Community As Curriculum

Youth Community Informatics Curriculum

Integrating Inquiry and Social Action with Technology

Developed by the Youth Community Informatics project http://yci.illinois.edu

We would like to give special thanks to the youth and youth leaders who contributed to the development of these activities and have implemented them in their communities.

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WHAT IS THE YOUTH COMMUNITY INFORMATICS PROJECT?

Learning not only occurs in the highly structured realm of schools but everywhere in the more diffuse realms of life within the community. These settings include after-school programs, Boys and Girls clubs, libraries, museums, and community centers, to name just a few. Youth Community Informatics (YCI) attends to these informal settings in the community and provides spaces in which youth have fun, learn about new technologies, and experience their community through actual engagement.

The implementation of the YCI curriculum is generating new meaning-making practices in several informal settings in the community. Through the YCI process, youth use information and communication technologies to investigate community issues and create various kinds of products that illuminate or address these issues. This process leads youth to become active creators and sustainers of their own community who can participate in community building and problem solving.

![Youth Community Informatics poster](image-url)

**Figure 1. Youth Community Informatics poster**
INTRODUCTION TO THE YCI CURRICULUM

The Youth Community Informatics (YCI) curriculum employs community informatics practices to engage youth in learning about their communities using an inquiry-based and experience-based learning model. YCI’s curricular focus is not solely on cognitive development, but also the social and emotional development of youth. YCI aims to build community, offer mastery of ICT skills, and empower youth while increasing their understanding of the library and information science fields. A sense of belonging, proficiency, independence, and generosity are the ultimate goals.

The YCI curriculum thus supports the development of both youth and the community. We do not see youth development as separate from community development. Instead, the two have a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship. By participating in their community, youth can develop hands-on knowledge while building a strong sense of where they live, its living history, and the joys and concerns that go into living in this place and time. In addition, the community benefits from this participation by cultivating a well-informed “next generation” that actively contributes to the community.

How this curriculum works

The YCI curriculum consists of twenty learning modules, known as inquiry units. The first ten modules, entitled “Youth as Social Inquirer,” are inquiries into the community. Students choose a topic of interest and use the appropriate modules to guide their research of their chosen community issue (such as the local impact of poverty). After learning about that issue, students then use the “Youth as Social Activist” modules to help them construct and create a solution that addresses the problem they studied. As this is a flexible curriculum, there may be times when one might go directly to the “Youth as Social Activist” section. Use it as you see fit to best meet the needs of your participants and circumstances.

A special note about inquiry

Many of the inquiry topics covered within this curriculum are socially difficult and complex. It is important that anyone doing this kind of research, whether a youth or adult, have the opportunity to discuss what has been learned and the feelings that may have been stirred. Before beginning an inquiry, participants should review the material and consider possible sensitivities as well as ethical issues that may require extra vigilance or human resources. In addition, it is important that people who engage in this kind of community inquiry have the chance to do something about it. It is not recommended that the initial community inquiries be explored without an effort at action on the issue of concern.

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**ACTIVITY GUIDELINES: INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING**

Learning begins with the curiosity of the learners

The inquiry cycle is key to the YCI curriculum. Inquiry rarely proceeds in a simple, linear fashion. The five elements in the process—ask, investigate, create, discuss, reflect—sometimes interweave, and not every step is necessarily present in any given inquiry; each step can be embedded in any of the others, and so on. In fact, the very nature of inquiry is that these steps are mutually reinforcing and interrelated. Thus, reflection on solving a problem may lead to reformulating the problem or posing new questions. Similarly, action in the world is closely tied to dialogue with others.

**ASK** reminds us that inquiry develops from a question or problem arising out of experience. Meaningful questions are inspired by genuine curiosity about real-world experiences and challenges. Viewed in process terms, one can say that a question or a problem comes into focus, and the learner begins to define or describe what it is, for example:

- “What does poverty look like within our community?”
- “How might racism be viewed by different people?”
- “Are there locations that have better access to healthy food than others?”
- “What is the relationship between crime and unemployment within my community?”

But it is important to caution that inquiry does not always start with a well-articulated question. In fact, questions themselves arise from reflection and action in the world, including dialogue with others.

**INVESTIGATE** relates to the varieties of experiences possible and the many ways in which we become part of an indeterminate situation. It suggests that opportunities for learning require diverse, authentic, and challenging materials and problems. Because experience includes interactions with others, there is also a moral dimension to inquiry. Similarly, physical, emotional, aesthetic, and practical dimensions are inherent in inquiry, and are not merely enhancements or add-ons.

Through investigation, we turn curiosity into action. Learners gather information, study, craft an experiment, observe, or interview. The learner may recast the question, refine a line of query, or plunge down a new path that the original question did not, or could not, anticipate. The information-gathering stage becomes a self-motivated process that is owned by the engaged learner.

**CREATE** implies active, engaged, hands-on learning. Inquiry thus implies active creation of meaning, which includes new forms of collaborating and new roles for collaborators. As information begins to coalesce, the learner makes connections. The ability at this stage to synthesize meaning is the creative spark

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that forms new knowledge. The learner now undertakes the creative task of shaping significant new thoughts, ideas, and theories extending his or her prior experience and knowledge.

**DISCUSS** highlights an implicit part of John Dewey's definition. Although inquiry has a personal aspect, it is also part of our participation in social arrangements and community. The discuss aspect of the inquiry cycle involves listening to others and articulating one’s own understandings. Through discussion (or dialogue), construction of knowledge becomes a social enterprise. Learners share their ideas and ask others about their own experiences. Shared knowledge is a community-building process, and the meaning of their investigation begins to take on greater relevance in the context of the learner's society. Learners compare notes, share experiences, and discuss conclusions, through multiple media, including online social networks.

**REFLECT** means expressing experience, and thereby being able to move from new concepts into action. Reflection may also mean recognizing further questions, leading to continuing inquiry. Reflection is taking the time to look back at initial questions, the research path, and the conclusions made. The learner steps back, takes inventory, makes observations, and makes new decisions. Has a solution been found? Do new questions come into light? What might those questions be? And so it begins again—this is the circle of inquiry.

**How this curriculum works**

Each unit of this YCI curriculum is framed using the inquiry cycle and includes a brief description as well as specific questions that youth leaders may use to help guide youth activities at each stage of the inquiry. For the “Youth as Social Inquirer” lessons, suggestions for where students may start to locate information for their inquiries are provided in the information boxes. For the “Youth as Social Activist” section, examples are also offered to help youth leaders implement their ideas for addressing a social issue. These examples are provided in the information boxes on the activism pages.
## COMMUNITY AS CURRICULUM: INQUIRY UNIT LOCATOR

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SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 1

Exploring the Issue of Poverty within the Community

Brief Description

You will learn how to research issues related to poverty within your community. Through activities such as searching local archives and other community resources, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

- Learn how to do research using primary sources.  
- Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.
- Empower you to think critically about your own role and experiences as they relate to this issue.
- Design a project that helps to address the issue of poverty in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

- Ask: What is poverty? In what ways can you see poverty within your community? What information do you need to gather in order to find out about poverty within your community? Where can you find that information? How does poverty affect families in your community? What local organizations have a mission to address the issue of poverty? Who might serve as resources for you as you do this investigation on poverty?

- Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. Look to primary sources such as interviews with community members. This could include a homeless shelter director, someone who works at a food bank or shelter, politicians, spiritual leaders, etc. You may take a look at census information, city statistics, your local commerce commission, etc.

- Create: Once you have completed this inquiry, you will design a project to help address some of the issues you discovered through the asking and investigation portions of the cycle. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

- Discuss: Explore what you have learned by talking with other group members and community members about your inquiry findings. What did you learn about your community? What other important information did you gain from your research and from your interview(s)? Is there anything you can do in relation to this topic for further research or action? What did you learn about people through this inquiry? What is the value of your inquiry—for you, for others? How can you get others to become interested in this topic? What is the importance of documenting present local conditions? How does your participation in work like this change how others view you, your community, and your history?

- Reflect: How does learning about this topic impact you? How does sharing your knowledge about this topic impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How could learning about this topic affect others like you? What is the value that comes from learning about poverty in your community?

1 A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 1

Resources

UN Millennium Project—Fast Facts on Poverty: www.unmillenniumproject.org/resources/fastfacts_e.htm

US Census Bureau: www.census.gov

United Way: www.unitedway.org

Chamber of Commerce: www.uschamber.com

The Heritage Foundation—Understanding Poverty in America: www.heritage.org/research/welfare/bg1713.cfm

National Center for Children in Poverty: www.nccp.org/publications/pub_934.html

Poverty Facts in your Neighborhood: www.familypromise.org/poverty-facts-your-neighborhood

Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

1. Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit
2. Youth as Social Networker: Create an Online Community
3. Youth as Journalist: Create a Newspaper
4. Youth as Videographer: Create a Documentary
5. Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map
6. Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Story
7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:

What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 2
Exploring Issues of Racism within the Community

Brief Description

Through this inquiry, you conduct research about issues related to racism within your community. Through activities such as searching local archives and other community resources, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

- Learn how to do research using primary sources.¹
- Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.
- Think about your own racial identity and how race affects those within your community.
- Come up with a project to help address the issue of racism in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

◆ Ask: What is race? What is racism? Has racism changed since the Civil Rights Movement? Why is there racism? In what ways have you experienced racism? In what ways can you see racism within your community? What information do you need to gather in order to find out about racism within your community? Where can you find that information? Where might you be able to observe racism within your community? How might racism look differently in different contexts? What organizations exist within your community whose mission is to address the issue of racism? Who might serve as resources for you as you do this investigation on racism?

◆ Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source data such as census information, city statistics, school state test scores, newspaper archives of statistics, etc. You may want to interview people whose mission it is to work to end racism, such as someone who works at the NAACP, city council members, spiritual leaders, etc. You may also interview people who have experienced racism, but be cautioned to do this with adult supervision, so that if you ask questions that are particularly difficult, the adult can help you navigate the discussion.

◆ Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues you discovered through the asking and investigation portions of the cycle. Your project may be to inform the public of this issue; to take action on this issue through a protest, etc. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

◆ Discuss: Explore what you have learned by talking with other group members and community members about your inquiry findings. What did you learn about your community? What other important information did you gain from your research and from your interview(s)? Is there anything you can do in relation to this topic for further research or action? What did you learn about people through this inquiry? What is the value of your inquiry—for you, for others? How

¹ A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 2

can you get others to become interested in this topic? What is the importance of documenting present local conditions? How does your participation in work like this change how others view you, your community, and your history?

反映: How does learning about this topic impact you? How does sharing your knowledge about this topic impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How could learning about this topic affect others like you? How does participating in work like this change how others view your community and history?

Resources
African Americans and the Criminal Injustice System: www.prisonactivist.org/archive/factsheets/racism.pdf
Defining Race, Racism, and Racial Discrimination: http://academic.udayton.edu/race/01race/race08.htm
Racism: www.adl.org/hate-patrol/racism.asp
Anti-Racism.com: www.antiracism.com
UN Resources on Racism: www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/racism2001/

Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

1. Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit
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5. Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map
6. Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Story
7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:
What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 3
Exploring Issues of Violence within the Community

Brief Description
Through this inquiry, you will research issues related to violence within your community. Through activities such as searching local archives and news footage, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities
• Learn how to do research using primary sources.1
• Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.
• Empower you to think critically about your own role and experiences as they relate to this issue.
• Come up with a project to help address the issue of violence in your community.

Inquiry Cycle
• Ask: What is violence? What are some examples of violence? Who is impacted by violence? How does violence in the media affect people? In what ways can you see violence within your community? What violence, if any, have you experienced? What information do you need to gather in order to find out about violence within your community? Where can you find information this information? Where might you be able to observe violence within your community? How might violence look differently in different contexts? What organizations within your community address the issue of violence? Who might serve as resources for you as you do this investigation? Is there a relationship between poverty and violence in your community? Are there any locations within your community that are more violent than others? What is the relationship between the police and the community? Which violent acts in the community get reported by the media and which do not?

• Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source material such as census information, city statistics, your local commerce commission, police statistics, newspaper archives, etc. You may want to interview people who work to address violence in the community, such as someone who works at a women’s shelter, city council members, spiritual leaders, police officers, etc. You may also want to consider interviewing people who have experienced violence, but this should be done with adult supervision so that if you ask questions that are particularly difficult, the adult can help you navigate the discussion.

• Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues that surfaced during your inquiry. Your project may be to inform the public of this issue; to take action on this issue through a protest, etc. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

• Discuss: What did you learn about your community? What other important information did you gain from your research and from your interviews? Is there anything you can do in

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1 A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 3

Relation to this topic for further research or action? What is the value of your new knowledge? How can you get others to become interested in this topic? What else might you learn and teach others about?

Reflect: How does your learning about this topic impact you? How could sharing your knowledge about this topic impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How does participating in work like this change how others view you, your community, and your history? What is the importance of documenting local lived experience?

Resources

Statistics on violence: http://studentpeacealliance.org/learn/stats-violence
Violence in schools: http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/violence-in-schools
Crime Reports: www.crimereports.com
Types of violence and abuse: www.gov.nl.ca/VPI/types/index.html
CDC Youth Violence Prevention: www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/index.html
Violence against children: www.unicef.org/protection/index_violence.html
Violence against women: www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html
Violence against elderly: www.satodayscatholic.com/Martinez_081409.aspx

Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

1. Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit
2. Youth as Social Networker: Create an Online Community
3. Youth as Journalist: Create a Newspaper
4. Youth as Videographer: Create a Documentary
5. Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map
6. Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Story
7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:

What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 4

Exploring Issues of Crime within the Community

Brief Description

Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research crime-related issues within your community. Through activities such as searching local archives and news footage, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

• Learn how to do research using primary sources.¹

• Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.

• Empower you to think critically about crime and how it impacts you, your friends and family, and the community.

• Come up with a project to help address the issue of crime in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

♦ Ask: What constitutes a crime? What crimes have you experienced within your community? What types of crimes occur within your community? How frequently do different crimes occur? How does crime in your community affect you and your family? What information do you need to gather in order to find out about crime within your community? Where could you find that information? Where might you be able to observe crime within your community? How might crime look differently in different contexts? What organizations exist within your community whose mission it is to address the issue of crime? Who might serve as resources for you as you investigate crime-related issues? What is the relationship between poverty and crime in your community? Are there any locations within your community that have more crime than others? If so, why might this be? What is the relationship between the police and the community? Which criminal acts in the community get reported upon in the media and which do not?

♦ Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as census information, city statistics, your local commerce commission, police statistics, newspaper archives, etc. You may want to interview people work on crime-related problems such as a journalist, a prosecutor, someone who works at an organization such as the NAACP, city council members, church leaders, police officers, etc. You may also be interested in interviewing people who have been victims of crime. This should be done with careful adult supervision to help navigate the discussion.

♦ Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues that surfaced during your inquiry. Your project may be to inform the public or your peers about this issue; to take action on this issue through a protest, etc. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

♦ Discuss: What did you learn about your community? What other important information

¹ A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 4

did you gain from your research and from your interviews? Is there anything you can do in relation to this topic for further research or action? What did you learn about people from completing this project? What is the potential value of your inquiry? How can you get others to become interested in this issue? Why should this issue be important to others?

Reflect: How does learning about this topic impact you? How can sharing your knowledge about this topic impact you and your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How does participating in work like this change how others view you, your community, and your history?

Resources

2008 Economic Downturn and Federal Inaction Impact on Crime:

Bureau of Justice Statistics: http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov

Crime Reports: www.crimereports.com

Economic and Social Effects of Crime:

FBI Uniform Crime Reports: www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm

Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

1. Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit
2. Youth as Social Networker: Create an Online Community
3. Youth as Journalist: Create a Newspaper
4. Youth as Videographer: Create a Documentary
5. Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map
6. Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Story
7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:
What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 5

Exploring Issues of Racial Segregation within the Community

Brief Description

Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research racial segregation issues within your community. Through activities such as searching local archives and news footage, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

• Learn how to do research using primary sources.

• Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.

• Empower you to think critically about the role you play in further entrenching, or working toward an end to, racial segregation.

• Design a project that will help to address the issue of racial segregation in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

♦ Ask: What is segregation? When did racial segregation begin in your community? Why does racial segregation happen? What was the Brown v. Board of Education decision? How are the Brown v. Board 1 and 2 decisions different? How do members of your community perpetuate racial segregation? Are the schools in your community racially segregated? Are the churches or places of worship in your community racially segregated? Why might this be? Who may be a proponent of racial segregation and why? Who benefits from racial segregation? What races have been segregated? Is there a situation in which racial segregation could work? How can you gather information about the history of racial segregation within your community? What is the difference between de facto and de jure segregation? What organizations within your community work to address segregation issues? Who might serve as resources for you as you do this investigation?

♦ Investigate: For this investigation, you will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as historical census information, city statistics, historical maps, local commerce commission statistics, police statistics, newspaper archives, etc. You may want to interview people whose mission it is to explore or address segregation issues such as a teacher, journalist, someone who works at an organization such as the NAACP, city council members, spiritual leaders, police officers, etc. You may also be interested in interviewing someone who went to a segregated school, and or someone who went through schooling as the schools were being desegregated.

♦ Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues that surfaced during your inquiry. Your project may be to inform the public or your peers about this issue; to take action on this issue through a protest, etc. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

♦ Discuss: What did you learn about your community? What other important information did you gain from your research and from your
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 5

Interviews? Is there anything you can do in relation to this topic for further research or action? What did you learn about people from completing this project? What is the potential value of your inquiry? How can you get others to become interested in this issue? What else might you learn and teach others about?

Reflect: How does learning about this topic impact you? How can sharing your knowledge about this topic impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How does participating in work like this change how others view you, your community, and your history?

Resources
African American History Timeline: www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmtimeline.html
The Perpetuation of Residential Racial Segregation in America: www.law.fsu.edu/journals/landuse/Vol141/seit.htm
Landmark Cases of the Supreme Court – Plessy v. Ferguson: www.streetlaw.org/en/Case.4.aspx

Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

1. Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit
2. Youth as Social Networker: Create an Online Community
3. Youth as Journalist: Create a Newspaper
4. Youth as Videographer: Create a Documentary
5. Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map
6. Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Stor
7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:
What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 6
Exploring Issues of Unemployment within the Community

Brief Description
Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research unemployment and youth unemployment issues within your community. Through activities such as searching city records and news footage, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities
• Learn how to do research using primary sources.¹
• Empower you to think critically about unemployment within the context of your local history and social reality.
• Empower you to think critically of yourself within the context of local employment opportunities.
• Come up with a project to help address the issue of unemployment in your community.

Inquiry Cycle
♦ Ask: What does it mean to be unemployed? What are the unemployment rates for the nation, state, and community? Do these rates vary depending on a person’s level of education, age, race, etc.? Why might there be a difference in the unemployment rates among different races of people? How does the community perpetuate unemployment differences among different races of people? Compare and contrast rural/small urban unemployment to urban unemployment rates. What is minimum wage? What are the limitations of trying to live on minimum wage? What is the difference between a job and a career?
What types of jobs and careers are available for people with different levels of education (i.e., HS diploma, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctoral degree)? What are the salary variations based on your level of education? Who might serve as resources for you as you do this investigation? What types of things make a job satisfying or worthwhile? What career fields are currently in demand? What do employers really want (top skills and values employers seek from job seekers)? What is a salary? What are “benefits”? What are the salaries of school-teachers, lawyers, factory workers, nurses, retail sales associates, and cooks? What is the salary range for the career you see in your future?
♦ Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as census information, city statistics, local commerce commission statistics, employment statistics, newspaper employment ads with job qualifications and salary range information, job and career training opportunities within your community, etc. You may look at the jobs and careers of your family, friends, and community members. You may explore job and career resources at your public library. You may want to complete a career survey to see which careers meet your goals and interests. You may want to interview or “shadow” people whose job

1 A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 6

or career is similar to your own interest to find out what they do and what they had to do in order to obtain a specific career. You may also seek opportunities to work alongside community partners in careers in line with your own career interests. You may also be interested in learning about careers which are in line with areas in which you excel academically.

Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues that surfaced during your inquiry. Your project may be to inform your peers about present and future employment opportunities; to take action on this issue through peer counseling or by developing a mentoring program. You may also consider producing a career and education conference in your own community, etc. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Discuss: What did you learn about employment opportunities in your community compared to other communities? What other important information did you gain from your research and interviews? Is there anything you can do in relation to unemployment in your community for further research or action? What did you learn about people and employment from completing this project? What is the potential value of this information to your community and peers? How can you get others to become interested in the issue of unemployment in your community? What else might you learn about and teach others in relation to issues of unemployment? What did you learn about the importance of education in relation to career opportunities and employment? What did you learn about skill-building and networking beyond taking classes in relation to career opportunities and employment? What did you learn about the difference between your employment opportunities and the employment opportunities of your parents and/or grandparents? What particular skills are currently in high demand within your community? What types of experiences and educational opportunities should you pursue now to prepare yourself for your future career?

Reflect: How does learning about particular unemployment issues impact you, your family, and your community? How can sharing knowledge about employment issues impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How does participating in work like this change how others view you, youth, and youth contributions within your community? What kinds of positive and negative feedback have you encountered from within the community while involved in this process? What new questions have arisen?

Resources
Career Overview: www.careeroverview.com/salary-benefits.html
Illinois workNet Center: www.illinoisworknet.com/vos_portal/
Unemployment Rates Around the World:
www.visualeconomics.com/unemployment-rates-around-the-world/
Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

1. Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit
2. Youth as Social Networker: Create an Online Community
3. Youth as Journalist: Create a Newspaper
4. Youth as Videographer: Create a Documentary
5. Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map
6. Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Story
7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:

What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?

Notes & Reflections:
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 7
Exploring Issues of Drugs and Alcohol within the Community

Brief Description
Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research drug- and alcohol-related issues within your community. Through activities such as searching community archives and news footage, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution, community, and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities
- Learn how to do research using primary sources.  
- Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.
- Empower you to think critically about how drugs and alcohol impact you, your friends and family, and the community.
- Come up with a project to help address drug and alcohol issues in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

* Ask: What is the difference between drug and alcohol use versus abuse? What is a drug? What types counseling centers are available in your community for individuals dealing with drug and alcohol addiction? What type of addiction issues are prominent in your community? What effect is drug and alcohol abuse having in your community? What are the drug and alcohol use statistics by race, by income, by education level, by age, by sex? What are the issues pertaining to drug and alcohol related arrests in your community and nation-wide? How do drugs and alcohol reach particular communities where they are NOT manufactured? What kinds of drugs are most popular today? Are cigarettes a drug? What are some of the countries of origin for specific drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin, LSD, etc.) and how do they reach the United States? What are the statistics pertaining to youth drug and alcohol abuse? What is the difference in sentencing for particular drug-related infractions and which community members are most adversely affected? Who might serve as resources for you as you do this investigation?

* Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as juvenile justice statistics related to drug and alcohol offenses within your community and nation-wide. You may interview drug and alcohol rehabilitation counselors in the community. You may want to speak with recovering addicts. You may want to incorporate your own experiences. You may also be interested in learning the many chemicals involved in the manufacturing of particular drugs (e.g., methamphetamine, crack cocaine, heroin, LSD, etc.) and about the impact of these chemicals on the human body. You may also be interested in learning about peer programs designed to deter youth drug and alcohol use.

* Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues that surfaced during your inquiry. Your project may involve informing your peers about issues that surround drug and
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 7

alcohol abuse in your community. You may want to create a public service announcement aimed at your peers involving the consequences of youth drug and alcohol abuse. You may also participate in creating a brochure to inform people about drug and alcohol abuse. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Discuss: What did you learn about drug and alcohol abuse in your community? What other important information did you gain about drug and alcohol abuse from your research and interviews? Is there anything you can do in relation to drug and alcohol abuse in your community for further research or action? What did you learn about people, drugs, and alcohol from completing this project? What is the potential value of this information to your community and peers? How can you get others to become interested in the issue of drug and alcohol abuse in your community?

Reflect: How does learning about drug and alcohol use and abuse issues impact you, your family, and community? How can sharing knowledge about drug- and alcohol-related issues impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How does participating in work like this change how others view you, youth, and youth contributions within your community? What kinds of positive and negative feedback have you encountered from within the community while involved in this learning process?

Resources

Alcohol and Youth Facts: www.marininstitute.org/Youth/alcohol_youth.htm

Above the Influence: www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/drugs-alcohol.aspx


History of Alcohol and Drinking around the World: www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/controversies/1114796842.html

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: www.health.org

National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA): www.casacolumbia.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse: www.nida.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov
Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

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7. Youth as Author II: Create a Zine
8. Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates
9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:
What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?

