

Maine Municipal Literacy Project

LESSON PLAN

Citizen Initiatives: Taking a Part in Our Town Development

Grade Level: 9-12

Key Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. See how powerful individuals can be in shaping their town environment.
2. Understand the numerous steps a citizen will likely take to make an idea a reality.
3. Meet the people in town who play distinct roles in moving ideas forward.
4. Learn how to interview, videotape and edit digital content to share an idea.

Project Description:

Farmer's Markets, Development of Bike Trails, Festivals, Community Gardens, Races, Art shows and similar community events "foster pride, volunteerism and cooperation, which are valuable ingredients in making things happen in an era of tight budgets and limited government" (Burnett). Many of these initiatives began with one person's idea and their willingness to move it forward. The class will choose one such citizen's initiative to document in a video. They will interview the person responsible for the idea as a class and then break up to travel to various town offices and interview others who were involved in the process of making the idea a reality. Once all the pieces are put together the class will be able to see the journey of an idea and the various offices and people connected to any initiative.

Lesson Introduction:

- READ & DISCUSS:** Read attached article "Innovative Approaches to Building Community" by Lee Burnett. *Maine Townsman October 2009*. Have them identify the people in the story who grew an idea into a town tradition. What is unique about each of their stories? What do they have in common?
- BRAINSTORM:** What ideas do your students have for making their town community stronger? In which idea would they be most willing to invest time and energy? What events or spaces currently define their town? Do they know of any that began with a motivated individual or small group? Focus on one initiative, and contact the individual responsible for a class interview.

Instructional Strategies and Activities:

1. **Class Interview**-They will first tape an interview with the person responsible. What steps did it take to get their idea off the ground? Who did they speak to in town municipal offices? What role did they each play? What were some of the stumbling blocks on the road to success? How did he/she overcome them? What was the outcome and how has it impacted the town community? What makes them most proud? This group interview will become the introduction and conclusion to the finished video.

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begins with **you**



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WE BELIEVE IN MAINE STUDENTS

The Maine Municipal Literacy Project is a partnership between the Maine Municipal Association, the City of Saco, and Jobs for Maine's Graduates. The project is supported by the Maine Community Foundation.

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2. Interview Practice: Discuss what went well in the class interview and what they learned. Have them read interview advice on New York Times Learning Site linked below. Students will likely only have one shot to get the footage they need. Once they have scheduled a 15 minute interview, have them experiment with the camera in class. They can practice their questions and make sure the audio is loud enough.

3. Group Interviews In Town: Next students will divide into teams and be assigned a town official who played a role in the idea's progress. Each group will tape an interview about the municipal officer's meetings with the citizen about the idea. How did they respond? What unique perspective do they bring? Note: If there are enough cameras at school available (4-5), it might be easiest to try to schedule all the interviews during the same class block so that all the content is collected on the same day, and the teacher can drop off and pick up students.

4. Final Edit: Edit Video Pieces and then combine and critique as a class. Once the video pieces are put together it will form a full vision of the process of one citizen's initiative.

Assessment:

- This is a process-oriented project and students should be assessed on their positive participation in each step of the video's creation.
- Each team of students will be graded on the quality of their mini interview and on timely completion of their video segment. They will upload the footage and edit it down to the best pieces. When possible they will edit their questions out of the clips.
- They will write up a self-assessment/reflection of their interview and of the finished product.

Reflection:

Watch the whole movie as a class once the pieces are complete. Discuss editing.

Sharing the Learning

Invite the people who you profiled to a Premier Showing during class. Consider inviting other classes so that more students can be motivated by seeing how to turn their ideas into a reality.

Resources needed:

- Video Camera that is easy to connect to school computer and Video Editing Software like iMovie.
- Transportation to town offices or other community spaces.

Please Note:

Additional curriculum materials can be found on the Maine Municipal Association website at:
http://www.memun.org/public/local_govt/ed/default.html

Helpful Resources:

Teen Gardeners Sow Seeds of Hope-MSNBC Video About Teens Making a Difference:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/32500185-32500185>

• Quick Tips for Interviews:

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/specials/weblines/461.html>