

EDUCATION ISSUE INQUIRY & ACTION GUIDE

DREAM
OF A
NATION



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

AN INTRODUCTION

These guides are meant to be a source of inspiration and support as you explore, imagine and create solutions in your own communities.

This is just a starting point. See what ideas catch your interest, imagine how you might be able to build on them. Don't underestimate what you and your peers are capable of. Dream big. You just might change the world.

SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS & IDEAS



Turning Inspiration into Action

Inspired by the profound needs to improve literacy in his community, Blake O'Connor and his peers created Café Freedom, named after the salons of the French Revolution. As a team, they worked to change local statistics: 35% of children in third grade were not ready to read when they arrived.

This is an important grade in Florida public schools, as third-grade students begin to take standardized tests that determine their placement in their educational progression. Meeting with peers, faculty and administration at the beginning of the new school year, Café Freedom got to work. A plan was formed and implemented to promote literacy awareness through numerous stages.

Book Donations: Freedom High students encouraged others to donate books to take to 12 second grade classrooms in Title 1 elementary schools. They asked for help gathering donated books from the entire school's educational community, including the PTSA, Liberty Middle School, parents, teachers and early childhood programs at nearby universities.

Readings at Elementary Schools: High school students read books to the second graders. They created "I Feel the Need to Read" activities and made sure they all received books that could be given away to each student.

Parent Night: The targeted elementary school parents were invited for a discussion on raising readers and an exploration of techniques to make it happen. A panel of experts from local media, education university faculty and librarians were asked to share their advice, while separately their children were entertained by Freedom High School's Drama Club productions of children's stories.

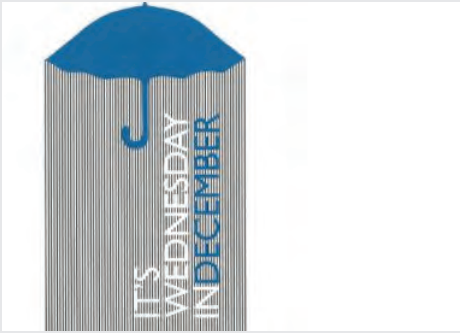
Day-long "I Feel the Need to Read" celebration: The major push of the initiative was the Literacy Festival on Dr. Seuss' birthday in which 280 second graders filled the Freedom High School football field for a day of literacy-themed games, activities, food and prizes. Not only was each student encouraged to read throughout the day, but each also took a literacy oath and received a bag of books and school supplies to take with them.

Bringing the Literacy Project to Other Schools

Because of the overwhelming success of the project, Café Freedom expanded their efforts. Two additional high schools were supported to start their own literacy initiatives, reaching a thousand more elementary school students. In just two years, over 1000 students benefited from books raised by this expanded group. The second annual Family Literacy night drew close to 400 parents and students. Sponsorship of this program has expanded from the original Bezos grant to include local support from Target, Publix and the Rotary Club of New Tampa.



I Feel the Need to Read: <https://vimeo.com/12306003>



Exploring the World Through Poetry

Twelfth grade English students at High Tech High in San Diego, California created this book of poetry as they thought critically about what it means to be active, ethical, responsible, and educated global citizens.

Students each investigated contemporary social problems in locations outside of the U.S.A., and considered the social, political, and historical factors contributing to those problems. After researching these problems students were asked to put a human face on their findings.

Students created poems reflecting an average day for a person living in their area of research and paired them with a poem for an average day in the life of their counterpart in San Diego. Students were inspired by the poem "It's Sunday Morning in Early November" by Philip Schultz.

The poems are presented side-by-side so that the reader can see the contrasts, and the final product includes poems featuring Africa, the Middle East, South America, the Far East, and Europe.

The book exemplifies a powerful way to humanize social issues and is an engaging means for exploring contemporary global issues

[Learn more here](#)



Kids Tutor Kids to Big Gains

All educators recognize the value of one-on-one instruction; they only wish they had more time and resources to do it.

Staff members at one elementary school, Ivy Hall School in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, began brainstorming a few years ago about ways to provide more individual support to primary students - and found their solution in other students.

The result is a four-year-old afterschool student program in which high school students tutor younger children. The program has helped some elementary school students gain as much as two years in reading ability after only 25 hours of tutoring, and at no cost to the district. "It's turned out to be very popular," Ivy Hall principal Peter King said. "Now we have kids who never wanted to read who want to read books and share them with their tutors."

Tutors meet for an hour a week after school with their students. The two students read together, sometimes play reading games, and occasionally review writing. Grant money covers the cost of paying teachers who supervise the program.

Big Gains Over Short Time

Classroom teachers report seeing not only improvement in the tutored students' reading, but also in their work in other subjects and attitude toward school as well. "Kids in the program feel special, and they began taking school more seriously," King said. "It re-enforces what we do in the classroom."

Staff members are trying to quantify the impact of the tutoring on students. Just by reviewing reading test scores, they have found that students have gained as much as two years in reading ability between the fall and spring, after working with a tutor over the course of a year.

[Learn more here](#)



Colorado Students Protest Proposed Curriculum Changes

"It's not OK to censor my education," said senior Meg Henderson. In Colorado's Jefferson County, more than a thousand students have walked out of their classes at several schools this past fall, protesting proposed changes to curriculum in U.S. History classes. Students say school should be about learning to be free thinkers, how to express themselves and critically analyze what's before them. Most students disagree with the resolution's reference to the fact that materials should not encourage civil disorder. "If there's no civil disobedience, no matter how big or small, nothing ever changes," said Senior Jocelyn Wallen. "And if nothing ever changes, then nothing can ever get better."

Evergreen Senior Eric Temple took part in the protests, which he says was organized via Facebook and other social media. Temple and three other students met with District Superintendent Dan McMinimee and staff members. Temple says the meeting went well, with the superintendent pledging to be more transparent about what is before the school board. McMinimee said he respects students' rights to express their opinions.

