

M2-S5: Developing Sociopolitical Consciousness Across Learning Environments.

CLH	<p>Hello, Gina, Hello Listeners, and welcome! This is Session 5 in Module 2 of the Tale Academy: and it is titled, Developing Sociopolitical Consciousness Across Learning Environments. Today we're going to explore youth participatory action research and how you can use this practice in your classroom.</p>
GK	<p>Hi Christina. Boy, that's a mouthful: Youth Participatory Action Research, or YPAR for short. Before we dig in, let's bring this concept to life with a great example.</p> <p>In May 2016, Jack Einstein, a senior at Shaker High School in Latham, New York, was celebrated on his school's website for creating and leading a human rights campaign. Jack said, "I have a voice and I have a strong voice." Jack's recognition of his own agency and his conviction to use his voice for a greater good is supported by NYSED's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework. In New York, we have committed to a vision of students who (1) experience academic success, (2) are sociopolitically conscious and socioculturally responsive, and (3) have a critical lens through which they challenge inequitable systems of access, power, and privilege.</p> <p>So back to Jack, his project was called, "I AM HUMAN," it sought to raise greater awareness for transgender rights, specifically the treatment of transgender students in schools, encouraging open dialogues that would allow students to explore the issue more deeply. As part of his strategy, Jack used message stickers to spark conversations about a topic he cared about. What started as an assignment from his English teacher to take part in an advocacy project, "became a lot bigger than [he] intended it to become." Jack was even asked to present at other local schools, as well as to the New York State United Teachers Civil and Human Rights Committee.</p>
CLH	<p>That's awesome and Jack's teacher, Thea McFawn, is no stranger when it comes to encouraging student activism. She was featured in a New York State United Teachers article for her Human Rights Day advocacy lesson that guided students in getting involved with a cause of interest. She used class time for discussion on how each student is advocating for their cause or improving conditions. Students' projects in their community included volunteering with a refugee agency, helping children new to this country develop literacy skills, creating public service announcements about the Dakota Access Pipeline, and even sending holiday well wishes to service men and women abroad.</p>
GK	<p>There's this other thing I also love, also from New York, using cell phone documentary tools. In an Edutopia article on co-creating interdisciplinary social justice projects, educator Michael Hernandez describes the ways in which he integrates cultural literacy with academic literacy – critical thinking, writing, close reading, and media literacy skills. Hernandez notes that "social justice projects' interdisciplinary nature helps students make important connections between history, culture, economics, and science." One of his projects included equipping students to make a short documentary that would "tell a story about something good in your</p>

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	<p>neighborhood that others don't know about." For educators such as Hernandez, the power of visual storytelling and student documentaries helps him align content with standards.</p>
CLH	<p>That is amazing but McFawn and Hernandez are not alone in their quest for increasing student and civic engagement activism. Many teachers across the country - and the globe - integrate a method called youth participatory action research into their instructional design.</p> <p>According to the Youth Activism Project Guide produced by the Youth Activism Project, participatory action research, "empowers community members to learn and apply research techniques in order to discover solutions to issues in their community." Youth Participatory Action Research, we can use the acronym Y-P-A-R, is a strategy that allows students and adults to partner on research aimed at improving the conditions of youth lives and communities. The data that emerges from YPAR can be used to advocate for change in communities.</p> <p>So his process and its goals are likely why so many teachers have begun to integrate YPAR into their curriculum. At its core, YPAR reaffirms the value young people bring to wide-scale problem-solving and treats them as equal partners who have the ability to effect real change. Teachers involved in YPAR are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that their students are adequately prepared to pursue the significant objectives often tied to YPAR projects.</p>
GK	<p>That's so inspirational. In their YPAR Guide, The Youth Activism Project outlines nine steps to prepare for a successful YPAR endeavor. You can find a link to this guide, and all of the resources we reference in the transcript of this podcast.</p> <p>Step 1. <i>Recruit a YPAR team.</i> This can be as simple as organizing learning around YPAR with our own classes. Use online tools and resources for students to ask questions privately, learn more about what YPAR is, and sign up.</p> <p>Step 2. <i>Build relationships.</i> Teachers must facilitate trust and collaboration, so while this is Step 2, it is actually an ongoing part of the process. Using a restorative justice community-building circle is a research-based process that moves easily between in-person and online environments. A regular circle process supports building, strengthening, and maintaining relationships through safe and structured conversations.</p> <p>Step 3. <i>Develop critical awareness.</i> Teachers need to ensure students have an understanding of the systemic roots of community issues and the social, historical, economic, and environmental reasons for inequitable outcomes that favor some groups over others. How do we do that? Strategies such as online teach-ins allow students to come together to research, listen, present, and problem solve around the issues that matter to them.</p> <p>Step 4. <i>Identify issues.</i> Although students are the lead investigators, teachers have to support students in effectively narrowing their focus areas based on various factors that affect feasibility. An online handbook from the Maine Youth Action Network is a</p>

