

Lesson 4: Empowering Youth as Change Agents

Students will analyze and discuss the basic elements of successful action plans created and implemented by their peers from around the country. This lesson highlights the role youth can play in creating a more sustainable and democratic society that reflects human values.

Time

Approximately 50 minutes: interactive exercise supported by power point slides.

Materials

- Power point notes and slides
- One double-sided copy per student of the 2-page WORKSHEET: Analyzing Action Plans
- Download or cue for viewing the following films
 - » Slide 3 – Story of Solutions, 9 minutes <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/the-story-of-solutions/>
 - » Slide 7 – Youth leader Alec Looorz, 5 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqmfjsxzGyxE>
 - » Slide 9 – Youth leader Tania Pulido, 4 minutes <http://www.broweryouthawards.org/winner/tania-pulido/>
 - » Slide 13 – Youth leader Daniel Lee, 2 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-M54Z-Bzgcw&safe=active>
 - » Slide 14 – Youth leader Jessie-Ruth Corkins, 4 minutes <http://vimeo.com/1987910>
- *OPTIONAL*: Teachers may highlight other youth leaders and issues of interest to your students by selecting different films from <http://www.broweryouthawards.org/article.php?list=type&type=54>

Preparation

- Review power point notes and slides
- If different youth are chosen, Teacher should use worksheet to analyze action plan in preparation for class discussion.

Extension ideas (optional)

- Read Chapter 10: Green Your Campus, pages 167–193, in *The Young Activist's Guide to Building a Green Movement and Changing the World*. The reading will help students understand how youth are changing the world and prepare for the next *Rethinking Democracy!* lesson. (Download material from ACTIVISTS' GUIDE folder.)
- Create and implement an action plan to achieve a desired goal, using Lessons 3–4 EXTENSION MATERIAL.

“True peace is not merely the absence of tension, but it is the presence of justice... Legislation and court orders can only declare rights. They can never thoroughly deliver them. Only when the people themselves begin to act are rights on paper given life blood.”

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Lesson 4: Power point notes

1. *Rethinking Democracy!* COVER SLIDE

Today we will explore how to create a more sustainable and democratic society that reflects human values and creates real wealth.

2. Empowering Youth as Change Agents

We will look at what youth leaders are doing, and we will analyze the basic elements of their action plan to create parallel institutions.

3. The Story of Solutions

Let's start by watching a 9-minute film about setting meaningful goals and shifting ideas into action.

We'll reflect on the film after viewing, then discuss some of the "ah-hah" moments or things that stood out for you.



SHOW FILM

Ask students to reflect and write. Allow about 3 minutes.

Guide discussion



Ask students to share their reflections. Make sure the following points are covered in the class discussion.

- Discuss importance of understanding root cause of problem and setting appropriate GOALS. How has economic goal of MORE made things less safe, less healthy, and less fair?

How might the goal of BETTER make things "safer, healthier and more fair"?

- Apply this to Timeline: The "rules" or laws have been changed to advantage MORE economic wealth and corporate profit at the expense of other forms of wealth, including those critical to survival of our (and other) species.
- Apply this to economic system: Discuss how changing the rules will also mean changing the old measurement of progress (i.e., the GDP).
- What are the four elements of a game-changing GOAL?
 - » G = Gives people more power and builds democracy
 - » O = Open's peoples' eyes to truth of happiness
 - » A = Accounts for all costs
 - » L = Lessens the wealth gap
- How do you get started? (Figuring out what you like to do – your passion – and what you're good at. It also helps to have role models or mentors or a group of like-minded people to work with. Start educating yourself on issue.)

4. Youth leaders

In the western world, history often focuses on the role of adult leadership but rarely on the role of youth. But in reality, youth are often the catalysts for change in society. For example:

- Think of the civil rights movement: who comes to mind? (Likely Martin Luther King Jr.)