Notes & Reflections:
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 8

Exploring Issues of Youth Drop-outs within the Community

Brief Description

Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research issues related to school drop-outs and the impact of school drop-out rates within your community. Through activities such as searching local archives and news footage, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

- Learn how to do research using primary sources.
- Empower you to think critically about the issue of high school drop-outs within your own community.
- Design a project that will help to address the issue of students dropping out of high school in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

• Ask: What are the reasons students drop out of high school? What do high school drop-outs do once they leave school? At what grade level do students typically drop out of school? What kind of effect are high school drop-outs having on their community? What are the drop-out statistics in your community (e.g., by age, race, gender, family income, etc.)? What is the relationship between dropping out of school and literacy? What are the issues pertaining to crime and high school drop-outs in your community as well as nation-wide? What is the connection between poverty and high school drop-out rates? What are the benefits of obtaining a high school education? What are the career or job opportunities for high school drop-outs? What are some ways school districts can lower drop-out rates? Who might serve as resources for this investigation? What is a GED and what is its real value?

• Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as high school drop-out statistics related to your community and nation-wide. You may interview high school drop-outs, teachers, administrators, and school counselors. You may want to speak with adult drop-outs and learn their stories. You may want to incorporate your own experiences or those of family or friends. You may also be interested in investigating statistics on high school drop-outs and drug and alcohol addiction. You may want to investigate the connection between different types of learning experiences and dropping out of school. You may also be interested in learning about alternative high schools or peer programs designed to deter people from leaving high school prior to graduation.

• Create: You will design a project to help address some of the issues that surfaced during your inquiry. Your project may involve informing your peers about issues that surround drop-outs in your community. You may wish to take action on this issue through peer information sessions and peer intervention plans within your school and community. You may want to create a public

1 A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 8

service announcement aimed at your peers. You may develop an intervention posse of peers with aims to encourage people who have chosen to leave school early to return to school or assist them in obtaining their GED. Your project may be to address some of the issues that lead youth to drop-out of school. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

◆ Discuss: What did you learn about high school drop-outs in your community? What other important information did you learn about high school drop-outs from your research and from your interviews? Is there anything you can do with regard to high school students dropping out of school in your community for further research or action? What is the potential value of this information to your community, the local schools, and your peers? How can you get others to become interested in the issue of high school drop-outs in your community?

◆ Reflect: How does your learning about issues related to high school drop-outs impact you, your family, and your community? How can sharing your knowledge about the importance of educational attainment within your community help make your community a better place to live? How does your participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How does your participation in work like this change how others view you, youth, and youth contributions within your community? What kinds of positive and negative feedback have you encountered from within the community while conducting this inquiry?

Resources


Drop-out Prevention: www.solutionsforamerica.org/healthyfam/dropout_prevention.html


School Drop-out Prevention Program: www.dropoutprevention.org


Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

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9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:
What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?

Notes & Reflections:
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 9

Exploring Career Opportunities and Career Planning

Brief Description

Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research career opportunities and related information in your community and beyond. Through activities such as searching local newspaper searches and library resources, interviews, and peer discussions you will think about career planning and opportunities as they relate to your personal interests as well as the experiences and interests of your family and peers.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

- Learn how to do research using primary sources.¹
- Empower you to think critically within the context of career opportunities and career planning within your own community for your own life.
- Come up with a project to help address the issue of crime in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

✦ Ask: What is the difference between a job and a career? What is the connection between your personal interests (things you enjoy doing) and a future career? What are the careers you see for yourself in the future? What types of hours and days might you be expected to work in the career area of your choice? What kind of physical demands will there be? What kind of social skills are required? What type of education is required to accomplish your career goals? What educational institutions in your community (i.e., college, university, technical institutes, vocational schools, etc.) have programs that provide educational training in your area of interest? What institutions in other locations have programs that provide educational training in your area of interest? What is the amount of time that is required to complete a degree program in your area of interest? What is the amount of money that is required to complete a degree program in your area of interest? How do you plan to fund your desired education? If you will need financial aid, how do you apply for financial aid and what information will you need to provide to apply for financial aid? What classes are you expected to have completed prior to entering your specific program? What is the expected high school grade point average for a person applying for your desired program? What types of employment opportunities are available in your career area of interest in your community? What types of institutions or companies could you apply to for employment once you have completed your training, degree, or certification? What are the salary ranges for careers in your area of interest? What are some salary variations for your career choice, comparing your community to other areas outside of your community?

✦ Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as the United States Department of Labor website, local and other

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¹ A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
**SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 9**

newspaper employment advertisements, as well as employment websites. You are encouraged to complete one or several of many available career surveys to determine how your interests line up with possible career choices.

You may explore the resources available at local college career centers, your public library, or your local unemployment office. You may conduct interviews with various professionals in your career area of interest. You may wish to job shadow someone to learn about a typical day. You can explore various employment websites such as CareerBuilder.com and Monster.com. You may be able to find valuable information on the websites of relevant professional organizations; for example, you could look at the site of the Association of American Educators if you are interested in becoming a teacher. These organizations are also a great source for finding a person within your career to interview.

**Create:** You will design a project to help address some of the career opportunity and career planning issues that surfaced during your inquiry.

You may consider the types of careers that are popular among your peers, family, and within your community, then create a career planning program that provides information about training and job opportunities within the community and beyond.

You may, in partnership with a local job agency or college in your community, organize a career fair where you, your peers, and family members can connect with professionals to discuss local opportunities and needs. You can create a newsletter, video, or website in order to share information you discovered through your research, and find a way to distribute the information to your peers, community members, and family.

**Discuss:** What did you learn about career opportunities in your community? What did you learn about educational opportunities in your community? What did you learn about what you will need to do in order to reach your career goals? What did you learn about the importance of education? What did you learn about financing an education? What did you learn about your career of interest that you did not already know? What did you learn about skill-building and networking beyond taking classes in relation to career opportunities and employment? What did you learn about the connection between your career interests, location, and salary? What did you learn about applying to college or career training institutions? Is there anything further you can do to encourage career planning among your peers and family members in your community? What kinds of opportunities are available in your community to learn more about careers planning and education? What other important information did you gain? What is the potential value of this information to your community and peers? What else may you learn about and teach others in relation to career planning?

**Reflect:** How does learning about career planning, career opportunities, education, and training help you, your family, and your community? How can sharing knowledge about career planning and career opportunities impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? Did participating in this inquiry change your perspective on your career choice? How do you see career opportunities and training affecting your community, culture, or peers? How might learning about career planning, career opportunities, education, and training help address poverty in your community?
Youth Community Informatics

SECTION 1

Community As Curriculum

Youth As Social Inquirer

SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 9

Resources

Career Onestop: www.careeronestop.org
Career Planning from ACT: www.actstudent.org/wwm/index.html
Career Interest Survey: www.edonline.com/collegecompass/carhlp2.htm
Federal Student Aid: www.fafsa.ed.gov
Illinois workNet Center: www.illinoisworknet.com/vos_portal/
Jobweb: www.jobweb.com/students.aspx?id=188
Students.gov (see “Career development”): www.students.gov
U.S. Department of Labor: www.dol.gov

Take social action!

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9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:

What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 10

Exploring Issues of Food Consumption and Health within the Community

Brief Description

Through this inquiry, you will learn how to research issues related to food consumption habits, food security, and health within your community. Through activities such as searching community records and news footage, conducting surveys, Internet searches, and interviews, you will explore the issues and possible solutions.

The goals of this activity should be adapted to the specific resources of the participating institution, community, and youth group.

After doing your inquiry, you will then work to implement a plan based on your inquiry. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

Goals of Activities

- Learn how to do research using primary sources.1
- Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.
- Empower you to think critically about how food choices and food security issues impact you, your friends and family, and the community.
- Come up with a project to help address health and eating issues in your community.

Inquiry Cycle

♣ Ask: How does a person you consider to be healthy live? How does a person you consider to be unhealthy live? What food groups are considered to be healthy and why? What are organic foods? What are the benefits of regular exercise? What are some of the foods that you see consumed most often in your community or culture? What are some of the foods that are most popular among your peers? What are some of the foods you have consumed this week (including ingredients such as margarine, salt, and sugar)? What is the chemical composition and caloric content of some of the foods on your list? What are nutrients? How much sugar is contained in your favorite drink? What chemicals are used in sweeteners and diet drinks? What effect do some of the chemicals and ingredients contained in your food have on the human body? What are the nutritional guidelines and recommended daily caloric intake for someone your age and gender? What kind of dieting to lose weight is safe and unsafe? Where can you find information on health conditions that impact your community? What does the term “food security” mean? Where in your community can you find information on healthier living? How far do you have to travel to buy groceries? How do you get there? Where in your community can you find fresh produce (fruits and vegetables)? What types of health issues are prominent in your family? What types of health issues are prominent among youth in your age group nationwide? What is the potential connection between diet and health issues in your community or culture? How might poverty affect the patterns in which people purchase and consume food? How might your community’s location affect access to fresh or healthy food?

♣ Investigate: You will explore answers to your questions. You may take a look at primary source information such as United States health statistics community health statistics, culturally specific health statistics, and age- and gender-specific health statistics. You may conduct interviews with various health professionals in your area such as a

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1 A primary source means someone or something that provides first-hand or original information on a topic.
SOCIAL INQUIRY: ACTIVITY 10

dietician, family doctor, or school nurse. You may want to do a food inventory of your kitchen at home. You may want to interview family members, peers, or neighbors about their food shopping habits. You may want to compare the prices of food items such as organic and non-organic apples at the supermarket or a gallon of milk at a convenience store, a full-service grocery story, and a health food store.

♦ Create: You will design a project to help address some of the food-related health issues in your community, in your family, and among your peers that have surfaced during your inquiry. You may want consider conducting a food consumption survey within your community, family, or peer group to find out what types of food consumption patterns are popular. You could then create a health education program that provides information specific to the health concerns of your community.

You may work in partnership with a local health facility in your community and organize a health fair. You may want to look into the possibility of growing your own herbs or vegetables, perhaps through a community garden project. You may want to conduct a survey of your community to find and then map locations where healthy and unhealthy foods are sold. [See Section 2: Youth as Social Activist for ideas.]

♦ Discuss: What did you learn about health awareness in your community? What kinds of ingredients in food should you try to avoid and why? What did you learn about the connection between diet, exercise, and disease from your re-search and interviews? Is there anything you can do in relation to health issues your community, culture, or among your peers for further research or action? What is the potential value of the information you learned to your community and peers? How can you get others to become interested in issues of health in your community? What else may you learn about and teach others in relation to issues of health? What kinds of opportunities are available in your community to learn more about health related issues? What other important information did you gain?

♦ Reflect: How does learning about particular health issues impact you, your family, and your community? How can sharing knowledge about health, diet, and exercise issues impact your community? How does participating in work like this involve you in a democracy? How do you see diet patterns affecting your community, culture, or peers? How might the food industry take advantage of people who do not read and understand food labels? Who is responsible for the health of your community, family, and peers?

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Healthy Youth – Nutrition: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/index.htm

Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit: www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EFAN02013


University of Illinois Nutrition Analysis Tool: http://nat.illinois.edu/mainnat.html
Take social action!

Now that you have investigated an issue that is relevant to your community, there are many ways that you can use what you’ve learned to take action. Explore the Youth as Social Activist units in this curriculum and consider which technology(ies) or mediums will be most effective in addressing the change that you would like to see.

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9. Youth as Librarian: Create a Library
10. Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Some things to consider:

What change do you want to see happen in your community?
What stakeholders or different audiences need to be involved to make that change happen?
What technology or medium for your message will be most effective in reaching those audiences?

Notes & Reflections:
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 1
Youth As Curator: Design a Public Exhibit

Brief Description
As a curator, you will explore how the creation of a public exhibit can be a way to create change around the issue of your social inquiry. You will learn how to do research using primary sources and artifacts such as books, maps, artwork, and music to create a physical display. It is your job to find historical objects within the community to help tell the story of the social justice issue you investigated. For instance, when investigating the issue of racial segregation, the community archive may have a map showing historical borders dividing races within the community, which may be used to help people think about this issue historically and today.

We often see such exhibits in museums, libraries, and sometimes in the lobbies of businesses such as banks. As part of this inquiry, you need to identify which organizations within the community currently host or archive historical objects. Within this inquiry, you may partner with one of these organizations to develop your exhibit.

