A Service-Learning Guide for Citizen Journalists

written by
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for EarthEcho International

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Acknowledgments

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Page 7 Definition of Service + Learning = Service-Learning adapted from Going Blue: A Teen Guide to Saving Our Oceans & Waterways by Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A., © 2010. Used with permission of Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN: 800-735-7323; www.freespirit.com. All rights reserved. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Unless otherwise noted, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations or critical reviews.

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My grandfather Jacques Cousteau taught the world about how vital our oceans are to our existence. He didn't have a degree in science. He had curiosity, tenacity, and determination. He was not about to let anyone tell him what he could do or know. His actions mirrored his belief that people can investigate and draw conclusions. He valued his innate ability to question.

Born in southwest France, my grandfather often swam in the Mediterranean. When a ship's captain gave him goggles he looked underwater with open eyes, but soon became frustrated by the inability to explore further and deeper. This led him to develop methods to remain underwater by, inventing, with engineer Emile Gagnan, a wearable oxygen tank known as SCUBA gear, which allowed for safer, easier diving. To bring the underwater world to the public, he pioneered innovative technologies such as underwater cameras. Jacques Cousteau was a storyteller; this was his passion. His books and films about the sea and its creatures captivated the world.

His son, my father, Philippe, Sr., was not a scientist or journalist by trade either. He studied engineering and worked alongside my grandfather with shared passions for exploration and storytelling. By the 1960s, however, my father noticed tremendous changes from earlier documentation of this underwater world, changes that were leading to the death of Mediterranean marine, specifically caused by ocean acidification, improper fishing methods, and tourism. His purpose evolved from collecting stories to spreading the imperative message that we must care for and coexist with our oceans and environment. He aimed to stimulate conversations about what he had seen and what needed to be done. Philippe, Sr. introduced a new generation to critical issues through his youthful perspective and ability to question the status quo.

When the Gulf oil spill occurred on April 20, 2010, I found myself wearing my father and grandfather's shoes, standing as they would have stood, observing and reporting on television and radio news and in Congress about this human and ecological tragedy and our collective determination to care for, repair, and restore this region. Choosing to play a role in this profound moment in history was not about the name on my birth certificate; I chose this role because work needed to be done. And I now recognize how our caring and commitment to protect the environment for generations to come led each of us—my grandfather, my father, and myself—to be citizen journalists.

During days and weeks following the spill, I met youth wanting to be involved in the restoration efforts. In the Gulf region, they saw the damaged ecosystem and the dramatic impact on the lives of friends and family. Yet their age and the severity of the situation meant that only trained professionals could be part of the clean up and restoration efforts. Youth who live outside of this region similarly echoed, “What can we do?”

Service-Learning. Fortunately there is a process youth can be involved in that enables them to respond to this ongoing Gulf situation and to environmental needs in their own backyards. For years, teens have been engaged in service-learning. They have followed their interests and authentic community needs and applied their talents, skills, and knowledge to better their communities. Citizen journalism can be a powerful form of service-learning.

Wherever you are, the time has arrived to become the ones willing to look at the world in a different way, to ask questions, and gather together to tell stories of what is happening to the environment in our communities. This is our turn, as caring responsible members of this global society, to be citizen journalists.
Why Youth as Citizen Journalists?

While professional journalists make ongoing contributions to providing needed information to the general populace, there is also a clear role for youth as citizen journalists. Why?

- Youth know about youth.
- Youth know about what youth care about.
- Youth can capture, from their unique perspective, what is significant in their communities.
- Youth have ideas for solutions regarding important issues, including the environment.
- Youth know firsthand how they are affected by local issues, including the environment.
- Youth can get other youth to get involved, and can record their voices, opinions, and experiences.
- Youth are already taking bold stands in their communities as leaders and change makers.

As youth become citizen journalists, they become the eyes, ears, and voices of their communities. If this sounds like something you want to do, then turn the page and get started.

COMING SOON

Throughout this Action Guide you will find information and resources to assist you in developing as a citizen journalist. This is just the beginning. For additional resources, examples of citizen journalists at work, and to share your story, be sure to visit STREAM at www.EarthEcho.org/STREAM. STREAM—STudents Reporting Environmental Action through Media—has been created by EarthEcho International for youth, and we invite you to submit your articles, videos, photographs, or radio shows—your stories about the environmental issues in your backyard. What’s the scoop? Find the news, and be sure to capture the voices of other youth in the process.
Service + Learning = Service-Learning

Service: Service means contributing or helping to benefit others and the common good.

Learning: Learning means gaining understanding of a subject or skill through study, experience, or an exchange of ideas.

Service-Learning: The ideas of service and learning combine to create service-learning. Investigation, preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration are the five stages of service-learning. By understanding how each stage works, you can be more effective in making plans to help in our community and be effective as a citizen journalist.

The Five Stages of Service-Learning

Stage 1: Find Out —> Investigate: Begin the service-learning process by asking, "What resources do we have in our group? What are our skills and talents?" Then investigate the needs in your community to find a local problem that you can document and report on.

Stage 2: Dive In —> Prepare: What do you need to know to be well informed about the topic? Finding out can involve talking with other people and organizations, reading newspapers or watching a video, or attending a community meeting. And what skills do you need to be an effective journalist? Being able to listen well, document what you learn, and select a way to report your findings all come into play. All this preparing and planning leads to knowing what forum you will use to report your story. Then you are ready to...

Stage 3: Get Going —> Act: Set your plan in motion! As a citizen journalist your action is the total of many small parts of a well-designed plan and well-practiced skills. This is when you will:

- Conduct interviews or surveys;
- Find supporting data in media, including books, Internet, newspapers, magazines;
- Create the story in your chosen form, such as a video, article, or photo essay;
- Present the story to the public

Stage 4: Think Back —> Reflect: During ALL of the stages it’s important to pause and consider: How is this going? What am I learning? Anything need to be changed? Checking in through reflection keeps us on track as we connect our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Stage 5: Tell it —> Demonstrate: Tell the story of what happened as a citizen journalist. This is different from reporting your story, as this is when you showcase the service-learning process. Remember to document every stage of service-learning beginning with Investigate so you will have all you need to present your journey completely. Consider who would want to know what you did, what skills you learned, the interests you developed, and the results. Include your reflections. Be bold! Share the learning and the service!
Stage 1: Find Out —> Investigate

Being a Citizen Journalist

As you enter this exploration to be a citizen journalist, you will have opportunities to write responses to questions and ideas, to write stories, to capture your thoughts and feelings of the experience. A journal or notebook will be great to have—with recycled paper of course!

