

Living on One Dollar: Education Series

The Living on One Dollar: Educational Series helps students engage with global issues and develop 21st Century Skills of cultural awareness, critical thinking, real-world problem solving and online media learning.

Purpose and Learning Objectives

This free series is being developed alongside the award-winning documentary, *Living on One Dollar*. The documentary film follows four college students as they spend 56 days living on just \$1 a day in rural Guatemala to better understand the reality of extreme poverty. They battle hunger, parasites and the realization that there are no easy answers but find hope in the strength and generosity of their neighbors.

The series is a collection of 6-7 minute videos that follow the four's journey as they explore specific issues of clean water, nutrition, Mayan culture, going to school and finding work.

Student interest is captured through the adventurous style and relatable characters of the series. At the same time, they make connections between their own lives and the reality of life for the extreme poor.

As students make this connection, they become engaged in three important ways:

- 1. Develop empathy** for human suffering and hardship around the world
- 2. Foster a curiosity and desire for in-depth exploration** of current global issues and the real challenges facing people of different cultures and economic statuses.
- 3. Think critically and analytically** about essential questions such as:
 - How do we define 'poverty'?
 - How do social, political and economic factors work together to keep a family or community in poverty?
 - Why are global issues important to me and what is my relationship to them as a global citizen?
 - How can I use my creativity and skills to be part of an innovative solution?

At its core, the series helps students realize that someone living in extreme poverty is a lot like them. He or she dreams about becoming a pro soccer player, struggles in school, cares about friends and family and works hard to attain a better life. While videos focus on a specific issue, each one will integrate moments of joy, innovation and friendship within this highly impoverished community.

Global poverty is not a simple concept. The Living on One Dollar: Education Series uses selected facts about poverty to help students understand the scope of the problem. Instead of positing a single-step solution or pushing a political agenda, the series highlights real complexities and brings up critical questions to jumpstart a class discussion around ideas of equality, justice, policy and innovative solutions.



Video Details and Outline

The Living on One Dollar: Education Series is created as a video supplement which is applicable to and supportive of lessons across many subjects.

- Videos will be free and hosted on LivingonOne.org, [YouTube.com/LivingonOneDollar](https://www.youtube.com/LivingonOneDollar) and [Edmodo.com/home#/publisher/LivingonOne](https://www.edmodo.com/home#/publisher/LivingonOne)
- Videos will be accompanied by discussion questions and additional resources but not a full curriculum, particular lesson plans or activities

Vid 1: Introduction

What is it really like to live on just \$1 a day?

Meet college students, Chris, Zach, Sean and Ryan, who are setting out on an intense adventure to live in extreme poverty, on just \$1 a day for 56 days. As they travel from the U.S. to the small village of Peña Blanca in rural Guatemala, they raise questions and fears about their next two months. What will they eat every day, how will they budget such a small income and what does it truly mean to be “poor”? Will they be surprised by what they find in Peña Blanca or have the statistics they learned in school already told them everything?

Vid 2: Exploring Clean Water

How big of an effect could not having clean water nearby have on your life?

Zach and Chris find that the closest source of water looks to be a plastic pipe coming out of the side of a hill. Two weeks later, Chris becomes very sick. They go visit a doctor in town and learn that Chris has Giardia, an intestinal parasite contracted through contaminated water. Chris reflects on what a sickness like this and the cost of medication would mean for someone like their 12-year-old friend Carlos and his family. Without big government investments, what solutions exist for people in rural villages like Peña Blanca?

Vid 3: Food & Nutrition

What kind of food can you afford on \$1 a day and what does it really mean to be malnourished?

The four quickly learn that cooking without a microwave or stove is harder than they thought! They start to feel the effects of eating just rice and beans every day and Zach even passes out on the floor. Thankfully their neighbor, Rosa Solares, teaches them about lard and traditional tortilla making. Eating more calories every day, they still question whether a diet of corn tortillas is able to give their neighbors the nutrition they need to be healthy. How does being malnourished affect other aspects of their neighbors’ lives, like mental and physical growth, prenatal care and educational achievement?

Vid 4: Finding Work

What barriers do the poor face in finding work and how do they make a living?

Researching job opportunities in Peña Blanca, the four find that few people in the village actually have formal jobs. They decide to plant their own small crop of radishes and get a glimpse of the challenges of working informally as a day laborer or a farmer. Anthony, one of the only fully employed men in a nearby town, talks about how this job has completely changed his life. Clearly there aren’t enough formal jobs for most of the people living in Peña Blanca, but is moving to a big city the only answer?



Vid 5: Extreme Budgeting

How is it possible to budget just \$1 a day for immediate costs like food and shelter and still save for long term items like your kids' education and emergencies?

Chris, Zach, Sean and Ryan head into town to see if traditional financial services, like a credit card and savings account, are an option for the extreme poor. Back in the village, they talk to their friends, Anthony and Rosa, about how they save and borrow money without using a traditional bank. They are inspired by an innovative savings club Anthony has joined and Rosa's new chicken coop that she started with a microfinance loan. How can these services reach more of the poor? Could these tools have negative effects for a family or community?

Vid 6: Going to School

What prevents kids from going to school and how can education respect traditional culture while also teaching modern skills?

Playing soccer with the local kids becomes a daily activity for Chris, Zach, Sean and Ryan, and they realize that 9-year-old Julio's family still can't afford to send him to the public school. Although the majority of the villagers speak their native language, Katchiquel, learning Guatemala's national language, Spanish, is an important part of school. What effect would only speaking the local dialect have on someone's ability to get a formal job, travel to a big city or even visit a hospital? Their neighbor, Rosa, talks about how many girls quit school to take care of their younger siblings and how education can be especially empowering for women.

Vid 7: Natural Disasters

What happens to the poor when a natural disaster strikes? What options do they have to get back on their feet?

The four ask their neighbor Pedro for advice as they start to farm a small radish plot. Working in the fields every day, they think about what life as a subsistence farmer would be like. Pedro tells them about how in 2009, a tropical storm swept through Guatemala and he saw 60 percent of his onion fields destroyed in a massive landslide. Hearing this, Chris, Zach, Sean and Ryan are sobered by the knowledge of what a natural disaster could mean for a family who is already living on the edge.

Vid 8: Back in the U.S.

How did this experience change Chris, Zach, Sean and Ryan's perspectives on poverty and how will it change yours?

Having survived the two months, Chris, Zach, Sean and Ryan leave Peña Blanca and say goodbye to their new friends. Back home, they struggle with the abundance of their lifestyles in the U.S. and how they can make a difference for the people back in Peña Blanca. They start to use their story to inspire other students that with just a small action, everyone can make a difference for someone in poverty.