For this project to be successful, a willing collaboration between a participating cultural institution (museum, library, or historical society) and a youth group must be established. The goals should be adapted to the specific resources of the institution and your group.

You can then learn about the participating cultural institution. This may include behind-the-scenes tours, introductions to staff, or guided tours of existing exhibits. As a curator, you will then work to research and select the final objects that will be put on display. You should help create the thematic organization, work to draft the accompanying text, and design the exhibit layout.

Parameters and limitations for the exhibition should be clearly defined with the participating cultural institution.

Goals of Activities
- Learn how to do research using primary sources, while gaining first-hand experience with museum and library studies.
- Empower you to think critically about this issue within the context of your local history and social reality.
- Create an exhibit in a public space that will empower others to take action on your issue of interest.

Inquiry Cycle
- **Ask:** How do historical materials reflect your identity and enable you to better understand your history? What organizations exist that have information on your topic of interest? Where might your story best be told? What resources (maps, objects, etc.) are available that will help you tell others about your topic of interest?
- **Investigate:** You should investigate possible locations for your exhibit. You should think critically about how you might best present your findings in a way that inspires others to take action on this issue. After investigating your issue of choice (see Youth as Social Inquirer section), you should locate objects that can be used to tell the story of your research and findings. You can think about ways to tell your story or the story of your findings. You may do this by viewing similar exhibits and analyzing them. What makes these exhibits interesting? How do they tell a story? Do they move people to do something? If so, how?
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 1

♠ **Create:** You will collaborate with the cultural institution where your exhibit will be located to select exhibit themes, find artifacts (physical objects) that you want to display, create and finalize an object list, and write object descriptions. You should gather objects for your exhibit and put them with your descriptions in a way that is visually interesting.

♠ **Discuss:** You may engage in a discussion about the nature of history and the role of primary sources. Discuss what primary sources are, how primary sources tell stories, how we decide to trust or distrust historical sources, and how history determines the present. You may also want to discuss what makes exhibits powerful, and whether the exhibit you created was powerful and why.

♠ **Reflect:** Create an object list of at least ten items that could serve to represent your life to someone living a hundred years from now. Additionally, ask family, friends, or teachers to select three of these objects and find out how those objects are viewed by those close to you. In other words, what do these objects reveal about you, and what remains hidden (undisclosed)? What story do they tell about you and your life?

In spring of 2008, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) and the Newberry Library initiated a collaboration, with assistance from the University of Illinois’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science. This collaboration culminated in an exhibition of materials at the library relating to the culture and history of Puerto Rico.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 1

Inquiry Action: The Newberry Library Project in Paseo Boricua, Chicago, IL

The project was incorporated into the PACHS Puerto Rican history and culture class as well as the Spanish class, and aimed to teach students primary research skills while empowering them to serve as curators of an exhibition of Puerto Rican materials at a prominent cultural institution in the city of Chicago.

Ask

What books are available at the library about Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican history?
What maps of Puerto Rico are available at the library?
What other resources on Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican history are available at the library?
What is included in an exhibition?
What is the purpose of an exhibition?

Investigate

Students were brought to the library where they searched the archives, shelves, and stacks for materials relating to Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican history. They worked with a librarian to located resources. Students then assessed and discussed the materials. Students and leaders discussed how the exhibition should be organized, which brought to light more questions such as: What is a public exhibit? Who writes history? How is history documented and inherited, and what ultimately are the consequences? How and when do exhibitions present an opportunity to address these questions?

Create

Students became familiar with the library’s on-line catalog and began to research their own specific items of interest. The students wrote about their objects in both English and Spanish. They put their exhibit together and it was shown at the Newberry Library in June of that year.

Discuss

What did you learn about our own history by doing this project?
What did you learn by telling the story of our own history?
What did you learn about libraries through this project?
What did you learn about creating an actual exhibit?

Reflect

How might exhibits and processes such as these be used to inform the public about history and the creation of history?
How might projects such as these be expanded to involve more students in the future?
How might telling history in this way empower youth?

More about the exhibit “500 Years of Puerto Rican History through the Eyes of Others” can be found online:

- http://www.newberry.org/exhibits/PuertoRico.html
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 2

Youth as Social Networker: Create an Online Community

Brief Description

As a social networker you will explore the use of Internet technologies as a means of sharing information about the social justice issue into which you inquired. There are many websites that have created online communities, connecting people from all around the world. Facebook, MySpace, BlackPlanet, Global Voices, and Twitter are just a few examples. Some of these communities are organized for mostly social reasons – to meet new people and stay connected to friends. Others grew out of a specific need or goal. You may have heard about how youth in various parts of the world have been organizing their political causes and fighting for their rights with the help of different social networking tools. There are also groups here in the U.S. who are using social networking tools in similar ways.

Goals of Activities

• Empower you to think critically about how the Internet can be used to take social action.

• Provide an opportunity for you to explore how you can connect to existing online communities or create a new community to address your social justice topic.

Inquiry Cycle

♦ Ask: Are there already online communities that discuss the social justice topic of my interest? Who is involved in these discussions and who is missing? How can I encourage all of the needed stakeholders or audiences to participate in this online discussion? How can discussions and sharing of information within online communities be turned into social action? Do I need an online community that is more local, national, or global? What is the difference between a social networking site like Facebook and a blogging site like Wordpress or a personal website? Do you need to register and log in to the site to use it? What information can you see without logging in? How much personal information do you have to give in order to register? How old do you have to be to legally use the site?

♦ Investigate: Go online and do a search for online communities that are already discussing your social justice topic. You may also want to think about your target audience. Are youth important to the change you want to see happen in your community? If so, where are youth going online to talk with one another? If other audiences – parents, government officials, business leaders, etc. – are also important to your plan for social action, where are they talking online? Are there different online communities that you want to try to connect?

Explore the different communication capabilities and tools (e.g., chat functions, file or data sharing, posting photos, personal profiles, etc.) that are used on different community websites. Try to determine the value of these different features for your needs.

♦ Create: Decide whether you are going to create a new discussion thread or group page within an existing site – like Facebook – or whether you are going to create a completely new website that focuses on your social justice topic. Also decide which communication tools or capabilities you want to have on your site. For instance, is it important that every person who logs into the site creates a personal profile page? Is it important that the people participating in the online conversations can be identified?
**SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 2**

**Discuss:** Share your online community page/group with others. Discuss the information you discovered and how social action can be taken to impact change. Are people participating in your online community? Why or why not? Who is participating and who isn’t? Why or why not?

**Reflect:** Think about how and when technology offers a space to express thoughts, discuss issues with others, and share findings and resources.

**Consider:**
- Which communications tools online are the most effective in bringing people together for social action? Are there any risks? What might those be?
- Do online discussions of social justice topics provide one more way to support already active communities, or can they inspire new social action in the world? Can you find examples?

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**Inquiry Action: ¡Humboldt Park NO SE VENDE! Campaign (Humboldt Park, Not For Sale)**

The ¡Humboldt Park NO SE VENDE! (HPNSVD!) campaign is a project of the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center, a community organization that has existed for over 30 years in Paseo Boricana, Chicago. The organizers are working to integrate long-time residents into the process of building the future of Humboldt Park. First developed in order to address the lack of educational resources on gentrification in the neighborhood, the campaign aims to challenge local gentrification and prevent the displacement of Chicago’s oldest Puerto Rican community. The object is to engage community residents in a serious dialogue with city officials and property developers.

The official web page HPNSVD! is hosted as a sub-category on the Puerto Rican Cultural Center's website. However, it is hard to know who is paying attention to the campaign’s message and who, if anyone, is keeping abreast of the latest news, resources, and upcoming events. The organizers were also looking for a way to communicate easily with one another and with anyone interested in the issue. They began asking: How could HPNSVD! get more attention and support from young people and enhance their awareness of the issues of gentrification? What would be the most effective tool for this purpose? HPNSVD! realized that most young people have pages on Facebook, which is one of the most used social networking websites in terms of monthly users worldwide. In July 2009, HPNSVD! created a page on Facebook, which it uses to regularly advertise its efforts to the public at large as well as to those in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Anyone who has an account on Facebook can join the HPNSVD! page, be informed of upcoming events and news, see photos, write something on the wall, and connect themselves with other people. Some information on the page is also publicly viewable without logging on to Facebook.

The community of users who participate on the HPNV! Facebook page talk not only about gentrification. Conversations touch on a wide range of community issues and events in Paseo Boricana, such as the Puerto Rican Film Festival; poetry, dance, and hip hop night; interesting YouTube clips about Puerto Rican history and culture; fundraising for the Puerto Rican political prisoners; and so on. The page helps people keep up-to-date on all community issues, and gets more people involved in both the actual and the virtual world.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 3

Youth as Journalist: Create a Newspaper

Brief Description

As a journalist, you will explore how community newspapers can serve communities—in particular disenfranchised communities—in a multitude of ways. Applying best journalistic practices within a community setting allows citizens to describe the problems they face, question the obstacles that stand in their way, and potentially determine solutions for what may lay ahead. By becoming a citizen journalist you will not only question your surroundings, but also use the tools of journalism to identify solutions and address issues rarely seen or heard. This activity will empower you to learn about the foundations of democracy and how you can play an active role within that democracy.

You will need to get a feeling for the various resources available within your community. These resources may come in the form of economic assets, human capital, or in the case of investigative work (which is at the core of journalism), informational resources.

Consider using Section I—Youth As Social Inquirer as a starting off point to research topics such as poverty, crime, race, and so on. Such explorations can help you get a better sense of what you intend to accomplish with your written or visual work.

Once a topic has been selected, you will need to determine whom to interview. You will need to learn how to conduct an interview and how to supplement the interview with other information sources. In the case of poverty, for instance, trips to local food shelters, soup kitchens, employment offices, the public library, city hall, and so on can all help to inform your work.

Writing or creating a newspaper will allow you to practice expressing yourself, but also to apply your knowledge in thoughtful and creative ways. Using technologies such as digital cameras, desktop publishing software, or even GPS receivers to aid in your story-telling will heighten your awareness about the potential use of new technologies and how they play a role within our information society.

Goals of Activities

• Hone your ability to express yourself either through the written word, a visual medium, or the convergence of both.
• Empower you with the tools to potentially solve issues at hand.
• Provide a creative outlet and academic exercise that helps you to learn about the most basic concept of higher learning—research.

Inquiry Cycle

• Ask: After doing an inquiry into the community (see Youth as Social Inquirer activities), you will explore how journalism can help you to effectively research and propose hypotheses on the basis of your research. Possible questions include: What would you like to see improved? What have you learned about the community that others need to know about or may be curious about? How might using journalism help others to learn about this topic? Are there some problems in your community that are more pressing than others? Are there untold stories that need to be told within your community? If so, what are they?

• Investigate: You will determine what questions to ask, whom to ask, and how to follow-up on that information once your questions have been answered. You will read articles from a variety of sources (both online and in print), analyzing them to determine what makes them powerful stories.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 3

You will analyze what types of information are found in journalistic pieces. You will explore concepts such as media ethics and source reliability.

♦ Create: You may write or produce a journalistic piece as a culmination of your work as a citizen journalist. Remember to think about the components of a journalistic piece — who, what, where, when, and why, as well as some suggestions for what others can do to become involved in this issue. Your work may be submitted to local newspapers or independent media centers. Your work may also be posted to the Web in a wiki or blog, for example.

♦ Discuss: Try to use the work that you produce as a conversation starter in your community — one that highlights voices and perspectives that come from within the community, rather than one based primarily on outsider perspectives.

♦ Reflect: How effective was the work you created at engaging your peers, other community members, or those outside of the community? Who listened and who didn’t? Why? Who participated and who didn’t? Why? Why is journalism so tied to our notion of democracy in the U.S.? How did this project help you to participate within a democracy?

Inquiry Action: Community Journalism in Paseo Boricua, Chicago, IL

A journalism class was offered through the Barrio Arts, Culture, and Communication Academy (BACCA), an after-school program organized by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in the Humboldt Park area of Chicago. The class was held in the computer workroom of a local, bilingual newspaper called La Voz del Paseo Boricua, which published the articles the students wrote.

