Central High Takes Center Spotlight

A Blackburn Project Proposal

Team VII: Education Policy and Public Schools

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Part I: The Problem

There is no shortage of research explaining the necessity of both technology and art education in our public schools. The *Artistic Literacy Consortium Creatively Innovating Alabama's Future* recently published an executive summary dictating the importance of art in Alabama's state curriculum for public education, citing that "90% of the highest scoring schools on the ACT Plan have high access to arts education… 93% of the lowest scoring schools on the ACT Plan have minimal to no access to arts education" (Plan for Arts Education). Additionally, there is a strong argument for the inclusion of technology in general education. The input of a large selection of teachers in a study regarding the impact of technology inclusion in the classroom described the need and benefit of having technology in the curriculum for all students. Of the teachers included in the study, "a majority (86%) of respondents said in-class computers improve academic performance, while 74% said computers increase student attention in class" (THE Journal).

One recent method of integrating technology into the classroom is the 1:1 Laptop Initiative, which aims to provide every student with a laptop from kindergarten through high school. However, the implementation of this initiative has not shown as positive widespread results as once expected. In Huntsville, one such initiative was put into place with varying results. The program claims success in "improved student achievement," but it is also facing backlash from the students themselves, some of whom noted that the laptops made it "harder to focus" and that maintenance and breakage have become issues (Bonvillian). The overarching goal of this initiative is to improve the education of the students, so student voices arguing against it are difficult to overcome. This case shows both benefits and significant costs to this specific method of implementing technology in the classroom and curriculum within the state of Alabama.

Further, technological initiatives such as this one sometimes comes at the cost of arts education programs-- despite the fact that research has already established the benefits of arts education. In Tuscaloosa, both the city and county schools have programs aimed at media education in an attempt to unite the two areas of arts and technology, but the implementations and student results from these programs leave room for improvement. Both Tuscaloosa City and Tuscaloosa County high schools have programs in place to provide students with exposure to

media education through animation, graphic design, photography, and/or audio and visual production (TCSS Course Catalog, TCS Career & Technology Academy). However, in order to properly address the issue, our group knew we would need to narrow our view to a single school system.

A recent report by the Alabama State Department of Education gave each school in the state a grade based on several factors, including academic achievement and college and career readiness. For Tuscaloosa's high schools, both city and county, there was not a single school that earned an A, or a score of 90 or higher, in the report (Taylor). These figures represent a real problem for Tuscaloosa schools in academic achievement and college and career readiness. When the city and county high schools are compared, the average score of the city schools is one point lower at 76 than the average of the county schools at 77. However, this gap is effectively larger when you consider that the county schools have only one high school with a score below 78, while only one city high school was given a score *above* 78. These numbers illustrate needs in both Tuscaloosa City and Tuscaloosa County high schools, but gaps in the numbers shows a greater need in the Tuscaloosa City Schools for a media education project that could potentially better learning outcomes for students.

Part II: Imagining a Solution

The need for technological literacy is a new issue in any given community, as technology is a rapidly evolving field that has left many public schools falling behind. Previous attempts to provide media education for Tuscaloosa City Students have included a program designed by Dr. Brickman of the University of Alabama New College through the local YMCA. One member of this group actually participated in this program as a mentor, and described the experience as somewhat ineffective due to the ages of the students and the nature of after school programs. Because students already spend the majority of their time in the classroom, they are less willing and able to get as much out of after school programs as they do from classes in their normal school day.

Dr. Brickman's efforts to provide media education to Tuscaloosa's students also provide insight into the competing interests of this issue. One of the most important interests to represent in addressing this issue is, of course, the students. The main goal in exploring media education and the ways to include and improve it in Tuscaloosa City Schools is to provide a stronger and more enriching education for the students in the Tuscaloosa City school system. Other interests include the teachers and administrators of Tuscaloosa City Schools. A course in media education cannot be offered if there are no funds allocated to provide it or teachers provided to teach it. The third interest in this issue is, of course, the Blackburn Institute. This issue is providing the Institute with an opportunity to improve the Tuscaloosa community from the very foundation of the community— our educational system. It will require heavy cooperation from all of the parties listed above, but this issue can provide real opportunities for change and improvement in Tuscaloosa.

