

[Visit our website!](#)

The Good Project

Newsletter: May 2014

In This Issue

[Design for Change's 8th Grade Curriculum to be Assessed by Good Project Researchers](#)

[Good Idea of the Month: Excellence](#)

[Good Participation: Exploring Civic Engagement in the Digital Age](#)

[Recent Blogs](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Dear Friend of The Good Project,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well! In this issue, we provide updates on two of the Good Project team's initiatives: one being an assessment of Design for Change's 8th Grade Curriculum, another being the work of the Good Participation team. For our "Good Idea of the Month", we look at Excellence and also share news on our upcoming Twitter Chat on Excellence. Further, we also showcase recent blogs from our website. If you have ideas for future newsletters or would like your work to be highlighted, please email Paromita De at paromita_de@harvard.edu. Thank you and we hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Sincerely,
The Good Team

Design for Change's 8th Grade Curriculum to be Assessed by Good Project Researchers

By Laura Easley, Good Project Researcher



The Good Project is working with the global student activism movement, [Design for Change](#), to evaluate the effectiveness of its Design Thinking Guide in changing student socio-emotional growth factors. This study will take place in 8th grade classrooms in India

during the June 2014 - March 2015 school year, measuring differences in student empathy, problem-solving, and confidence.

Design for Change encourages students to solve problems

in their community through four steps: Feel, Imagine, Do, and Share. Feel refers to noticing problems and reframing those problems from the perspective of others who are experiencing them. Imagine refers to designing solutions that addresses those problems. Do refers to carrying out those solutions - which should be bold, quick, and long-lasting in their impact. Share refers to documenting and publicizing those solutions to inspire other student activism around the world.

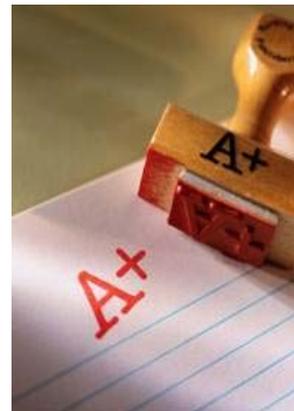
To excite students and teach the concrete steps by which they can achieve such bold changes, DFC has published the Design Thinking Guide. In India alone, over 6,000 8th grade students will be using the Design Thinking Guide in their classrooms this year. The Good Project is assessing measures of empathy, problem-solving, and confidence before and after the use of the Design Thinking Guide with the goal of measuring the socio-emotional change that exposure to DFC principles produces in students.

Our data will come from student interviews, teacher interviews, and a miniature solution-generating activity based on the Design Thinking Guide. We are looking for empathetic indicators such as viewing problems from multiple vantage points and designing solutions that address the problem for all stakeholders. Our problem-solving indicators include both adeptness in understanding the problem and the ability to design an impactful solution. Finally, our indicators for confidence not only include student confidence in their solutions, but recognition for growth potential in their solutions.

We can't wait to update you as our research progresses!

Good Idea of the Month: Excellence

When you think of the word "excellence", what comes to mind? Is it "perfection", "success", or "doing your best"? However you define it, pursuing excellence can be a major motivating factor in our work. The idea that we can improve ourselves in any realm - whether it is the efficiency with which one designs a computer program or the extent to which a



journalist uncovers the facts of an issue - can be an empowering one that shows of what we are capable.

While pursuing excellence in our work is a noble endeavor, the ways in which we perceive our work and who it impacts can bring about ambiguity to this pursuit. For instance, excellence implies that we are seeking to achieve the highest standard of performance for our task at hand. A question that arises with the pursuit of excellence is what standards are we working towards? If we are running a race, do we want to beat the time that we set before, or do we want to get first place? How we measure excellence can also be a question of debate. Does "A+" mean the same thing in every class and every school? Should we put more weight on student test scores or classroom observations in teacher evaluations? Further, the question "do the ends justify the means" is one that can make us question how and why we pursue excellence. One may certainly argue that cheating is not a way pursue excellence, yet there are still students who cheat on assignments and exams as a way of ensuring that they get good grades. We also need to consider the implications of our pursuit of excellence beyond ourselves and our fields. A car manufacturer may meet their quota for vehicle production, but if that process brings about unwanted side effects in the form of pollution from the manufacturing plant, the cost of this definition of excellence needs to be assessed. These questions do not undermine the pursuit of excellence by any means; on the contrary, they challenge us to pursue excellence on terms that not only consider our desire to perform well but also what that pursuit means for others too.