The protests are aimed at new JeffCo School Board member Julie Williams' proposal, which states, in part: "Materials should promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights. Materials should not encourage or condone civil disorder, social strife or disregard of the law. Instructional materials should present positive aspects of the United States and its heritage."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado has offered its support to the students. "It's ironic that an attempt to downplay examples of social change being accomplished through civil disobedience has spurred a community-wide crash course in just how important it is to be able to speak out and question authority in a just and democratic society."

[Learn more here](#)

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

FROM DREAM OF A NATION :: *Education Innovation*

Education is the foundation for success in modern society. The quality of our educational system directly influences the strength of our nation. There are a spectrum of opportunities for improving our educational system, here are just a few:

Seeing Education in a New Light *(download essay PDF)*

Fair School Funding and Equal Opportunities *(download essay PDF)*

Educating for a Sustainable Future *(download essay PDF)*

A School and Community Strategy for the 21st Century *(download essay PDF)*

Making Education Work for All Students *(download essay PDF)*

Educated citizens solve tough problems and contribute to society in meaningful ways. Yet the United States is one of only two industrialized countries in which today's young people are less likely than previous generations to complete high school.

Fortunately, there are passionate teachers and administrators, concerned citizens, elected officials and organizations across the country working to create an equitable, effective, high-quality educational system for our students.

download full chapter, Aiming for the Best in Education (Ch. 5)

MORE RESOURCES

Interesting sites to explore these issues areas further, gather important information:

[State Academic Performance Tool](#)

[Education Finance Statistics Center](#)

>> [Public School District Finance Comparison Search](#)

>> [Longitudinal Finance Statistics](#)

[Education Watch State Reports](#)

[Alliance for Excellence in Education](#)

[Learning First: an Emerging Vision](#)

[Schools that Work](#)

[Coalition for Community Schools](#)

[Youth Mentoring Program Guides](#)

[The Power of Service Learning](#)

>> [Education Beyond the Classroom \(pdf\)](#)

[Center for Ecoliteracy](#)

[Greening k-12 Curriculum](#)

Find a cool Education resource?

Let us know so we can share!

A look at the numbers...



All school districts are not funded equally. In one state, **per-pupil spending ranges from \$6,114 to \$17,082** across 500 districts.

22 points

Amount that test scores in poor urban districts of New Jersey have increased after reforming their school funding system.

Estimates suggest that we'll need between:



to rebuild the country's **deteriorating school buildings.**

\$15 billion

Amount the Obama administration has pledged to rebuild school buildings that are worst-off, but more is needed.

Struggling cities will not be able to rejuvenate without education, yet many organizations estimate that every 26 seconds a student drops out of school in America. **That's more than 1.3 million students per year.**



\$900 million

Amount President Obama has promised for the 12% of American schools that produce 50% of dropouts.

\$400 – \$670 billion

How much higher the GDP would have been in 2008 if the US had narrowed the gap between low-income students and their peers.



75%

Increase in math and reading proficiency scores in Portland's SUN Community Schools, which coordinate extended learning, service learning, health and social services and parental engagement programs to support their students.

90%

Percentage of graduates from the Harlem Children's Zone (where they are held to the highest expectations) who go on to college.

MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS

High School Dropout

\$31,400

College Graduate

The median annual earnings of **college graduates** are **\$31,400 more** than high school dropouts.

Addressing the achievement gap:

2x

How much more likely low-income students and students of color are to be taught core academics by out-of-field teachers.

Providing low-income students with highly effective teachers **virtually closes the socio-economic achievement gap.**

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL EXPLORATION [OR GROUP DISCUSSION]

> What does education mean to you?

> How do we value education in our communities? (*Check out [School spending](#), [School rankings](#), [How else do we place value?](#)*)

SEARCH/REPORT: Can you find any examples of how we prioritize education in our communities (Your State/Town/School/Home)? How we are failing?

SEARCH/REPORT: Is there a conversation about improving or innovating education in your community? Who is having those conversations? (Organizations, Companies, Government, Individuals?)

SEARCH/REPORT: Are there examples of other communities who have tried to successfully strengthen or innovation their own education system? Collect possible solutions, describe, rank etc. Use Solutions Spotlight print-out to guide research/ranking.

SEARCH/REPORT: What could your community be doing? Would any of the solutions you've discovered work in your community? What might that solution look like in your community?

Get to know your subject >>

Start preliminary research on your topic, and not just the basics! Think of all the levels and angles there are to the topic you selected. How are you going to find out all you need to know to effectively tell your story? What are the right questions to ask to find the information you need?

Your research might not be typical research (instead of looking up magazine articles you might take a poll of other students or interview people), but you will have to gather information on your topic. Remember, you have one of the best resources that helps you access information from everywhere – the Internet! Other sources to use are your school or local libraries, talking to students, adults and others in your community or school, watching the news, reading your local paper, etc.

There is information to be found through multiple sources, but it is up to you to find this information so that you can fully cover and articulate your story!

Suggestions:

Most likely, your issue is one that is universal, meaning it exists elsewhere and is a shared issue by many people who are interested in creating change on its behalf.

What is the current state of the issue you are voicing?

What leaders and organizations in your community, region and state are already advocating for the same or similar issue?

What are the challenges and obstacles that exist? It is important for you to understand the history and current state in order for you to move forward.

ISSUE/SOLUTION RESEARCH GUIDE

You can use the following organizer to help you create a road-map for your research. There are four parts to the organizer: in part one you will list everything you already KNOW about your issue/solution, in the second part you will list everything you NEED to know about your issue/solution, finally in part three you will list anything else you might want to know about your issue/solution.

WHAT DO YOU ALREADY KNOW?

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

Use the following table to help record information about different solutions you’re interested in that address similar issues or ideas.