An initiative in the form of media education will be able to update the arts curricula of Tuscaloosa City Schools while also integrating technology education into the schools' curricula to familiarize students with current technology and provide them with more post-graduation options in terms of college and career opportunities. Often arts and technology programs are seen as competitors for funding in public schools, but as education policy struggles to properly teach in both areas, we saw an opportunity to turn two opponents into allies.

Part III: Community Partner Selection

In order to craft a solution to our identified problem, we knew we would have to join forces with a community entity already doing work in the area. Because we had already narrowed our scope to the Tuscaloosa City Schools system. Therefore, we needed to identify members of the Tuscaloosa community who had ties to the City Schools specifically in regards to the intersection of arts and technology.

Our Community Partner Specialist Jack Kappelman began with four major places to look for a relationship: Tuscaloosa City Schools, Dr. Brickman and the Tuscaloosa YMCA, the Tuscaloosa Amphitheatre, and the Tuscaloosa Career and Technical Academy. Another group member, Abba Mellon, had an existing relationship with Dr. Brickman, so she made initial contact in that area. As for all other contacts, Jack was tasked with making the initial contact and establishing a potential relationship.

Jack began by reaching out to two individuals who he thought would be able to point the group in the right direction: Dr. Jeffrey Schultz, Coordinator of Fine Arts for Tuscaloosa City Schools, and Mr. Isaiah Harper, the instructor in charge of the Tuscaloosa Career and Technical Academy film program. Meanwhile, Abba initiated contact with Dr. Brickman and was able to gather contact information for two individuals at the YMCA who had worked on the Druid City Girls Media Camp-- Ashley Waid (CEO) and LaKeda Smith (Director, Barnes Branch). Jack promptly made contact, but ultimately he was able to establish a relationship with Dr. Schultz.

Dr. Schultz has proved to be an invaluable asset in developing the vision for our project. As the Coordinator of Fine Arts for Tuscaloosa City Schools, he oversees all fine arts programs within the system and is intimately aware of the needs of the programs that already exist. In emails, a phone-call, and a subsequent in-person meeting, Dr. Schultz helped Jack identify areas for our project to focus on. Based on Dr. Schultz's suggestions, we further narrowed the scope of our project in two areas: (1) the project should focus on the equity of access for city school students with arts and technology programs and (2) the project should emphasize growth in the Central High School (CHS) IB film program, with room for potential expansion to all other Tuscaloosa City High School campuses.

After we decided to work with CHS's IB film program, Dr. Schultz gave us contact information for Valencia Winston, director of the program. From that point, Ms. Winston became our primary contact. Our expectation of Ms. Winston is to have her help us by providing

input in order to construct curriculum for an experience that could work in conjunction with her course.

Part IV: Implementation Plan

    A. Background

According to our research, access to arts and technology programs is highly correlated with student success and outcomes. Locally, Tuscaloosa City Schools (TCS) is working to ensure that students are provided with opportunities to study in these fields. TCS has underperformed in recent years in college and career readiness assessments. Given the link between academic achievement and these fields, it is important that these programs receive support to continue providing students with opportunities to study arts and technology.

One of the most successful of these programs is the International Baccalaureate film course at Central High School (CHS.) The semester-long course enrolls approximately 60 high school students, teaching film analysis and production. Throughout the semester, students work in groups to produce a documentary film, involving research, writing, filming, and editing components. According to the teacher of the course, Valencia Winston, the school provides camera kits and a single laptop with editing software that the groups use in the classroom. Winston is hoping that the program will expand to a year-round course with a larger class size in future years.

The Blackburn Institute is in a unique position to facilitate resources available at the University of Alabama in order to benefit the local community at-large. In the arts and technology space, UA is home to a top national communications program, and the only university in the state offering an undergraduate degree in film production. Because UA is home to one of the only two university-owned-and-operated commercial news stations in the country, our campus also has unparalleled opportunities for students to work side-by-side with broadcast media professionals. Due to all of these assets, UA is distinctive in its resources of knowledgeable film professors, accessibility of production technology, and student talent. With the connections of the new student class to the Journalism & Creative Media (JCM) Department, Blackburn has an opportunity to establish a strong relationship between UA and the film and media programs in Tuscaloosa City Schools.