Articles written by youth in the BACCA after-school program were published by the local newspaper, La Voz del Paseo Boricua
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 3

Inquiry Action: Community Journalism in Paseo Boricua, Chicago, IL

Five teens were all personally invited to participate in the BACCA program by the program’s organizers, young adults who are actively involved as community leaders. Although the BACCA students were initially resistant, saying things like, “I was kind of pushed into this” to describe how they got involved in the BACCA program, when they attended the journalism class they commented that they were learning valuable skills and having fun.

A basic curriculum for the journalism class was provided by a previous teacher and another curriculum outline was provided by the local newspaper editors. Additional guidance was provided by a former professional journalist who was then a graduate student studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science. He also taught a session in interviewing techniques and topic brainstorming.

In the beginning, most of the students were very uncertain about how to write an organized argument or article, so the leaders emphasized writing as an argument as participants worked on their articles. Much of the class time focused on gaining first-hand writing experience. The class discussed interview techniques, and the participants practiced interviewing people and taking good notes. They were taught how to evaluate the validity and usefulness of information and how to cite their sources appropriately for newspaper journalism. A great deal of the class’s focus involved exploring the idea of community identity, and developing within the students a dedication to responsible community activism.

The students’ written pieces were translated into Spanish (by other staff) and published monthly in the local newspaper One such article can be accessed online in English at http://lavoz-prcc.org/2008/06/bacca-youth-reflection-new-soul-in-this-strange-world).

Students completed several solidly written articles that were meaningful within the community. The articles demonstrated that the youth were undergoing a kind of coming of age and beginning to recognize the significance of being active members of their community. They met deadlines and worked cooperatively to develop their skills and their articles. They also demonstrated a growing digital, media, and text literacy as they researched, wrote, and revised their articles—including becoming much more comfortable using Macintosh computers (several students had never used a Mac before). All of the participants enthusiastically discussed their situation as minorities in a challenged neighborhood, and all were eager to take on the challenge of writing for their community.
**SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 4**

**Youth as Videographer: Create a Documentary**

*Brief Description*

As a videographer, you will create a video that tells the story of an issue in the community.

Documentaries commonly tell a story by exploring an issue through different lenses of experience collected through interviews with different stakeholders in the community. These interviews are interwoven other visual images and sound to tell about an issue of interest. Carefully selected music can add meaning or power to the story being told.

*Goals of Activities*

- Reflect on the underlying causes of the particular issue learned about from your inquiry into the community.
- Provide a voice for people in the community.
- Build awareness of your issue in the community.
- Explore ways to address the issue.

*Inquiry Cycle*

**Ask:** After doing an inquiry into the community, you will explore how journalism can allow you to effectively research and communicate findings through the voices of the people in your community. Possible questions include: How might creating a documentary help others to learn about this topic? Who has information about this topic? Who will your audience be for your documentary? (if you think you might ever show your film on a screen larger than the one on your computer, consider using a digital video camera and external microphone for best quality) Who will you need to interview? What questions will you ask? Do you need to get permission to record the interviews? What are 2-3 goals that you want to achieve by making this movie? What stories do you want to communicate?

**Investigate:** Before you go out and start talking to people, you need to learn a bit about being a journalist and prepare in advance. Pair up and decide which people to interview. Each group should write up questions to ask based on the themes that the whole group has previously discussed. Practice interviewing each other; listen carefully to your interviewee’s answers, being sure to follow up with any questions that may contain stories. For instance, let’s say you ask the question, “Have you ever experienced racism?” and the response is, “Yes.” Don’t just stop there. Ask follow-up questions that will get to the story. For instance, you could ask, “Can you tell me the story of when you had this experience?” or “Can you tell me how that made you feel?”

*Activity: Interviewing*

Using the questions previously prepared as a guide, choose a spot to interview each community member. If possible, consider shooting in a location that will add additional meaning to the story you are trying to tell. Use a video camera, still camera with a video option, or cell phone camera to record the interview. Be aware of your distance from the person you are interviewing and any background noise such as traffic, as the quality of your interview will be impacted by these factors. If it is possible to use an external microphone that you can direct toward the person who is speaking, that will greatly improve the sound quality.

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A stakeholder is an individual or group that is directly involved or affected by the issue in some way.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 4

Allow for some flexibility as the interview progresses. Encourage the story to go where it will. Ask questions that come to mind as you talk to with the interviewee. Be curious. One person should make field notes during the interview, logging an outline of the conversation. You’ll use this later for quicker review of the video. After the interview, you can also record extra footage (a “b-roll”) of the surrounding area and significant things that the person spoke about.

◆ Create:

Activity: Writing & Storyboarding

After you’ve decided on the goals for your video, you will practice a technique called storyboarding. A storyboard is like a visual outline for a video. It is similar to a story map.

Sometimes one begins storyboarding at the very beginning of a project, as part of writing a script. Other times, storyboarding and scripting happen after a writer sees what people have to say, and then tell the story based on the themes that came up. This is more like what you’re doing with this project. While working on any movie project, you may storyboard and script several times. Think of it as a way to outline your ideas visually.

Activity: Editing

You will need practice transferring your video footage from your camera to your computer; importing your footage into your video editing software program; and editing your footage. Depending on the program used, you should be able to find instructions online as well as use the program’s built-in help features. With time to play and practice, you should have no problem mastering this topic. Avoid rushing this learning process.

Activity: Reviewing & Logging Footage

Reviewing and logging your footage is a very important if time-consuming step in creating a documentary. As you watch the shots, you should make notes on what people said, where it matched your themes and issues, and even trim or create smaller clips to use later in editing. Depending on what software you’re using to edit the video, some of this notation capability may be available in the program. You can also make notes by keeping the original footage intact, and making notes where the “good takes” were in the timeline of each clip. It’s important to stay focused and organized, looking for footage that helps communicate what you intended.

◆ Discuss: The process of creating a documentary video doesn’t always happen in a particular order. You might have a plan as you begin shooting interviews, but often the plan changes based on what is discovered. A team producing a documentary will usually have regular meetings to discuss the status of the project, issues that might require a change in direction for shooting, or brainstorming and group storyboarding sessions to begin working with the content as it is gathered.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 4

Activity: Ongoing Project Review

In this activity, using some footage that small groups have already gathered, the project team should review and then have a discussion about the highlights of the footage and begin to create a storyboard of how it fits within the overall project. Those who shot the footage should present the clips and lead the discussion about them. It may also be useful to discuss the footage as a whole group, then break into small groups for quick storyboarding, then have each group present their storyboard. The entire project team can then discuss the strengths of each different storyboard.

Activity: Editing Practice

Using the storyboards that small groups created in the previous activity, small groups (or individual editors) should begin to edit the footage to tell that story (or another that emerges as the film is edited). When groups are finished, they will present the video to the rest of the groups with a brief explanation or introduction. During editing, groups or individual editors should write down thoughts on shots that might be nice to use but are unavailable. For instance, if a person being interviewed is talking about a particular building, place, person, or event, the team may need to investigate whether photographs exist, if video can be obtained, or how the subject might be otherwise illustrated in the video. All this information should be discussed when the editor/group presents back to the project team.

Activity: Community Screening and Dialogue

Consider having a public screening or peer screening of your finished documentary. Schedule time after the screening to discuss the inquiry process that led to the film, the issues your documentary explores, and what this might mean for the community.

Reflect: How might the video(s) you created be used to engage community members in open dialogue about issues that affect them? Think about how you might get your video out into the community to a larger audience. Who will your video reach?

Reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of exploring this issue through documentary storytelling techniques. To whom does your message speak? What worked well? What might have worked better? What voices get heard? Which voices were excluded, accidentally or intentionally? Why?

Inquiry Action: BeComeUnity and Rantoul Township High School

Over the course of 10 months, youth in Rantoul, Illinois, were engaged in a series of discussions around the issue of poverty in their community. This was a very free-flowing discussion, with the direction of the conversation and action being guided by the participating high school students.

Ask

It took just a few questions to have the room embroiled in turmoil.

Do you think race and poverty are related?

Accusations were bandied about. Girls turned on boys. Boys turned on girls. Quickly the question had turned into what are the defining characteristics of being rich or poor, and soon the students were trying to determine how to tell the stories of class relations in Rantoul. In a city where the poverty rate has affected approximately 40 to 50 percent of the high school’s student population, these 10 students, Rantoul community members, were debating whether or not there was a story to be told.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 4

Inquiry Action: BeComeUnity and Rantoul Township High School

How can you create a video that would tell those stories and help the community at the same time?

It seemed as if discussion turned to question, and question turned to discussion. The inquiry cycle had become the inquiry treadmill. Students were debating where to find information. Is it on the Internet? How about the local government?

Then one student thought she could tell her story through a video diary. Another decided to interview relatives. Soon they wanted to ask their local government: Just what is wrong with our community? Where are the jobs? What about the unemployment rate? What did it mean to live below the poverty rate? What exactly was the poverty rate?

Investigate

They learned of the U.S. Census Bureau data. They scoured local newspaper stories. Slowly they began to tell the story of their community. They asked local officials. They questioned teachers. They spoke to business leaders. They even turned to themselves.

Create

In a span of 10 weeks, students were filming their days, their relatives, their local leaders, and they were asking questions. They were creating a narrative of their community based on a question. True, they would not finish. But, they would begin a story.

Through a program that began in coordination with the Rantoul Township High School and the Youth Community Informatics (YCI) program, a group of students banded together under the moniker Youth Democracy and organized a town hall meeting. It was a small sample of the community, but it was a microcosm of ideas and curiosity that helped to create a video about unemployment. Interested in just how to document what they saw day-in and day-out, students turned to themselves, learned from each other, and began to work towards their goal.

Their first product was brief but important. In less than two minutes of video, created through a combination of interviews, community photographs and student-shot video, students learned how to edit, transform, and translate their community’s story onto the screen. They learned new technical skills. They learned the value of research. But, more importantly they learned the value of discussion and inquiry.

Discuss / Reflect

The process was not a simple one. Tackling issues such as class, race and poverty is challenging. Both adult and youth participants engaged in a lot of discussion and reflection: What do we do if participants lose interest in the project? How can we get more youth interested in participating in this project with us? What do we do if we lose hope or when we get depressed about all of this? What are we trying to do here and why? How can we get this information out to the masses?

Check out their first effort at:
http://youtu.be/gzq01Qe_UPc
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 5
Youth as Mapper: Create a Community Map

Brief Description
As a community mapper, you will use technology to create a map showing the location of different resources in your community. These resources relate to the social justice topic you are investigating. If you are investigating unemployment, for instance, you might choose to create a map of potential employers in your community. Other examples of resources may include the location of grocery and health food stores, food banks, schools, teen recreation sites, historical buildings, etc. You can also map information describing households in your community.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects information about households, including data on family income, age of household members, race of household members, level of education, and so on. This information is available to the public for free at the U.S. Census Bureau website. Or maybe you want to look at historical maps of your community and compare them to current maps? How has your community changed over time? What similarities or differences do you see in the number or location of residences versus businesses? What similarities or differences do you see in the racial demographic of the community? Are households of different races segregated in different parts of town or are they integrated? These and many more questions can be explored with data that is shared as a visual map, creating a powerful way for you to raise awareness and influence the actions of others on the topic of your social justice inquiry.

Geospatial technologies are available to help you create and share your map. GPS units (geospatial positioning systems) use satellite information to mark geographic locations by latitude and longitude. If you are mapping buildings, you can easily use addresses to map their location. But sometimes the information you are mapping doesn’t have an address, such as the location of stop signs, community gardens, playgrounds, and so on.

In these cases, handheld GPS receivers can help you mark the location in a way that others can easily find. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software is another tool available to help you create and share your map. Google Maps is an example of GIS software that allows you to map resources in your community and quickly share this map with others through the Internet. GIS software will let you add detailed information describing each data point on your map, including photos, video, URL and a text description. For more information on using geospatial technologies for your project, look for the Youth Community Informatics website online, where you can find more inquiry units on mastering GIS skills.

Inquiry Cycle
• Ask: What data from your social inquiry do you want to communicate with others through a map? What are the assets or resources in your community related to your social justice topic?
• Investigate: You should look to find maps that communicate information about your community that might already exist. What information is missing from these maps that you would like to add? With whom do you want to share your map? Will you share your map through the Internet or save it as an image to include in a PowerPoint presentation, exhibit, newsletter, or other format?
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 5

♦ Create: The first step of creating your map is to collect your data. Depending on which software you are using to create the map, you may need this information to be in a specific format, such as an Excel spreadsheet. In other cases, you may just need a list of addresses with whatever additional information you want to include about the resource at each location.