Describe Solution:

Issue Being Addressed:

Facts and Stats:

Organizations Involved:

Now rank this solution:
Difficulty (Easy-Hard, 1-5)

Impact (None - Significant 1-5)

Cost (0-\$\$\$\$)

Solution Type (Individual, Group, Institutional)

Describe Solution:

Issue Being Addressed:

Facts and Stats:

Organizations Involved:

Difficulty (Easy-Hard, 1-5)

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STARTING A CONVERSATION

CREATING AWARENESS

One simple reason individuals, schools, communities and the larger population don't integrate attainable solutions into their everyday lives is because they do not know. Creating awareness about simple actions, if applied by the masses, can make **big differences**.

Brainstorm a list of ideas about how to create awareness around your issue of interest for both your direct and large communities. Some examples include:

Direct Local Community (*home, school*)

- School Announcement
- In-School Posters or Flyers
- School Fundraisers
- Present to Other Classes and Administration
- Ad-Space in School Newspaper or Publication

Larger Community (*town, city, state, region, country*)

- Op-Eds in Local Newspapers
- Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- Public Service Announcement on Local Radio
- Write a Member of Congress
- Ad Space in Local Publications
- Table in a High Foot Traffic Area

Keep brainstorming! What are some other ways you might get your message or ideas out into the world?

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IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

In order to most effectively implement your solution you must identify your audience, where they exist and how to best engage them. Once your audience and location are identified you can work out how to create lines of communication in order to engage them. *(For example, if your solution was to cut down on food waste in your school's cafeteria the target audience is students, teachers and staff, the best place to engage that audience would be in your school, and the most effective way to engage students, teachers and staff in school may be through hallway posters and school announcements.)* Your solution may have multiple audiences and locations. Use the organizer below to identify your targeted audiences.

Targeted Audience:

Where can this audience be reached?

How can you communicate and engage this audience?

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Why do letters to the editor matter? *Awareness and information is the first step towards making a difference, and with an Op-Ed you can reach a large audience with your message.*

Outline for a Letter to the Editor

- Open your letter with your reason for writing. State the problem that concerns you.
- Define why this issue is important. Explain how this problem affects you or others, and explain what will happen if something is/isn't done.
- Praise or criticize what a public official has said or done about the issue. Make a positive or critical statement about a public action related to the issue. Support your praise or criticism with concrete details.
- Offer a recommendation. Discuss what should be done and explain why you think this approach would work.
- Sign the letter. Provide your full name, mailing address, email address and phone number (many outlets will want to contact you before publishing). Include any relevant organizational affiliation.

Publishing Your Letter

Identify your target publications. Community newspapers and trade publications often carry more influence than a letter placed in a more high-profile publication. And it's easier to get letters to the editor published in these smaller publications.

Call the editor to ensure your letter has been received. Rather than leave a voicemail, follow up until you speak to a staff member.

Amplify your message. Send a copy of your letter to a group that advocates for your position.

Find more “How To’s” in the resources section.

TIPS AND TRICKS

>> Check the specs. Pay attention to each outlet's submission requirements. While these vary from outlet to outlet, in general it's best to make your point in 250–300 words. Be sure to find out what format outlets accept submissions in — whether they prefer snail mail, email or the use of a designated form on the outlet's website.

>> Be timely. Hook your letter to something that's currently happening in the news.

>> Express your feelings, but don't get mean. Stick to the facts and remember that personal attacks on policymakers are not effective. Express your feelings in a constructive way.

>> Go local. You can go local in your analysis even when the issue you're tackling is national in scope. It will feel more personal and impactful to your audience.

>> Provide evidence and context. Don't assume your audience is familiar with the issue you're presenting. Illustrate your point with concrete evidence that strengthens your position. Boost your credibility by mentioning anything that makes you especially qualified to discuss this topic.

>> Don't use form letters. Some organizations provide sample letters, but it's much more powerful to tell your story. Be sure to write a separate letter for each outlet you're targeting. Tailor each letter to the outlet's audience.

>> Do your research. Read letters in your target publications on a regular basis to get a sense of each outlet's style and approach.

There are a million different ways you can start a conversation in your community about the issue you are exploring. There is value whether you engage a small group, or reach your larger region. Use your strengths, and be creative! *Here are just a few ideas to get you started...*

> **Create a presentation for your community** Sharing critical information about an issue you care about is the first step towards making a difference! Share the presentation with interested citizens in a community theater, local bookstore or university and/or to your city council, your state or national representatives. Even sharing among your networks on social media can have a **big impact**. (See **HOW TO: Make a Video**)

> **Create an infographic** or other social-media-friendly element and share online with friends and family. Go where the people already are! Use your immediate network to share what you've learned through compelling facts and images. If you're able to build interest, start a blog or an awareness campaign (See **Best-Social Media Practices**)

> **Interview a community/school leader** working in your area of interest. Summarize and submit to school/local paper, online news source/blog, or again, share among your social channels! (See **Interview Guide**)

> **Create a work of art inspired by this issue**, a poem, video, illustration, movie, short story... Whatever inspires you. You can share online, share at your school, or think bigger! Work with others to create multiple pieces inspired by an issue or idea and bind them all together in a handmade zine that can be disseminated throughout your community, or if you're able to coordinate, into a book to sell at a local bookstore to benefit the cause (See 9th grade Neosha's Poem "What's Your Dream?" // See **HOW TO: Start your own ZINE guide** // See the **G is for Gulf book**)

> **Go even bigger, literally! Host a community mural project.** Community murals provide a cost-effective method for people to publicly celebrate those things that they consider to be truly important. (See **Community Mural guide** // See **Lily Yeh's Barefoot Artists**)

> **Create a podcast or radio segment to tell a story.** All you need is a recording device and an idea and you're on your way. We're in a golden audio age when some of our most compelling stories are being created for online and on-the-go listening, or submit what you've created to your local radio station.. What a great way to dig into a subject and start a conversation. (See **DIY Radio guide** // See **Radio Rookies**)

Something sound interesting? You'll find support throughout, and more guides in the resources section that will help get you started.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



COLLABORATE

There are smart and dedicated people already out there working to try and make this world a better place! *Find a way to collaborate with them to amplify both of your efforts.*

> **Volunteer with a local organization.** Sometimes the best way to explore a topic is to jump right in! Find an organization working in an area you're interested in and volunteer your time and skills. Contribute how you can and see where it takes you.

