

# Make Your Own Episode of

POWERED BY DETROIT PBS

a guide for educators

## Background

*Great Lakes Now* is a monthly TV show offerings in-depth coverage of news, issues, events and developments affecting the lakes and the communities that depend on them, while capturing the character and culture of the region. The show is extremely valuable for teaching and learning because the episode segments and accompanying digital content provide opportunities for students to learn more about the communities and the ecosystems that they're a part of while developing disciplinary knowledge and media and digital literacies across content areas.

## Skills & Content Area Applications

This project offers many opportunities for student learning, including:

- *Media literacy and critical thinking:* Students will need to analyze the mentor episodes and identify what makes them successful. They will curate techniques and producer “moves” that will help them create successful, engaging content.
- *Collaboration:* Being part of a production crew necessarily means working alongside others. Students will need to figure out how to work in a small group to write scripts, capture meaningful content, and edit a final product that is expressive of all of their goals.
- *Content area knowledge and research:* Students will need specific subject knowledge in order to present any sort of convincing educational or inspirational content. They will likely want to do additional research to check their knowledge and ensure that they are presenting facts and diverse perspectives that are relevant for their audience.

## Real-World Project-Based Learning

This project supports authentic project-based learning because its grounding in real-world content creation and storytelling means that students will necessarily go through a design process in order to create something meaningful for a real audience. Additional, Michigan Learning Channel offers opportunities for student work to be shared on our statewide platforms and we support screenings and special events to celebrate student projects. Reach out to [connect@michiganlearning.org](mailto:connect@michiganlearning.org) to learn more!

## Background and Initial Learning: Approaching *Great Lakes Now* through a Media Literacy Lens

Each episode of *Great Lakes Now* is created by professional multimedia journalists, with a focus on delivering well-researched and trustworthy content. The production team takes great care to ensure that all research is thorough, credible sources are interviewed, facts are meticulously checked, and all references are properly cited. These practices reflect the standards of professional researchers and journalists, essential components of media literacy training. By adhering to these rigorous methods, the *Great Lakes Now* team builds credibility with their audience, setting a standard for responsible and accurate media creation.

### Media Literacy Discussion Prompts

Invite students to watch one or more episodes of *Great Lakes Now*. As you watch together, discuss the following questions (adapted from NAMLE's "Key Questions for Media Literacy")

#### Who is Telling the Story?

- Who created this message?
- Who is not involved in the creation of the episodes and/or segments?
- When was the episode or segment made?

#### What Techniques Were Used to Attract Attention?

- How does the format of *Great Lakes Now* impact my experience with the show?
- Where or how was *Great Lakes Now* shared with the public?
- What techniques (like camera angles, sound, graphics, etc.) are used to communicate meaning, and why?
- How do those techniques communicate this message?
- Based on your own opinion, explain how those techniques were effective/ineffective.

#### How Can This Message Be Interpreted?

- What is your interpretation of the episode(s) or segment(s) of *Great Lakes Now* that you watched?
- How might other people interpret the episode(s) or segment(s) *Great Lakes Now* that you watched *differently than you*?

#### Content, Purpose, Credibility

- What does a viewer need to know to understand the episode(s) or segment(s)? What can someone learn from it?
- Why do you think the episode(s) or segment(s) of *Great Lakes Now* was made?
- Who is the target audience for *Great Lakes Now*?
- What is a viewer supposed to do after watching the episode(s) or segment(s)?
- How is credibility established in the episode(s) or segment(s)?

#### Economics

- How are programs like *Great Lakes Now* funded? How does this funding model differ from monetized or commercial programming?

## Get Inspired

Invite students to watch (or re-watch) several episodes of *Great Lakes Now* from different seasons. Have them take notes on the similarities and differences between the segments, as well as their own reactions and thoughts about what works and what doesn't work from a content perspective and from a production perspective. For segment recommendations, check out our YouTube playlist.

