

## Film Clips for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

What does education look like when students are engaged in meaningful tasks that challenge them to think deeply and integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines? The framework from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Partnership<sup>1</sup> calls for schools to create this scenario from classroom to classroom, day to day. But the question remains. How do we get there? Current practice often focuses at the more basic levels of knowledge and comprehension that are typically required on the standardized tests mandated by No Child Left Behind. Effective practices to achieve truly rigorous and relevant instruction remain allusive.

Yet there is a way. To get there, we must look at instruction from a bigger perspective. We need to bring the world into the classroom, and the classroom into the world. This will require going beyond simulation exercises and contrived problems. It requires providing students with learning experiences that are of the world, from the world, and in the world. Most importantly, it requires viewing instruction as integrated learning in the most acute sense of the word, fully bringing together students' experiences in their daily lives with the skills they develop on a daily basis.

Now, advocating for real world learning is nothing new in education. What is unique about the process outlined in this guide is that it models how to integrate two revolutionary instructional tools: major motion pictures and the teaching methodology of service-learning. Studying, assessing, and taking action on community issues through service-learning has been found to have a substantial effect on student learning, as well as their academic and civic engagement. Service-learning offers a vehicle through which students can integrate new skills in the context of the larger community, providing opportunities to adapt, synthesize, and evaluate what they know as they address an identified need in the community.

Herein lies the possibility to take No Child Left Behind to the next level. If we stop at measuring academic success by what the individual has gained, we fail as an educational system. It is only through raising the academic achievement of individuals in order to strengthen our communities and work for the "common good" that we succeed as a democratic society.

Who better to provide messages that inspire and broaden understanding of this work than the Hollywood movie industry? In the film, *National Treasure* (Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2005), the character played by Nicholas Cage says, "Of all the ideas that became the United States, there's a line here that's at the heart of all the others." He then reads a section from the Declaration of Independence, which he translates to "those that have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action." If we are to succeed in truly preparing our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must help them learn to use the abilities they have to make our democracy stronger, our economy more viable, and our social systems healthier.

---

<sup>1</sup> Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2004). Retrieved January 12, 2008 from <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>.

The movie clips from major motion pictures that correspond to this guide have been selected for their ability to connect content area learning with an understanding of the world. They portray relevant themes which have been identified through character education initiatives, and thereby can be used to strengthen the development of character in the instructional setting. The clips provide students with situations that relate to "real life" experiences and draw them into a natural engagement with the subject. This approach not only stimulates students' thinking on moral action and character, but enhances their engagement with classroom curriculum in such areas as Language Arts, Social Studies, and the Arts.

Most importantly, the Film Clips DVDs connect academic content with inspiration for using the skills and knowledge gained in the classroom to strengthen our communities. While this guide does not attempt to provide in-depth expertise in service-learning, it is important to have a basic understanding of the methodology in order to effectively implement the suggested curricular units. At the most basic level, service-learning is an instructional process which connects academic learning with service to the community. There are, however a number of important elements that must be incorporated into this process to have the intended impact on student learning, academic and civic engagement, and community issues. Renowned service-learning researcher Shelley Billig notes, "As practitioners have noted for many years, service-learning *can* have strong academic, civic, and character building outcomes, but these outcomes are not automatic. Rather, *it is the way in which service-learning is implemented that makes a difference.*"<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, it is incumbent upon the practitioner to become well-versed in the elements necessary to make this critical difference in order to establish effective practices that produce the intended outcomes. A set of eight promising practices are currently undergoing scrutiny by service-learning experts and practitioners across the country which will ultimately lead to the adoption of a set of national standards and indicators for the field. Educators seeking to utilize this instructional methodology need to become familiar with these practices in order to ensure high quality experiences for their students. A full discussion of the promising practices and indicators of successful implementation can be found in the publication *Growing to Greatness 2007*, available for download at [http://www.nylc.org/resource\\_center.cfm](http://www.nylc.org/resource_center.cfm).

Through the integration of the movie clips contained in the *Film Clips* resources, content area skill development, and service-learning projects that address meaningful community needs, students will be provided with learning opportunities that develop a broad spectrum of critical skills identified by the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The curricular units contained in this guide develop higher order thinking skills, cross-disciplinary studies, and communication skills by bringing together a broad range of experiences that connect learning to life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. No longer is instruction an isolated series of concepts to master. Film Clips for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning makes classroom experiences real, using the language of popular culture to connect the

---

<sup>2</sup> National Youth Leadership Council (2007). Excerpted from "Growing to Greatness 2007". Available from the NYLC Resource Center at <http://www.nylc.org>.

issues that are important in students' lives with the skills and knowledge expected in the academic standards. Below you will find an outline of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills which will be developed through the integration of the resources and instructional strategies contained in this guide.