> **Propose a collaboration project with a local organization where there is overlapping interest, bring a new idea.** Partner up with an organization for even greater impact. You each will bring something different to the table, ideas, resources, even youth! Suggest a new idea and see how big you can go with your collective resources.

> **Join forces with your school.** Is there an effort under way? How can you help/make it bigger or better? Do you have an idea that you could bring to your school as a partnership opportunity?

> **Organize a Community Volunteer Day** Encourage your fellow community members to take a day and volunteer with a local organization. Coordinate with organizations to find maximum volunteer opportunities for the day, and see how that inspires community engagement for the rest of the year!

> **Localize a national campaign** Is there an organization that has launched a national information campaign about an issue you care about? Share that campaign with your community using your *Start a Conversation* ideas, but add your local take on it. Personalize their nationally-focused campaign by framing it with how the issue is affecting your community specifically.

TEAM-UP WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



ORGANIZATION PROFILES

Use the following table to help record information about organizations that share similar issue awareness, solutions, strategies and goals. Studying these groups and how they have implemented solutions will help in executing your own solution. You may also find an opportunity to collaborate.

Organization:

Founder(s):
Contact Info:

Issue(s):

Solution(s):

Goal(s):

Possible Volunteer/Collaboration Opportunity?

If yes, what are next steps?

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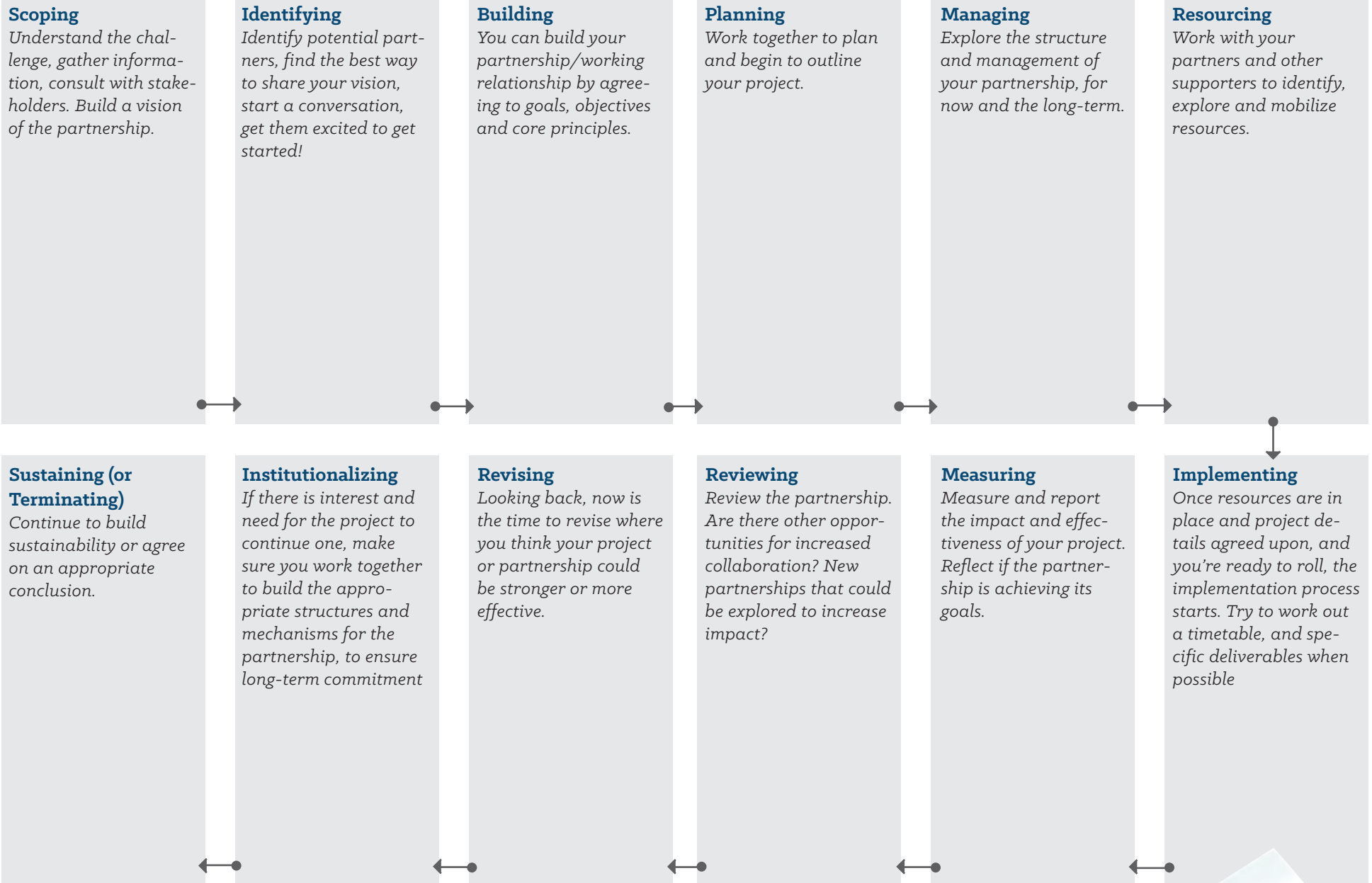
Goal(s):

Possible Volunteer/Collaboration Opportunity?

If yes, what are next steps?

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS MAP

I want to develop a clear plan for working with other groups that have the same vision as me.



IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION

HOW DO I GET STARTED?



You have an idea!

Everything starts with an idea!

Magic happens when you take that idea and see where it can go.