B. The Program

  In order to maximize the potential of CHS's existing IB film course, we propose a semester-long program connecting CHS students with JCM professors at UA. JCM professors will act as professional mentors throughout the conception and production of a short documentary film - providing feedback, answering any logistical questions, and facilitating the production. Midway through the semester, our group will also facilitate a workshop day for the participating class to help move students from film conception to film production. In this workshop, the students will have three sessions (the basics of camera operation, editing, and storytelling) and will use what they learn to develop a microfilm.

  Through a partnership with the University, these students will be provided greater resources and opportunities for their arts and technology education. We expect that involvement and support from UA will drive student interest in the film program and interest at the University in other arts programs in local schools. For the students, we believe the partnership and workshop will aid them in developing their artistic visions and passions. The program is an opportunity for the Blackburn Institute to make a positive connection and impact on local schools and support important education efforts that drive student involvement and success.

  Before launching the program, our team will contact professors to facilitate and plan the workshop and partnership. We hope to involve at least three faculty of JCM to work with the IB film students in a mentoring role. These professors will be connected with Valencia Winston and work with her to arrange meeting times and mentorship for student groups. To best avoid logistical hurdles, CHS students will only be grouped with students within their individual IB classes. Because there are three IB classes with approximately 20 students each, each class will have three groups of roughly six students. In order to minimize the amount of partnering professors needed, JCM professors will be assigned to one class, taking on a mentorship role for all three groups within. However, if there are more than three professors wishing to take part in the program, the distribution of groups can always be modified.

  Throughout the semester, the student groups will be required to have in-person meetings with their professional mentor once a month to develop the concept for the film, identify resources, create a production plan, and troubleshoot production. JCM professors will also be

available via email and/or video call outside of these required meetings. Meetings with professional mentors will follow this proposed schedule:

January	Concept development
February	Identification of resources, pre-production
March	Production (including feedback,) post-production planning
April	Feedback, debriefing

We will also collaborate with the participating professors to develop three sessions for the workshop day on campus. In order to plan for the workshop day, our team will recruit volunteers from the 2019 Blackburn class to assist in the generation of media to promote the event. Volunteers from the class will also be organized into the various roles outlined later in the proposal, and if necessary, given training. Our team will also book rooms, editing spaces, and transportation for the event and distribute necessary paperwork for volunteers and students.

We would like to hold the workshop on a Saturday so that (1) the program could last all day without interfering with the students' core classes and (2) we would have maximum access to spaces on campus. The workshop will be held in Reese Phifer Hall, the building that houses the JCM department. Within Reese Phifer, we would have access to auditorium-style classrooms, editing suites, the shooting studio, traditional classrooms and The Hub (a casual lounge-style space suited for snacks, breaks, etc.)

The workshop will also include a crash-course on university-level production concepts split into three areas: storytelling and development, cinematography and camera mechanics, and editing workflow. Throughout the workshop, the students will produce micro-films within their small groups to be screened at the end of the day. This will allow the JCM professors to gauge where the students are in terms of readiness for film production.

Curriculum for the workshop will be developed by members of the Blackburn team based on expectations, needs, and desires of partnering JCM professors and the IB film instructors at CHS.

The Monday following the workshop, Winston will provide students a short assignment for anonymous feedback about the event. This feedback will be communicated back to the Blackburn Institute and our team. The professors involved with the event will also be surveyed following the workshop.

To further determine the success of the program, we evaluate all feedback in terms of factors determined by Ms.Winston and Dr. Schultz. One example of a tangible outcome is the number of students who participate in the workshop. Another such example is whether or not this program can be continued, either with or without continued Blackburn engagement. An example of an intangible outcome is how our program has addressed the "Equity of Access" to arts education for students in Tuscaloosa City Schools.

