

**Grade Level:** 6-8**Time Needed:** One to three class periods**Lesson Plan:**

# The Power of a Penny

## SUMMARY

Pennies for Peace is a service-learning program that raises money to provide funds to build new schools, repair and improve existing schools, and purchase equipment—such as uniforms, furniture, and school supplies—for students and teachers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Pennies for Peace teaches young people the importance of taking action for something that is important to them. It shows them that no matter how big or small you are, you can make a difference for others—often in a profound way—by committing to a cause that matters to you. The very first Pennies for Peace donation was from a group of elementary students in Wisconsin who collected pennies—and Pennies for Peace was born! Pennies for Peace is a wonderful service-learning campaign because almost everyone can collect pennies!

Pennies for Peace teaches children the rewards of sharing and working together to bring hope and educational opportunities to children in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. A penny in the United States may have little worth, but in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan 12 pennies buys a pencil—and opens the door to literacy. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan:

12 pennies = one pencil

70 pennies = one notebook

\$30 = one chalkboard

\$35 = one desk

\$1,000 = one teacher's annual salary

(Source: Central Asia Institute. Numbers reflect the average cost of school supplies in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan and may vary.)

In this lesson, students will research the power of a penny in terms of what a U.S. penny is worth (can buy) in other countries, thereby developing a better understanding of the positive effects the money that they collect will have on students in Central Asia.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will research the value of a penny in different countries.
- Students will use critical thinking skills to draw conclusions and form opinions.
- Students will demonstrate understanding and apply learning by creating a chart to support facts.
- Students will determine how they can make a positive contribution to the global community.

## SUBJECTS

- Language Arts
- Math/Economics



## THE POWER OF A PENNY *continued*

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### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Do all children, everywhere, get to attend school?
  - Is school always free, as it is in the United States?
  - Do you ever see a penny on the street and decide *not* to pick it up? Why or why not?
  - Is a penny worth much in the United States? How many pennies make one dollar? What can we buy with a penny? What can we buy with one dollar?
  - We use the dollar to compare U.S. money with money in other countries. Do you think a dollar is worth the same amount everywhere in the world?
  - Why might a U.S. dollar or a penny be worth more in some countries and less in other countries?
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### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Central Asia Institute & Pennies for Peace Story (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
  - Videos (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
  - Photos (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
  - Fact sheets (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
  - Printable Map (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
  - Research tools such as newspapers, news magazines, and the Internet
  - Central Asia Institute blog, which can be found at <http://centralasiainstitute.org/field-notes/>
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### LESSON

1. Introduce students to the Central Asia Institute & Pennies for Peace Story (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section).
2. Have students use a map or globe to locate Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.
3. Ask students if they think that collecting pennies can really make a difference for children all the way on the other side of the world who want to go to school. After all, in the United States we can buy only a few things with a penny. If we collect enough pennies, will that make a



## THE POWER OF A PENNY *continued*

- difference for children in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan? What if we collect only a few pennies? Could even a few pennies make a difference? Why or why not?
4. Talk about the components that make up your school, such as the building itself and all of the desks, books, chalkboards, and computers. Talk about the people who work in the school, such as teachers, front office staff, custodians, and the principal. Ask the students if they can name other things in the school that make it a great place to learn, such as P.E. equipment, art supplies, the playground, and the cafeteria.
  5. Ask students how much they think it cost to build your school. (Older students might research actual building costs.) Could pennies help build a new school in your town? How many pennies would it take?
  6. Working in small groups or as a class, have students use the chart below (or create their own chart) to compare the value of a penny with a school-related item in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Tajikistan. For example, we know that in Pakistan, 12 pennies can buy one pencil. What can we buy with one penny in the United States?
  7. Then have students expand the chart, showing the value of one teacher's daily salary. What can students buy for \$4 here in the United States? For example, an energy drink costs about \$4. Is that more or less valuable than having a teacher for an entire day?
  8. Continue expanding the chart to compare the cost of education in Central Asia to the cost of commonly used items in the United States.
  9. With the chart(s) complete, have students form an opinion about the cost of education in Central Asia—helping them realize that even a small amount of money can make a big difference in those regions.
  10. At the end of your campaign, have students count the pennies collected and determine exactly *what* they raised money to buy. For example, if your class collected \$200, help students discover that they paid for school supplies for 10 students! Have your students work together to create a poster depicting the students in Central Asia receiving their new school supplies, and hang it in your classroom for students to see all year!

### IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE ALL LEARNERS

- English Language Learners
  - Give students a Word Bank with vocabulary that will help them with the discussion and chart.
  - Ask students to talk to the class about the value of a U.S. penny, or a U.S. dollar, in their native country.



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- Special Education
  - Have students work together to create their chart.
  - Offer one-on-one support for students who struggle with the concept of monetary value.
- Gifted and Talented
  - Have students create a chart noting (during one day or tracing over multiple days) the value of a U.S. dollar compared to the value of currency in the three countries that we are studying. Students may trace the value of a U.S. dollar over a week or a month to discover fluctuations in the worth of a dollar worldwide. In one column of their chart, ask students to convert the amount to pennies (i.e., divide each value by 100).
  - At the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders from rich and poor countries alike committed themselves to a set of eight time-bound targets, including one for universal primary education:

*Every human being should have the opportunity to make a better life for themselves. Unfortunately, too many children in the world today grow up without this chance, because they are denied their basic right to even attend primary school. A sustainable end to world poverty as we know it, as well as the path to peace and security, require that citizens in every country are empowered to make positive choices and provide for themselves and their families. (Source: UNESCO)*
  - Encourage students to learn about the United Nations Millennium Goals for 2015 at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>. Some countries are on target to meet their goals, and others are not. What is working for the countries that are projected to meet their goals? What consequences are there for the countries that do not meet their goals and/or do not even attempt to meet them?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Have students go online to discover and compare the value of other objects (not related to education) that we use in the U.S. to the value of similar objects in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Tajikistan, such as the cost of a new book, a meal in a restaurant, an article of clothing, or a TV (helpful websites: CIA World Factbook and NationMaster).
- Should the United States keep the penny? Split your class in half: one side is the “yes” team, and the other side is the “no” team. Each team will gather facts/reasons in favor of keeping the penny, or in favor of eliminating the penny from circulation in the U.S. Each fact should be written separately and clearly on an index card. After the research phase, students should gather in discussion groups to eliminate duplicate cards or cards that don’t support their side of the debate. Allow students one final round of brainstorming to create more fact cards. Determine a preferred way of reading cards aloud and allow students to vote on the issue. You might give each student one final index card for the vote: on one side of the card, they will write their vote “yes” or “no,” and on the other side they will write an opinion statement (“why”). Finally, create a class display of findings by gluing cards end-to-end, creating two separate bars for a bar graph poster. Does your class vote agree with the poster findings?



## THE POWER OF A PENNY *continued*

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### **DIGITAL ACTIVITIES**

- Have students use a free online program to create a survey or questionnaire about the value of the penny and whether or not it is still relevant in the United States. They should administer their surveys to a group of people and present their results along with discussion of the challenges of creating and conducting a good survey.
- Using available digital publishing programs and/or photo editing programs, create flyers for your Pennies for Peace campaign. Print flyers to post around the school, and distribute the flyers electronically to a school email list.

Tell us about your project! We'd love to see samples of the charts or the posters that your students make. Send photos and/or descriptions to [info@penniesforpeace.org](mailto:info@penniesforpeace.org).



# What Is the Value of a Penny?

Monetary amount in U.S. dollars	What can that buy in the U.S.?	What can that buy in Central Asia?
12¢	One piece of gum	One pencil
70¢		One notebook
\$4	One bottle of juice or sports drink	A teacher's salary for a whole day
\$5		
\$50	Four movie tickets	A student's school supplies for one year
\$100		
\$500		
\$1,000	A new mobile phone	A teacher's salary for an entire year
\$5,000		