

Title of Session: SSF - My 2 Cents For Change

Moderator: Michael Hutchison

Guest Speaker: Sarah Shapiro

Title of File: 20080910ssf2cents

Date: September 10, 2008

Room: Social Studies Forum

MichaelH: Welcome to tonight's Social Studies Forum Session

MichaelH: we have a great topic that will be of interest to teachers of all grade levels and subject areas that we'll be discussing

MichaelH: Sarah joined us for a session back in the spring, but she now has new election resources on the My2CentsForChange site that she'll be sharing

MichaelH: as well as an overview of the site and how we can use it

MichaelH: ok, if we are ready... let's start with introductions

MichaelH: would everyone like to tell us who you are, where you're located geographically, and what you teach

MichaelH is a social studies teacher in Southwestern Indiana

DavidW helps teachers learn more about educational technology in New Jersey

BjB: I'm a retired communications and arts teacher located in Pennsylvania

MeganT: I am an English teacher in San Diego CA and a masters degree student at Cal State San Marcos

MirandahO: I teach 7th grade English in Encinitas, California; Encinitas is in the north part of San Diego.

MichaelH: Cool, Megan, I was telling Mirandah that I spent a few days in your fair city last November... was there for the National Council for the Social Studies conference

MirandahO: I am also working on my masters at Cal State, San Marcos

MirandahO: Were you in downtown?

MichaelH . o O (had dinner at Croce's, and went to the zoo, too)

DavidW has had a couple of meals at Croce's, too

MichaelH: didn't see Bad, Bad Leroy Brown though...

DavidW smiles

MichaelH: anyway... Sarah is going to demonstrate some great features on the My2CentsForChange site, so I'll let her introduce herself and talk about the site...

SarahSha: I'm not a teacher but I do have some great resources to share with teachers about engaging teens not old enough to vote in the upcoming election. I am based in Washington, DC

MichaelH listens attentively to Sarah

SarahSha: Thanks, Michael. Let's get started!

SarahSha: I'm very excited to share our website and resources but also to find out what additional materials and resources we can provide to teachers like you across America.

SarahSha: I am here to share a website called My2CentsforChange (www.my2centsforchange.org). It's a site for teens, ages 13-17, who are not yet old enough to vote but want to play a role in the upcoming presidential election. It was designed to be a fun, interactive way for teens to make their voices heard on the issues that are being talked about by the presidential candidates.

SarahSha: For those more tech savvy, it's a Flash site - fun, colorful, dynamic - all what today's teens are used to!

MichaelH notes to all that you can click on the link Sarah just showed and go to the site... however, don't stay away long, so you can follow with the discussion

SarahSha: The site was launched on Super Tuesday (in February) and has generated thousands of messages for the presidential candidates from teens across the country

MirandahO: Are the messages questions for the candidates as well?

SarahSha: I'm going to go into what the site does and how it works but please feel free to ask questions along the way!

SarahSha: They can be - it's really an opportunity to teens to "add their 2 cents" so if they choose to do so in the form of a question, that's great too!

SarahSha: but for the most part, teens tend to give their opinions on the issues

SarahSha: A quick run down of what the site does: A teen can visit the site, pick an issue from one of our 11 "issues wells" (it has a wishing well motif). And then "add their 2

cents" to the well by writing a message about how they feel on a particular issue.

DavidW: any sense of feedback from the candidates or the campaigns to the questions, Sarah?

SarahSha: Not only do these "2 cents" get posted to the site but the teen is also able to select which presidential candidates they'd like to receive the message. Every 6 weeks, we'll bundle the messages and send them off to the candidates to let them know that the teens of America are united in sharing their opinions on issues from war, genocide, health care, etc.

MichaelH: Sarah, what's the target grade levels for the site?

MirandahO: At our school, we have a Teens for Tolerance club. This sounds appropriate for them, especially since most are in 8th grade and 13 years old.

SarahSha: We've heard from some of the campaigns and we're actually planning to have a group of teens present the campaigns with a final collection of the 2 cents just before the election.

SarahSha: Yes, our targets are grades 7-12...the key is ages 13-17 but the resources and materials can be used by any ages

SarahSha: Ultimately, we want as many teens to "add their 2 cents" and spread the word about the site as possible up through the election.

