

# L.A. youth teacher's guide

*Publishing Schedule*

**L.A. Youth will begin arriving Wed. March 18**

## Key to using the March-April 2009 issue:

**ARTICLE and PAGE NUMBER**

**KEY TEACHING POINTS**

<p><b>Hang up and drive</b> p. 5 Joyce says the roads would be safer if people didn't use their cell phones while driving.</p>	<p>What do you think of the cell phone driving law? Do you think it makes the roads safer?</p>
<p><b>A chance to say goodbye</b> p. 9 Justin was grateful he got to spend time with his sick grandpa before he died.</p>	<p>What do your grandparents mean to you? What can you do to show them you care?</p>
<p><b>COVER STORY: Seeing the potential</b> pp. 10-11 Making a documentary changed Justin's view of his South Los Angeles neighborhood.</p>	<p>See lesson plan on page 2.</p>
<p><b>I thought we'd always be friends</b> p. 13 As Diana and her cousin got older she felt like she was no longer treated as an equal.</p>	<p>What is the definition of a friend? How can you tell when someone isn't being a good friend.</p>
<p><b>Creative cash</b> pp. 14-15 Solange started making her own jewelry to earn spending money.</p>	<p>What can you do to earn extra cash? Is there something you enjoy doing that you could turn into a business?</p>
<p><b>Is cheating OK?</b> p. 17 L.A. Youth writers have different views on whether cheating in school is right or wrong.</p>	<p>Do you think it's OK to cheat? Why do you think students feel pressure to cheat?</p>
<p><b>Race shouldn't matter</b> pp. 18-19 Britawnya stopped caring about people who say she's not acting the way black people should.</p>	<p>Have you ever felt pressure to fit in with a certain group? How can someone stay true to themselves?</p>
<p><b>Finally proud to be Korean</b> pp. 20-21 A holiday that celebrates strength and perserverance showed Jean a positive side to her culture.</p>	<p>What have you learned about your culture that makes you proud? What's wrong with stereotyping cultures?</p>
<p><b>We need more support</b> p. 22 Foster youth say the system should do more to help them get ready to be on their own.</p>	<p>Could you be independent at 18? Who is helping you prepare for your future?</p>
<p><b>I found great schools at the right price</b> pp. 24-25 With two older siblings who went to college before him, Aaron had to find schools that fit his family's budget.</p>	<p>What are the factors affecting your college search? What are some of the benefits of public schools?</p>

# How can we improve our communities?

A lesson plan to go with “Seeing the potential” from the March-April 2009 issue of L.A. Youth. In this story, Justin Fulcher describes how making a documentary about his neighborhood in South Los Angeles helped him see the importance of people giving back to their communities.

By Mike Fricano, editor

**Grades:** 7-12

**Subjects:** Language arts, social studies, government, life skills

**Suggested Time Allowance:** 45 minutes-1 hour

**Resources/Materials:**

- copies of the L.A. Youth article “Seeing the potential” (one per student)
- pens and paper
- white board or blackboard

**Overview:**

Students will examine their neighborhoods to determine what the communities’ needs are and suggest ways to make improvements.

**Introduction:**

No matter where teens are from, whether it’s Beverly Hills, El Monte, Long Beach or South Los Angeles, there are things that they love about their communities and things they think could be better. In a place as big and diverse as Los Angeles County, that list could range from nothing for teens to do and a lack of jobs to too many gangs and overcrowded schools. But it’s easy to complain. The reward comes from trying to be part of the solution. Even in the communities most affected by poverty and violence, there are people dedicated to making life better for everyone.

**Warm-up:**

Ask students to write lists of four things their communities need and four

things they like about them. Then create two columns on the board, one titled “Needs” and the other “Likes.” Have students share examples from their lists of things their communities need or need to do better and write down the answers in the appropriate column. They might say that they need safer streets, more jobs for teens, there aren’t enough things to do (restaurants and movie theaters), more bus stops or metro rail stations, cleaner parks. Next, ask students to describe what they like about their communities. They could say things like a nearby movie theater, a great neighborhood library, a community center, it’s safe and clean, places to shop are close by, etc.

**Activities:**

Read the article “Seeing the potential,” about how making a documentary about his neighborhood reinforced in Justin the value of people giving back to their communities. The story is on pages 10-11 of the March-April 2009 issue of L.A. Youth.