The second step is to add your data to the map, using GIS software such as Google Maps. You will need to think about a title for your map and create a legend that describes any symbols or colors used to mark different kinds of resources or data about your community. If you are creating an interactive map online, you may want to record videos or sound clips and upload them as well, or include URL links to other websites that are relevant.

The third step is to share your map with others. You will need to decide whether you are using the Internet or another format to reach your audience. If you are creating an online map, think about how you will let people know that this new resource exists. If you are creating a print map, you will need to decide how to distribute it.

♦ Discuss: Talk with others to find out what your map communicates. How was it useful? What questions did it spark? Is there additional information that would make the map more effective in communicating the findings from your social justice inquiry?

♦ Reflect: What kinds of maps are effective at communicating? What kinds of data are difficult to communicate with maps? Did your map reach the intended audience?

Inquiry Action I: Community Mapping, Ford Iroquois, IL

A group of students of Iroquois West Middle School completed a community atlas project in 2008. They created nearly a dozen maps about different facets of their community: roads, schools, and railroads, among others.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 5

Inquiry Action I: Community Mapping, Ford Iroquois, IL

In 2009, they decided to continue mapping to build on the project of the previous year. They were given three options to select one for this mapping project: historic buildings, fire hydrants, or cemeteries. The students chose to map a cemetery.

Ask

The project began with a talk from the president of Onarga Historical Society, which sparked the students’ interests. The following are some of the questions the students began to ask:

*Who are some of the people the president mentioned?*
*Who are other people who made an interesting contribution to our community?*
*Where can we find more information about them?*

Investigate

Students decided to spend some time in the library researching the people they identified through their questions. They then continued their investigation in the field (i.e., the cemetery), with the help of some handheld GPS receivers and cameras.

The original idea was just to mark the locations of the gravestones of the people they identified during their library research. Through their investigation, they began to see different things in the cemetery. For example, they saw that the gravestones differed in terms of size, shape, and orientation. They became more curious about the meanings behind these differences. This led them to a whole new area of research, called “cemetery symbolism.” After further investigation, the students came to understand that different symbols on gravestones have different social meanings. For example, engravings such as broken chains symbolize a life cut short.

Create

After both the library and field investigations, students regularly met in the school lab to integrate GPS coordinates, pictures, videos, and narratives. They created a variety of information products:

- Podcasts about the individuals that interested them;
- Blog entries (see [http://wp.iwest.k12.il.us/maps/](http://wp.iwest.k12.il.us/maps/));
- A Google Map with narrative, photo, and videos attached to the location of each gravestone (see [http://goo.gl/pCBBo](http://goo.gl/pCBBo)).

Discuss

Most of the technological tools used—Google Maps for mapping, Wordpress for blogging, Audacity for voice recording—were new for the students. Hence, the process of the creation involved investigation for each of them. These were collaborative investigations and students learned from each other. The discussions were more on 'how to do X' than on the bigger questions they asked at the beginning of the project.

Reflect

Participants learned that cemeteries are full of information about the past: who the most powerful and well-respected people were, average family size during certain time periods, and general patterns of life or death in the community that might indicate periods of wealth, poverty, or even disease outbreaks.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 5

Inquiry Action II: Engaging and Empowering Youth (E2Y) Community Asset Mapping Project, Champaign, IL

The E2Y Community Asset Mapping Project was an after-school program developed in collaboration with community organizations and the University of Illinois. Five African American youth interviewed business owners, neighbors, community leaders, and others to identify the assets in their own neighborhoods—neighborhoods often viewed in a negative light. They sought job opportunities, summer activities, teen-friendly spaces, and informal and formal networks of support for youth. The E2Y participants then created an asset map with the help of Google Maps in order to share their data with peers and with adults who work with teens.

This project initially aimed at helping the participating youths develop leadership and technology skills as well as self-esteem. Along with such individual objectives, the project aimed to assist these youth in building a collective voice for themselves and their peers, working toward the health and wellness of their communities.

Ask
What assets and resources are available to youth in our community?
How can we share this information with other people?

Investigate
First, E2Y youth learned the skills needed to conduct field work. They learned how to conduct interviews, use a video recorder and a tripod, how to choose a good camera angle, and use a GPS device.

Adult partners initially created a list of community organizations for youth participants to interview. However, the youth also joined the adults in canvassing the community, looking for undiscovered assets. They distributed a flyer that asked community members to contact E2Y with information, and spoke with peers and neighbors to spread the word and gather feedback. After a list of assets had been finalized, they
Inquiry Action II: Engaging and Empowering Youth (E2Y) Community Asset Mapping Project, Champaign, IL

Interviewed representatives from each organization identified. Interview subjects shared detailed information regarding what their organization or facility offers local youth. The participants also used handheld GPS devices to document asset locations, and took photos and notes about their findings.

Create

The youth participants created an interactive community map using Google Maps. At each map location, users can find a link to interview results, video highlights from different interviews, an organization profile, interview questions asked, and a short description of the agency or location. Check it out at: http://go.illinois.edu/E2Ymap.

Discuss and Reflect

Youth worked closely together throughout the project, discussing goals, challenges, and helping each other to complete tasks. They also shared their experiences with peers, family, and adult partners, and were invited to reflect on the impact that this mapping project could have on their community, other teens, and themselves. They discussed other topics as well, such as poverty, journalism, democracy, careers, and the challenges and potential of various technologies.

Since completing the project, youth participants have also discussed their work at conference workshops and in several classes at the University of Illinois's Graduate School of Library and Information Science.

Read more about the project at:
http://illinoisyouthmedia.org/projects/e2y/
http://will.illinois.edu/pressroom/item/teens-research-assets-they-can-use/
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 6
Youth as Author I: Tell Your Own Story

**Brief Description**
As an author, you will explore how sharing your own experiences around a social justice issue can help inspire and guide others to take social action for community change.

With a book, you have the freedom to express yourself. You can use any type of textual or graphic resources, such as photos, illustrations, maps, cartoons, poetry, lyrics, narratives, and letters. You can make a book on your own, but you can also collaborate with your friends.

How can you publish your book to be read by other people? You can try classic bookbinding using paper, threads, glues, pens, and other craft products to create a single, one-of-a-kind book. But, you also may want to consider using one of several online book publishing tools. These tools allow you to create and lay out your own text, photos, and artwork (sometimes by downloading fairly simple software that is customized to work with a particular website). Some websites also provide templates with standard layouts. Using online self-publishing, you create your book “virtually” and then interested readers are able to order copies online. Some sites offer a choice of hardcover, softcover, or e-book projects.

**Goals of Activities**
- Provide an opportunity to express your thoughts and feelings in more diverse and creative ways.
- Empower you to think critically about how sharing your own personal experiences can help mobilize/inspire and guide others in taking social action.
- Provide an opportunity for you to experiment with different ways of publishing books.

**Inquiry Cycle**
- **Ask:** What issue within your community is important to you that you want others to know about? What stories do you want to tell other people related that issue? Why are those stories important to you and others? How can you tell your story in a way that is interesting and engaging? What language or languages will you write in, if any? What types of visual resources (e.g., photos, illustrations, maps, etc.) could you include that would help to tell your story? Who will be interested in reading your story? How do you want to publish your book?
- **Investigate:** You should investigate ways you can communicate your story or issue that will be powerful to those who read your book. You can take photos, write poetry or an essay, find newspaper clippings or cite statistics. You can also interview your friends, family members, school teachers, and so on about the topic that you chose. You may want to explore the Internet for different bookbinding techniques. On the Internet there are also many sites that allow you to upload your book and have others purchase it. You should investigate different sites, and possibly reviews of their services, to compare their services, benefits and drawbacks. If you wish to create a book digitally and plan to use photos or other images, you should investigate the concept of image resolution and pixels.
- **Create:** Gather the information and materials you want to include in your book. Decide which method you are going to use to create the book. Will you use an online publishing tool or a classic approach using arts and craft materials? If the
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 6

latter, you might still use a computer to compose and print out your story. However, even if you are using an online publishing tool (e.g., Blurb, Lulu, Wordclay, etc.), you should first compose, revise, edit, and spell-check your story using a word processing program. A word processor is used for writing like a knife is used for chopping: it’s the right tool for the job. Once you’ve finished the writing process, you can import your text into a desktop publishing program to design the “look” of your book, but a word processor is the more appropriate tool during the actual writing phase of a project.

Decide how many chapters or pages you are going to have and how they will be arranged. Experiment with different layouts of chapters. It’s often a good idea to sketch out your ideas by hand first. Once you have the general layout, you can begin importing your content. If you decide to use an online publishing tool, you do not have to go through the process of bookbinding and delivering the book to people in person. But if you choose classic bookbinding, you can get more information about the process from books or online resources, where you can find out about folding and collating pages, trimming and gilding edges, preparing covers, and creating clasps and ties.

Discuss: Are chapters or pages well organized and do they go together well? What are the advantages of using online publishing tools? What are its disadvantages? What is the main advantage of doing classic bookbinding? What are its disadvantages? Has your book effectively reached your intended audience? If not, why? How would you be able to more effectively reach out to your audience? How does your book educate and inspire others about the issue of your concern? Has your book been effective in moving others who have read it to take action within the community? What feedback or reactions did you get from people who read your book?

Reflect: What was the most exciting part of this book-making project? What was the most challenging part? What changes would you make if you did this project again? Are books an effective way to convey the kind of message you want to share? What kind of audience is a book good for? What kind of audience is it not good for? What makes your book distinctive from the books produced by big publishing companies? What other issues do you want to deal with in your future book-making projects? What genres of writing or resources would be good for exploring those issues?

Inquiry Action: This Is the Real Me, Paseo Boricua, Chicago, IL

This Is the Real Me is a hardcover book published in June 2009 by the students of the Barrio Arts, Culture and Communication Academy (BACCA) in Chicago’s Paseo Boricua community. Over 20 students from area high schools including the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School participated in the project. The BACCA students created the book, This Is the Real Me, as part of their anti-underage drinking campaign conducted in partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Ask

How do we integrate culture, community, and technology?

How can we reduce underage drinking?

How can we develop an indigenous youth voice to create and promote an anti-drinking campaign in the greater Humboldt Park area?
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 6

Inquiry Action: *This Is the Real Me*, Paseo Boricua, Chicago, IL

Investigate

BACCA offers classes in multimedia, photography, radio journalism, and participatory democracy. To produce the book, the multimedia and photography classes acted as the editorial board for the other two classes, where youth participants learned the fundamentals of journalism, basic techniques of radio production, and civic engagement. For the project, youth went door-to-door in the community, providing education on underage drinking and learning how it related to other obstacles the community confronts. Youth participants also studied underage drinking data for their area, which they gleaned from statewide statistics. Finally, they held focus group interviews for adults and youth to develop appropriate campaign messages for each group: “This is the real me” (for youth), and “Teach me to live responsibly” (for adults).

Create

Adobe InDesign was used to lay out the book. Students imported text and photos, and designed the book pages digitally. Once everyone had designed their pages, they exported them as high-resolution jpeg images and uploaded them to the blank page container of Blurb.com, which is a site that allows people to publish their own books. Students also produced posters, a video, and radio spots for their campaign.

Discuss

The most important discussions revolved around how to make an underage drinking campaign relevant to community members. Youth talked and wrote about their own experiences with alcohol, which were very powerful. They also discussed the significance of peer pressure and other factors affecting drinking to which they’d been exposed. Literacy was another constant feature of project discussions. The youth wrote and re-wrote their texts, and talked about how to design a book. They discussed every step of the production process, learning, for example, that it was best to create and revise their designs on paper before ever touching a computer.

Reflect

Reflecting on the project, Alejandro Molina, the multimedia instructor, noted that it tries to model a different kind of program because it explores the interconnectedness of social ills and assets. The BACCA book project teaches youth how rich in resources their community is, and encourages them to use those resources in the context of an anti-drinking campaign.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 7
Youth as Author II: Create a Zine

Brief Description
Zines, along with more traditional journals, magazines, and newspapers, are often published as periodicals. That is, they are published periodically as a series of issues on the same theme or topic. Zines may include content from a range of sources and can represent multiple authors and perspectives or just your own. Your zine might incorporate a wide range of materials, including poems, journalistic news reports, artwork, and editorials.