<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Addressed in this Film Clips Guide<sup>3</sup></b>	
Life and Career Skills	<p><b>Initiative and Self-Direction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring one's own understanding and learning needs</li> <li>• Going beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise</li> <li>• Defining, prioritizing and completing tasks without direct oversight</li> </ul> <p><b>Social and Cross-Cultural Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working appropriately and productively with others</li> <li>• Leveraging the collective intelligence of groups when appropriate</li> <li>• Bridging cultural differences and using differing perspectives to increase innovation and the quality of work</li> </ul> <p><b>Leadership and Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal</li> <li>• Leveraging strengths of others to accomplish a common goal</li> <li>• Demonstrating integrity and ethical behavior</li> <li>• Acting responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind</li> </ul>
Learning and Innovation Skills	<p><b>Creativity and Innovation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing, implementing and communicating new ideas to others</li> <li>• Being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives</li> <li>• Acting on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the domain in which the innovation occurs</li> </ul> <p><b>Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercising sound reasoning in understanding</li> <li>• Making complex choices and decisions</li> <li>• Understanding the interconnections among systems</li> <li>• Identifying and asking significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions</li> <li>• Framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication and Collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulating thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing</li> <li>• Demonstrating ability to work effectively with diverse teams</li> <li>• Exercising flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal</li> <li>• Assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work</li> </ul>
Information, Media, and Technology Skills	<p><b>Information Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing information efficiently and effectively, evaluating information critically and competently and using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand</li> </ul> <p><b>Media Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding how media messages are constructed, for what purposes and using which tools, characteristics and conventions.</li> <li>• Examining how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2004). Retrieved January 12, 2008 from <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possessing a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information</li> </ul> <p>ICT (Information, Communications &amp; Technology) Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information, and the possession of a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information</li> </ul>
Core Subjects and 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Themes	<p>Core Subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core content standards with interdisciplinary connections developed through the service-learning project selected by the students.</li> </ul> <p>Global Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues</li> <li>• Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts</li> </ul> <p>Civic Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes</li> <li>• Exercising the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels</li> <li>• Understanding the local and global implications of civic decisions</li> </ul>

## How to use this guide

The curricular units contained in this guide are designed as an overview representing typical instructional units currently taught in classrooms at the identified grade levels. Using backward curriculum design, these unit plans are grounded in the core academic standards. Topics addressed in each unit are shaped by the essential questions and desired learning outcomes. Within each unit plan are suggestions for assessment of learning, movie segments from the Film Clips resources, and a process for developing a service-learning project related to the essential questions identified in the unit. The intent is for educators to infuse these resources into the instructional units currently taught in the classroom, resulting in rich learning experiences that will transform students into active global citizens. Ideally, this guide will not be used to add on to an already full instructional “plate”, but will instead provide an alternative method of covering core content that enhances current practices.

A common fourth grade science unit (typically where health is taught at the elementary level), for example, might focus on nutrition. Based on the backward design model of curriculum development, we would begin to outline this unit by identifying the content standards that would be addressed. While state standards vary from state to state, the national standards identified by Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel)<sup>4</sup> offer the following as related directly to this unit:

**Standard 6.** Understands essential concepts about nutrition and diet

**Level II (Grades 3-5)**

1. Knows the nutritional value of different foods

<sup>4</sup> Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (2007). 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Standards and Benchmarks. Retrieved December 30, 2007, from <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

2. Knows healthy eating practices (e.g., eating a nutritious breakfast, eating a variety of foods, eating nutritious meals and snacks at regular intervals to satisfy individual energy and growth needs)
3. Knows factors that influence food choices (e.g., activity level, peers, culture, religion, advertising, time, age, health, money/economics, convenience, environment, status, personal experience)
4. Knows how food-preparation methods and food-handling practices affect the safety and nutrient quality of foods

These standards call for the development of understandings in what constitutes healthy eating, how to make healthy eating choices, and what factors influence individual choices. The essential questions that might be addressed in this unit might include:

- What is healthy eating?
- Why do different people have different needs in maintaining a healthy diet?
- How do commercials and the media affect our food choices?
- How are eating habits related to income levels?
- Why are there so many health problems in the United States that are related to poor eating habits despite all of the information available to people about healthy eating?

In moving students toward mastery of these standards, a teacher might begin the unit by showing the movie clip from *Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius*, contained in Episode 2 of the Film Clips DVDs. This clip shows the children in Jimmy Neutron's neighborhood going wild when they discover that all of the parents have been kidnapped by aliens. This clip could be used to stimulate a discussion about self-responsibility in general, but also to explore students' predictions about what type of food they might eat if they had no parental supervision. This discussion could then serve as a launchpad for instructional activities to follow, which would explore why healthy eating is so important, what constitutes healthy eating, and to address the other concepts posed in the essential questions.

The linkage between the skills and knowledge developed in this unit and a relevant service-learning project would be made by asking students to focus on issues related to healthy eating in their community. As students explore community assets and identify issues related to this topic, they may discover that there is an overabundance of fast food restaurants in their area, with few healthy alternatives available. Or they may find that the school lunch program could be more effective in promoting healthy eating by offering a salad bar. Further research into the issue may reveal that the local culture places a high emphasis on activities that promote unhealthy eating choices. The possibilities for students to design and implement a service-learning project that would address one of these needs are many and varied. In the process, students would begin to use the knowledge and skills they've gained in understanding nutrition to make a difference in their community. Critical thinking and problem solving skills would be necessary components of instruction as students weigh multiple options, explore alternative solutions, and determine effective courses of action. In the process, important life skills, communication, and technology skills would be seamlessly interwoven with core academic content as students undergo a rich unit of study that would help them become better citizens for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Each of the following curriculum guides provides an overview of an instructional unit that utilizes this process. You are encouraged to use this as a resource in making the connection between high quality instruction and engaging students in our democracy through taking civic action on issue related to what they are learning in school. Use these models as inspiration for shaping your classroom into an effective 21<sup>st</sup> century learning center. Adapt them, mold them, and intersect them with your current instructional practices. However they fit into your classroom curriculum, use the principles outlined in this guide to fully prepare your students to be successful 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens.