



THE MEDIA IS THE LESSON

Grades: Ninth - Twelfth Grades

Subjects:



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SAFETY MESSAGE:

- Always expect a train.

OVERVIEW

This unit is ideally taught by collaborating teachers of communications, social studies and health/safety. In this unit, each student works as a member of a creative team to develop a media campaign for the railway safety industry (the client). Each team focuses on a key safety issue and develops a three-part campaign on that issue, using available media (radio, television, billboards, magazines, Internet banners, etc.). Students develop a presentation designed to convince their client (the rest of the class), to choose their media campaign as the one that they accept and use.

SUGGESTED TIME ALLOWANCE

Six 90-minute blocks

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Communicate clearly and convincingly a specific position on rail safety.
- Use details, illustrations, statistics, comparisons and analogies to defend his/her position.
- Identify, evaluate and synthesize information in order to support a thesis.
- Present information in a logical, well-organized format.
- Cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation.
- Communicate ideas to an intended audience.
- Work collaboratively and cooperatively to develop a cohesive

campaign.

National Academic Content Standards addressed by this lesson.

MATERIALS

- Internet-Ready Computer(s)
- Browser (Either Netscape or Internet Explorer)
- PowerPoint or HyperStudio or any word processor desktop publishing program (for the production of flyers, brochures, posters, etc.)
- Camcorder
- Audiocassette Recorder/Player
- Digital Camera
- Blank Disk(s) to Store Multimedia Presentation

Per student:

- Assignment Sheet
- Client Scoring Sheet
- Grading Rubric

VOCABULARY

Media campaign, PSA, comprehensive, intended audience

PROCEDURES

TEACHER PREPARATION:

View videotapes that serve as examples of trespassing and dangerous acts students might try around trains. *David's Run* and *Byron's Last Day* are good examples. See the video utilization suggestions in the Teacher Resources section.

MOTIVATION:

Explain to the students that for the next several class periods, they will be serving in the role of marketing specialists in building a public service campaign for the railroad industry. Their clients are looking for them to present a three-part, well-developed campaign (to be presented in the 4th and 5th class periods). Ask if any students have seen a movie, music video or commercial that includes a train sequence in which people perform dangerous acts in or around trains. (If possible, show an example to get the discussion going. *David's Run* and *Byron's Last Day* are good examples.) Pose these questions to fuel discussion: *How are the acts you've seen in the media dangerous? What are some of the railroad incidents you have read about or seen on news broadcasts? What are some of the rail safety messages you remember from elementary and middle school health and safety classes? Which of these do you think might*

lend themselves best to being developed into a public service campaign? Allow students to think about and discuss these questions.

ACTIVITY:

1. Show on a large screen one or all of the public service announcements provided in the Teacher Resources section.
2. Also discuss some of the background information provided with this lesson. Have students note some of the safety messages, each focused on a different general theme, such as trespassing. Divide students into groups of 4-6, using any successful method for teaming students of different skills. As an example of small group roles, each team might have the following:
 - a. Artist — In charge of designing any art components of the project, though all group members help to complete the actual artistic work.
 - b. Internet "whizkid" — In charge of guiding the Internet research, though all members of the group may be using computers.
 - c. Presentation leader — In charge of assuring that all components of the presentation are ready before the presentation date; also leads the presentation for the class, though all members of the group will be involved in creating components and giving presentation.
 - d. Media manager — In charge of directing any audio or video components of the project, though all group members will be involved in producing these components.
 - e. Editor — In charge of reviewing and editing all written components of project prior to presentation to class and teacher, though all group members work on the writing.
 - f. Safety guide — In charge of assuring that the safety messages chosen are utilized throughout the campaign, though all students in the group should be sure to include the safety messages.
3. Tell students that they should spend about 20 minutes looking over the different safety messages and choose one that they would like to use as their campaign's focus. It is possible that teams will choose the same message, in which case they will have to negotiate so that each team focuses on a different aspect of the message. Ask teams to start to think about which media they will use to produce their public service announcement: television, radio, print, billboard, etc. They will create one PSA message for all three forms of media.
4. Pass out the assignment and go over it, so that students are

clear about their tasks. The assignment requires students to use the Web to locate statistical information about injuries and deaths caused in or around trains and details about train crashes. There are two specific websites where this information can be found: Operation Lifesaver <<http://www.oli.org>> and the Federal Railroad Administration

<<http://ww.fra.dot.gov/site/>>. You may also wish for students to revisit the PSA messages shared with the class. These can be found on the CD-ROM or through the OL website. Each group should have time to go to these websites, either on a single classroom computer while other teams strategize off-line, or in a computer lab, where all teams work on the Web simultaneously. Give the students information to prepare them to use the computers and access the websites. It is important that they are clear about the amount of time they will have to devote to computer time, as compared to time off-line when they will be preparing the presentation of their media campaign.

