

Mighty Writers

Mighty Writers, our 501(c)(3) nonprofit, teaches Philadelphia kids, ages seven to 17, to think and write with clarity.

Our free programs combat the literacy crisis in Philadelphia, where nearly half of high school students drop out and some 50% of working-age adults are functionally illiterate (can't read bank statements, fill out job applications or easily comprehend news articles).

At Mighty Writers, we don't believe that education and entertainment are, or need to be, mutually exclusive. Like you, we believe that a successful new era in education can be achieved through innovative, entertaining and relevant technology-based projects that appeal to, impact and connect large numbers of students.

We also notice that everybody seems to have an opinion about teens in Philadelphia and our K-12 education crisis--the politicians, educators, teacher unions and pundits of every stripe. We at Mighty Writers have an opinion, too: make sure the conversation includes youth voices.

As a result, we propose to design and launch the Mighty Post: an online journalism platform where the sole contributors are city high school students. Students will work with an editor to develop, submit and comment on quality pieces of youth writing from across the city.

At least 150 (we hope this is a low estimate) of 1,000 students who create user accounts will contribute published, polished content to the Mighty Post in the site's first year. We will track how many student users sign up and interact through the website.

The Post will inspire a citywide conversation among local teens at a time when technology, K-12 education, our job market, the economy and the media are in flux. It will function as an interactive website with sections (News, Arts & Entertainment, Music, Style/Fashion, Sports, Neighborhoods, Schools/Education) and stylish content (including daily polls and slideshows) designed to energize and empower city high schoolers.

Teens tell us they don't feel as if the classroom writing they are asked to do is relevant. If they have to choose between a five-paragraph essay that only their teacher will see and a piece about what they'd do if they were principal for a day that's going to be viewed by their friends, they'll choose the latter every time. We know. We asked.

By blogging and commenting, students will become better accustomed to reading, writing and engaging with news online, with respect and thoughtful criticism. By working with an editor to publish essays, articles, comments and multimedia contributions, students will create and maintain a legitimate news outlet to call their own.