

Case Study

A Backpack Journalist + Picaboo Yearbooks: Building Youth Resiliency Through Creative Expression

Overview:

A Backpack Journalist is a program devoted to helping youth find their voice by presenting them with real world experiences and using critical thinking to share their stories. Through their workshops, students learn to develop 21st Century Learning skills through various modules focused on storytelling, photography and news literacy.

Program manager, Linda Dennis, was so moved by the powerful and poignant depictions as told in the words and photographs of her youth workshop attendees, she began looking for a publishing partner with a shared vision in support of youth self-expression.

Enter Picaboo Yearbooks.

Linda was put in touch with local Atlanta-based dealer, Rhonda Sapp, who helped her develop the foundation for A Backpack Journalist to publish youth-driven books using Picaboo Yearbooks' intuitive software.

Two 21st Century Learning Programs Unite:

Picaboo Yearbooks' mission to empower students through student-directed learning aligned perfectly with A Backpack Journalist's youth-centric objectives, which include providing a creative method for youth to express themselves, thus building self-esteem and strengthening their resiliency.



A Backpack Journalist provides academic support that not only prepares youth in the expansion of their education, but encourages them to become their own life storytellers. The Picaboo Yearbooks platform was seamlessly integrated into A Backpack Journalist's curriculum. The result is an on-going collection of published works written, designed and built within the Picaboo Yearbooks web-based app.

The Process:

Through their writing and photography workshops, A Backpack Journalist prepares attendees for real world situations where they must use critical thinking skills. Prior to going out in the field and putting their newfound skills to the test, students spend 1-2 days researching and preparing through basic narrative writing, interviewing and photography exercises.

Once they go through their investigative training, students break into groups to tour the venue they are covering. Not only are they prepared, but they can apprehend the information they are presented with and translate it into a factual book.

Providing further in-depth analysis and research, QR Codes are used in their book projects to support their digital storytelling efforts. This allows them to link to video content, such as student-directed interviews with experts such as Park Rangers and Museum Curators.



The first title available for purchase to libraries, schools and consumers nationwide is "Nature Storytelling with Fossils," which highlights fossils, redwoods, bugs, insects, leaves and the paleontology lab located at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in Colorado. Filled with full color photos, it offers a glimpse of what existed millions of years ago as life on our world was forming.

"History Comes Alive" and "The Basics of Farming" are two titles that are currently in development and will be available in 2014.

Outcome:

The finished printed book and eBooks, which are offered to the students as part of their workshop, is the greatest reward to the students, believes Linda. "Seeing their names in print in a book that shows their work helps in building their self-esteem," she stated. The books themselves become part of the now-published student's portfolio as they move forward in their educational careers and are extremely valuable tools for students to showcase their work as they apply for college and scholarships.

Beyond supporting students in their journey of finding their voice through self-expression and exposing them to life experiences that will prepare them for the future, implementing Picaboo Yearbooks has proven successful in other areas, as well, for A Backpack Journalist's program. Picaboo Yearbooks' print on demand system has allowed A Backpack Journalist to order the exact amount of copies as needed of a specific title, and the flexibility to make continual updates without charge.

Working with Picaboo Yearbooks as a print publisher has also provided a fundraising opportunity for A Backpack Journalist to give back to the foundations, such as the Friends of Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument Foundation, that fund their free workshops. A percentage of the sales from every book goes back to the venues that support their hands-on, learning-based curriculums.

A Backpack Journalist has exemplified the Picaboo Yearbooks "No Boundaries, No Limits" position like no program before. They have taken the process of creating a book and have transformed it into a means for youth to pay it forward to others by documenting and sharing what they have learned. The result is a unique opportunity for youth to build their self-esteem and resilience as they harness the power of storytelling and investigative journalism.