring we'll realize what we did when we see those colorful blooms, and I am convinced that everyone in the community will be inspired so this progress will be sustained.

A long time ago, someone said, "It takes a village to raise a child." I think it takes a child to inspire a community. I am proud of my son.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. Why did her son want to plant the garden?	2. Why did she help her son?
a. He liked plants.	a. He inspired her.
b. He wanted to help the community.	b. She liked her neighbors.
c. It would flower in spring.	c. Her family lived there.
d. It was across from the school.	d. She was proud of him.

3. Why was there less trash in the area?	4. What do you think the most important effect of his change was?
a. People were recycling.	a. The mother was proud.
b. People noticed what the students did.	b. The community was improved.
c. The students picked it up every day.	c. The students planted so many bulbs.
d. The school had a littering campaign.	d. There would be many flowers in spring.

5. Write your own answer to this question.

What do you think this change will cause people to do?

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TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking
These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	a	b	b

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. Improve the community, by planting and reducing litter.