



Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide



Getting Started

What Is Educational Outreach?

In very broad terms, outreach extends the impact of public broadcasting through a variety of media services, educational materials, and collaborative activities designed to engage individuals and foster community participation in addressing issues of concern.

Educational outreach refers to activities that support formal or classroom-based education, as well as informal education that occurs outside the classroom. Educational outreach campaigns provide educational experiences for young people in classrooms, libraries, after-school programs, community-based organizations, museums, etc., as well as supporting the professional development of the professionals and paraprofessionals who work with them. This definition does not exclude initiatives that also have a Web site targeting the general audience, or a family activity guide, or a partnership with the Rotary Club. However, at its core, the projects we are focusing on have a strong educational mission, in the more traditional sense of the term, even if the series themselves target a general audience.

- Formal vs. Informal Education 2
- Who Can Help Me?** 3
 - National Center for Outreach 4
 - PBS Interactive Learning 5
 - Educational Outreach Manager 6



Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide

➤ *Getting Started*

Formal vs. Informal Education

Formal education is classroom-based, provided by trained teachers. Informal education happens outside the classroom, in after-school programs, community-based organizations, museums, libraries, or at home.

What are the main differences between the two?

- In general, classrooms have the same kids and the same teachers every day. After-school programs are often drop-in, so attendance is inconsistent, as is leadership.
- Classroom activities can last several days. After-school programs need to complete an activity each day because a different group of kids could be in attendance tomorrow.
- You can assume that classroom-based teachers have a certain level of training in educational philosophy, effective teaching strategies, classroom management, and content. After-school providers, by contrast, vary in experience and knowledge of teaching techniques, content expertise, and group management. Typically, materials for after-school settings need to include a lot more structure.
- Teachers need to meet educational standards and stick to a specified curriculum, which can make it difficult for them to incorporate nontraditional content. After-school programs, on the other hand, can be more flexible with their content.

Both formal and informal education settings offer different strengths to your educational outreach project. If your project fits in the classroom, it can have a very long life; teachers will use trusted resources for years. After-school programs offer a different kind of environment, where your activities don't need to be as formal and where you can reach a different audience.

While both schools and after-school programs serve students, many kids who feel disenfranchised at school blossom in after-school settings. Real learning can happen in a setting where kids feel less intimidated or more comfortable than they do in a formal classroom. The ultimate goal is that their success in an informal setting can lead to greater confidence in the formal classroom.

An additional benefit of developing materials for informal educational settings is that they may be useful to parents at home with their kids, or to adult learners who are looking to expand their knowledge, either for their own enrichment or to increase their career options.



Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide



Getting Started

Who Can Help Me?

As you develop your proposal, you may want to engage the services of either an outreach staff person from your presenting station or an independent consultant to serve as your project's educational outreach manager.

National outreach campaigns are generally launched one of two ways. If you are affiliated (either as staff or in a presenting-station relationship) with a major producing station, the station outreach department or the consultants it generally works with can help you develop and later implement your educational outreach initiatives. Try to involve the station's outreach staff as early as possible in your production development process. The more time you give staff members to develop the educational outreach elements of your project, the stronger your proposal and project will be.

If you are an independent producer without access to a presenting station's outreach department, an independent educational outreach consultant can help you develop, budget, and implement your educational outreach plan. The National Center for Outreach (<http://www.nationaloutreach.org>) maintains a list of educational outreach consultants that it will share with you. The *NCO Pipeline* (<http://www.nationaloutreach.org/Pipeline.html>), which lists upcoming PBS-related outreach projects available on their Web site, is also a good resource. You could look for projects similar to yours in the Pipeline and see who is handling the outreach to try to identify a good match. PBS itself can also provide referrals and editorial assistance (see following page). Check the CPB Web site's PTV Funding section (<http://www.cpb.org/tv/funding>) or Education Funding section (<http://www.cpb.org/ed/funding>) to see if there are any system-wide initiatives around a similar topic that can serve as an umbrella for your project. In addition, you may also want to attend the NCO's annual conference, where you can network with educational outreach professionals and consultants and hear about other projects.

