

Lesson Plan #2: Constructing Your Soundscape

Rationale: Occurring during the recording and editing phases of the unit, this workshop session will focus on the creative and constructive elements of podcasts and storytelling. Youth will be able to attend to various needs of their episodes and have access to tools to write and adjust their stories in text/written form and for feedback from peers, to makeshift recording booths with audio recording devices and laptops, and to other sets of laptops available on regular tablets so they can edit their works. Though construction and recording are the primary goals in this session, support and exertion of a feedback loop will also be critical.

Grade Levels: Youth in grades 2-5. Near-peer mentors / facilitators are transitional-age, between ages 16-24.

Curriculum Areas: Language arts and grammar, journalism, narrative writing and storytelling, audio recording and editing, digital problem-solving, layering audio.

Preparation & Prerequisites: Facilitation team will need to construct makeshift recording booths, likely to be made from a combination of cardboard and insulation foam located at the Exploratorium. Booths will need to be outfitted with microphones and chairs, enough for two people in case interviews are being conducted.

Material & Equipment:

Paper
Computers
Headphones
Worksheets (additional to paper)
Writing utensils
Microphones / lapel mics
Insulation foam

Time Needed: 50-80 minutes

General Step-by-Step:

As the program is informal and built around redistributed leadership models, the intention is for students to have built a foundational understanding of the project by this point, enough that they can navigate their own learning and design experiences with the support of the facilitation team.

After an initial conversation about the direction of the podcasts that youth already have in mind (this workshop session will occur several weeks after the launch of the unit), facilitation staff will point out the various segments of the room from the recording booths to the editing stations and to an area for youth to produce their own foley/sound arts to add texture and dimension to their storytelling. A previous workshop session will have covered the basics of using the software that will ultimately be chosen for the unit and how to navigate and maintain files on a computer.

(Digital technologies like computers are regularly featured in Tinkering Afterschool so basic knowledge of using computers will not be necessary within this unit.) Students will then be invited to use the remaining time on their projects.

An expected trajectory for a student looks like:

Youth sits down with their notes and writing that includes the major beats of their story. They may ask a peer or a mentor to offer feedback, and proceed to implement edits. As part of learning the software, they already have some portions of their writing recorded, but they return to the booth with their laptop and begin to record or re-record parts of their story, now with the new edits they've just made. The segment of the story they are currently working on involves a progression of the narrative into an unexpected direction for the listener, so they bring their laptop from the recording booth to an editing station so others can record, and proceed to look up audio files or artifacts from across the internet, perhaps YouTube or even iTunes, etc., and begin to parse them into files they can incorporate into the master file of their recording. They make adjustments to the placement on their audio timeline, so that the sounds match the narrative to maximize their effect. If they cannot find a piece of audio online that supports their storytelling efforts, they can go to the Foley Station and make another original recording using any number of items or instruments to create sound effects or to invite peers to conjure environmental effects similarly.

At the end of each of the workshop sessions in the recording and editing phase, students will stop their work 15 minutes before the end of the workshop to write notes for next time, to share what they've recorded with a peer, a small group, or the full group, and to ensure that their files are in proper placement on their laptops for a proper closure to the day.