SarahSha: It makes a big statement about the youth of America and gets teens involved before they are able to vote so when the time comes, they already feel a connection to the process

SarahSha: Additionally, we launched a My2CentsforChange Election Blog in July written BY and FOR teens

SarahSha: it can be found at www.my2centsforchange.wordpress.com

SarahSha: We recruited teen bloggers from across the country to regularly blog about election-related issues that matter to them.

SarahSha: We wanted to provide an opportunity for those who have more to say to talk about the issues in greater detail and to allow other teens to comment on them

SarahSha: We launched the blog as part of an initiative led by YouthNoise.org (www.youthnoise.org) and their election coverage.

MirandahO: Do these teens basically get the conversation started and the blog can be accessed by others to voice their own opinions

SarahSha : Exactly

SarahSha : It's a great tool for the classroom - to read a bloggers post(s) and then have your students comment

SarahSha : and build discussion

SarahSha : The more schools and classrooms we can get on board with My2CentsforChange and the blog the better

MirandahO : Will this Web site be up after the election?

SarahSha : which leads me to some of the available supplemental resources we've created for teachers like you

DavidW left the room (signed off).

SarahSha : We're still in the process of planning the next phase of the initiative.

SarahSha : But it will likely morph into a non-election-centric civic involvement initiative for teens

MeganT : seems like it would be a great way to keep students involved in the democratic process all of the time

SarahSha : We're working with several great partner organizations who also have amazing resources

SarahSha : Exactly - the goal is for My2CentsforChange to serve as a catalyst for further involvement...not the be all and end all of civic involvement

MichaelH : it might also be interesting to have the teens continue to look at the dynamics of the transition to the new administration, and to follow whether the winner follows through on their promises

MichaelH . o O (and not just talk about lipstick)

SarahSha : All great ideas

SarahSha : Let me bring your attention to another website - www.bbyo.org/my2cents

SarahSha : this page has a number of great resources - in addition to using the blog - to help you implement My2CentsforChange in the classroom and at your school

SarahSha : I recommend the Teacher/Facilitator Guide which gives an all you need in-

class program based around the website

MirandahO: When you say resources, do you mean lesson ideas?

SarahSha: Remembering, that the ultimate goal is to have each student add their 2 cents to the site so the candidates see the interest of the students

SarahSha: The Teacher/Facilitator Guide is a lesson plan, essentially

MichaelH: Sarah, is the teacher guide on the www.bbyo.org/my2cents page? I must have missed the link...

SarahSha: and there are other promotional and programmatic resources on the site

MichaelH: whoops... just found the link... sorry

SarahSha: It's there - it's called "Give Your 2 Cents in the Classroom: A Guide for Teachers/Facilitators"

MichaelH needs to clean his glasses, apparently

SarahSha: We also have promotional materials - including buttons and business cards to help spread the word in your schools.

SarahSha: I'd love to send a supply to each of you

SarahSha: You can email me your contact information and I'll send you a package, at no cost

MirandahO: That would be great!

MichaelH: cool, Sarah...

SarahSha: my email is sarah@my2centsforchange.org

MirandahO: I'm going to check out the Web site later, I will lose the chat window as well.

MichaelH: Sarah, you may have mentioned it before... how many schools/students are currently involved in discussions on My2Cents?

SarahSha: While I don't have an exact count, we know that there are lots of schools around the country participating in different ways

SarahSha: We deployed thousands of teens across the country to bring My2CentsforChange to their schools

MichaelH: Of course, a lot of Web 2.0 stuff is just becoming mainstream... so my bet is the number of kids/schools will definitely grow

SarahSha: And we've even partnered with Rock the Vote on a large concert in a suburban Maryland high school reaching several thousands of teens

SarahSha: There will also be a My2CentsforChange concert on Sunset Blvd in LA at the end of the month

SarahSha: Our intention is for it to be as viral as possible - but we didn't want to count out the influence teachers can have on spreading the word

SarahSha: The site really combines the fun of Web 2.0 with the excitement of such an historic election

SarahSha: And teens LOVE to add their opinions to the mix - and we truly value what they have to say

MichaelH: that's definitely true, Sarah... I think technology is always a good "hook" for teens, and of course, you couldn't have asked for a more controversial or historic campaign

MirandahO: and they love to have their voice heard!

SarahSha: At this point, I'd love to hear more from you about ways we can work together to spread the word to other teachers around the country as well as creative ways to present the site

DavidW: Any discussions on lowering the voting age?

SarahSha: Perhaps a little, but not a great deal of discussion about it, which is interesting.