In addition, some funders (such as ITVS and the Annie E. Casey Foundation) provide outreach consulting and support to help you develop your educational outreach program. Sometimes they will even implement your program for you, or fold it into an umbrella initiative that they or their consultants are implementing.



Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide

➤ Getting Started: Who Can Help Me?

National Center for Outreach

The goals of the National Center for Outreach (NCO) are to provide resources, training, and funding for public television stations, promote meaningful outreach at the local level, and expand the presence of outreach within public broadcasting. NCO is committed to supporting producers as they develop and implement national educational outreach initiatives.

Among the many services the NCO provides are the following:

- Outreach consultation and technical assistance
- * Contact lists of outreach consultants and PTV station outreach coordinators
- An annual NCO conference
- Presentations at national conferences in and beyond the industry
- A producer outreach day camp (in planning process)
- *Pipeline*, a listing of upcoming broadcasts/initiatives with related outreach, available online and in print
- Grants to public television stations to support local outreach initiatives
- Developing and modeling best outreach practices
- Fostering local and national outreach partnerships
- Facilitating national evaluation initiatives

For more information, contact
National Center for Outreach
975 Observatory Drive
Madison, WI 53706
Tel: 608-263-9295
Fax: 608-265-5039
<http://www.nationaloutreach.org>

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Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide



Getting Started: Who Can Help Me?

PBS Interactive Learning

PBS is another valuable resource for shaping your project. *Producing for PBS* (<http://www.pbs.org/producers>) provides an overview of key PBS priorities and processes. Since your project will likely have a Web site that will live on PBS.org, you'll need to become familiar with the guidelines found in the *PBS Web Production Manual* (<http://www.pbs.org/producers/webmanual>—note that you must register to use this site). PBS Interactive Learning staff will provide resource information and support. They can help you shape your project plans, offer curriculum developer referrals, and provide editorial assistance.

For more information, contact

PBS Interactive Learning
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-739-5127



Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide

➤ *Getting Started: Who Can Help Me?*

Educational Outreach Manager

Why do you need someone dedicated to managing your educational outreach efforts if you already have staff creating all your different educational outreach components? An educational outreach manager can help you do the following:

- Define the overall goals and target audience as you begin your project.
- Determine who is doing what, what the educational needs and opportunities are, and where your project best fits into that landscape.
- Cultivate partnerships to help reach your target audience, and then manage the ongoing support of those relationships.
- Create a distribution plan for any print materials and work with print staff to revise these as needs change. (Some educational outreach managers may also oversee the development of the print and online curricula resources.)
- Develop person-to-person activities to bring your project's resources directly to the target audience, and throughout the project, identify new opportunities to leverage these resources.

An educational outreach manager also brings valuable knowledge and experience to your project: She's learned from mistakes that would cost you money and time if you were to repeat them.

So when should you engage the services of an educational outreach manager? The manager should be involved both before and after your broadcast premiere. In general, try to bring in an educational outreach manager during the early development stage of your project. The benefit will far outweigh the small additional cost that you might incur. As you prepare your proposal, a manager can establish partnerships, develop the schedule, and lay the groundwork for the overall educational outreach campaign. Once that baseline is established, the manager need not stay on the payroll through your funding period, but her early work will pay off enormously in the long run, enabling the educational outreach team to hit the ground running once your project launches.



Enhancing Education

A Producer's Guide

➤ *Getting Started: Who Can Help Me?*

Educational Outreach Manager (cont'd)

Your educational outreach manager should also be on board for some months after the premiere to ensure that your project's resources are getting out there and getting used. Ultimately, how long the coordinator stays on will depend in large part on the size and scope of your project. But the educational outreach coordinator can play a big role in extending the impact of your project well beyond the broadcast period.