First, ask yourself...

Is there a need? And can this idea fulfill that need?

Then, start exploring...

Is this idea possible in my community?

Start asking how you might make that answer a yes!

SEARCH: Has an idea like this worked in another community? What can you learn from them?

Who do you know who might have some insight, answers, ideas? *Who do you know who knows someone who might have some insight, answers, ideas?*

There's power in a conversation. People like to share their knowledge, use their skills to help the community. See how your idea can grow by engaging people in your community. It's as easy as an e-mail or a phone call.

I want to develop a clear plan....

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

What do you do better than anyone else?

What makes you unique?

What unique or low-cost resources can you draw upon?

When do people in your community see as your strengths?

INTERNAL FACTORS

WEAKNESS

What could you improve?

What should you avoid?

What are things that others might see as a weakness?

INTERNAL FACTORS

OPPORTUNITIES

Is there a clear need?

Are there changes in technology or policy?

Do people prefer something else?

EXTERNAL FACTORS

THREATS

What challenges do you face?

What are competitors doing?

Are finances an issue?

EXTERNAL FACTORS



IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION

I want to clarify my priorities...

PROBLEM DEFINITION

What is the key issue you are trying to address and why is it important?

Who is it a problem for?

What social or cultural factors shape this problem?

What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?

Can you think of this problem in a different way?

IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION

ISSUE ACTION PLAN

I need to start thinking through the various steps towards launching my idea... If you don't know an answer, find someone to discuss your idea with who can help you think through the details.

Paragraph 1

- Briefly explain the proposed solution or action.
- What issue does the solution confront?
- How does the proposed solution help solve the given issue?
- Describe the anticipated outcome to the solution or action

Paragraph 2

- Where is the solution most effectively executed?

- Describe the steps involved.

- Is it a difficult process to execute?

- How will you measure results?

Paragraph 3

- Describe the advantages of the solution.

- Describe the disadvantages of the solution.

- Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

Paragraph 4

- Is the issue being solved any other way? If so, how?
- Are there any other groups involved with the issue?
- Does this solution improve or add to the overall resolution of the issue?

Paragraph 5

- What possible roadblocks do you foresee?
- Do you feel you can be successful in executing the solution? Why?
- Why do you feel this is a worthwhile endeavor?

I need to organize the various steps of my plan...

ACTION TIMELINE

ACTIONS

What needs to be done?

BY WHOM

Who will take action?

BY WHEN

By what date will action be done?

RESOURCES NEEDED

*What financial, human, political
& other resources are needed?*

COMMUNICATION

*What organizations or indi-
viduals need to be informed?*

ARE YOU READY?

Before launching your idea, you should be able answer the following. *Use this as a check list!*

1. You should have a clear explanation of the issue ____
2. Examples of the issue having local impact ____
3. Description of the proposed solution and why it is relevant ____
4. How the solution will be executed (clear steps) ____
5. Who the solution will reach and help ____
6. Where the solution will have its greatest impact ____
7. Examples of similar success models (organizations and solutions) ____
8. A timeline for implementation ____
9. How success of the solution will be measured ____
10. What successful execution of the solution will achieve ____

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

COMMUNITY LEADER / YOUTH VISIONARY PROFILE

Search for a youth visionary you would like to communicate with and learn more about. Individuals or the entire groups can choose to contact a youth visionary to learn more about him or her. Try to set up a Skype/Google Hangout chat, see what you can learn. This is a great place to get inspired!

Try to know the following questions before contacting the individual:

- What issues is the individual involved in?
- What solutions is the individual encouraging?
- Is the individual involved in an organization?
- What motivates this individual?

Once you've completed these questions move onto the second set of questions, which will help you reflect on your goals and what can motivate you to become a leader in your community.

- Are you involved in creating change in your community?
- What inspires you to create change in the community?
- How can you continue to create change in your community?
- What are your personal and overall goals for creating change in the community?

Resources for Exploring Youth Leaders:

www.barronprize.org/

www.youthtoleaders.org/

www.ashoka.org/youthventure

HOW TO: Set Up a Meeting With Your Members of Congress

Make an appointment Call the legislator's home district office and ask for the scheduler's name and contact information. We recommend contacting the office by email and, if you have access to a machine, by fax. In your message, include your name and contact information, note the issue you'd like to discuss during the meeting and suggest a range of times that you can meet. Follow up with a call to the scheduler within a few hours of sending your request.

Recruit your community Assemble a small group of fellow constituents to attend the meeting with you. Reach out to your friends, neighbors and other concerned community members. The best meetings involve between four and eight attendees. If you have fewer than four, your impact is diminished. If you have a lot more, not everyone will have a chance to speak.

Preparing for Your Meeting

Take some time to read up on the issues and familiarize yourself with the topic, but remember that your personal experience is the most important thing you will bring to the meeting.

Plan carefully It's best to have one topic per meeting. Have a good idea about why it is important and what actions your representative could take to help.

Prepare Agree on a few key talking points and write them down. Research your legislator's record on the issue you will be addressing. Also make copies of fact sheets that you can share with other attendees before the meeting.

What to Expect at the Meeting

This is the fun part! Here are a couple of tips on what to expect during a meeting and ways to make it a success.

Expect a brief meeting Plan to have each participant in your group briefly make one important and unique point during the meeting. Leave time for the legislator or staffer to ask questions and respond to your request for action. Note that meetings with a legislator can be as short as 10–15 minutes, though meetings with legislative staff may last longer.

Be polite, clear and concise Tell the legislator how the issue affects you personally and provide facts and examples to support your argument. Keep the tone positive.

Ask for a specific action It's OK if the legislator or staffer needs to get back to you later with an answer.

Document the meeting Assign one person in your group to take notes so you can report back to others about what was said. It's also useful to bring a digital camera or your phone and to ask the legislator or staffer to pose for a picture with the members of your group while you hold signs.