MichaelH: Has there been a lot of conversation on the site about the choice of Sarah Palin, Sarah?

SarahSha: It has definitely come up the past week!

DavidW smiles

MirandahO: Are you advertised or mentioned in the Teaching Tolerance magazine? Many teachers I know read it, and it is highly recommended at our university's credential program. The issues that my2centsforchange centers on seem to be largely related to tolerance. One in particular-- genocide and immigration

MichaelH: My kids have definitely been fired up about that the past few days

MichaelH: Sarah, going back to your question about promoting the site...

MichaelH: it could definitely be promoted on various social studies related listservs...

MichaelH: Didn't I first contact you because of a post you made on the NCSS listserv?

SarahSha: Indeed :)

MeganT: Could you promote on local library sites? I send my students there all the time to research.

DavidW wonders if ISTE might be interested in highlighting the web site

SarahSha: That's a great idea. We've definitely been covered on several library sites but more through word of mouth

MichaelH: Great idea, David...

MichaelH: I'm not sure... maybe a mention in Learning and Leading With Technology?

SarahSha: We've gotten a great deal of press (which can be seen in the press section of the website)

SarahSha: All these resources sound great and I will definitely follow up with you to get more information

MichaelH: They did a web 2.0 feature in the latest edition, but nothing that I recall about using web 2.0 for social awareness or teaching about the election

MichaelH: David, do you know someone at ISTE Sarah could contact?

SarahSha: Well, thanks to Michael, we received a shout out in Cable in the Classroom Magazine!

MichaelH . o O (it's in the September issue)

SarahSha: And most importantly, just sharing the site and its purpose with your students and other teachers/departments at your schools and in your communities does wonders!

SarahSha: I hope it's something that you will find valuable and more importantly, something that your students will enjoy

MichaelH: Sarah, I was just thinking...

MirandahO: I will definitely share it with colleagues in my district!

SarahSha: Great! I'll be sure to send extra materials that you can share

MichaelH: I might have a contact at ISTE who might be able to get me in touch with someone at their publication (Learning and Leading With Technology)... would you like me to see if I can get someone from the magazine to contact you?

SarahSha: That would be great, Michael!

MichaelH: I'll send you an e-mail after while following up on that.

SarahSha: Absolutely

MichaelH: It may not be in time for the election, but maybe it will be something that will help continued interest in the site

SarahSha: Does anyone have any more questions about the initiative?

SarahSha: And how you can implement it?

MichaelH: I'm not a language arts teacher...

SarahSha: Again, my email is sarah@my2centsforchange.org - so if you go to the site after this chat and have questions, please email me

MirandahO: Fantastic, thank you!

MichaelH: but I could definitely see some great opportunities in LA with this... not only grammar, but persuasive writing, even debate

MirandahO: and the use of tech language

MeganT: It is a great chance for collaboration with social studies!

SarahSha: I love it!

MichaelH: absolutely

MeganT: Thank you so much for introducing this to us!

SarahSha: And the blog could be great for that as well

MichaelH: And safe because it's all moderated and student ids are kept secret

SarahSha: so I encourage you to check out all the sites

SarahSha : I'll list them again:

MichaelH : we sure will Sarah...

SarahSha : www.my2centsforchange.org

SarahSha : www.my2centsforchange.wordpress.com

SarahSha : www.bbyo.org/my2cents

MichaelH : everyone has Sarah's contact info, correct?

MeganT : yes!

SarahSha : If there are no other questions/comments we can wrap up and let you check out the sites. But again, PLEASE email me your contact information (sarah@my2centsforchange.org) if you haven't already so I can follow up with you and be as helpful as possible!

MichaelH : She's a great resource and will definitely be more than happy to work with you

MichaelH : Thanks again, Sarah. Another great session :)

SarahSha : And feel free to share my info with colleagues

SarahSha : The more the merrier

SarahSha : Thank you everyone and I look forward to reconnecting with you

MichaelH : will do. I'll send you an e-mail when I find out something from L&L with Technology

MirandahO : Thank you again, I will share this wonderful Web site

SarahSha : sounds great. Thank you Michael again for the opportunity to share My2Cents

MichaelH : you're welcome, Sarah... feel free to join us anytime!

MichaelH waves goodnight to all

MirandahO waves adios!

BjB : Thanks, Michael and Sarah

SarahSha: Thank you!

SarahSha: Good night all

MeganT: Thank you!

MeganT: Good night

DavidW: Thanks, Sarah