MLKJ was part of a broad movement with many faces, including youth like Bob Moses who set up voter registration for African Americans in Mississippi through the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

- Think of the climate crisis or global warming: who comes to mind? (Likely 2007 Nobel Peace laureate Al Gore or Bill McKibben with 350.org)

Al Gore and Bill McKibben are also part of a broad movement, being largely driven by youth. Climate activist Alec Looz was 12-years old when he first saw the documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth.” Alec created his own show and nonprofit organization, kids-vs-global-warming.com, to start educating his peers about the greatest challenge facing his generation. In May 2011, 17-year-old Alec filed a lawsuit against the United States of America, for its failure to protect the climate to ensure the survival of his generation, and his right to a safe and healthy planet.

Bill McKibben started Step It Up 2007 as a national teach-in, then 350.org, with the leadership of six Middlebury College students – May Boeve and Jon Warner and four others.

College student Billy Parrish started Energy Action Coalition on campuses across America. EAC youth leaders like Jessy Tolkan have mobilized over 10,000 youth for national Power Shift gatherings.

5. Elements of a game-changing action plan



Youth are changing the world by their actions. These youth are passionate and committed to goal, but they also start with a plan – an action plan. There are SIX basic elements of an action plan.

1. First is the **goal**; the big idea; what it is you want to do. To effect fundamental change, the goal must also change the rules or otherwise challenge the status quo. It helps to think of game-changing GOALS as four elements: G = Gives people more power and builds democracy; O = Open’s peoples’ eyes to truth of happiness; A = Accounts for all costs; and L = Lessens the wealth gap.
2. Next are the **strategies** or ways to achieve the goal. Strategies are project ideas that can be put into action. Strategies usually include one or more elements such as education, outreach, direct action, policy/legal, fundraising, provide goods or services. For example, creating a Sea Level Awareness Project or S.L.A.P. (Alec Looz) is a strategy that is a direct action (making poles) but it also includes elements of education, outreach, policy/legal, fundraising, and media). Other examples of strategies are creating a community garden (direct action), filing a lawsuit or passing a law (policy/legal), or targeted protests like the bus rides during the civil rights movement (direct action, outreach, education, media). Strategies usually start with a VERB.

3. Next is **tactics**. Each strategy will need specific action steps, like developing a design, determining the cost, convincing decision-makers to approve the project, collecting documentation, getting work crews, researching and writing, etc. A tactic is specific: who is going to do what and by when?
4. Creating a **message** – a story with key talking points – for your action plan is critical to accomplishing your goal. Why is your idea (goal) important? Why should people get involved with your project? Why will their lives be better off with your project?
5. **Identifying key players** – the people who will help you or try to stop you – is also critical to your plan’s success. Once you identify them, including decision-makers or gate-keepers, you must figure out how to best build support and minimize opposition.
6. **Assigning a timeline and tasks** is an ongoing process. Start by assigning specific tasks (tactics) to people with a deadline. New needs or different tactics can be added to the timeline as needed.

6. How did they do it?

Each year, the New Leaders Initiative, a program of Earth Island Institute, recognizes six youth leaders with Brower Youth Awards. We’re going to watch some short film clips of youth leaders and analyze their action plans.

EXPLAIN INSTRUCTIONS and prepare students to write their analysis before next slide.

Instructions for Slides 7-11



Before the film clip

- Explain: These films do not include a timeline. Instead we will look for obstacles that the youth leaders had to overcome to achieve their goal and the inspiration that made them passionate about achieving their goal. What inspired you about their story?
- Create SIX groups of students (rows will work as a group).
- Assign each group to write one action plan element and inspiration in the appropriate place on the Worksheet.
 - » Group 1: goals and inspiration
 - » Group 2: strategy and inspiration
 - » Group 3: tactics and inspiration
 - » Group 4: key players and inspiration
 - » Group 5: message and inspiration
 - » Group 6: obstacles and inspiration
- Explain: We will discuss the action plans after each film. Worksheets will be handed in after class. The films are only 4 minutes so pay attention!



ADVANCE to next SLIDE and SHOW FILM

After the film, guide discussion.

- Starting with Group 1, ask each group in turn to share what they wrote. If one group gets stuck, ask other students to share what they heard.
- Students will need assistance matching strategy and tactics from the lists created on their WORKSHEETS. On a whiteboard, teacher creates the

Strategy and Tactics section of the ANALYSIS.

- Teacher should make columns for each strategy on white board. Explore what categories are fulfilled by the Strategy (i.e., education, outreach, policy/legal, etc.)
- Next ask group assigned to Tactics to match their tactics to a strategy. Teacher writes tactics in appropriate column.

Repeat the sequence

- Show and discuss two more films, reassigning tasks between the films.
- Leave at least 10 minutes of class to finish the power point lesson.

7. Identify action plan element



SHOW FILM

8. How did they do it?



Discuss analysis of action plan as per instructions in Slide 6. Refer to **Analysis for Alec Loorz**.

After discussion, Teacher reassigns action plan elements to different groups.

9. Identify action plan element



VIEW FILM CLIP

10. How did they do it?



Discuss analysis of action plan as per instructions in Slide 6. Refer to **Analysis for Tania Pulido**.

After discussion, Teacher reassigns action plan elements to different groups.

11. How did Daniel do it?

Daniel Lee was a student at Univ. California-Davis when he learned the history of “corporate persons” and corporate constitutional rights. Back home in Los Angeles, he started a MoveToAmend chapter to amend the U.S. Constitution to restore democracy. Six months later, Los Angeles became the first major U.S. city to pass a resolution. to end corporate constitutional rights.

Instructions: As we watch this 2-minute film clip, listen for goals, strategy, and key messages. Be prepared to discuss this film.



VIEW FILM CLIP

- What were some of the key messages? (Corporations are not persons. Money is not speech.)
- Was getting the Los Angeles City Council to pass the resolution a goal or a strategy? (strategy)
- What is Daniel’s goal? (to help amend the U.S. Constitution to abolish corporate constitutional rights or end corporate personhood)

12. Process to amend Constitution

The process to amend the Constitution is stated in the Constitution. People-made law trumps judge-made law. A constitutional amendment passed by the states, for example, stating that only human beings are entitled to constitutional rights and protections, would reverse the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United*.

The process of amending the Constitution has two parts: Initiation and Ratification.

- Under Initiation: READ from SLIDE.
- Under Ratification: READ from SLIDE.

13. Vision without action is a daydream

READ full proverb.

Amending our Constitution will take time and work. But anything worth doing takes time and work – and it can be empowering and fun. This is the nature of democracy. It's always a work in progress. Youth are catalysts in the people's work towards a more equal, democratic and sustainable world. Democracy and sustainability are entwined: one cannot be realized without the other.

14. Youth Game-Changer

Instructions: If there is time (another 4 minutes of class), show film of another youth leader just for fun. Do NOT do an analysis of the action plan.

15. Rethinking Democracy! COVER SLIDE

In the next *Rethinking Democracy!* lesson, we will work in small groups to prepare our own action plans for amending the Constitution!

Analysis for Alec Loorz

Goal

Stop global warming within his lifetime. Alec started by creating Kids vs. Global Warming as nonprofit with this mission.

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Create Sea Level Awareness Project S.L.A.P. (direct action, education, outreach, media, fundraising)

- Design poles
- Build community support for project
- Get support of City Council for funding and permits
- Set up ways for people to donate materials and supplies
- Set up crew to create and install poles

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Give trainings on climate crisis (education, outreach, media)

- Educate himself about causes and effects of global warming through research, writing and training
- Create message and theme (iMatter, iSuck, iEmit, iPollute, iFlood, iMelt)
- Create age-appropriate talks with videos, music, and graphics
- Set up and gave hundreds of talks to peers in Ventura County and then across country
- Spearhead global warming education projects in Ventura County and inspire other kids to do the same
- Use social networks to share info

Strategy 3 and Tactics

Create Declaration of Independence from Fossil Fuels (education, outreach, media, direct action, policy/legal)

- Design and create graphics and tools
- Build social networks to get signatures
- Educate policy makers

Message

- Stop global warming now!

Key players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: Mother, peers – youth around country, Ventura community members
- Foes: Fossil fuel industry
- Decision-makers: Ventura City Council, Al Gore, Congress

Obstacles

- Age – he was initially dismissed by Gore’s team as being “too young” to take training.