For You to Do

In a small group, consider the words CITIZEN and JOURNALIST separately. List words that come to mind when you think of each of these words.

Next, define "citizen journalist" in ten words or less. And add an image (that means a drawing).

After you are done, turn the page to see a definition by Gulf Shore High School students.

Can an everyday citizen actually step into the role of a journalist? They have! And, when done with ample preparation, ongoing development of skills, and resources to ensure good, quality reporting like Jacques Cousteau, the results have changed the world.

What Citizen Journalists Do

In Gulf Shores, Alabama, students at Gulf Shores High School intently followed the oil spill that dramatically altered their community in a flash. The explosion on the British Petroleum (BP) Deepwater oil rig on April 20, 2010, took the lives of 11 rig workers, ultimately dispersed over 50 million gallons of oil into a fragile ecosystem, and brought the local economy to a halt.

What were they to do? They wanted to help, yet repeatedly the public was told that only skilled, trained professionals could participate in the clean up efforts. And of course this makes sense—whether working on a boat to remove oil or handling wildlife, specific training was required. Even more importantly, no one would want the teens in danger. This left students feeling helpless and seeing their lives change without the ability to have a voice or participate.

In July 2010, sixteen students came together with EarthEcho International and Mobile Baykeeper to experience a process of becoming citizen journalists. You will hear about their experience throughout this publication.

FACT: In the Gulf region, more than one-third of children had physical symptoms or mental health problems related to the oil spill.
FACT: More than 40% of those living near the coast have experienced direct exposure to spilled oil.
FACT: An economic research firm estimates that almost $1.2 billion in economic output and 17,000 jobs will have been lost this year due to the Gulf oil spill.
FACT: BP estimates that more than 108 square miles of marshes have been touched by the spill.

— USA Today, August 5, 2010, “And now, the spill’s cost comes into focus,” page 2
Citizen journalists:
- Tell their own stories
- Interview and tell the story of others
- Compile a story from various sources
- Create photo essays, news videos, or radio shows
- Give their opinions

Many forums exist for publishing or otherwise sharing your story with others. Select your media before you begin; this may change during the process or at the end.

Getting Started with a Personal Inventory

Almost immediately after the Gulf Shores High School students arrived for the citizen journalist workshop, they formed pairs to conduct a Personal Inventory to find out their collective skills and talents. Then in groups of four, and based on the Personal Inventory they had conducted, students selected the primary research method that each would be responsible for:

- **Interview**: Ensured questions were developed to ask of people with expertise in the Gulf oil spill.
- **Media**: Made certain that cameras and recording devices were used to capture what was seen and heard.
- **Survey**: Formulated questions for the general populace and tabulated responses.
- **Observation and Experience**: Were attentive to the moment and ensured all was captured.

All students were part of doing these methods; those responsible made sure the task was done.

For You to Do

Take a Personal Inventory by interviewing a partner about your interests, skills, and talents. Make a list as a class. Refer to this list as you take on roles and responsibilities as citizen journalists. Is someone especially inquisitive? Great for developing interview questions. Does someone like to write? Perfect for putting together an article. Any photographers? Needed for capturing the visuals. Any shoppers? Excellent for getting the best prices on supplies you might need. Value every interest, skill, and talent revealed. You may be surprised how they all come in handy. Find a Personal Inventory document on page 21.
Gathering Information About A Community Need

Does your community have a polluted creek or experience frequent floods? Is there a community initiative reminding everyone to properly dispose of electronic waste? What is going on in your community related to the environment that is of interest to you?

Brainstorm topics of compelling interest and use these methods to find out more:

- **Media:** What newspapers cover local environmental issues? What websites have local information about environmental issues?
- **Interview:** What government agency or organization is responsible for sensitive environmental issues, like the mayor’s office or Save the Bay? Who could you interview to learn more?
- **Survey:** A community survey can help you quickly determine what environmental topics are of concern to your community. A few basic questions and you are ready to go!
- **Observation:** Field trip! Where can you go or send delegates to capture information you need? Perhaps visiting a local stream will reveal trash you can link to a source, or a community picnic may lack enough recycling containers so extra plastic and aluminum cans head for the landfill.

Use the organizing tool Gathering Information About a Community Need found on pages 22-23 to generate ideas for learning about important local environmental issues. The information and evidence you find will guide you toward Stage Two: Dive In —> Prepare

**ON JUNE 22, 2010,** the *New York Times* reported on an 82-year-old woman determined to reduce plastic water bottle use in her city. She led an effort to ban the sale of single-use water bottles in Concord, MA. The story also mentioned that plastic water bottle manufacturers may sue the city. Who in your community is taking action to improve your community?

**REPORT THE STORY!**

**DID YOU NOTICE** that these are the same categories the students in Gulf Shores used to define tasks in their small groups? These four methods will become handy throughout the citizen journalism process.
RESPONSIBILITY IN JOURNALISM:

As a citizen journalist, remember to be persistent in:

• **accuracy** — check validity of information;
• **thoroughness** — stick with facts and what can be confirmed as true;
• **fairness** — be aware of your own ideas, listen to others, and seek a balance;
• **transparency** — cite any source you use, and
• **being respectful** — ask permission when taking photographs of or recording or quoting individuals by name.

Once you have clarified this idea of citizen journalism, created an inventory of each person's interests, skills, and talents, and found a compelling community need, you are ready for preparation.