A zine can be created written and designed digitally on your computer, but it can also be created the old-fashioned way with paper, pens, markers, glue, scissors, staples, and so on. An old-fashioned zine can still be distributed online if you choose to digitize it by scanning or taking digital photos of its pages and then upload it to the web (e.g., by posting the pages on Flickr). The foundation of a zine is self-expression. Zines are different from newspapers because they are always non-commercial – a means of showcasing information and opinions in more creative, artistic, and experimental ways. The creators have complete, independent control over the nature of the content and how it is presented, and so, nothing is filtered or censored. This usually makes the perspectives in a zine more candid and outspoken.

Inquiry Cycle

拖欠: What information from your social inquiry do you want to communicate in your zine or eZine (online zine)? How will you communicate the information (images, charts, graphs, poetry, articles, etc.)?

Investigate: Search the Internet for examples of eZines. You might want to search for a specific topic, such as “poverty eZine.” Or you might want to just look for “youth eZines.” Look at these examples to think about the features you want to include in your own zine.

拖欠: Create: Gather the information you want to include in your zine. This may include photos, newspaper clippings, original artwork, text, statistics, and anything else you can think of. Decide whether you are going to create the zine digitally on the computer, or whether you are going to create a paper zine. You may decide to start with a paper version and later scan this into the computer. Experiment with different layouts and decide how you want to arrange the information. Once you have the general layout, input or add your information. Decide whether you want to distribute the zine in paper format or as an eZine through the Internet. Think about whether you want to find ways to turn your zine into a dialogue rather than a monologue.

拖欠: Discuss: How and when can a zine help spark conversation and action about the issues you care about? Who were you able to reach with your zine? Did readers contact you? Consider why or why not. What feedback or reactions did you get from people who read your zine?

拖欠: Reflect: What kinds of information are eZines effective at communicating? Is there a difference in audience when you distribute your zine online versus in print format? What kinds of data are difficult to communicate with eZines? Are eZines an effective way of influencing others to take social action? If so, how? If not, why not?
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 7

Inquiry Action: “Music as the Message” YCI 2009 Summer Forum, Champaign, IL

In the summer of 2009, “Music as the Message” was the theme for the Youth Community Informatics’ Summer Forum, which took place on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. Participants researched the history behind popular protest songs and then created pieces exploring the effect of music and its message on the political, social, economic, and personal arenas of life.

Creating a zine was one way in which youth chose to present their data and share their opinions on the research they conducted. During the forum, two groups chose this format. One group focused on how politics and religion interact by researching Bright Eyes’ “When the President Talks to God.” Another group chose to focus on socio-economic issues in relation to education as discussed in James Brown’s “I Don’t Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing.”

Ask

What issues are discussed in the song?

Why are these issues important to the songwriter?

Are these issues significant to you? Why?

Investigate

Youth participants researched the topics raised in the lyrics of their chosen protest song using numerous relevant resources.

Create

Using the data gathered from their research, the participants then explored the topic by creating zines. They photocopied images and graphs from books, expressed their opinions in various ways, and shared the findings of their investigations.

Discuss / Reflect

The youth shared their work, discussed why they had chosen a particular song, and what they had learned about its history, its message, and its impact. Participants also discussed the role of music in their own lives. They reflected on the power of music to express both feelings and ideas, not only through lyrics but through the music itself. They could then compare that form of expression to the different forms they had created, including zines, podcasts, and digital video.
**SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 8**

Youth as Community Planner: Use Community Data in Policy Debates

**Brief Description**

As a community planner, you will use technology to collect and share information about your community to inform local policy decisions. Community planners help envision the future of a community and the implications of proposed changes to the physical, environmental, and social environment. Community planning decisions often relate to land-use plans and policies, that is, decisions about how the land of a community will be used. Will it be used to build more homes, businesses, schools, social services, or for parks?

Community planners collect a wide range of data that may include population data (e.g., race, age, gender, education level, income, etc.), economic data (e.g., property value, business profitability), transportation data (e.g., the number and location of major roads, public transportation routes and availability, etc.), crime data, employment data, and other information useful for planning future needs of a community. Geospatial technologies are often used by community planners to create a visual map of where different kinds of resources exist within the community and to project future scenarios of growth.

An important part of community planning is to weigh the pros and cons, or benefits and risks, of different changes to the community. For instance, if you are investigating the social justice topic of unemployment, you would want to consider the pros and cons of different strategies for creating more jobs in a community. What are the pros and cons of small versus big businesses? What are the pros and cons of privately owned versus chain or franchised businesses? Where should new businesses be built and what are the pros and cons of different locations? As a community planner, you have the opportunity to influence which information is considered in these policy debates and to make sure that the voices of community members are heard within these discussions.

**Inquiry Cycle**

- **Ask:** What community policies or plans are being considered that could impact the social justice topic of your inquiry? What are the future scenarios you hope to influence for your community? What data related to your social justice topic do you want to communicate in order to influence these policy debates?

- **In what form do you want to share your data?**
  - What are the pros and cons of sharing information as a written report, a video, a map, or other format?

- **Investigate:** How are decisions made about future change or growth in your community? Who are the different stakeholders or groups that influence decisions about your community? What information is missing from discussions about your community’s plans that you can help provide?

- **Create:** Once you have decided what data you want to share, you will create a map, video, written report, or another type of information product to communicate your findings and your message to others. Make a plan for how you will share that information (in person, on the web, through flyers, etc.). You may choose to combine different methods.

Identify potential partners (individuals or organizations) that can help you join in these discussions. Participate in planning discussions and use your data to raise awareness about the pros
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 8
and cons of different future scenarios being considered for your community.

♦ Discuss: What questions were raised by the information you shared? What are the obstacles to realizing your vision for your community? What data or perspectives conflict with the data and perspective you bring to the discussion?

♦ Reflect: What are effective strategies for using information to influence community planning and policy?

Inquiry Action: The “Humboldt Park NO SEVENDE/NOT FOR SALE!” Campaign, Paseo Boricua, Chicago, IL

In 2009, members of Paseo Boricua's Participatory Democracy Group joined with DePaul University and the University of Illinois at Chicago to create an asset map of Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood.

The project aimed to help prevent further displacement of the community's long-term residents through gentrification. The goal was to prevent this historically working-class community with a culturally and politically unique history from becoming a community where property developers seeking quick profits re-draw community boundaries and deny the community's history.

Ask

What is an asset map? How can an asset map be used to shape policy? What are the community’s unique historical moments? What makes Humboldt Park unique? What types of assets can be found in our community? Where can these be found? Do assets need to be places, or can they include people, community groups, etc.? What will help us to understand the cycle of poverty and violence in Humboldt Park?

Investigate

Participants interviewed long-term residents about their struggle for political freedom and the preservation of their cultural identity. This struggle, led by numerous activists, clashed with the status quo at the time, resulting in police crackdowns and FBI surveillance and contributing to institutional racism by the city in its budget cuts for local social services, housing, and schools. This tumultuous history is important in understanding the cycle of poverty and violence in the community. Students identified assets of the community with the help of community members and local activists.

Create

Students used their research to create a multi-layered asset map of Humboldt Park. They identified manageable geographical boundaries to explore, incorporating areas that have special meaning to long-term residents. They then identified assets including murals, sites of protest and riots, long-term residents' oral histories, community businesses, cultural and educational institutions, and social services. They collected geospatial data (location, attributes, and media). They then created a framework for the next phase of the Humboldt Park Asset Map — to develop a tool for residents, businesses, leaders, and activists.

Discuss / Reflect

How does a community aid development without displacing its residents and denying its history? How can we hold local representatives accountable to the needs of residents? How can we encourage residents to participate in political decision-making? How can we be politically productive? How can we use our map to impact public policy and make a difference in our community? How can we effectively reach out to long-term residents and new residents alike while continuing to preserve cultural and political markers?
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 9

Youth as Librarian: Create a Library

Brief Description

As a librarian, you will explore how the creation of a library collection or exhibit can be a way to impact change around the issue of your social inquiry. You will learn to plan what types of books, magazines, and other media should be included in the library and how these materials should be organized through research using primary sources and materials available at the public library and information you can find online. It is your job to create a library collection or display that reflects the social justice issue you have chosen to investigate. For instance, when developing a collection of materials related to dropping out, you may consult with your peers, teachers, and local librarians to gain a better understanding of what materials related to this topic are available and what types of materials or specific topics youth and educators would find useful.

Library collections can be developed in school, public, or university libraries, or at community organizations. For this project to be successful, a willing collaboration between a participating cultural institution and an organized youth group must be established. The goals should be adapted to the specific resources of the institution and your group.

Libraries often use book and material displays to promote a topic relevant to the people that use the library. They draw materials from their collection and bring them together into a highly visible space that provides convenient, attention-grabbing access to these resources. Within this inquiry, you may partner with a library to discuss creating a display and to suggest additional materials that would be useful to the community.

If you choose to develop an entire collection of materials based around a topic, you should identify one or more of these agencies as a partner. If you choose to partner with a library, you may be able to use materials the library already owns and to suggest additional materials for the library to acquire based on your research. If you choose to partner with a community organization, you will have to collaborate to decide on the amount of space you will be given and how the materials you want to display will be acquired.

After this collaboration is established, you can work closely with librarians, library staff, or community organizations and their staff to learn about the resources already available. In your role as a librarian, you can then make suggestions for a display or collection of materials, and use your research skills to locate relevant materials. You will then collaborate with your partner institution to decide on the type of display to create and where it should be located. A permanent collection in a community organization may involve a bookshelf of resources, while a temporary display in a library may be placed on a table or on library shelves, for example. Parameters and limitations for the exhibition should be clearly defined between yourself and the participating cultural institution.

Goals of the Activity

• Learn how to do research using primary sources, while gaining first-hand experience with museum and library studies.
• Increase your understanding of library services.
• Increase your knowledge of the information resources available in your community and other resources that may be useful to your community.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 9

- Create a display or collection that showcases your work and research that will empower others to action on your issue of interest.

Inquiry Cycle

♦ Ask: How do library materials reflect your concerns and the concerns of your community and help you to better understand those concerns? Are there sufficient materials available that reflect your concerns or the concerns of your community? What additional materials would be helpful to you and your community that are related to your social justice issue? How can library displays or collections be used to empower people to become involved in the social justice issue of your choice? How can you create a display or collection that people will notice?

♦ Investigate: You should investigate possible locations for your exhibit. Think critically about how you might most powerfully present your findings in a way that inspires others to take action on this issue. After investigating your issue of choice (see Section 1: Youth as Social Inquirer), you should locate library materials that can be used to tell the story of your research and findings. You should also investigate what materials will be useful to you or your community that are not currently available at a library or community organization. Think of ways to display your materials that will draw people’s attention. You may investigate a variety of types of materials on a topic, such as documentaries, objects, maps, newspapers, posters, fiction, and nonfiction books, and so on. You may examine other library displays or collections in order to gain an understanding of what makes them appealing.

♦ Create: You will collaborate with a library or community organization where the display or collection will be housed to discuss the topic addressed, the types of materials that should be included, what resources are already available, and whether and how new materials will be acquired. You should organize your display or collection in a way that is appealing to the people that frequent the library or the community organization. Consider your audience!

♦ Discuss: While creating the library display or collection, you may discuss the kinds of materials available within the library or community organization, the types of materials that will be useful, and how to conduct research to find useful materials. After the display or collection is established, you may want to discuss the following questions: What was the impact of your display or collection? What are the positive and negative aspects of the display or collection? Have you learned about libraries and community organizations that you didn’t know prior to creating this project? What have you learned about creating displays or collections? What about your display attracted the most attention?

♦ Reflect: Review the materials included in the display or collection with your peers and educators. Did these materials address the topic you selected? Was there information that you wanted to include but were unable to locate? If so, what prevented you from locating it? What suggestions would you make for groups interested in creating a similar display or collection? Was there anyone motivated to become involved in this social issue due to your display? How would you know this? What are some other ways you can reach out to the community to inform them about this social issue?
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 9

Inquiry Action: Juvenile Detention Center Library, Champaign, IL

Ask (and/or) Reflect
Youth previously involved with the juvenile justice system (the Peer Ambassadors) reflected on their experiences within the Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center and recognized a need for additional library materials and programming that linked the youth in the center to community resources, such as community organizations and public libraries.

Discuss
The youth discussed their interests and whether or not the materials located in the library at the juvenile detention center matched their interests and lived experiences. They led discussions with incarcerated youth regarding the kinds of topics they would like to see in the library.

