

# 10 Questions for Young Changemakers

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## Example 5: Youth Participatory Action Research for the 8th Grade Civics (civics)

*Melissa Strelke, a teacher at Frontier Regional High School at Deerfield, MA, folded the Ten Questions framework into her school-wide youth participatory action research project for the 8th graders.*

### Youth Participatory Action Research for the 8th Grade Civics

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#### Advisory

#### Day 1

#### Introduce YPAR

**Participatory Action Research (PAR)** is a process through which people investigate meaningful social topics, participate in research to understand the root causes of problems that directly impact them, and then take action to influence policies through the dissemination of their findings to policymakers and stakeholders.

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**Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** is a tool for increasing youth involvement in social movement organizing that can generate renewed enthusiasm for social change and create

new opportunities for youth leadership.

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## Narrowing Down Your Topic

- What is your topic?
  - Where do you see this issue? (school, street, workplace, etc.)
  - How do we see this issue in society? What forms does it take? (pay, housing, representation, etc.)
  - Where and what specific form of your issue do you want to focus on for your project?
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## Define

- Where and what specific form of your issue do you want to focus on for your project?
- Define your issue (provide a detailed, working definition)
- Define the specific form of your issue (what does it look like, where, and why?)
- Explain WHY this is an important issue.

## Advisory

### Day 2

## Finishing Defining Your Topic

- Where and what specific form of your issue do you want to focus on for your project?
- Define your issue (provide a detailed, working definition)
- Define the specific form of your issue (what does it look like, where, and why?)
- Explain WHY this is an important issue.

## Gathering Data for the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Survey

- Finishing Defining Your Topic
- Where and what specific form of your issue do you want to focus on for your project?
- Define your issue (provide a detailed, working definition)

- Define the specific form of your issue (what does it look like, where, and why?)
- Explain WHY this is an important issue.

## Advisory

### Day 3

**Join Google Classroom** (more discussion and activities take place in Google Classroom)

### Submitting Your Data Question

- Advisor will type questions into a Google Form
- (Form is in 8th grade YPAR folder)
- If you are done, please work on researching the CAUSES of your issue as well as actions you can take to help FIX the problem and/or SPREAD AWARENESS of the issue and HOW PEOPLE CAN HELP.

## Advisory

### Day 4

### Take Survey

- Please take the surveys that are posted in Google Classroom.
- These surveys are anonymous, but you want to be honest so that everyone can receive accurate data.

## 1. Why does it matter to me?

*What is your passion? Where does it come from?*

Start with the experiences and interests you and your friends already can't get enough of, and connect that engagement to civic and political themes. Popular culture fandom, for example, is a great source to harness. Overall, you and your peers know a lot about a lot, and you've got all sorts of authentic ways to bring your friends on board. Use that expertise to build

traction for your cause by finding unexpected alignments. And take the time to figure out why your passion matters to you.

→ **Why does this issue matter to you? How does it affect you or others around you?**

## **2. How much should I share?**

*Mind the risk. Once you put things out there online, it is nearly impossible to take them back.*

Take heed: real names can help foster better dialogues, but they can also put people at risk and discourage taking positions or acting on controversial issues. Consider how much you should share. Which part of your persona do you want to see live online? Can you keep your offline and online selves separate? If so, how? Or do you have to expect them to merge? Which features of your offline responsibilities and roles should limit what you do online? Help your community consider how different audiences may react to their posts and how a post might impact them years down the road. Give them choices about how much to disclose, and make it possible for them to change their minds.

→ **Decide how much you want to share about WHY this issue matters to you. Perhaps you want to share some personal thoughts and stories, but not everything.**

## **3. How do I make it more than just myself?**

*It's not just about me, but for us.*

How can you and your community take it from “I” to “we”? Help your users think of themselves as part of something bigger. Can you expand the network of engagement for yourself and your users by actively rewarding authenticity, accuracy, truth-telling, and bridge-building across social divides?

→ **Define your issue.**

→ **Research your issue and find supporting evidence that quantifies and qualifies your issue.**

## 4. Where do we start?

*Go where your peers go.*

Can you make use of spaces where you and your friends and associates already gather to connect and pursue shared interests? (Hint: for right now at least, text and mobile are key). Perhaps you're interested in building a stand-alone platform? Think twice before you do. A custom platform is easier for opponents to hack and probably harder for your friends to use, than a common mainstream, commercial platform. But remember that existing platforms have their own cultures, which you'll need to consider and fit into.