A Pause for Reflection - Discuss in pairs or small groups:

• What you most like about Stage One: Investigate.
• A new idea you learned about being a citizen journalist.
• A skill or talent you are ready to put to use as a citizen journalist.
Stage 2: Dive In —> Prepare

First Decisions

☑ You know your interests, skills, and talents.
☑ You have a compelling community need.

Now, which method or methods of reporting will you choose you use?

**News Format** is told with the who, what, when, where, why. As a citizen journalist you seek out the best, most reliable source for information. The reporting is objective. Present reliable information as clearly as possible and allow readers to draw their own conclusions and decide what they think about what’s happening in the news.

**Opinion Piece** allows for the journalist’s perspective. The writing is subjective. Usually opinion pieces are clearly marked as “editorials” or “commentary.” Often a position is taken to persuade the reader to a particular point of view.

In all cases, journalists strive for excellence in telling or capturing the story.

The **form** the journalist uses to tell the story becomes the tool or vehicle. How will you tell your story? Each of these can be used for a news story or for an opinion piece:

- Article
- Photography
- Video
- Radio
- Cartoon (often used with editorials)

The **platform** is where you publish or make public your journalistic composition. How can you reach your target audience? Knowing who you want to be your audience may influence where you place the story you want to tell. You may choose:

- Print, as in a newspaper
- Radio
- Television
- Online (which may include publishing of text, photo, audio, or video)

Of course different **skills** may be required for each method. Generally, several key skills required for citizen journalism include:

- Differentiating between facts and opinions
- Conducting an interview
- Compiling a story from various sources
- Taking photographs and video

An overview of these follows.
Knowing Facts From Opinions

As a citizen journalist, knowing the difference between facts and opinions is key.

NEWS ALERT!

(a) Every year an estimated 50 billion bottles of water are consumed annually in the United States and around 200 billion bottles globally. (b) This means that worldwide, about 2.7 million tons of plastic are used each year to make water bottles. (c) Can you imagine the amount of waste that causes for our planet? (d) With only 23% of water bottles being recycled, that means that about 38 billion end up in landfills each year. (e) In some countries, water purity makes bottled water a necessity until the infrastructure can provide clean water. (f) In the United States, however, in most cases, tap water actually follows higher purity standards than bottled water. (g) And about 40% of bottled water originated as tap water, so I really feel that everyone should get hold of a reusable water bottle. (h) When I think of how much waste there really is, I can get furious, or I can get active. (i) Together we can start a campaign to inform others and take a stand that helps reduce our nation’s dependency on oil. (j) Think about this: It takes 17 million barrels of oil each year to make water bottles for the US market, which is enough to fuel 1.3 million cars for a year! (k) Know the water bottle facts and decide for yourself.


A news story should be free from personal bias. An editorial expresses the writer’s opinion, usually to inform and often to persuade. Sometimes editorials may be presented as news stories, which can cause confusion for the reader. It is important to be able to distinguish fact from opinion and keep the line between news articles and editorials very clear.

Read the opening paragraph again. On a piece of paper, make an a-k list and mark which sentences are fact and which are opinion. If the designation isn’t clear, explain why.

Facts and opinions are commonly confused in verbal and written communication. Once you understand the difference between facts and opinions you will be more alert to them in your own communication and during interviews. An easy way to separate the two:

Facts generally describe what happened, provide proven data, and can be verified. Opinions express a belief, judgment, or idea, that may not be substantiated—nor does it have to be.
Citing the Source
Glance at the News Alert paragraph. In this case the source was listed at the end. Often in an article the source is woven into the narrative; for example: As noted in the book Going Blue, 40% of bottled water originated as tap water. Phrases such as, “according to,” and, “Ms. Montgomery describes the following,” help you integrate where or who the source is right in the middle of what you write.

What if you are interviewing someone and they begin to give facts and you are unsure of the source? Ask! Sometimes the interviewee will be able to immediately tell you the source, and sometimes they will provide the information later. Be certain to follow up.

For You to Do
Bring in an editorial essay written on a blog or newspaper and circle all of the various ways the writer’s opinion comes through. Which tactics are most provocative or persuasive? Discuss which strategies may be best when formulating an editorial.

Find several articles from a newspaper or a website on the same topic. Select a news story and an editorial. Read and compare the two. Based on what you notice, create a writer’s tip list. Share and combine with others to come up with helpful hints and guidelines that you can all use for reference.

Write two versions of an environmental issue in your own community. First write a news article that includes general information, a fact with a source, and an interview with one other person (someone from class). Then write an opinion piece about the same topic with your particular point of view and an element of persuasion to sway the reader to agree with you.

Your Opinion
“In my opinion . . .”
“What I think would work the best . . .”
“If only we tried these ideas . . .”
“Can you imagine how much we could accomplish by working together?”

There is a place for your opinions. Editorials and editorial cartoons are a couple of ways that people can communicate what they perceive as pros and cons.

The Editorial Cartoon
Sixth graders at Voorhees Middle School in New Jersey [www.nationalbiodiversityparks.org/educate.html] displayed their opinions in the form of cartoons for Earth Day. Art is an extremely powerful way to convey opinions. Certainly, photos have captured powerful ideas and sentiments since their inception.

Take a look at editorial cartoons, especially ones with commentary about the environment. If you are inclined to draw, this may be a medium for you.
The Art of Interviewing

Is there an art to interviewing? Absolutely! This is a skill you can develop and hone so that you build the confidence to take on any person and most any topic. There is an artistic quality that emerges as you make a series of decisions such as how you approach the person and the topic, the way in which you form and pose your questions, and your response to the many possibilities that present during the actual interview.

Keep in mind that an interview can be:
• one-on-one.
• in small groups, with students having roles and opportunities to develop and ask questions.
• with an entire class, perhaps set up as a town hall meeting. In this situation, the guest is advised ahead of time about the format. The speaker has a few minutes to make opening remarks, and the rest of the session allows for questions predetermined by the class or group.

 Depending on the set-up or arrangement, the process will vary. All of the information provided, however, can be adapted for any situation. Being prepared saves time and builds confidence.

Document the Interview. Consider how you will capture the interview. Will you:
• take written notes?
• use an audio recorder?
• use a video recorder?

A recording device ensures that the information can be reviewed afterwards.

Know Your Interviewee. Familiarizing yourself with background information could make the difference between a good interview and a great one.

Topic: Learn what you can about the topic prior to the interview.

Organization or Agency: If the person represents an organization or government agency, read about the group on their website and read any printed material they may have.

Resumé: Request the person’s resumé a week prior to the interview. This resource provides details about background, education, and work experience. Information in the resumé will prove valuable as you develop questions and will help you frame the interview questions into categories. As you read the resumé, underline three or four facts that make this person knowledgeable about the interview topic.
As students in Gulf Shores prepared for their day of citizen journalism, they received an overview of the situation from their Mayor and a general review of life since the oil spill. They prepared for scheduled interviews in groups by determining various roles the group members would play during the interviews: greeter who welcomed the guest and provided introductions about the purpose of the interview, two lead interviewers, and tech person who recorded the interview on a video camera. They received résumés from their interviewees. All participated in developing questions and every person did share in asking the questions. Each group had an expert specializing in one of the following: marine life rescue, the human story, cleaning up today and tomorrow, and going blue by reducing oil dependency. Interviews lasted 50 minutes followed by a time when everyone came together, including the guests, and discussed how the process went and what was learned.

**ASKING QUESTIONS**

**For You to Do**

As a class, select a local environmental issue on which you wish to report. Identify a person to interview who is knowledgeable about the topic. Have every student write two questions, each on a separate small piece of paper, and post them on the wall. You will come back to these questions later.

**The Naive Question**

Scott Simon of National Public Radio says, "Questions are what motivate a story. You have to reconcile yourself to sounding naive. Often we want to prove to someone we know what we are talking about. However that can result in a disaster in an interview. People will assume you know more than you do. You risk their answer is so inside and so informed that it won't be comprehendible to the audience. The more fundamental 'why' question forces people to explain why something happened, or is set up the way it is, or why the law is that way."

**Which would you select as a naive question?**

1. Given that the Gulf oil spill caused the loss of jobs and tourism, and has been called the worst environmental disaster in American history, how would you describe what happened?
2. What has been most significant about the Gulf oil spill to you?
Obviously the second question allows the person being interviewed the greatest opportunity to tell you more and to reveal what is most important to him/her. It also allows you the opportunity to ask follow-up questions that go deeper. According to Simon, "Naive questions ask people to explain basic meanings or implied understandings that often go unstated. They can force people to look at something from a different perspective or uncover simple, but powerful, feelings and responses."

For You to Do
With a partner, select an environmental topic, a person you would want to interview, and develop five naive questions. Then, meet with another pair and provide feedback. Share questions with the entire group and begin making lists of sample questions that you especially like.

Reflecting on Naive Questions
• What is the most important point that you want to remember about naive questions?
• What naive question would you want to ask Scott Simon?
• What naive question would you want someone to ask you?

OPEN, NEUTRAL, LEAN
John Sawatsky of ESPN, suggests that, "A question should be like a window. It should give a perfect view into the topic that you are digging into. You don't want dirt on that window. . . . You want to get reality about what is going on so we can inform the public."

To keep the questions direct and uncluttered, he recommends that questions be:
open = who, what, when, where, why and how
neutral = non-controversial and unbiased
lean = one question at a time, very simple

For You to Do
Remember the questions posted on the wall? Take a gallery walk. Note three questions for each category: open, neutral, or lean. Write down questions you might want to use. Having a list of good questions can be an excellent resource for a citizen journalist.

Tone and Style
"Oh!" Short and simple. Yet, if you think about this two letter expressions, you could say it in all different ways. Try responding with, "Oh!" to each of the following situations:
• You just got the birthday present you've been wishing for.
• Someone walks up behind you and scares you.
• You got an A on your project.
• You found out your best friend stole your boyfriend/girlfriend.

Tone and emotion are connected. How important is tone during an interview?
Soledad O’Brien of CNN says, “Tone has great importance. Make sure you are giving a context and that you questions are fair. Be thoughtful and polite. Are there stupid questions? Perhaps, however it’s okay to ask them. Are their questions not worth asking? Probably, there is a lot in the tone...When you really want to know and understand that can lead to an appropriate question.”

Interviewers often have a style that may influence the tone. What is style? Consider that a person’s clothing could be preppy, punk, or emo. And music can be country, rock, or pop. Can you imagine the range of possibilities that could exist for different types of questioning styles?

INTERVIEW TIPS FROM SOLEDAD O’BRIEN:
- Be respectful.
- Be contextual.
- Be fair.
- Be thoughtful.
- Be conversational.

HERE ARE STYLES TO AVOID:
- aggressive
- leading
- judgmental

HERE ARE STYLES TO CONSIDER:
- thoughtful
- reflective
- personal

A person’s questioning style develops over time, much like one’s style of dress or taste in music.

Even if you arrive with a prepared list of questions, O’Brien recommends that listening carefully can lead you from question to question. “It’s better to think about, ‘What do I want to know from this person? Why are you here? What matters most?’ These questions from your gut often matter more than long-winded questions. The better your listening gets – being engaged – the better your questions will get. Because I am listening I am getting more out of this interview that I even thought! I may find a whole new line of questioning!”

For You to Do
Write responses in your journal or notebook to these questions:
- What are the characteristics of a “good listener”?
- Write three ways that identify a person as a good listener.
- What does an engaged listener look like and how can active listening lead to other questions?

Part of being a citizen journalist may involve questions that probe and push. A probing question asks for more information and clarity. For example, if the question asks, “What do you do when you spend time in nature?” and the response is, “I take walks.” The probing question could be, “Where do you like to walk?” A question that pushes often encourages the responder to reflect or think about their answers in more detail. For example, “You mentioned that seeing the animals affected by the oil spill was difficult. What exactly was difficult for you about that situation?” Or an interviewer might say, “I don’t think you answered what I was asking, so let me try again.”