Have the students write down complaints that Justin has about his neighborhood in South Los Angeles. Possible answers include:

- Graffiti on billboards.
- Old billboards for movies that have left the theaters.
- Lots of vacant lots and buildings.
- Not enough things for teens to do; the closest movie theater is far away.
- Not enough jobs.

Next have the students write down things that Justin likes in his community and what value they have. Possible answers:

- His family, because he learned to value education and a strong work ethic from his mom and grandmother.
- The Challengers Boys and Girls Club, because it’s a safe place for kids filled with patient adults who always

try to bring out the best in kids. It’s also where he has learned video production.

- The Southern California Library, which preserves the history of the people who lived in South L.A.

But Justin does more than just list complaints and likes in his story. Working on the documentary made him more observant and thoughtful about where he lives. Have students note the ways Justin’s attitude has changed.

- He sees a vacant building and questions why no one has done anything with it.
- He sees graffiti and wonders what motivated the person to tag. Perhaps they were angry or sad.
- The parents who volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club and the people who volunteer at the Southern California Library reinforced in Justin the importance of people giving back to their communities.

**Concluding discussion:**

After seeing how Justin has found the positives in his community, have them re-examine the lists of “Needs” and “Likes” that they created. How do they feel about their lists? Were they too negative? What things might they add to their lists?

**Assignment:**

Combining the students’ lists of things they like and don’t like about their communities with what they learned reading Justin’s story, have your students write an essay about what they like about their communities and also what they would like to see improved. Ask them to write about why and how those things would improve their communities and the lives of the teens who live there.

**Extension activity:**

Have your students mail their essays to a local city council member or member of the County Board of Supervisors, the mayor or a state legislator.



## Would you like a speaker from L.A. Youth?

Editors Laura Lee and Mike Fricano speak about journalism, current events, working as a reporter, how to be a better writer and how students can get involved in L.A. Youth.

Call Laura or Mike at (323) 938-9194 or e-mail [llee@layouth.com](mailto:llee@layouth.com) or [mfricano@layouth.com](mailto:mfricano@layouth.com). PLEASE NOTE: You'll be asked to pay \$5 to help offset the cost of gas.

**THANKS TO TEACHERS** who contributed essays and letters to the editor: Jolie Augustine, Wilson MS in Glendale; Jessica Cameron, West Adams Prep HS; Lori Chamberlain, Paramount HS; Kerry Jackson, Birmingham HS in Van Nuys; Elizabeth Montano, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy; Karen Johnston, San Gabriel HS; Valerie Tymoczko, New Heights Prep in Northridge; East Valley HS in North Hollywood; and Madison MS in North Hollywood.

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**Next Newcomer's Orientation: Saturday, April 18, 11 a.m.-noon** at L.A. Youth 5967 W. Third Street Suite 301, L.A. 90036 (between Fairfax and La Brea)

Call Amanda, Laura or Mike at (323) 938-9194 or e-mail [editor@layouth.com](mailto:editor@layouth.com).

# L.A. youth urgently needs your help

One of the cornerstones of L.A. Youth's existence has been the longtime support of the Los Angeles Times, not only through the involvement of staff members as advisors, board members and volunteers, but also through major corporate support in the form of donated printing and distribution services. The Times has been our largest on-going partner, printing and distributing 120,000 copies of L.A. Youth's 28-page newspaper six times a year.

Sadly, bankruptcy and a bleak financial outlook for the Times have constrained its ability to continue supporting L.A. Youth at this level. Although the paper has honored its commitment to L.A. Youth through the 2008-09 school year, it will no longer fund printing and distribution beginning with the September 2009 issue.

So we're beginning now with a special fundraising effort to make up the shortfall and allow L.A. Youth to continue to be printed and distributed to more than 1,300 classrooms throughout Los Angeles County.

Proposals to foundations are being prepared, and we are investigating ways to cut costs, but L.A. Youth is already a lean, efficient organization. We are also reviewing ways to expand the reach of layout.com, but we are still dedicated to the print newspaper as the best way to fulfill our mission of youth development, empowerment and advocacy.

We will have to find new funds quickly. Donations from individuals such as yourself will be essential and we hope you will join other friends of L.A. Youth in responding to this immediate crisis. Please go to [layout.com](http://layout.com) and click "Donate to L.A. Youth" (upper right corner) to pay by credit card, or send a check to the address below. Thank you.

Donna Myrow  
Executive Director

 **YES** I would like to support L.A. Youth's  
special fundraising effort

**Mail to: L.A. Youth**  
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