Exchange contact information Make sure that you get a business card from the person you meet with. If you have a card, leave it behind.

Follow Up and Next Steps

Send a note Send a thank-you note right away and watch for your legislator's action on the issue. If a commitment has been made to you, make note of whether there is follow-through.

Share your success stories or tactics with others Blog about your experience and share photos. Report back to your community what you've learned and discuss next steps together.

Need to take a step back and figure out who your representative is? You can search here: contactingthecongress.org and look into their voting records here: opencongress.org/

SERVICE AND EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Bringing Service Learning to Your School

>> <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/bring-service-learning-to-your-school-maurice-elias>

>> <http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning-getting-started-resources>

Expeditionary Learning, Center for Student Work

>> <http://centerforstudentwork.elschools.org/>

BRINGING YOUR COMMUNITY INTO YOUR SCHOOL

Kids as Reading Helpers: A Peer Tutor Training Manual

>> <http://www.interventioncentral.org/academic-interventions/reading-fluency/kids-reading-helpers-peer-tutor-training-manual>

How to Start a Community School

>> http://www.communityschools.org/resources/how_to_start_a_community_school1.aspx

Building Community Schools, A Guide for Actions

>> Download PDF

Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships

>> <http://www.communityschools.org/ScalingUp/>

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Take Action: Campaign for Environmental Literacy

>> <http://www.fundee.org/action/>

Create a Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat

>> <http://www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife/Schoolyard-Habitats/Create.aspx>

>> <http://www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife/Schoolyard-Habitats/Create/How-To-Guide.aspx> (How To)

Blue Print for a Green School

>> <http://www.ceeonline.org/greenGuide/greenGuide.aspx>

Solar Powered School Tools

>> <http://greenschools.net/article.php?id=148>

EDUCATION RESOURCES



See following pages for:

HOW TO: Conduct an Interview / Interview Checklist
HOW TO: Become a Spokesperson!
Media Tracker

SOCIAL MEDIA 101

Beginners Guides to Social Media

>> <http://climatenexus.org/messaging-communication/communication-basics/social-media-guide>
>> <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media>
>> http://d2eeipcrd6le6.cloudfront.net/guides/beginners_guide_to_social_media.pdf (PDF)

What's in a Meme?

>> http://www.storybasedstrategy.org/sites/smartmeme.drupalgardens.com/files/201306/CSS_WHATSINAMEME.pdf (PDF)

Tips for a Great Infographic

>> <http://www.easel.ly/blog/top-tips-from-experts-on-what-makes-a-great-infographic/>
>> <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/229818>

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Tips for Op-Ed Writing

>> http://www.theopedproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=79
>> <http://civic.moveon.org/signon/opedhelp.html>

Sample Press Release

>> <http://www.smetoolkit.org/smetoolkit/en/content/en/249/Sample-Press-Releases>

RADIO RECORDING

HOW TO: DIY Radio Reporter

>> <http://transom.org/2013/shout-out-a-kids-guide-to-recording-stories/>
>> <http://www.radiodiaries.org/wp-content/uploads/handbook-abridged.pdf> (PDF)

Radio Rookies DIY Toolkit

>> http://www.wnyc.org/story/diy-radio-rookies-toolkit/?utm_source=showpage&utm_medium=treatment&utm_campaign=featured&utm_content=item0

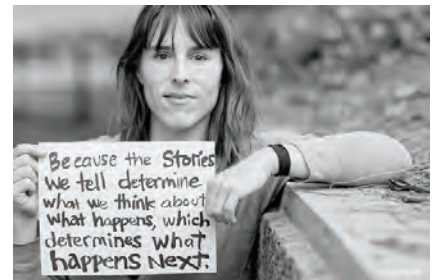
How to Report Your Own Story

>> <https://vimeo.com/95749724> (Video)

How To Report On An Issue

>> <https://vimeo.com/95745636> (Video)

HARNESSING THE POWER OF MEDIA



HOW TO: Conduct an Interview

A good interview depends on more than just a list of questions.

Make your approach polite and respectful

Explain what you're doing. Be confident. Assume your subject will want to talk to you. The way people respond depends on how you approach them. The trick is to make people realize that your project is both fun and important. Also let people know that everything can – and will – be edited. Make the interview situation comfortable before you start. Move chairs around, get close so you don't have to reach.

Record interviews in the quietest place possible

Be careful of TVs, stereos, traffic noise, wind, anything that will be distracting from the interview. Even refrigerators can make an annoying sound that you might not notice until you get home and listen to the tape. Sometimes you want the sound of the environment. But it's best to gather that separately, and record all the important interviews in a quiet place. Anytime you are in a loud room or noisy environment, remember to collect a few minutes of that sound on its own – what is called a “sound bed” or ambience. If you have to record an interview in a loud place, it can help to bring the microphone even closer (2-3 inches) to the speaker's mouth.

Keep the microphone close

It bears repeating here: Just as when you are recording yourself, the most important thing is to keep the microphone close to the speaker's mouth (5-6 inches). If you want to record your questions too, you'll have to move the microphone back and forth. Don't let the interviewee take the microphone. It's better if you keep control of the equipment.

Put people at ease

Talk about the weather. Joke about the microphone. It's a good idea to begin recording a few minutes before you actually start the interview. That helps you avoid the uncomfortably dramatic moment: “Okay, now we will begin recording.” Just chat about anything while you begin rolling tape. Before they realize it, you've started the interview.

Maintain eye contact

Keep the microphone below the line of sight. Talk to people just as you would normally.

In groups, don't let everyone talk at once

If you are interviewing a few people at once, have them gather around close to the microphone. Try to focus on one or two people. Less is more. Also get people to identify themselves on tape.

Watch out for uh-huhs

Be aware of natural conversational responses like uh-huhs or laughter. Try to use quiet responses: a concerned nod, questioning eyes, the silent laugh.