C. Volunteer Stratification

The members of our team will take on the following roles in order to oversee completion of the project:

Lord of Logistics
Christopher Robinson

Oversee all functions of the Logistics Team; ensure semester-long functions are happening on-schedule

Countess of Curriculum
Abba Mellon

Facilitate conversations between Blackburn, community partner, and UA professors; unite the needs of all involved parties to create curriculum plans

Archduke of Advertising
Jack Kappelman

Oversee all functions of the Outreach Team

Dvoryanin of Volunteers
Clark Vick

Coordinate all necessary volunteer recruiting, training, assignments, timing, and communications; point-of-contact for all volunteer operations

When involving the rest of our Blackburn class, we will be primarily assigning students to two groups of volunteers: Outreach and Logistics. The Outreach Team will oversee graphic design, media communications, communications with students/their parents, etc. The Logistics

Team will be directly involved with the launching workshop; all volunteers on the Logistics Team will need to complete the university's child protection training.

The breakdown of volunteer roles is as follows:

Outreach (12 students)

Graphic design -- 2 students

Social & digital media -- 2 students

Broadcast & legacy media -- 2 students

Student communications -- 3 students

Mentor pairing and scheduling -- 3 students

Logistics (43 students)

Meals (chaperones, clean-up) -- 10 students

Snack/break chaperones -- 5 students

Micro-film production chaperones -- 10 students

Teaching assistants -- 15 students

Screening set-up -- 3 students

D. Risk Management

There are several risk factors associated with hosting the workshop day on campus. In order to get students on campus to participate, parents would be required to sign a permission form, similar to a field trip form. This will also cover permission to publish media of the event that includes the student.

During the workshop, students will have access to university property and equipment. Students will be given clear rules and instructions on how to manage and use this equipment and will be chaperoned while accessing it. In case of incident, students will not be held liable for property damage; the JCM Department may elect to assume liability, but this is a conversation that would need to be had with input from all involved parties.

In order to work with minors, all Logistics Team volunteers will be required to complete Child Protection training as outlined by the University. They will also be required to complete background checks. In order to get background checks completed in a timely manner, they will be submitted all at once at the end of our Protective Life trip. The University also calls for any programs involving minors, UA-affiliated volunteers must wear clothing that designates them as such; to address this, we will be ordering T-shirts for volunteers in accordance with requirements from the Office of Strategic Communications. In case of an emergency, designated volunteers will be responsible for contacting the proper emergency services.

Because we are feeding participants, we also have to ensure that any students with allergies will be safe and well-fed. To ensure this, the Outreach team will work with guidelines provided by CHS to gather any allergy or other health information from students when they first

register for the workshop. From this information, a safety plan will be created with the Blackburn team.

E. Transportation

Students will be transported to and from UA's campus utilizing CHS's buses. If a student wishes to drive him/herself to campus or be driven by a parent/guardian, they must fill out a form and return it with a parent/guardian signature. Students who wish to park on campus will be asked to park in a designated lot, and they must also inform the Blackburn team so that a chaperone will be available to escort the student from their parking space to Reese Phifer. The exact nature of this communication will be determined by the Outreach Team's student communications volunteers, based on safety guidelines provided by CHS, the University, and the Blackburn Institute.

F. Budget

The following items will be provided out of the budget for the project:
- Transportation - payment to cover fuel and driver fees from TCS
- Provided Meals - breakfast items, lunch at UA dining hall, and snack items
- Small prizes for best micro-film
- Volunteer T-shirts
- Student T-shirts
- Printed materials - paper programs, brochures, flyers, etc.

G. Media

Our media outreach plan is broken down into areas of digital media and legacy media. Pre-event, we plan to launch social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) to promote the program, highlighting what's already been accomplished at CHS and our goals moving forward. Our graphic design team will create universal social media graphics that our supporters can share on their personal pages. The goal is not to draw student participants, as our participating group will be limited to those already in the IB film program, but to build up excitement throughout the community and draw attention to the incredible work already being

done. Meanwhile, our legacy media outreach will include press releases sent to the Crimson White, The Tuscaloosa News, and WVUA23.

Event coverage will include live Instagram and Facebook stories posted throughout the launch workshop. We will also seek to arrange broadcast television coverage via WVUA23. Members of the Outreach Team will also be charged with taking photos throughout the event for use in future promotions. The microfilms produced at the workshop will later be posted to Facebook.

