

Atwater Agents of Change Project

Ever wonder what our children are really thinking about the state of the world? As 6th grade teachers, we have. We set out to craft an expedition that would give them an authentic chance to give voice to their world views. What they came up with surprised us. Given the ever increasing complexity of social justice issues facing our young people today, it has become vital to guide our children to seek out credible sources of information on issues that they are personally interested in. Stepping further forward, we must also teach them engaging ways to change our world for the better. 6th grade teachers at Atwater school launched a new Expeditionary Learning project this year called “Agents of Change”. This project immersed students in case study materials focused on ***human and civil rights*** around the world. Local connections were explored with an examination of the life and work of Vel Phillips, a Milwaukee civil rights leader. On the international stage, the history of the founding of the United Nations and the creation of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 were explored. Human rights violations and the responses to those violations were examined and researched. Topics included; North Korea, religious freedom in the Soviet Union, human trafficking, women’s rights and much more.

Students were expected to focus in on and research a topic of personal interest and process a well organized and credibly sourced advocacy script which was then transformed into a PODcast. A PODcast is similar to a radio segment but can be enjoyed at anytime. PODcast stands for “Personal On Demand” broadcast.

Using PODcast software and an extensive peer review process, students created a set of engaging PODcasts that are now on display both at Atwater school and the Shorewood Public Library. Using QR code technology, anyone who wishes can listen to the student’s PODcasts for free on virtually any device with a QR code reader application.

Students responded to this project in surprising ways, taking the subject matter to unexpected depths of examination and detail. Many students interviewed family members who had personal encounters with the topics students explored. The voices of the children and the ideas and issues they are concerned with come through clearly and compellingly. The students have given us all a more profound sense of how aware and engaged our young people are and want to be. This project has given us all a more confident outlook for the future of humanity.

We encourage you to explore the student’s PODcasts by stopping by the library and looking for posters displayed on the end-caps for the adult resources section of the library.