Inspiration

At age 12, Alec saw Al Gore’s climate documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* and he took this information to heart. He understood how unchecked global warming would affect his generation and he wanted to push leaders to take action to stop it. His mother supported his passion and direction. The more he learned, the more empowered he became to continue taking action.

Game changer

- Was Alec’s initial action enough to achieve his goals? (No)
- What did he do to be a game-changer? (Hint: mentioned earlier in lesson that Alec went on to sue the U.S. government over breach of fiduciary responsibility to protect the climate for his generation.)

Analysis for Tania Pulido

Goal

Increase access to healthy food to create healthy people and healthy communities

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Startup and maintain demonstration gardens (direct action, provide goods & services, education, outreach, policy/legal)

- Educate herself and community members about issue through meetings, flyers, and garden work
- Choose site for gardens in areas of high foot traffic and shared common spaces
- Get permits to use space
- Recruit households closest to gardens, targeting children and mothers
- Cook and test new recipes
- Share raw and cooked food

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Involve businesses in growing and supply food chain (education, outreach)

- Research and contact local farmers, grocery stores
- Educate and recruit target groups tailored messages

Strategy 3 and Tactics

- Organize and conduct local actions (direct action, education, outreach)
- Art activities every second Saturday for children who bring parents
- Inspired people to join rallies against food and soil polluters

Strategy 4 and Tactics

Youth Food Bill of Rights (education, outreach, direct action, policy/legal)

- Organize and give talks with peers to key decision-makers
- Hold rallies near decision-makers

Message

- People are the solution. When we get together, we can solve our problems.
- Share food, seeds, thoughts.

Key Players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: children, mothers, households closest to gardens, community members
- Foes: industries that are polluting her neighborhood (not specified in clip)
- Decision-makers: (implied) local city councils for permits to create community gardens, Congress

Obstacles

- Scale: polluters include largest greenhouse gas emitter in California.
- Attitude: we don't see change; entrenched mindsets; lack of vision for how things could be different.

Inspiration

- Personally tests recipes as needs to know first-hand if they work
- Belief that personal health manifests healthy community

Game changer

- Was Tania's initial action enough to achieve her goals? (no)
- What did she do to be a game-changer? (She used agriculture and healthy food as tools to grow a youth-led movement that demanded healthy food as a human right. Movement changed how local farmers grew food, types of food supplied in local grocery stores, and businesses in community to ones that supplied healthy food.

WORKSHEET: Analyzing Action Plans

Name:

Goal: the big concept – what you want to do. Is the goal a game-changer?

G = Gives people more power and builds democracy; O = Open's peoples' eyes to truth of happiness; A = Accounts for all costs; and L = Lessens the wealth gap.

Strategy: Ideas that can be put into action. A strategy may include elements such as outreach and education, direct action, fundraising, advocacy, legal or policy changes, or providing goods or services.

Tactics: individual actions, events, and activities to advance your goals

Key Players:

- allies/friends

- foes/opponents

- decision-makers

Message: key talking points in clear, simple phrases to targeted audience

Obstacles: “the odds” that must be overcome to achieve goal

Inspiration: motivation for pursuing goal



Additional Analyses of Action Plans

Analysis for Junior Walk

Goal

Stop strip mining of coal in Appalachia and protect the environment

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Educate himself and his community about project (education, outreach)

- Research, writing, talking with people
- Write newsletter and for newspaper
- Help organize and participate in rallies and protests

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Raise awareness of Appalachia mining in other parts of U.S. (education, outreach)

- Arrange talks and tours

Strategy 3 and Tactics

Stop or delay project (direct action, education, outreach, policy/legal)

- Pursue litigation and collect evidence of illegal activities for lawsuit (e.g., water monitoring, photo-documentation)
- Pursue direct action to physically block mining (e.g., tree-sitting) and leverage media attention

Strategy 4 and Tactics

Develop new economy for community, not based on coal mining

- Educate himself and community about other resources for local economy (e.g., generate wind power along mountain ridges)

Message

- America's water is being poisoned! Water of Appalachia is being poisoned!
- Don't mind being poor but draw the line at being blasted and poisoned.

