BACKGROUND

Empowering Youth, Exploring Justice was established in 2013 by members of Plymouth Church in Cleveland, Ohio. The organization’s mission is to empower and amplify the voices of teens and pre-teens by bridging them with diverse individuals to engage in interactive discussions centered around social justice issues. Since its inception, EYEJ has reached over 1,000 students through its monthly classroom-based Discussion Series facilitated by 450 volunteers. Through the Discussion Series, students come together in a safe space to engage in dialogue around timely and relevant social justice topics. But when the discussion session is over, the conversation stops. Both students and faculty alike, want to continue the conversation, but they don’t have the tools nor resources, to integrate additional discussions into the curriculum. As a response to this overwhelming feedback, EYEJ built a digital discussion series tool, DiscussSocialJustice (DSJ) that allows for curriculum integration and continued conversation, both in and outside of the classroom.

FEATURES

- Digital platform
- Conversations are privately administered
- Platform can be customized for each user
- Community Managers moderate the platform
- DSJ platform is turnkey

BENEFITS

- Conversations are not confined to the classroom
- Creates a safe space for open, honest dialogue
- Seamlessly integrates with your curriculum
- Focus on teaching, not on moderating
- Easy set-up and onboarding

OPPORTUNITY

Education systems across America understand the importance of integrating social justice studies into their curriculum. In middle schools and high schools across the country, faculty are incorporating social justice topics into their social studies curriculum. In higher education, there are over 120 colleges and universities with dedicated social justice courses, and over 100 social justice majors.

A critical component of studying and addressing social justice issues is talking about them. DSJ provides a safe space for continuous and robust dialogue. The platform provides educators with a customizable, easy to use platform, that seamlessly integrates into their curriculum.

SOLUTION

DSJ is a membership-based online community that helps educators facilitate social justice conversations with their students both in and outside of the classroom. The platform is a Salesforce-driven, private community where students of all ages can come together in conversation. Through DSJ, students can engage in thought-provoking and dynamic discussions, use critical thinking skills, and expand their views on particular topics.

Educators can use the tool as a reflection component to pre-existing discussions and can integrate it into class projects. DSJ is meant to be a safe, open, and respectful community so Community Managers moderate the site to ensure safety and proper use. Because student safety is our utmost concern, we have a “3 flags and you’re out” rule and we follow all COPPA law requirements.
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Many educational institutions use digital platforms like Blackboard Learn, Desire2Learn, Sakai, Moodle, or Canvas to connect with students and distribute curriculum. However, these platforms are merely designed to distribute assignments and are not used as a community tool for ongoing dialogue.

DSJ is the first of its kind to provide faculty and students with a digital platform to engage in social justice related conversations. While students use social media to discuss social justice issues, the conversations are not necessarily coordinated, focused, private, nor facilitated. Our platform provides the simple user experience of a social media account, with the safety, privacy, and rigor required in an academic institution.

DSJ TEAM

Elizabeth Falco
Board Member, DSJ Coordinator

Amanda Lilly - DSJ Intern,
Case Western Reserve University student

Mai Moore – Founder, Board Emeritus &
Executive Director of EYEJ

LaShon Sawyer, Ph.D, LISW-S, - Board Member
At-Large; Director of Online Education for Case Western Reserve University

Bob Schenosky - Chairman of the EYEJ Board,
Retired financial industry executive, experienced in startups and non-profit organizations

Technology Team - IT Advisor + Implementation Specialist + Business Analyst

PARTNERS

EYEJ - Embrace Your Eye - Justice