For You to Do
Watch three interviews on television or the Internet and categorize the tone and style. Write down sample questions you might want to avoid and also those to emulate.
Conduct practice interviews. In small groups, have one student play a well-known person while the others prepare and conduct an interview. Change roles so that all students get to be an interviewer. With any of these methods, discuss the experience with questions such as:

- Which questions promoted conversation?
- Which questions got surprising or in depth responses?
- Did you notice how the journalist’s tone influenced the interview?
- Were there different questioning styles represented by the journalists?

**INTERVIEW GUIDELINES**

- Introduce yourself as a citizen or student journalist and explain the purpose of the interview.
- Be polite and respectful.
- Ask permission to interview your subject.
- Respect an individual’s decision not to participate in an interview.
- Have all interview subjects read and sign a standard waiver granting permission to use his/her name and/or image.
- Never put yourself or others at risk for a story or interview.

**Compiling a Story From Various Sources**

**THE GULF SHORES STORY CONTINUES...**

After the Gulf Shores High School students conducted scheduled interviews, they prepared for impromptu interviews with passersby on a local beach. This situation required them to think on their feet, and let them test their photography, videography, and surveying skills.

Upon arrival, each small group quickly selected who they would meet with first. With clipboards in hand they made introductions and explained what they hoped to accomplish. Next they requested formal permissions when the video or photographic camera would be used; signatures and dates were on the forms before the interviews began. Then the students asked, listened, and learned. They met with people who had been rescuing turtles, another group met with a lifeguard and representative from the city’s department of parks and recreation. A different group met with two BP officials. One group approached several tourists who had gathered to watch. One group headed into a nearby restaurant to request permission from management to survey some of the diners about their experience with the oil spill. Some students went to the shore and took photographs and video of the coastline and ocean.

Back at the library, students reviewed the information gathered throughout the day and began creating articles and editing their videos. Many students went online to confirm facts cited during the interviews. Within seven hours, 16 high school students had become citizen journalists.
What sources will you use? As you can see from this example, Gulf Shores High School students learned how to access reliable information from various resources. They gained the awareness of the importance of accuracy. Inaccurate reporting creates a mess. Double checking facts, documenting and citing reliable sources, and keeping personal opinions in editorials are all key to being an effective citizen journalist.

**For You to Do**
List all the different ways Gulf Shores students sought out information, such as surveys and observation. Then consider what other ways they may have approached gathering information.

Think of a story you might want to cover in your community related to an environmental issue. With a partner or in a small group, brainstorm the varied sources you could access. And think again—bigger and broader!

**Creating a Survey**
As Gulf Shore students conducted surveys of tourists and locals along the beachfront area, they included these questions:

1. Has the oil spill impacted your daily life?
2. Would you consider making changes in your daily life to reduce your oil dependency? If yes, what would you do? If not, please provide any reasons.

**For You to Do**
A survey usually includes simple questions, often that can be answered with yes or no. For practice, in small groups, design a survey to conduct with your fellow students about how water or electricity is being used, or choose another topic of interest. Compile questions. Decide the method you will use, such as a survey in which a person asks questions one-on-one, a paper survey distributed to a random selection of students, or a survey website that may be distributed to the entire school. Discuss with a math or statistics teacher the best way to tally and report your findings.

**The Visual Story**
A picture is worth a thousand words. In this case, we are discussing what can be captured in a photograph or video. What tips help us capture the visuals we need?

**Know your equipment.** Most cameras have many functions that will improve the images.

**Check your equipment.** Have extra batteries or even a backup camera if this is the only chance you have to be where the action is.

**Go for high resolution photographs or high definition (HD) video.** These are easier to use in a variety of places, whether for print publication or on a website. Pictures shot at 300 pixels per inch insure the best results when it comes to printing.
How do you begin to take good photos? The first thing to remember is this: The photographer, not the camera, takes great photos. Second, remember that you master photography by doing it—experimenting and learning by trial and error.

Take photos, get feedback. Much can be learned simply by having a camera in your hands as often as possible. With digital photography, you can take many photos on the same memory card, transfer the ones you like, erase those you don’t like, and start over.

Trust yourself and have fun! Following your instincts will help you be increasingly bold with a camera in your hand. Having fun? That’s just part of the process!

A Pause for Reflection - Key Ideas to Remember:

Much occurs in preparation. To keep ideas fresh and accessible, make a word map of key thoughts that stand out as most important. Add more reflection circles for more ideas.
Stage 3: Get Going —> Act: Being a Citizen Journalist

The time has arrived to take what you have learned and go after your story. First, review the environmental issue you plan to address. Clarify the following:

**Topic:**

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<th>What I still need to find out</th>
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Include doing any necessary research as you develop the timeline below.

**Process:** Go back to page 8 when you first thought about what kind of story you would tell, including the method, the form, and the platform. Review your options one more time and note which you use. Also, if you have a specific target audience, include this as you move toward action.

**Method:**

**Form:**

**Target Audience:**

**Platform:**

**Sources:** Make a list of the sources you intend to use.

**Roles, Responsibilities, Timeline:** Working with others? Consider determining all the tasks that need doing, and set a timeline for getting the work accomplished. This can include creating a survey or scheduling interviews. Even journalists who usually work on their own can team with other journalists to help each other or collaborate.

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Set your plan of action in motion.

**Telling the Story**
Whether you are taking photos with captions, editing a video, or writing a news story, this is the time to do your best work. Keep in mind the following:

- **Allow ample time.** Set a realistic timeframe to get this story together. An interview may need to be rescheduled or a photo shoot postponed due to rain. Be patient.
- **Editing is good.** Your work is aimed for a public audience so be ready to edit. Be open to feedback. Share your work with teachers and students and look for constructive feedback.
- **Edit Again.** Yes, editing is ongoing so be ready to revisit your work often. Let a day go by after you think you are done and edit again with fresh eyes.
- **Read Articles Out Loud.** Sometimes what we miss with our eyes we can catch with our ears. Read your work aloud. This can make a huge difference. Read slowly. Listen carefully.
- **Check for repetition.** Are any words appearing and reappearing? Expand your vocabulary and find precise ways to describe and communicate.
- **Cite Sources.** Be consistent and cite every source.