## Get Started

Help students identify what and how they want to include in their episode or segment. This may be the step where you identify parameters or expectations that are driven by content-area learning goals. If you don't have topics in mind for your students to cover, invite them to research and brainstorm by doing the following:

- Survey peers to find out what environmental issues resonate most with them
- Explore trending environmental topics from social media and news that affect a particular demographic
- Look into local environmental events or concerns in your community
- Research global environmental issues and offer a new perspective

*Brainstorming Idea:* set a timer and create a list of potential topics, and spend time narrowing them down based on feedback from peers

## Get Together

By organizing a production team where everyone contributes their skills, students will be able to create an episode that speaks directly to their audience and reflects the voices and concerns of their community.

This project works best if students can choose their own team. Share the different roles that they need to fill in order to have a successful project (we recommend producer/director, camera operator, talent/host, editor, and graphic artist/marketing director. You may add additional roles that support your learning goals. However groups are formed, make sure students identify who will fill what role(s) during the project.

Have students finalize their plans for their content as a group. What topic(s) will they cover? What are the goals of their episode(s) and how will they engage or connect with their intended audience?

Have students submit an initial "pitch" for their episode as a formative assessment and check-in. You should look to see that they have identified group roles and that they have a clear topic or topics for their episode based on their established purpose and audience.

## Get Planning

The first step in any production process includes a “treatment” or “rundown” and a script. The treatment indicates the general structure and flow of a segment or episode. The script is a more detailed outline that includes both audio and visual cues, lines, and graphics indicators.

If students are creating a segment of *Great Lakes Now* modeled after the real show, they might create a rundown that looks like this:

1. Music and Title Introduction
2. Host(s) in the field to introduce the segment topic and provide background
3. Background Segment including B-roll and voiceover
4. Interview Segment 1
5. Background segment including B-roll and voiceover
6. Interview Segment 2
7. Background segment including B-roll and voiceover
8. Interview Segment 3
9. Concluding segment including B-roll and voiceover with call to action

Note that this structure supports students who record one or more interviews with individuals who might be experts on a topic or otherwise have an opinion or experience related to the segment topic. The background segments will be scripted with voiceover and B-roll, giving students a chance to investigate phenomena related to the topic and deliver their own perspective that leads to the conclusion and a call to action. For more resources that can support students interviewing and scriptwriting about environmental topics, visit our project page.

## Get Producing

Provide students with equipment or help them learn how to record high-quality content with their cell phones. Encourage them to practice by setting up multiple angles with the equipment you have available, and rotate team members through different roles to build experience.

- Note: If you want to record with iPads, tablets, or multiple cell phones, that will work! Set up multiple devices at different angles and record simultaneously. Each person on the production team can handle a device, learning how to manage framing, lighting, and timing.

Monitor students as they finalize scripts and give them time to record host wraps voiceover multiple times so that they get segments they are proud of. Encourage students to collect lots of B-roll footage while in the field so that they have plenty to choose from when finalizing segments.

Help students identify accessible editing software or apps like iMovie, DaVinci Resolve, Capcut, or Premiere Rush to combine footage from different angles, add audio and music, and add graphics. If you have a Canva for Education or Adobe Express for Education account, you can also have students work in your “classroom” and support their collaboration.

## Get Sharing

Once students complete their segment, have them review it completely as a team and make any final adjustments. Give them time to share their episode with another group and collect additional feedback that they can act on before finalizing and publishing their episode.

Once groups have integrated any feedback that they receive, help them share and celebrate their work by hosting an in-class, school, or community screening. Encourage students to continue reflecting on their own work and collecting feedback - even if they don't change their episode, they can still reflect on what they learn and what they might do differently going forward.

Encourage students to share their projects on their own social media pages and on other platforms that celebrate youth voice and youth media. There are many contests that have specific prompts, so it may help to research these before starting, as well.

## Don't forget - share with us!

Congratulations! You've taken your students through a real-world collaborative content creation process and they've created media that means something to them and their peers. It means something to us, too, and we would love to help celebrate it. Please reach out so that we can include your students' content in our on-air and online programming. We also may be able to support school-based and community screenings and celebratory events.

Email [connect@michiganlearning.org](mailto:connect@michiganlearning.org) for support and more opportunities, and tag @michlearning on any social media posts that celebrate your and your students' work.



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