→ Consider where you see your issue in your community.

→ What are people in your community saying about this issue?

## 5. How can we make it easy and engaging for others to join in?

*Remember that some engagement is better than none.*

Think early and often about your target audience. How can you engineer an array of entry-points and pathways to participation for your community? Where are the opportunities for light-touch engagement that is potentially powerful in itself and also a possible gateway into deeper involvement? Make acting easy, so your users can co-produce your civic and political engagement.

→ Brainstorm ways you get others in your community to help you with this issue?

## 6. How do we get wisdom from crowds?

*Invite investigation and critique.*

Create openings for your friends, associates, and even strangers to dig into, verify, challenge, and contribute to the knowledge-base you provide, and stay open to evolving purposes. Don't act like you know the whole story. Because you don't. There is wisdom in crowds.

→ **Conduct data surveys and analyze the results.**

→ **Conduct interviews or find diverse perspectives on your issue.**

## **7. How do we handle the downside from crowds?**

*Be prepared for people to say and do things you don't like in your shared space.*

Do you know how you would respond? Is your platform or digital strategy being overtaken by a sub-group of users? How can you keep the nastiness out of crowds? Do you need moderators? Algorithms? Special functions? The goal is to keep your community open and democratic, and that also means protecting it from those who misuse that freedom and opportunity.

→ **How would you respond to those who may disagree with you?**

## **8. Are we pursuing voice, influence, or both?**

*Raising awareness is key.*

Changing what people care about already makes a difference, and just getting your views into the public conversation is meaningful. Making the invisible visible is already an important civic and political action and a form of activism. Are you also trying to drive change beyond visibility? You'll need that raised awareness to elevate civic and political engagement over time.

→ **Consider what awareness you want to spread, what is needed, and the most effective form of spreading awareness in our school community.**

## **9. How do we get from voice to change?**

*Is your goal to convert voice to influence over policies, institutions, or concrete practices ?*

If so, you'll need to move beyond raising awareness to mobilize specific actions on the basis of the attention you manage to get. How can you get

traction—real change in concrete practices, institutions, and policies? The research shows that this often comes from a mix of digital and face-to-face organizing. But it's also possible to achieve influence with online-only tactics. Make sure you know what your targets are, and what changes you want to see. Then you can figure out whether building numbers online and taking aim at your target's reputation, or criss-crossing the line into hybrid online-offline efforts makes more sense.

→ **How do you get from spreading awareness about your issue to creating a positive change in regards to your issue? What ACTIONS can you and your community do *right now* to create change?**

## **10. How can we find allies?**

*How can we amplify our influence and scale it up?*

It makes sense to call on institutional power holders like established organizations or influential individuals who can support your interests. Gaining influence requires building alliances with people who control decisions over policies and institutions. But it can be hard to reach people in power. What's more, how can you engage with power players in a way that benefits your cause and also empowers you? The answer often involves connecting with allies who can provide mentorship and broker on your behalf, being creative in your methods, and seeking elites in a variety of places--sometimes beyond the usual suspects.

→ **What can those who agree with you do to help? What is something they can do right now to create change and become a part of the community?**

### **Group Presentations:**

***The goal of your presentation is to discuss the process and lead the audience through the important decisions you made.***

- Identify and define your issue
- Why does it matter to you?

- How did you come up with your action? (*How do I make it about more than myself?*)
  - What ideas did you generate?
  - What failed? Why?
  - What succeeded? Why?
  - What was your action? (*How did you make it easy and engaging for others to join in?*)
- What challenges did you face with your action? (*How do we get from voice to change?*)
- What are your hopes for the future?
- What are the next steps you will take?
- What are the next steps your community should take?
- OPTIONAL- Google Slides/ Prezi/ PowerPoint

### **Group Booth Displays:**

***The goal of these booth displays is to deeply inform your audience about your issue and spread awareness. They should include suggestions of simple actions your visitors can do to help fix the issue. (OPTIONAL- This booth may also serve as a way for you to carry out your action as well.)***

- Identify and define your issue
  - Display MLA CITED (use NoodleTools) researched graphs and statistics
  - Display your collected DATA and ANALYSIS
  - Include facts that are in YOUR OWN WORDS
  - Display solutions to your issue (these should be BOTH what visitors can do as well as your greater community)
- OPTIONAL- Incorporate your action (i.e. writing letters, pledging, etc.)