**Editing video?**
**Over shoot.** Taking more than you think you might need often comes in handy.

**Know the length.** This can dictate how you approach the editing process. Sometimes your favorite parts may end up “on the cutting room floor” to make room for those shots that communicate the heart of the message. Save the extra footage for another time.

**Missing pieces?** Consider adding more video or voiceovers to fill in details that may not be obvious. Visuals such as photos or text can also be inserted to complete the story.

Think about how any of these topics can apply to whatever kind of medium you are using. For every approach you will take to journalism, look for experts at school or in the community who can assist you.

**Reaching an Audience**
With a finished product, you are ready to complete the action: going public. Consider outlets you have at school, in your local community, and reliable websites that welcome youth contributions.

**Join Stream**
**COMING SOON!** Be sure to visit www.EarthEcho.org/STREAM to submit your environmental story. You are now a citizen journalist!

**A Pause for ReFlection - An Ongoing Process**

Being a citizen journalist has a myriad of opportunities for learning. Describe two skills you have definitely improved since you started. How has the idea of citizen journalism changed how you think about your role in the community?
Stage 4: Think Back —> Reflect

Yes, you have been reflecting all along. But now make the time to bring together all of your thoughts, ideas, feelings, and questions and put them in the Four Square Reflection Tool in the Resources Section on page 26 at the end of this guide.

Stage 5: Tell it —> Demonstrate

What a process! Think of all you have done and all you have learned! You have stepped into a new world of citizen journalism and found a story to tell. You have put together a plan or action and seen the results. Now it’s time for demonstration—the stage when you show others what you’ve learned about what’s happening in your community, what skills you’ve learned and how you’ve learned them, and the ways you have developed in how you are contributing toward an informed society. This demonstration of your service-learning is meant to include what you learned, how you learned, and what service you ultimately provided.

To help you make the most of your demonstration, consider:

• Who is your audience? Students at school, parents, community members?
• What do you most want to tell them about what you learned and how you learned it?
• What do you most want to tell them about how you provided service as a citizen journalist?
• Are there any community partners who you might like to include in the demonstration?
• Is there anyone you interviewed during the process who might want to know how this all turned out?
• What form of demonstration would you like to use?

THE GULF SHORES STORY... AN ONGOING SAGA

After the Gulf Shore High School students were introduced to citizen journalism, they were invited to demonstrate what they had experienced at a City Council meeting. Returning to school in the fall will provide more ways for students to continue as citizen journalists—as the eyes, ears, and voices of their community.

Consider all the skills and talents of your group and use as many as possible as you come up with ways to demonstrate. Be sure to incorporate information and the processes you used during all of the different stages. Include images—a picture is worth a thousand words. Sharing what you have learned and accomplished is a way to inform and inspire others.
What Is a Citizen Journalist?

Citizen + Journalist

WHERE DO YOU GO FOR INFORMATION?

Thoughts ... Opinions ... Ideas

Feelings ... Emotions

Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A., CBK Associates © 2010
Interests, skills, and talents—we all have them. What are they?

**Interests** are what you think about and what you would like to know more about—for example, outer space, popular music, or a historical event like a world war. Are you interested in animals, movies, mysteries, or visiting faraway places? Do you collect anything?

**Skills and talents** have to do with things you like to do or that you do easily or well. Do you have an activity you especially like? Do you have a favorite subject in school? Do you sing, play the saxophone, or study ballet? Do you know more than one language? Can you cook? Do you have a garden? Do you prefer to paint pictures or play soccer? Do you have any special computer abilities?

Work with a partner and take turns interviewing each other to identify your interests, skills, and talents and to find out how you have helped and been helped by others. Then, compile a class chart of your findings. This will come in handy on your service learning journey.

**Interests:** I like to learn and think about . . .

**Skills and talents:** I can . . .

**Being helpful:** Describe a time when you helped someone.

**Receiving help:** Describe a time when someone helped you.
Gathering Information About a Community Need

What does your community need?

Use the questions in the following four categories as guides for finding out. As a class, you might agree to explore one topic, for example, how kids get along at school, hunger and poverty, or an environmental concern. Or you might decide to learn about general needs at school or in the surrounding area. Form small groups, with each group focusing on one category and gathering information in a different way.

Finding out about:

Media
What media (newspapers—including school newspapers, TV stations, radio) in your community might have helpful information? List ways you can work with different media to learn about needs in your community.

Interviews
Think of a person who is knowledgeable about this topic in your area—perhaps someone at school or in a local organization or government office. Write four questions you would ask this person in an interview.

An interview with

Questions:
1.

2.

3.

4.
Gathering Information About a Community Need

Survey
A survey can help you find out what people know or think about a topic and get ideas for helping. Who could you survey—students, family members, neighbors? How many surveys would you want completed? Write three survey questions.

Who to survey: How many surveys:

Questions for the survey:

1.

2.

3.

Observation and Experience
How can you gather information through your own observation and experience? Where would you go? What would you do there? How would you keep track of what you find out?

Next Step: Share your ideas. Make a plan for gathering information using the four categories. If you are working in small groups, each group may want to involve people in other groups. For example, everyone could help conduct the survey and collect the results. Compile the information you learn into a list of community needs.
<table>
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<th>THE TOPICS</th>
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Preparing for an Interview

Interview with ____________________________

In groups, develop questions based on the resume received and the information you hope to learn. Each group prepares a different category of questions; several categories are provided and others may be added as is relevant for this interviewee. Review questions with the class for feedback. Decide how the interview will be conducted.