Don't be afraid of pauses and silences

Resist the temptation to jump in. Let the person think. Often the best comments come after a short, uncomfortable silence when the person you are interviewing feels the need to fill the void and add something better.

Let people talk in full sentences

Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Instead of, “Are you a doctor?” ask, “Tell me how you became a doctor.” Remember that you want people to tell you stories.

Listening is the key

A good interview is like a conversation. Prepare questions, but don't just follow a list. The most important thing is to listen and have your questions come naturally. If your questions are rehearsed and hollow, the answers will be too. If you are curious and your questions are spontaneous and honest, you will get a good interview.

Interviewing is a two-way street

Conducting a good interview depends, in part, on asking the right questions. But it is also important to establish a relationship with the person you are interviewing. Sometimes it is appropriate to share some information about yourself in an interview. Remember that it's a conversation. What's more, for it to be an honest conversation, people must feel that you care about what they say, and will honor and respect their words and stories.

The foolproof question

Here is one simple question that always works: “How do you see things differently since (blank) happened?” If you're talking to your mailman about the time he was chased for 2 blocks by a neighborhood dog, ask how he feels every time he goes by that house.

Take notes

Remember specific details. Take notes immediately after the interview, while it's still fresh in your mind. You can also use the tape recorder like a dictating machine.

Relax and forget about the microphone

One thing that's always amazing: In the beginning of an interview people are usually stiff and self-conscious, but after a while, they forget all about the tape recorder and start to be themselves.

The last secret to a great interview

There is one simple rule for getting people to talk openly and honestly: You have to be genuinely curious about the world around you. That curiosity will help you find the most interesting story!

See next page for your Interview Checklist!

And, on the flip-side, How To Be a Spokesperson!

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Things to bring to the interview

- __ Your question list
- __ Recording device
- __ Microphone/headphones equipment
- __ Extra batteries, charger and/or power source
- __ Pen or pencil

Before you begin your interview

- __ Find the quietest place possible to record
- __ Turn off or move away from noisy appliances like clocks, TVs, and refrigerators
- __ Make sure you and your storyteller are comfortable
- __ Do a test recording, holding the microphone about one hand's distance from your storyteller's mouth. If anything sounds strange, stop and figure out what the problem is before starting the interview

During your interview

- __ Double check that the recorder is actually recording
- __ Start each tape with an ID: State your name, your age, the date, and the location of the interview. Ask your storyteller to state the same information.
- __ Stay quiet when your subject is talking. Don't say, "Uh, huh." Instead, nod your head.
- __ Feel free to rerecord. If your storyteller makes a mistake or if a noisy truck passes by, feel free to ask him or her to repeat the story.
- __ Ask emotional questions like "How did this make you feel?"
- __ Look your storyteller in the eyes and stay engaged.
- __ Stick with amazing moments in the interview. Follow-up questions often yield the best material.
- __ Be curious and keep an open heart. Great things will happen.

When you finish

- __ Properly label your recording, and make sure it's saved in a safe place.
- __ Take a couple notes, make sure you capture any additional thoughts or feelings about your interview right after

HOW TO: Be a Spokesperson

Be aware of who you're talking to

Do the advance work: Find out who the reporter is, what outlet and their general angle/audience. Ask the reporter what their story is and who they have talked to. Try to be aware of the frame their coming at the story with, and don't be afraid to correct false-assumptions.

Frame the story

Tactics vs. Issue: Don't tell the media what you are doing. Tell them WHY. Your values and motivation are part of a compelling story. Structure your story: 1. Problem, 2. Solution, 3. Action.

Not a conversation

Don't just answer the question -- respond! Get your message out regardless of what questions the reporter asks.

Message discipline

Know your message and practice. Repeat your message.

ABC

- A.cknowledge the question
- B.ridge back to your...
- C.ontent (the message!)

Sample bridges:

- "...I think the important issue..."
- "...I think the real point is..."
- "...the reason I'm here is..."

Be quotable

Be a character in the story - establish your connection to the issue. People respond to personal stories and connections.

The truth is on your side

It's ok to say, "I don't know the answer to that" or "I'll get back to you on that." Don't say, "No comment." It makes you look guilty of something. Do no lie or make stuff up, EVER! Back up your arguments with facts.

Be yourself

Relax. If you can't, at least try to appear relaxed. Take deep breaths, and be yourself!

MEDIA TRACKER

Media Source	Contact Information (Name, Phone, Email)	Best Approach	Deadlines
NEWSPAPERS			
TV			
RADIO			
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTERS			
WEB-BASED MEDIA			
SOCIAL MEDIA			

HOW TO: MAKE A VIDEO

Vimeo Video School

>> <https://vimeo.com/videoschool/101>



Video 101: Shooting basics

>> <https://vimeo.com/17853099>

Video 101 :: Editing Basics

>> <https://vimeo.com/17853140>

FREE Movie Editing Software

>> Get iMovie: <http://www.apple.com/ios/imovie/>

>> Get Movie Maker: <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/get-movie-maker-download>

10 Steps to Shooting your First DIY Interview

>> <https://vimeo.com/64729691>

HOW TO: BUILD A SIMPLE WEBSITE

Wordpress Set-Up Guides

>> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLpPZbscjJk> (Video)

>> <http://www.creativebloq.com/web-design/wordpress-tutorials-designers-1012990>

HOW TO: START AN ONLINE PETITION

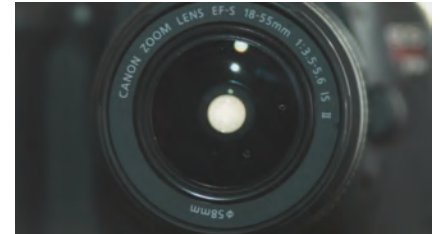
Online Petition Tools

>> http://www.idealware.org/articles/fgt_online_petitions.php

We the People

>> <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/>

HARNESSING THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY



COMMUNITY ART

Community murals provide a cost-effective method for people to publicly celebrate those things that they consider to be truly important, identifying themselves to each other as well as to visitors to the community.



