Digital Outreach for Community Engagement

This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework.

Overview

This lesson asks students, in groups, to take their issue and solution to the streets. In order to enact real change through action for the benefit of the larger community, each chosen topic will need to be exposed to and understood by other members of the community. In this lesson, students will design a community outreach promotional campaign in order to effect real change that matters to them. If the students have completed the *Digital Storytelling for Community Engagement* lesson and have created their own Digital Story, this digital project can be used as the starting point/ product with which to share with others. If not, groups of students can create a hypothetical solution to an existing problem, which then could be disseminated to the larger community using their designed outreach strategy.

This lesson is designed as part of a three-part series *Creating Digital Content for Community Engagement*:

- *Introduction to Online Community Engagement*
- *Digital Storytelling for Community Engagement*
- *Digital Outreach for Community Engagement*

However, each is also designed to be delivered as a standalone lesson and any two of the lessons can be taught together without the third.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- engage with a local or national issue as a group and learn how to disseminate information to the larger public

- using the *Community Engagement Activity* handout as a starting point, design an outreach campaign using clear goals, a "Call to Action" and a variety of both on and offline methods

- learn how to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of outreach methods and how to adjust accordingly

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the handout *Digital Outreach Project*.

If the lesson is being delivered on its own, photocopy the *Community Engagement Activity* handout.

Activity 1: Reflecting on Outreach Campaigns

If you are delivering the lesson as part of the larger unit, have students review the *Community Engagement Activity* handout. If not:

Distribute the handout and have students complete it. As a class, go through each of the 5 categories and have one student speak to their experience in each:

1. Online (posting on Facebook, writing a blog)

2. In-person activities (discussion at the dinner table)

3. Civic engagement (volunteering)

4. Activism (petitioning)

5. Formal politics (joining a political party, donating to a candidate)

Prompt student reflection with questions like:

- What was the issue you were involved with, and how did you get involved initially? Was there someone who invited you to participate or did you discover the issue/cause independently?

- Are you currently involved with the same cause or a different one?

- What was your experience like? Did you find it effective or a satisfying experience?

- In your opinion, how effective are the different categories?

- With the shift in politics to more and more online forums and outlets, do you think there is still value in the face-to-face participation?

- What are the advantages to the on and offline methods?

Then have the class brainstorm a variety of different issues that concern them at the school, community, provincial/territorial or federal level. Divide the class into groups and have each group select one issue.

Then ask students:

- Can you think of any cause-related online campaigns that have resonated with you?

- What were some of these causes?

- What kind of campaign was it? (For example, was it to promote an event? To raise awareness? To raise funds? To let people know about services that are provided?)

Next, have students consider how these campaigns used digital media to amplify their message, promote their services and/or help them find support for their cause by asking them:

- How were these campaigns promoted online? (Have students consider both methods and platforms.)
- What was it that caught your attention and made the cause resonate with you?
- Was this solely an online campaign or was other media used?
- Which was better at getting your attention?

Activity 2: Design a Campaign

Distribute the handout *Digital Outreach Project* and go through it with the class. **If the lesson is being delivered as part of the larger unit, the *Digital Outreach Project* should specifically be aimed at spreading their Digital Story from the *Digital Storytelling for Civic Engagement* lesson.** If not, students may create an outreach plan based on a hypothetical means of getting the word out on their chosen topic. Give students time to complete this phase of the project and then present their plan to the class. Make sure each group gives at least one piece of meaningful feedback for each of the other groups' presentations.

Extension Activity: Execute the Campaign

If the lesson is being delivered as part of the larger unit, you may have students carry out the outreach plans for the Digital Stories. Follow this with a group discussion ensuring each campaign is reviewed:

- Was the goal achieved?
- Has a community situation been solved or challenge improved through collective action thanks to this initiative?
- What channels worked well, what didn't?
- Why do you think this was so?
- What did you learn through this process?
- What next steps need to be taken in order to continue this campaign's momentum?