Questions

- Career Path

- Education

- Everyday Work Responsibilities

-

- Interview Procedure
  - Who will do what?
  - Greet Guest
  - Introduce Guest
  - Explain the Purpose to the Guest
  - Facilitate Interview
  - Keep Time
  - Thank the Guest
  - Escort from Class
  - Write Thank You Letter

Adapted from Strategies for Success with Literacy Meeting Challenges by Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A., © 2009. All rights reserved.
An Interview with...

Write your category and questions for this interview.

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<th>Key words</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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Summary
Interview with ____________________________

In groups, develop questions based on the resume received and the information you hope to learn. Each group prepares a different category of questions; several categories are provided and others may be added as is relevant for this interviewee. Review questions with the class for feedback. Decide how the interview will be conducted.

Questions

• Career Path

• Education

• Everyday Work Responsibilities

Interview Procedure

Who will do what?

Greet Guest

Introduce Guest

Explain the Purpose to the Guest

Facilitate Interview

Keep Time

Thank the Guest

Escort from Class

Write Thank You Letter

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An Interview with...

Interview with

Write your category and questions for this interview.

Key words

Notes

Summary

Adapted from Strategies for Success with Literacy Meeting Challenges by Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A., © 2009. All rights reserved.
Difficult? Not really! Guidelines help turn you into the news reporter you were meant to be.

What are these guidelines? The tried, true, and proven

**who, what, when, where, why, & how**

[repeat these until you have them memorized and can recite them in your sleep]

Any good news story will cover these — and most often in the first two paragraphs. News stories operate on an inverted pyramid idea.

**The Inverted Pyramid!**
Simple concept: place the most important facts at the beginning. Provide your reader with an overview of the entire story in the first (and maybe second) paragraph(s). The rest of your article expands and explains based on this concise, clear opening.

Why? You probably know. Consider these explanations.
Reader Interest. People read the first paragraphs and then decide whether they want to know more.
Space Limitations. An editor may decide there’s only room for the first two paragraphs of your eight paragraph article so the main points must be up front.
Any other reasons you can come up with?
This inverted pyramid idea works for written news stories for sure. Could you apply this concept to any other medium?
A good approach is to assume that the story might be cut off at any point due to space limitations. Does the story work if the editor only decides to include the first two paragraphs? If not, re-arrange it so that it does.
The same principle can apply to any type of medium.

**Back to Who + What + When + Why + How**
For example, if you are covering a story about a beach cleanup involving youth you will need to answer:

**Who** is participating? Who is the sponsor or their organization partners? Who are the student leaders? Who are the supporters?

**What** is the purpose? What is the compelling need?

**Where** is this event? Where is the school located? Where are the key partners based?

When is the event? How long have they been preparing? Are there any other important time factors? Does this happen often or once a year?

Why did they choose to clean up at this site now? If relevant, do the students work on other environmental issues?

How is this being accomplished? How do they get their supplies? How much preparation is required? What evidence will they have?

NOW READ THIS!

Catch your attention? For good reason. A HEADLINE catches attention. Now for more tips.

Have a SLANT or a HOOK
How the story is presented will hook in your reader or cause them to move on to the next story. This is realistic in journalism. Knowing the slant can lead to clarity of what you are writing about and helps you zoom in on the story to be told. Back to the clean up; you could have “slants” like...

The HUMAN INTEREST ANGLE or It's About People
News stories are about how people are affected. In the clean up story, the writer could focus on one or more individuals, on how the student teams are doing, or how the supporters are responding.

Include QUOTES
People like to hear from real people. For example: “We didn't anticipate so many kids coming to help. They didn't just want to clean, they want to stop the trash from returning,” says Rebecca Levin from Save the Sands. “When teens want to do something, all we have to do is stand back!"
BE RELIABLE
As a Citizen Journalist you seek out the best, most reliable source for information. Verify every fact possible. Keep track of your sources – write them down.

Be OBJECTIVE
Reporting is objective. Present reliable information and allow readers to draw their conclusions and decide what they think about what's happening in the news. If there are multiple sides of the story do your best to cover them. Keep yourself out of the story – that means a ban on "I" and "me."

WRITE an OPINION PIECE
An Op-Ed — opinion piece or editorial — allows for the writer's perspective. Writing is subjective. Usually opinion pieces are clearly marked as "Editorials" or "Commentary." Often a position is taken to persuade the reader to a particular point of view.

BE CLEAR and PRECISE
With news stories, the writing must say what needs to be said and that's all folks. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Avoid overly heavily descriptive language. And re-read your writing, including reading your writing out loud. When editing, eliminate unnecessary words. Do you have words that are interesting or nice but don't add information? Take them out. Go from key word to key word (with a few connecting words in between). Example:

a) Some words are interesting or nice but don't add information.
   b) Some words don't add information.

The words "interesting" and "nice" can be edited out almost 100% of the time. In general, avoid confusing words. For example, use "it" with caution. "It" is often overused. What is an "it" anyway? Avoid it. Consider this:

a) They want to stop it from returning.
   b) They want to stop trash from returning.
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CITIZEN JOURNALIST ________________________________

SCHOOL or ORGANIZATION ____________________________

QUESTION

RESPONSES
SAMPLE PERMISSION RELEASE

Date: January 1, 2011
Name: Zoe Starfish
To: Kids in Action (Producer)

I hereby irrevocably grant to Producer the right in perpetuity in all now known and hereafter existing media to use my physical likeness and/or voice in connection with the Kids in Action video about trash in the Potomac River.

These rights granted include the right to edit or delete any part of the Production in which I appear, and change the sequences of events of the Production at the Producer's discretion.

It is understood that permission is granted in support of charitable and educational endeavors.

I represent that I am over the age of 18, or, if a minor, my legal guardian signs below with full knowledge and authority on my behalf. Producer is hereby released from all claims or demands regarding the validity of the rights granted by this authorization.

I hereby certify and represent that I have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof and have signed this Authorization as of the date above.