5. Provide time for students to find statistics through the two websites, develop their campaign as a team and produce their PSAs for three forms of media. This will take both class time and homework time.
6. During the fourth class period, guide students in the development of their presentation to the client. Begin presentations on Day 5 and wrap up on Day 6 with the final team.

CONCLUSION:

Using the client scoring sheet provided, have all students in the class serve as "the client" and determine which team presents the best PSA campaign. Take a class vote to determine the winning marketing firm. The winning team gets an additional 10 points added on to their grading rubric.

HIGHER ORDER THINKING

This lesson is high level in its requirements for all students to use skills of critical thinking, problem solving, creative production, teamwork and compromise. To challenge students more than the lesson already provides, you might require all teams to do a radio or television PSA as one of the three media forms they select. In addition, a core group of students from the class could take on the task of communicating with a local public access cable provider or broadcaster to see about airing the class' PSAs through local media outlets.

ASSESSMENT

- Final presentation and journal entries (all objectives listed at beginning of lesson). (Use details, illustrations, statistics, comparisons and analogies to defend his/her position.)
- Have students complete a journal of their group process and individual contributions to the team effort. Ask them to evaluate their own work and the team's finished products. Evaluate students as objectively as possible using the grading rubric provided with this lesson. Share the rubric with students in advance so they know what is expected of them. Monitor student use of the computers and their ability to stay on-task, as well as their cooperation as a member of their creative team. While some students may stand out as leaders in their groups, take steps to assure that all members of the team have the chance to play an important role, rather than having just one person do all the work. The fact that this unit is limited to six 90-minute periods should help to assure that everyone has an important job to do in each team.

EXTENSIONS

Math: Have students develop a budget for their media campaign.

Health/Safety: Arrange to have an Operation Lifesaver state coordinator visit the class to answer questions related to the safety messages researched.

Technology: Have students arrange to publish their media campaigns and multimedia presentations on the school server for access through the school Intranet. In addition, students could create a Yahoo club for the purpose of sharing media campaign information or for debating topics. This club could continue beyond the actual project.

English/Journalism: Students could develop a newsletter (either in print form or in HTML format) that synthesizes all media campaign messages and provides a forum for student expression and input.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Operation Lifesaver website: <http://www.oli.org>

Federal Railroad Administration website: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/site/>

Operation Lifesaver [Public Service Announcements](#)

[David's Run](#) and [Byron's Last Day](#) Videos

Video utilization tips for [David's Run](#)

Video utilization tips for [Byron's Last Day](#)

Background information on [trespassing](#), [general safety](#), [signs/signals](#) and [driving](#)

NATIONAL ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

These standards are provided by the Mid-continent Regional Educational

Laboratory (McREL) online publication, [Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/). <<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>>

The following standards are addressed by the activities of this lesson:

Arts: Visual Arts

Level IV: High School (Grades 9-12)

Standard 2: Knows how to use structures (e.g. sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art
Benchmark: Understands how the characteristics and structures of art are used to accomplish commercial, personal, communal or other artistic intentions

Arts: Theater

Level IV: High School (Grades 9-12)

Standard 5: Understands how informal and formal theater, film, television and electronic media productions create and communicate meaning

Benchmark: Knows how social meanings (aural, oral and visual symbols with personal and/or social significance) communicated in informal productions, formal productions and personal performances of different cultures and historical periods can relate to current personal, national and international issues

Language Arts

Level IV: High School (Grades 9-12)

Standard 2: Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

Benchmarks:

- Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas
- Uses a variety of techniques to convey a personal style and voice

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Benchmarks:

- Uses a variety of news sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., newspapers, news magazines, television, radio, videotapes, artifacts)
- Synthesizes a variety of types of visual information, including pictures and symbols, for research topics

Standard 8: Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning

Benchmarks:

- Adjusts message wording and delivery to particular audiences

- and for particular purposes
- Evaluates own and others' effectiveness in group discussions and in formal presentations
- Makes informed judgments about nonprint media
- Understands influences on language use

Life Skills: Thinking and Reasoning

Level IV: High School (Grades 9-12)

Standard 1: Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument

Benchmark: Identifies the logic of arguments that are based on quantitative data

Life Skills: Working With Others

Level IV: (Grades K-12)

Standard 1: Contributes to the overall effort of the group

Benchmarks:

- Demonstrates respect for others in the group
- Identifies and uses the strengths of others
- Takes initiative when needed

Technology

Level IV: High School (Grades 9-12)

Standard 2: Knows the characteristics and uses of computer software programs

Benchmark: Uses desktop publishing software to create a variety of publications

To see related standards for your state, search [Achieve's Clearinghouse](http://www.achievetest.org/achievetest/achieveteststart.nsf/Search?OpenForm):
< <http://www.achievetest.org/achievetest/achieveteststart.nsf/Search?OpenForm> >

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