

**Educate, Empower, Advocate:
Amplifying marginalized voices in a digital society**

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We opened the draft to the public for commenting.
Comments will be used to revise the draft before publication

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Abstract:

The Internet and other communication technologies (ICTs) can provide a powerful tool for social justice and civic action. These digital devices and social media have shown enormous potential by activists to mobilize the public, document their activities and the injustices they witness, and spread information to a wider audience. Within these contexts, individuals are often inspired to identify ways they can leverage digital technologies to work toward positive social change.

The challenge is that youth are watching and learning from these events and texts as well. As a global society, we are increasingly seeing examples of youth speaking up to address societal problems. As youth utilize these digital, connected texts, we need to ask what makes their voices uniquely powerful. Perhaps more importantly, English language arts educators need to consider ways in which they can bring these skills, practices, and texts into the classroom.

In this study, we review current and historical contexts in which technology can be used as a tool to enact change. We examine these with a lens to examine how adults and youth use these digital, social technologies to advance social change. We also study the 'real world' reactions and implications of connecting using digital texts/tools to enact change pedagogically. This study responds directly to these pressing needs in the following questions.

- How do activists use digital, social technologies for the purposes of amplifying marginalized voices and enacting social change?
- How can these acts of digital activism be leveraged to inform ELA teachers as they support inquiry, empathy, and connection in their classrooms?

This qualitative study examines the use of digital tools for activist purposes by Shakem Amen Akhet, a vocal leader of the Black Nationalist Movement in the Charleston area. Akhet is also the Executive Director of the Muhiyidin d'Baha Leadership Academy, an academy for African American youth named after a slain Charleston Black Lives Matter activist. Tensions have been at a boiling point in the Charleston area after the Walter Scott shooting, the massacre at the Charleston AME Church, and now the murder of Muhiyidin d'Baha. This study examines how Shakem utilizes digital, social tools to work toward social justice and addressing local problems.

This study focuses on the personal and professional contexts of Shakem's life as an activist and as an educator. It is important to study and learn from a activist that uses digital tools, especially in this grim climate. In interviews with Shakem, he has shared insight about the challenges in pushing back against harmful discourses with grace, determination, and a commitment to justice. Akhet utilizes digital, social tools to document and share his narrative and the narratives of others. The published study will include multimodal content (i.e., images, video, web links, etc.) that shares examples of this work, and participant interviews to support the findings and implications presented in the research. The findings identify opportunities for teachers to educate, empower, and advocate for youth as digitally literate citizens.

What does it take to prepare English language arts teachers within this grim climate in ways that help them to acknowledge and respond to the challenges they will face with grace, determination, and a commitment to justice? What role does technology play in these efforts? Digital tools can be (and have been) wielded both to spread misinformation and amplify marginalized voices; they simultaneously have the power to contribute to echo chambers of

like-minded views and introduce new perspectives to civic conversations. How can they be leveraged within ELA teacher education to support inquiry, empathy, and connection?

What are the characteristics as an activist -- How does social media influence activists' choice of tactics or strategies for creating change? What is Shakem doing as an activist?

What are the opportunities and challenges in using this in a classroom? - Contextualizing this/
The role of education in his work?

Teachers have long organized on behalf of themselves, the students they serve and the communities in which they work and live.

Role of educators is to help contextualize what students are seeing, without imparting their perspective on the situation.

A need to educate, advocate, and empower. Amplify voices of youth.

How to bring digital, social texts into the classroom and discuss.

How to contextualize these texts safely for students.

How to create a safe space for students to share their voices.

School teachers better than anyone understand that the widespread use of digital media has seriously affected their students. Most often they emphasize the difficulties that have arisen in keeping attention and concentration of young people, but also, they can confirm that this development of technologies has beneficially influenced their general outlook and

self-development, including their academic path and social commitment.

As these connected technologies and social connections shift, it is crucial for students to become connected, digitally literate citizens. Expertise as a digitally literate citizen can take many forms. It may include critically consuming online information, or using social tools for the purpose of sharing messages they believe in. The digital environment allows students to effortlessly find the answer to any question and at the same time train the skill to determine reliable information. In addition, social networks and mobile devices allow youth to view and share these texts without leaving the house.

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The results of research and polls speak in favor of the fact that digital media has become an essential part of our life. It turned out that the number of hours spent by young users on the media is comparable to the time spent by them in the school on a daily basis. We are online at least 6 hours a day all days of the week. Even full-time work takes less time.

That is why many teachers and professors began to implement digital features into the educational process in order to reach their students and simplify communication with them. It concerns not only the implementation of technical advices and interactive techniques, but also a critical approach to different digital content within the covered topics, especially economic and political ones. Since such exams as SAT or similar requires abilities to critically analyze given information and pieces of text or video clips, this innovation can be especially efficient.

Despite the wide experience of using media, because of their small life experience, young people are not protected from disinformation, which is widespread in the world wide web. Based on this information, adolescents tend to misinterpret the situation and make false conclusions. This is due to the capabilities of the media can in a matter of hours entail a chain reaction.

That is why digital activism education can develop youth digital literacy and skills in fact-checking. Educators can teach students how to thoroughly examine the causes and correctly identify the link between them and the consequences. Experienced adults can teach how to perform fact-checking. Is that what they firmly believe is true? Digital education is the responsible way to raise awareness among youth and prevent unjustified panic and digital revolution. Often the dissemination of false information is a deliberate and purposeful action. As a rule, this is done for propaganda. If teen activists are to be taken seriously, they must be accurate or they will discredit their cause.

From all of the above, we need to figure out one important idea. The development of digital activism is not a resistance to the ways to struggle and manifest one's civil position that exist for many years. This should be perceived as an additional catalyst for the modern young generation and an auxiliary method to quickly and efficiently organize a disparate crowd of like-minded people from different geographical locations. We should be embracing the power of new technologies and using them for the greater good.