____________________________________ ____________________________
Last Name, First + Initial              Signature

____________________________________ __________________________________
Street Address                          City, State (or Province), Country

____________________________________ ____________________________
Email Address                           Phone

____________________________________ ____________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature               Parent/Guardian Name
You are now the editor! Congratulations! An editor is a person who provides helpful, constructive comments so the work of someone else improves. Learning how to be an editor also assists you with your own writing. All writing requires editing and revision.

The Role of the Editor
List four important tasks for an editor:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

List four important skills an editor would use:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Read the following paragraphs. In the margins, write as many notes as you think of that tell what is working well and suggestions for improvement.

This is a paragraph about a community beach cleanup. Everyone arrived there by bus. They went in the morning and stayed until noon. It was good. I could see everyone having a good time as they collected bags of garbage. What they did made a difference.

There were lots of people everywhere doing all kinds of stuff. There were the students and then some adults from different groups that were busy. Sometimes the kids were standing around and didn’t know what to do. Then I saw someone with a megaphone go up and get everyone in groups and they were doing things then.

One person seemed kind of disinterested and then another kid went up and they started doing stuff together. By the end there were huge piles of trash bags. It was good. When I asked two students if they had a good time they said they did. The adults seemed pleased with what happened.

Editing Marks
Editors usually use these symbols.

[ ] means delete what is in between
means delete what’s inside
placed under a letter means to capitalize that letter
¶ means start new paragraph
^ means to insert in this space what is written above it
, means to add a comma
. means to add a period
means misspelled word inside
Introducing the Editor

The Revised Paragraph
On Saturday morning, June 8, 25 students from Griffith High School’s EarthEcho Club boarded a bus headed to Carolina Beach. Students from four other schools also joined in for the community’s first Take Back the Beach event held from 9:00 am to noon. “This was good for our group,” commented Griffith High’s team leader, George Shiri, a senior. “Everyone wanted to pitch in to make our beaches better.”

Two organizations planned the event and reached out to the schools. Save Our Beach registered every participant and made sure they had supplies. The Wave Conservancy had stations set up across a one-mile stretch of highly used beach. Student groups took on different roles including handing out supplies, filling trash bags, and hauling filled trash bags to a collecting station. When kids appeared to be standing around, monitors with megaphones immediately provided them with clipboards.

“We want to get a record of as many items as we can before they go into the bags,” explained 7th grader Judy Branson from Mills Middle Schools. “If we know what’s tossed we can come up with a plan to keep trash from returning.”

Sarah Parker, a senior from Franklin High may have appeared disinterested but not for long. Jason Taylor, a junior at Baker Prep asked her to give him hand. “I just wasn’t sure where to pitch in,” offered Sarah, “so I was glad Jason got me distributing snacks.” “In recyclable bags, I want you to know!” added Jason.

By noon huge piles of trash bags lined the parking lot and city trucks arrived to haul some to the landfill and others to the recycling center. Before they left a busload of students yelled out the window, “This was great! This is our beach now!” The adults echoed appreciation. Myra Follman from Save Our Beach said, “Two priorities were met. To educate about our fragile coastline and to give kids ownership. We need them to care and be involved.”

Providing Helpful Feedback
The main role of the editor is to honor the work of the writer. We want to keep their voice, their tone, their writing style as much as possible and improve the telling of the story. All writing is some form of storytelling.

As an editor:
• Read the entire work with full attention before making suggestions.
• Look for what works well. Sometimes a great sentence needs to be moved to be better.
• Identify places where specific examples will work better than general statements.
• Make sure any repetition of words is for a purpose.
• Beware of overused words like “it,” “I,” “that,” “nice,” and “good.” Expand our vocabularies!

Enjoy editing! Being a great editor is helpful for you and others.

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# Four Square Reflection Tool

- **What happened?**
- **How do I feel?**
- **Ideas?**
- **Questions?**

FOR ADULT COORDINATORS

Welcome! Whether this is your first venture into service-learning or you are a seasoned veteran, many thanks for all you are doing for the students to participate in their community as citizen journalists. Participating in service-learning is an ideal way for students to increase both knowledge and skills transferable to many learning situations. This research-based teaching method affords the integration of many academic standards as well as opportunities for social and emotional development. Through teamwork and community collaborations, students can increase their understanding of reciprocal partnerships and the important role they have in improving society for everyone right now.

Many resources are available to continue developing youth as citizen journalists. Please visit the Stream website at www.EarthEcho.org/STREAM for resources that will be continually updated as well as other website referenced throughout this publication.

Interested in more information and resources about service-learning? Several books written by Cathryn Berger Kaye are available through Free Spirit Publishing (www.freespirit.com) including:


ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Wallace Global Fund
The Wallace Global Fund is a family philanthropy guided by the vision of Henry A. Wallace, vice president to Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Progressive Party candidate for president in 1948. It holds assets of approximately $175 million dollars and annually grants over 10 million dollars in the areas of environment, human rights, women’s empowerment, civic engagement, media, and other areas of progressive social change.

Singing for Change
SFC Charitable Foundation, Inc., or “Singing for Change,” is a private foundation established by Jimmy Buffett in 1995. Initially funded with contributions from Jimmy’s 1995 summer tour, Singing for Change continues to receive one dollar from each concert ticket sold during his tours. Singing for Change (SFC) has disbursed over $6 million in grants in its fifteen-year history. SFC offers competitive grants to progressive, community-based, nonprofit organizations that address the root causes of social or environmental problems. SFC is interested in funding projects that educate and empower individuals to effect positive change in their lives and communities. Most likely to be considered are organizations that keep their overhead low and that collaborate with other groups in their community to find innovative ways of solving common problems. SFC primarily funds projects that serve children and families, the environment, and disenfranchised groups.

EarthEcho International
EarthEcho International is a leading environmental nonprofit committed to youth engagement, action, and leadership through education. EarthEcho helps young people everywhere understand the critical role we play in the future of the planet through the one thing that connects us all—water. EarthEcho International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded by siblings Philippe and Alexandra Cousteau in honor of their father Philippe Cousteau Sr., son of the legendary explorer Jacques Yves Cousteau. For more information about EarthEcho International, visit http://www.earthecho.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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