Investigate
The Peer Ambassadors, juvenile detention center staff and community partners, including graduate students involved in Youth Community Informatics and a librarian from Urbana Free Library, began an ongoing investigation into the types of materials that would best serve the needs and interests of youth in the juvenile detention center. The Peer Ambassadors also reviewed materials in the library in order to determine which materials were not useful to the youth in the center.

Create
The Peer Ambassadors raised funds to purchase relevant materials for the juvenile detention center library. They partnered with students from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science to create programming that is focused on the kinds of skills needed to effectively use the resources available at public libraries in the area. This programming will equip incarcerated youth to make the most of public library resources (e.g., to conduct research into issues that concern them, find employment and educational resources, and locate reading material of interest) upon their release from the center.

Check out the detention center's new and improving library collection on LibraryThing:
http://www.librarything.com/catalog/elseyjdc

Read more about the project Extending Library Services to Empower Youth at:
http://elseyjdc.wordpress.com

The library in progress at the Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center (photos by Amber Castens)
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 10

Youth as Citizen Scientist: Collecting and Sharing Information to Help Make Decisions

Brief Description
When you think of a scientist, you might think of someone in a white coat who works in a lab all day measuring and testing things. In reality, the work of scientists is very diverse and takes place in a wide range of locations. A scientist is someone searching for new information; someone who conducts an investigation to get answers to questions. That information might involve counting the number of abandoned lots in your neighborhood, mapping the location of stores with fresh fruits and vegetables, taking water samples from a local stream or drinking fountain, or using a survey to ask kids in your school if they have been a victim of bullying or violence. As a citizen and community member who is using scientific methods to collect information, you can take social action as a citizen scientist.

Social activism through science puts an emphasis on getting the “facts”. As you’ve maybe discovered already through your social inquiry, it is sometimes difficult to figure out the difference between facts and opinions. And who decides? The tools and methods of science have been developed over a long period of time to help address this very challenge.

The bottom line goal of social activism through science is to collect information that will help answer questions and inspire others to take action. As a citizen scientist, you want to collect information that will be compelling, that others will believe and be persuaded by. In other words, your information will be viewed as fact or hard evidence, and not just an opinion or personal story.

Here are some things to consider when planning to collect information:

- **Telling the Whole Story – Data that is representative:** When collecting data, it is important to make sure you have enough information to support the social action you want to recommend. If you want to argue that drinking water in your community has contaminants, have you collected samples from enough homes to be able to say with confidence that this is a community-wide issue? Or if you want to argue that school violence is an issue in your school, how many people did you talk to and what voices or perspectives might be missing?

- **Documenting Your Investigation – Data that is reliable:** While collecting your data, it is also important to document or keep track of how you collected your data. What questions did you ask, to whom and over what period of time? Or where did you collect your water samples, with what tools and at what locations? This information is important to allow you or someone else to determine whether the results or data can be reproduced or replicated. That is, if I collected water samples in the same places with the same tools, would I get the same results? If not, then the data isn’t reliable. NOTE: When collecting data or information from people, reliability is more difficult because it is influenced by social factors such as power, trust, and cultural differences. When using this kind of data to argue for social action it is important to talk about what you did to try to make sure your information was as reliable as possible. You might consider questions such as: Who was asking the question? Did the person being interviewed feel like they could be honest and open with the person asking questions? Was the person being interviewed busy, rushed or thinking about something else when asked the questions? These are just a few of the many things that can influence the information you collect.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 10

Inquiry Cycle

♦ Ask: Is the data you collected through your social inquiry reliable? (Do you have a record of how the data was collected? Could someone repeat what you did and come up with the same results?) Is the data you collected representative? (What parts of the story or bigger picture might be missing?)

♦ Investigate: What format (map, video, power-point, spreadsheet graph, other?) would be most effective in sharing your data with others? What are the decisions or social actions you want to influence with your data? Which groups or individuals are involved in making those decisions that you want to influence with your data?

♦ Create: Once you have answered your “investigate” questions, make a plan for how you will share that information.

♦ Discuss: What questions were raised by the information you shared? What parts or aspects of the information were most surprising to others? Where there parts of the information that others doubted? How could you make your information more compelling? What would convince people that this is reliable/scientific data?

♦ Reflect: What are effective methods for collecting scientific data? In what ways does a scientific approach support your goals for social action? In what ways does a scientific approach challenge your goals for social action.

Inquiry Action: Citizen Scientist, Decatur, IL

4-H club members who are members of the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council in Decatur, IL collected information on “green” resources in their community. The project was one of the first steps in the Sustainable Decatur Initiative. These high school students partnered with the city’s environmental planner and collected data on the location and type of “green” resources, ranging from parks to trash collectors to recycling centers.

Ask

What are the current challenges for our metro area in creating a sustainable future?

What are the resources in our community that we can build upon in that plan for sustainability?

Investigate

What things do we identify as a “green” resource in our community?

What information should we collect about these resources? (e.g. location, type, contact information)

Create

4-H members used GIS mapping software to mark the location of “green” resources in Decatur. To take a look at the students’ green map project, go to www.greenmap.org and search for Decatur.

Youth organized a GIS Day event at the University of Illinois Extension Macon County office to educate the community about mapping software and its uses for social action on topics like the environment.

Discuss

Youth discussed how their map could be shared with broader audiences and also identified other things in their community that they would like to map in the future.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 11
Youth as Spoken Word Artist/Musician: Create a Poem or Song

Brief Description
As a performer, artist, and producer, you will research, write, and perform spoken word, poetry, rap lyrics, choreopoems, or songs with a specific focus on social activism and your own lived experiences. Many people who encounter you, at school or in the community, only have access to your exterior; the message your exterior conveys to them about you is based on their personal perceptions about the world. In this inquiry unit, your goal is to give the outside world a more detailed understanding of who you are, what types of music and poetry you prefer, what your life experiences are (good and bad), how you understand the world, what your urgent issues are, and what’s important to you.

Goals of Activities
• Enable you to reflect on who you are, the personal experiences you have had, and the people and problems you have encountered.
• Encourage you to use performance as a tool to teach those around you about the world you live in as a means to eliminate assumptions about you, your experiences, and your way of knowing the world.
• Empower you to use your own stories and your own voice to convey your sense of reality and feelings related to school, family, friends, neighborhood, conditions, conflicts, democracy, etc.
• Discuss with others around you, for example your peers and family members, how they feel about a specific subject such as poverty, democracy, employment, or education.
• Allow you to learn about yourself and others in a way that challenges your thinking about people, places, events, and the world.

Inquiry Cycle
♦ Ask: Read, listen to, and watch various performance types such as poetry, choreopoems, rap songs, R&B songs, and spoken word (see this unit’s blue box), from a variety of time periods including today. As you explore how people have used the stage as a platform to convey a message to the outside world regarding their lived experiences, ask yourself these types of questions: What types of artists have I experienced in my life? What attracts me to certain types of artists? Who are the biggest influences on my creative (music, poetry) life? Are my main influences positive, negative, or neutral? What is popular culture or hip hop culture? How does popular or hip hop culture influence my everyday life? What do I have in common with past or present writer/performers? What kind of changes do I see as necessary in my community, with family and peers? What issues do I see as urgent in my world compared to what I hear other artists writing about? How do I understand the origin of these urgent issues and how can I use performance to help others understand these issues? How can I use popular culture be an agent of positive change in my own life and the lives of others? What changes would I make to my community if given the opportunity? How can I help the world become a better place to live?

♦ Investigate: Take some time to research your favorite types of artists/performers. Take a look at various types of performances on the Internet — or even live, if you can. You may want to look at spoken word performances, choreopoem performances, rap performances, or others that have a particular focus on social change and activism. Listen for artists’ performance perspectives on subjects that seem connected to their personal lived
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 11

experiences. Think about why you believe these perspectives to be realistic and not contrived. Focus on the way artists have creatively chosen to convey a particular message. Think about why you believe an artist may have chosen to write about a particular subject. What kinds of things are the artists saying? In what ways do you or don’t you relate to what that artist is saying?

→ Create:

Activity 1 – Choose and research one old skool (up to the 1990s) and one new skool (2000 and up) performer that have had an influence in your life. Choose the kind of morally correct performances that tell a real story about a person, that person’s experiences, or the experiences of the people around that individual.

See if you can find interviews with this writer/performer. Find out how that person came to be a writer and performer, and what the driving force was behind their creativity. Where and when did their performance life begin? If you are investigating a group, find out how they met and became a group. If you are investigating an author, find out about that author’s life, the origins of their stories, and how they became published.

Find out as much as possible and then share the information with your peers as a presentation in which you explain why you feel a connection to these performers and why these two performers may connect in a special way, even if they were popular at different times. Finally, write your own performance based on your own personal experiences and what you have learned, then share it with your group.

Activity 2 – Choose one specific performance piece (e.g., song, rap, poem) that has had an impact on you personally. Share that specific performance piece with your group or class, then share with them why this particular piece had an impact on you and why you chose to share this.

Also explain what you think others might gain from the insights of this artist in this particular performance piece, then discuss. Finally, write your own performance based on your own personal experiences and on what you have learned, then share it with your group.

Activity 3 — Imagine that you just received a phone message from — Hollywood!!!...yes YOU! Director Bigballer Scott has heard that you have skills in the area of creative writing and performance and would like a demonstration of your best work because he may be able to use it in an upcoming film on youth democracy. He doesn’t care how you demonstrate your talent. You can write and perform spoken word, poetry, rap, R&B, a choreopoem, or whatever you choose to wow Mr. Scott, but you only have one chance to make a good impression. Remember: the general theme is youth and democracy. Good luck!

Activity 4 – Plan an open mic party where your peers can come and engage in spoken word, rap, or poetry. Have a DJ spin music while individuals come to the stage to perform their creative pieces. Advertise this party as an open mic social activist event for anyone who has something to share. Be sure to hold this event in a comfortable place accessible to your peers. You can choose specific themes for the event’s performances (e.g., poverty, youth issues, parents, war, pregnancy, etc.). Schedule 10- to 15-minute intervals where people perform, then let the DJ spin for a few minutes until the next talent is ready. You will likely want to have some grown-ups available to help with organization so that you can concentrate on the event. You may want to set the room up like a jazz club with plenty tables so people can come watch. Be creative and make it fun.
SOCIAL ACTIVISM: ACTIVITY 11

Activity 5 – Watch Byron Hurts’ hip hop documentary *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* then discuss this film and implications with your group.

♦ Discuss: Following any one of the activities, discuss what you learned about the connection between popular culture (i.e., music, poetry, and spoken word), social activism, and education. Share what you learned from engaging in a specific activity.

Discuss the details of the activities including what was great about the project, what could have been better, and the ways to improve youth engagement in social activism through popular culture among your peers.

♦ Reflect: Reflect on the experiences of all participants, the various forms of expression, and the lessons learned. Do you think of some peers differently now that you’ve experienced them as a writer/performer? In what ways can peers learn significant lessons from each other through personal expressions that adults and teachers are not always able to convey? What types of subjects are popular? Are the performing arts in education important? If you believe this to be the case, how can you work with others to convince local schools of the importance of the arts in education? Is popular culture an important component to youth education? If so, why? How can you work with others to convince local schools of the importance of using popular culture in education if you believe this to be the case?

Related Resources

Byron P. Hurt – *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes* (Explicit Language and Images)
http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2020029531334253002#

Social Activism Performance Songs

Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit” (1936)
Marvin Gaye, “What’s Goin’ On” (1971)
Marvin Gaye, “Mercy, Mercy Me” (1971)
Stevie Wonder, “You Haven’t Done Nothin’” (1974)
Public Enemy, “Fight the Power” (1989)
Public Enemy, “911 is a Joke,” (1990)
Tupac Shakur, “Keep Your Head Up” (1991)

Choreopoem

Ntozake Shange’s “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf” (1975)

Spoken Word/Poetry

Roxy Azari, “Seen But Not Heard”
http://youtu.be/91Uqr4Wczck
Black Ice, “Imagine” (explicit language)
http://youtu.be/8kJVgk80leLo
Suheir Hammad, “What I Will”
http://youtu.be/LFbE88BhSxW
Javon Johnson, “Elementary” (explicit language)
http://youtu.be/hTmHFhBXvAU
Zora Howard, “Bi-Racial Hair”
http://muxlim.com/videos/Islamicdancer/bi-racial-
haizora-howard/

Activist Poets

Maya Angelou
Langston Hughes