Community Engagement Activity

Put a check in the box next to any of the activities listed below that you've done.

1. The Twittering Classes: Online Discussion

❑   I circulated or reposted political information on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter

❑   I used email or instant messaging to discuss societal/political issues

❑   I blogged about a political issue

❑   I participated in an online group about societal/political issues

2. Somethin' to Talk About: Offline Discussion

❑   I discussed a societal/political issue face-to-face or on the phone

❑   I wrote a letter to the editor about a political issue

❑   I made a public speech on a political issue

❑   I organized a public event or meeting about politics

3. Taking It to The Streets: Activism

❑   I signed a petition

❑   I boycotted/"buycotted" a product

❑   I was part of a protest

4. Community Revival: Civic Engagement

❑   I worked with others on an issue in my community

❑   I was active in a group or organization

❑   I donated to a societal/political cause

❑   I did volunteer work

5. In the System: Formal Engagement

❑   I contacted an elected official about an issue that concerns me

❑   I attended a political meeting

❑   I volunteered in an election

❑   I donated to a political party or candidate

❑   I am or have been a member of a political party

(Adapted, with permission, from the checklist *Political Participation Activities* created by Samara Canada.)

Digital Outreach Project

For this project you will be creating an *outreach plan* to promote your chosen issue.

To do this you will:

- Establish the goal(s) of your campaign

- Choose roles in your group (researcher, writer, spokesperson or online manager)

- Identify the most effective methods for reaching the targeted community with the greatest numbers:
  - Will it be a combination of social media and face-to-face strategies?
  - If using social media, which sites or networks will you use?
  - If using face-to-face strategies, how will you go about reaching these people and where will you find them?

- Develop a "call to action" for your campaign. The purpose of the call to action is to:
  - **Give a reason why the audience should care about the issue.** Your campaign may be the first time a viewer will have even heard about an issue, so it's important to make an impression and show why it's important.
  - **Give viewers clear steps to take to address the issue.** The most effective campaigns are aimed at convincing viewers to do a specific thing or take a first step towards a particular behaviour (for instance, call a cab or a friend/parent instead of driving drunk).
  - **Leave the audience feeling empowered and better-informed instead of guilty or depressed**. Although community outreach campaigns often address very serious issues, it's important that they leave a viewer feeling as though they can do something to make a difference.

- Present your outreach plan to the class.

Task Assessment Rubric

	Learning Expectations	*Achievement*
Use Skills and competencies that fall under "use" range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.	*Community Engagement:* use social media and participative technology use digital media to be part of a community exhibit leadership as a digital citizen *Making and Remixing*: communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats participate in society through online engagement in democratic actions (e.g. lobbying, petitions, parliament) exhibit leadership as a digital citizen use social media and participative technology use digital media to be part of a community use social media and social networks to promote results of their work	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)
Understand "Understand" includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. "Understand" also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.	*Community Engagement:* understand how meaning is produced through multimedia (text, images, audio, video) and how culture is produced through the Internet and social media in particular show awareness of the discourse on both the issues and the opportunities involved in new media *Making and Remixing:* select and use applications effectively and productively (e.g. chooses the most appropriate technologies according to the task) understand the potential of digital devices and resources for her/his schoolwork be aware of the general trends within new media even if he/she does not use them understand the wider context of digital tools in a 'digital age' characterized by globalization and networks	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)

	Learning Expectations	Achievement
Create "Create" is the ability to produce content and effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. It includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; to create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; and to effectively and responsibly engage with user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social gaming and other forms of social media. The ability to create using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.	*Community Engagement:* identify and participate responsibly in online networks that foster positive community make valuable contributions to the public knowledge domain (e.g. wikis, public forums, reviews) *Making and Remixing:* contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems interact, collaborate, co-construct content and publish with peers, experts or others employing a variety of digital environments and media	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)