Key Players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: community members, adult mentors, environmental groups (implied)
- Foes: coal companies, community members who work mines like father
- Decision-makers: none mentioned

Obstacles

- Lives in one of many coal-dependent communities of West Virginia, where criticizing the coal industry can be grounds for ostracism – or harassment and intimidation.

Inspiration

- Passion – love of “most beautiful place in the world”
- Poisoning of family and water

Game-Changer

- Was Junior's initial action enough to achieve his goals? (No. It's hard to stop something that provides employment in a community without finding and building an alternative economy.)
- What did he do to be a game-changer? (He went on to help build a demonstration wind project on the mountain ridges to show another economy and jobs were possible (see film, *The Last Mountain* <http://thelastmountainmovie.com/>)

Analysis for Jessie-Ruth Corkins

Goal

Transition high school's oil boiler to a woodchip boiler fueled by local products.

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Develop pilot project for her school (education, outreach, direct action)

- Researched problem, learned Vermont does not have capacity to provide heat for population with wood alone
- Educated her peers to build support (core leader of Vermont Sustainable Heating Initiative with 200 youth from 26 high schools)
- Educated key decision-makers at school and in community
- Created messages emphasizing cost savings to sway decision-makers

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Design and develop a pilot project for her community to transition one sector – low-income family homes – to pellet stoves (education, outreach, direct action, policy/legal)

- Researched problem and her solution
- Educated key local decision-makers about problem and her solution
- Created messages emphasizing cost savings to sway decision-makers

Strategy 3 and Tactics

Design a pilot project for her state to develop underutilized land to grow prairie grass that could be pelletized to provide home heating needs (education, outreach, direct action, policy/legal)

- Researched problem and her solution

- Educated key local and state decision-makers about problem and solution
- Created messages emphasizing cost savings to sway decision-makers

Message:

- Our fuel will come from our own backyards and will offer a stable and affordable price to all Vermonters.
- Locally produced energy will develop a greater sense of community in Vermont towns.

Key Players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: students, teachers, local farmers
- Foes: companies that supplied oil entrenched thinking
- Decision-makers: school superintendant, local and state politicians

Obstacles

- Entrenched mindsets and established business: "We've always done it this way." She had to convince people that her vision would be a better way.

Inspiration

- Sense of self-worth, community pride
- A sense of fairness and ethics

Gamer changer

- Was Jessie-Ruth's initial action enough to achieve her goals? (no)
- What did she do to be a game-changer? (She ramped it up from school to the city to the state. Instead of changing the rules, she changed the status quo by creating pilot projects that created successful businesses using locally-available resources to save money and be more energy efficient.)

Analysis for Kyle Thiermann

Goal

Urges people to make small adjustments in their daily actions to help save the environment.

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Identify socio-economic issue in surfing spot abroad (education)

- Educates himself about local environmental issues in surfing spots abroad
- Follows the money” by researching where the money comes from to support the industry causing the problem (e.g., like World Bank loans to support unsustainable mining practices)
- Organizes and takes trip to impacted region to get first-hand experience
- Collects film and stories to bring home and share

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Create local campaign in home community to address issue abroad (education, outreach, direct action)

- Produced a five-part video series, Surfing for Change.
- Shares films on one-to-one basis with peers (surfers) and other interested persons
- Starts Move Your Money Campaign for people to take simple action (moving money from corporate banks to community banks weakens financial support for coal company)
- Inspires people to share his message and change action in daily lives to help make a difference

Message

- We are so interconnected that what we do at home has a big difference on world. So let’s make the right decisions that help the world.

Key Players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: surfers
- Foes: whatever is creating socio-economic issue
- Decision-makers: none, he effects change without involving decision-makers

Obstacles

- Money to travel
- Possibly language
- Stereotype of surfers

Inspiration

- Earned “street credit”: he’s actually out there, doing it
- You have more power than you think

Game Changer

- Was Kyle’s initial action enough to achieve his goals? (Yes. He targeted where people have the most leverage to influence global change – by changing daily actions.)
- What did he do to be a game-changer? (He created awareness of how daily individual actions were impacting other communities and inspired people to make small adjustments in their own lives that collectively impacted the status quo: this did not directly change things in the area of destruction, but Kyle was working towards long-term change by having people move their money to support community banks instead of investing in large national banks.)