Mural Guide

>> http://www.cpag.net/guide/2/2_pages/2_1.htm

>> http://www.cpag.net/guide/5/5_pages/5.htm (Working with youth!)

Mosaic Guide

>> http://www.cpag.net/guide/3/3_pages/3.htm

Planning and Managing Murals guide

>> Download PDF

HOW TO: Start your own Zine

>> <https://vimeo.com/11386025> (Video)

>> <http://www.creativebloq.com/print-design/make-your-own-zines-11410390>

>> <http://www.rookiemag.com/2012/05/how-to-make-a-zine/>

(also see following page for a step-by-step guide)

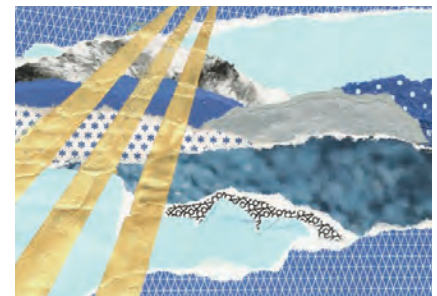
Collaging for Beginners

>> <http://www.rookiemag.com/2012/03/collaging-for-beginners/>

Creative Writing Tips

<http://www.creative-writing-now.com/how-to-write-poetry.html>

HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE ARTS



The boom of self published materials can be traced to pre-1960s science fiction fan mags or fanzines. These fanzines allowed amateurs as well as professionals to publish their own content and to share it. In the following decades, with the increase of political activism we saw an increase in self published political papers. Burgeoning artists historically used the versatile and affordable zine forum to collaborate and share their work. *This tradition of political and artistic self publishing continues today.*



Step 1: What's Your Zine About?

So you want to start a zine? Great! The first step is to determine what your zine is going to be about. This can be as broad or as focused as you want. You should ask yourself what you want to accomplish with this zine.

Do you want to start a conversation in your school? Community?

Do you want to spark change around an issue you care about?

Do you want to engage and collaborate with your peers?

See if others want to contribute content to the zine.

Step 2: Gathering Materials

You could create your zine with a computer, but most use the ageless technology of "Cut and Paste." More professional looking zines use computer layout for the most part, but your zine could use a blended technique. You can use printed text and images to paste on your master sheets, but this also allows for you to include hand-drawn elements that will make your zine feel very personal.

For cut and paste zines you will need:

- Paper
- Glue/Double-sided tape
- Scissors
- Pens/Markers
- Ink/watercolor if you're feeling artistic!

Anything else you'll need to see your vision through.

HOW TO: Publish Your Own Zine

Step 3: Putting Together the Master // Part 1

Once you have some idea of what you want to do and the materials with which to do it, it's time to start making a zine. The zine you paste together will be known as the "Master". Take care of your master copy just in case you ever want to do a reprint of your zine.

You can decide to do it any size or shape, ([See here for a different folding technique](#)) but it can be as simple as an 8.5x11 page folded in half. It may be best to do your master on white paper with black inks-this will allow the content to show up much better when you make copies. It is also important to be aware of page orders. It's a good idea to decide how long your zine will be ahead of time, take that many pages, fold them and do your layout that way. Otherwise the layout process can get very complicated very quickly.

Step 3: Putting Together the Master // Part 2

Next you want to use scrap paper to do some drawings and lettering. Cut out shapes, images, quotes, draw or create backgrounds. You can use typewriters, computer printouts and hand drawn stuff for this process. Get creative! This is where you get to express yourself and really make an impact with what you want to say. ([Here are some tips for first-time collagers.](#))

Once you like what you have, do a loose layout by hand. When you like it, paste the pages down to finalize your master.

Step 4: Makin' Copies

With your master copy done, it's time to make copies. For short print runs you will most likely want to go to a copy store. If you plan on doing a lot of copies, you should take it to a printer. It is much cheaper to make your own copies but if you want to get it done, most places will copy, fold and staple for a small fee.

Getting Your Zine Out There

Once you have some copies made it's time to get your zine out into the world!

Give your zines to friends and family for feedback. Depending on the topic of your zine you could place them in a variety of places. Small music venues, bookstores, your school, library or community center are all great places to start! If zine enthusiasm catches on, perhaps you find zine stands in your community soon.



See following pages for:

Project Event Budgeting Example

SCALING UP! (Financially)

HOW TO: Neighborhood and Community Crowd-sourcing

>> <http://ioby.org/about>

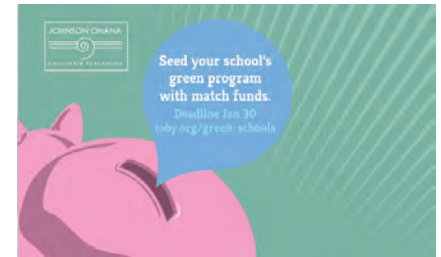
Ultimate Guide To Crowdfunding

>> <https://ecommerce.shopify.com/guides/crowdfunding>

Grant Writing 101

>> <http://www.guidestar.org/rxa/news/articles/2006/grant-writing-101-resources-for-grant-writers.aspx>

ETC.



EVENT BUDGETING TEMPLATE

Project: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____ Time: _____

Item	Budgeted Cost	Actual Cost	Can This Be Donated?
Venue Costs			
Equipment			
Tables and Chairs			
Rental Fee			
Parking			
Security			
Insurance			
A/V Equipment			
Miscellaneous			
Food (include tax & tip)			
Hors d'oeuvre			
Service Cost			
Meals and Beverage			
Flyers and Promotional			
News Release			
PSA			
Facebook Ads			
Website Ads			
Printing			
Entertainment			
DJ, Singer, Band			
Decorations			
Flowers, Balloons, Banners, Signage			
Photographer			
Graphic Artist			
Mailing			
Postage			
Stationary			
Other Costs			
Totals:			