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	<p>practical guide that can be accessed on any device. It helps you help students narrow down their interests.</p>
<p>CLH</p>	<p>I'm gonna knock it down with the last ones here.</p> <p>Step 5. <i>Create the research design.</i> Students require support to determine the best ways to collect their data, so teachers can provide examples of different data collection tools (such as surveys, focus groups, interviews and PhotoVoice). We can help them identify the pros and cons of each to select the one that is best aligned with their project goals.</p> <p>Step 6. <i>Conduct research.</i> Teachers provide the guidelines for students to transform their research design into action and accurately capture their desired data points. One important practice is a <i>reflection journal</i> that prompts students to reflect on various questions throughout the process; this can be a shared GoogleDoc, a VoiceThread, or an app such as DabbleMe.</p> <p>Step 7. <i>Analyze data.</i> Teachers assist students with reviewing the data and drawing conclusions, which can include sharing statistics and trends that demonstrate impact. Use online resources such as Tinkerplots to build in explicit instruction in data science.</p> <p>(GK: Like scatterplot and different kinds of graphing and visual representations of data, that's great).</p> <p>Step 8. <i>Advocate for change.</i> Students ultimately want to bring solutions to the challenges they have been studying, so teachers should assign YPAR that culminates in a concrete course of action intended to yield results. Use online presentation software such as Prezi or Doodly to help students develop high-quality presentations for community stakeholders.</p> <p>(GK: So the understanding is that you do it so you can go back to the community. You study and make a presentation. It requires that you have a relationship with community members that your students can be in contact with, I love it).</p> <p>Step 9. <i>Reflect and repeat.</i> Teachers may encourage students to engage in continued reflection, not only for the purposes of continuous improvement on the process but also on what other issues that they can use YPAR to address.</p>
<p>GK</p>	<p>To maximize the benefits of YPAR, consider incorporating the 10 questions that Harvard University's Democratic Knowledge Project recommends young people ask if they want to be changemakers in the world:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What matters to me and why? – How much should I share? – How do I make it about more than myself? – Where do we start? – How can we make it easy and engaging for others to join in?

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do we get wisdom from crowds? – How do we handle the downside of crowds? – Are we pursuing voice, influence, or both? – How do we get from voice to change? – How can we find allies? <p>So these are the 10 questions Harvard recommends we ask.</p>
CLH	<p>YPAR is an excellent way not only to elicit student engagement but also to reaffirm students' cultural identities while strengthening their communities. YPAR can also be used to develop both students' sociopolitical consciousness – the ability to critically analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping self and society – as well as their sociocultural responsiveness, a goal of the CRSE Framework.</p>
GK	<p>So student activism. Student activism can be nurtured even in the upper elementary grades. At Shaker High School, sociocultural responsiveness is encouraged through extracurriculars and in academic programs. High school students in partnership with Siena College students facilitate an anti-bullying club for 4th graders that mentors elementary students in bystander awareness and advocacy. Which is that jumping off place for developing sociopolitical consciousness.</p>
CLH	<p>Now, more than ever, we can empower our students to use their voice and influence beyond the confines of the physical classroom or geographic borders of their towns/cities to make a difference that can really range from local to global. Students can start or join virtual student groups that can fundraise for selected causes, run different social media campaigns to raise awareness on important topics, or connect through different social media platforms for the mobilization of student volunteers, organizing their collaborative efforts in a time-efficient and creative way.</p>
GK	<p>Nice, we've mentioned a number of great tools during this session. Let's review these tools in case you'd like to explore a tool on your own. We suggested PhotoVoice which was a new one to me, as a data collection tool students can use in their research. We suggested VoiceThread and DabbleMe as apps that can help students keep a reflection journal when conducting research. Tinkerplots can engage your students in data analysis and modeling in a fun and dynamic way. And finally, Prezi and Doodly can help students develop high-quality presentations for community stakeholders to really impress them.</p>
CLH	<p>As we conclude Session 5 in Module 2, remember that when we plan with CRSE in mind, promoting student activism is a stellar way to have student learning culminate in something that not only emotionally resonates with them but also intellectually challenges them and provides an opportunity to think critically about topics that</p>

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	directly affect their lives and may very well influence their future professional aspirations.
GK	That is fantastic. Okay, we are in conclusion now thank you listeners. You can now go find a choice board selection back in the course that reflects your interests. Thank you for joining us today, we will catch you in the next session.