We will also implement the usage of print media to advertise the program and to help with the logistical flow of the launch event. Our graphic design volunteers will create flyers to be distributed at CHS and an informational packet/brochure to be given to participating students at the launch event, with all pertinent information regarding campus and the course of the day, as well as necessary information about the rest of the semester's programming.

H. Workshop Schedule

7:30am	Students arrive on campus & eat breakfast	The Hub
8:00am	Students are introduced to the program-- requirements, expectations & learning outcomes	PH 216
8:45am	Students break out into small groups to discuss interests and brainstorm preliminary documentary ideas	Classrooms throughout PH
9:30am	Cameras 101-102 with mentors	Studio 121
10:15am	Story development workshop with mentors	Classrooms throughout PH
11:00am	Lunch	The Hub
12:15pm	Students break out with Blackburn chaperones to shoot their micro-films	Around PH
1:00pm	Snack break	The Hub
1:20pm	Students finish shooting micro-films with Blackburn chaperones	Around PH
2:00pm	Students edit their films with mentors	PH 338, 341, and 112
4:00pm	Students break / discuss communication plan with mentors while Blackburn students export films and prepare for screening	Classrooms throughout PH
4:30pm	End of day screening	PH 216
5:30pm	Students return to CHS	

I. Week-by-Week Project Timeline

Week Ending	Outcome
Pre-project planning	Work with community partner to set expectations and low-level details of program organization. Begin recruiting professors for involvement.
17-Jan	Student volunteers submit child protection paperwork at the end of the Protective Life Government Experience
31-Jan	Continue contact with professors and initial planning with IB class.
7-Feb	Finalize professor involvement.
14-Feb	Begin session curriculum development. Finalize workshop day itinerary. Professors visit classroom #1
21-Feb	Assignment of volunteer roles. Begin bookings.
28-Feb	Begin graphic and media design. Finalize required bookings.
6-Mar	Finalize graphic and media design. Professors visit classroom #2
13-Mar	Deadline for volunteer paperwork.
20-Mar	Finalize session curriculum. Deadline for student paperwork.
28-Mar	Workshop Day
4-Apr	Analyze workshop feedback

Appendix

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	Quantity	Revenue	Total	Running Total	Notes / Details
Group Number: 7					
Project Name: Central High					
	Quantity	**Revenue**	**Total**	**Running Total**	**Notes / Details**
Revenue:					
Daniel Foundation Grant	1	$ 5,000.00	$ 5,000.00	$ 5,000.00	
TOTAL REVENUE				**$ 5,000.00**	
	Quantity	**Expense per**	**Total**	**Running Total**	**Notes / Details**
Expenses:					
Meals	103	$ 24.89	$ 2,563.67	$ 2,563.67	Continental Breakfast - Sandwich Lunch - 2 Snack
T-Shirt for Volunteers	43	$ 11.35	$ 488.05	$ 3,051.72	Custom Ink - Various Sizes - Short Sleeve - 1 color
T-Shirt for Students	60	$ 11.35	$ 681.00	$ 3,732.72	Custom Ink - Various Sizes - Short Sleeve - 1 color
Transportation	1	$ 180.00	$ 180.00	$ 3,912.72	Central High School bus rental to transport students
Trophy	6	$ 9.95	$ 59.70	$ 3,972.42	Trophy for the winning movie group.
Event Flyers	1	$ 43.86	$ 43.86	$ 4,016.28	100 event flyers via Vista Print for Promotion.
Event Brochures	1	$ 60.92	$ 60.92	$ 4,077.20	100 event brochures via Vista Print for schedule.
Event Programs	1	$ 5.00	$ 5.00	$ 4,082.20	100 event programs via UA Library Printing for
Ferguson Theatre	1	$ 125.00	$ 125.00	$ 4,207.20	Hosting for movie watching event.
Bottled Water	5	$ 4.99	$ 24.95	$ 4,232.15	To ensure proper hydration, we will have additional
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
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Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
Expenses			$ -	$ 4,232.15	
TOTAL EXPENSES				**$ 4,232.15**	
DIFFERENCE				**$ 767.85**	**Balanced or Budget Surplus**