If you are interested in discussing "Excellence" more, especially how to teach this concept to students, please join us for our Excellence Twitter Chat on Wednesday June 4th at 7pm EST. For more information, please [click here](#).

Good Participation: Exploring Civic Engagement in the Digital Age

By Carrie James, Good Project Researcher (from the Good Project blog published on May 16, 2014)



When the militant group, Boko Haram, abducted hundreds of Nigerian school girls



last month, the major news outlets began to report the story. Yet worldwide awareness of the crisis didn't reach a tipping point

until the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls began to circulate across Twitter and Facebook. As of May 13, the hashtag was used 3.3 million times on Twitter alone. While some skeptics question whether "hashtag activism" can lead to real world impact, the potential of social media to shine a spotlight on an urgent issue seems clear.

The growing use of social media sites to call attention to political crises and broader social issues is a current area of research for the Good Project. Our research team is part of the MacArthur [Youth and Participatory Politics \(YPP\)](#) research network, an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners who are exploring how digital life affords new modes of participation with civic and political issues.

The YPP network has identified five core "participatory practices" which, while not new in and of themselves, are facilitated in new ways by the digital technologies, social media, and other aspects of the internet. These practices include:

- investigation: researching social issues in order to become more informed
- production: producing content that contains a civic or political message
- circulation: sharing civically- or politically-oriented content created by others
- dialogue and feedback: engaging in discussion of social issues and giving feedback to powerholders
- mobilization: inciting others to take action on behalf of a cause

As part of the YPP network, our Good Participation research team has been conducting qualitative interview studies with civically active youth focused on how they engage these practices online. For instance, we've spoken with youth who produce videos or blog posts in which they seek to inform others about issues such as child sex trafficking. We've looked at how youth leverage sites like Change.org to mobilize people to sign petitions. We've explored how civic youth use Facebook to circulate words or images that signal their beliefs about issues such as gun control, environmental issues, or marriage equality. We've found that civically engaged youth are excited by the potentials of digital media for action in the world. Yet, we also find that expressing the civic voice in the digital space - especially given its public, networked nature - can pose challenges and dilemmas, including unintended audiences, uncivil dialogue, and even backlash.

Our work on these issues is being shared in different forms. Researcher Emily Weinstein published [an article](#) in the *International Journal of Communication* about how civic youth manage dilemmas of voice online. Margaret Rundle is the lead author of a forthcoming paper about different approaches youth take to digital civics. In my forthcoming book, [Disconnected: Youth, New Media, and the Ethics Gap](#), I point to broader moral and ethical dilemmas in digital life that are relevant to civic uses of the web as well.

Finally, in an educational initiative called [Educating for Participatory Politics](#), our team is working with Facing History and Ourselves to develop classroom materials that address both the opportunities and challenges for civic participation posed by digital life. We look forward to sharing these materials with our educator community in the near future.

If you are excited to learn more, consider joining us at [Project Zero's San Francisco conference](#), October 10-12, 2014. The implications of growing up in the digital age for civic education will be a featured theme.

Recent Blogs

[A Reflective Space, A Just Space: Good Work in Extracurricular Activities](#)

(May 1, 2014)

Jia Wen He, HGSE Masters Candidate '14 and high school teacher in Singapore, discusses how extracurricular activities can be channeled to foster excellence, ethics, and engagement in students.

[Good Participation: Exploring Civic Engagement in the Digital Age](#)

(May 16, 2014)

Good Project Researcher Carrie James shares the current research initiatives of the Good Participation team.

[Forward this email](#)



This email was sent to pzinfo@gse.harvard.edu by paromita_de@harvard.edu |
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



Project Zero | Harvard Graduate School of Education | 124 Mt. Auburn St. | Floor 5 | Cambridge | MA | 02138