Analysis for Sierra Crane-Murdoch Goal

Enact national policies to swiftly and justly transition away from coal

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Start Power Past Coal to build national movement (education, outreach)

- Educated herself and toured front-line communities
- Created front-line activist network

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Direct Action Campaigns (direct action, education, outreach, media)

- Organized targeted protests for first 100 days of Obama Administration
- Organized and participated in marches, rallies, town hall meetings, and acts of civil disobedience

Strategy 3 and Tactics

Story-sharing with front-line communities (direct action, outreach, education, policy/legal)

- Found and documented front-line community residents with compelling stories
- United voices from coal-impacted communities with key decision-makers and media

Strategy 4 and Tactics

Create political/legal strategy to achieve goal

- Worked with key decision-makers to end coal subsidies
- Worked to reinvest in coal-impacted communities to create coal-free economy and green jobs

Message

- Stopping coal is important for stopping climate change.
- Small stories together tell larger story: all phases of coal dangerous for humans and environment.

Key Players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: people personally impacted by coal industry activities and coal use
- Foes: coal companies
- Decision-makers: President Obama, the Environmental Protection Agency, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and Congress

Obstacles

- Entrenched mindset among decision-makers (because campaigns funded by oil and coal contributions)
- Stories scattered all around country.

Inspiration

- Youth make a difference where adults have failed to provide leadership
- Youth inspire and give adults hope
- Stories are true heart of soulful campaign and kept campaign afloat

Game Changer

Was Sierra's initial action enough to achieve her goals? (Yes; she had a game-changing goal.) During campaign:

- Over 20 new coal plant permits and 5 mountaintop removal applications were denied or suspended
- EPA committed to regulating carbon dioxide from coal plants and coal ash from slurry ponds
- The goal of 100 protests in 100 days was exceeded by three times

Analysis for Erica Fernandez

Goal

Stop development of a liquefied natural gas facility off the coast of her community in Oxnard, California.

Strategy 1 and Tactics

Educate herself and her community about project (education, outreach)

- Research, writing, talking with people
- Create flyers with info to mobilize youth and Latino voices
- Meet regularly with community to inform on project impacts

Strategy 2 and Tactics

Organize strategic actions (education, outreach, direct action)

- Held weekly protests at BHP Billiton offices
- Held rallies in neighborhoods that would be most impacted
- Designed blue “team” tee-shirts to show solidarity

Strategy 3 and Tactics

Create media plan (education, outreach)

- Wrote articles
- Informed media about rallies

Strategy 4 and Tactics

Stop project permits (education, outreach, policy/legal, direct action)

- Testified at California State Lands Commission (voted to deny project)
- Spoke to members of and testified before California Coastal Commission (voted 12-0 against project)
- Worked on letter-writing and phone-

call campaign to Governor who vetoed project

Key Players (friends, foes, decision-makers)

- Friends: Sierra Club, Latino No on LNG group, high school youth
- Foes: BHP Billiton (multinational billion-dollar corporation)
- Decision-makers: California Coastal Commission, Governor

Message

Focused on environmental pollution and harm to health and community wellbeing.

Obstacles

- “Environmental Justice” issue: her community was targeted after richer white communities turned down LNG proposal
- ESL: Erica had to learn English
- Scale: BHP Billiton is richest mining corporation in world

Inspiration

- A sick parent (history of asthma)
- A sense of self-worth and community pride
- A sense of fairness and ethics
- A mentor and confidence that power is the ability to act

Game changer

- Was Erica’s initial action enough to achieve her goals? (Yes but she kept with it over several years.)
- Does this make her a game-changer? (No. Banning the project in one community puts pressure on neighboring communities to absorb the project rather changing the status quo like shifting from natural gas to other energy sources.)