Info-graphic Design Document

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Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline the rationale for and support the design decisions of the development of an info-graphic comparing and contrasting the disparity in economic opportunity for youth between Los Angeles and Orange County, and drawing attention to the educational and community impacts of economic disadvantage. A study from the United States Department of Education, found that one in three economically disadvantaged students in California do not graduate from a four year high school (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). According to the Opportunity Index (2015), although close in geographic proximity, the economic opportunity ranking of Los Angeles County is 12% behind Orange County. Los Angeles County also falls to below-average status in relation to the State.

Addressing this disparity is urgent, and civic engagement is shown to have a significant positive impact on future economic opportunity (Jordan & Krumnow, 2014). But, due to increasing demands on classroom instructors and learning facilitators, providing additional curriculum outside of what is outlined in educational standards is challenging. Collaborating with community organizations is one way to take some of the pressure off our school system, and supporting engaged, motivated students.

I created this info-graphic for the nonprofit I work with, [We Are the Next](#). We Are the Next provides in-classroom workshops, develops resources, and coordinates learning experiences in an attempt to support the efforts of instructors and schools. Educational advocates at the nonprofit will use the info-graphic to promote programming in under served communities in Los Angeles. Equity and economic opportunity are important issues in education, and drawing attention to disparity in opportunity due to economic disadvantage could impact a school or community group's decision to approve programming developed by the nonprofit to be used in the classroom.

The intended audience for the info-graphic are school administrators, counselors, and classroom instructors, as they are the primary decision makers when adopting new programs for use in the classroom. With this in mind, I presented statistical information in a compare and contrast format so the audience immediately identifies the disparity in economic opportunity. I also included additional information on the community impacts of economic disadvantage and a citation to reinforce the credibility and validity of the data. I concluded the info-graphic with suggested solutions to improving the situation.

The learning objectives and intended outcomes of this info-graphic are as follows:

- Audience will learn about the disparity in economic opportunity between Los Angeles and Orange County.
- Audience will identify potential solutions to improving the statistics.
- Audience will gain an appreciation for workshops and curriculum offered by the nonprofit organization.

I primarily designed this info-graphic to be included in an educational packet that is distributed physically to schools and educational organizations. However, a digital version of the final document will also be used online across blog and social media platforms. Graphics and text were developed in Photoshop, and design and production of the info-graphic were completed in Canva. I found the Canva interface was easy to use and included licensing for a wide selection of graphics and fonts.

Design Decisions

I based my design decisions on three big picture factors. To begin, I used the rule of thirds to establish a layout for my info-graphic. In graphic design, it is critical to think of balance from the start and work within some constraints. To ensure my info-graphic was memorable, I used concrete statistics to illustrate an abstract issue and made a comparison to evoke

emotion and a sense of identity for the viewer. Finally, I chose to use graphic standards based on the other resources and logo of We Are the Next. Repetition of the colors will help to ensure the resources have a sense of unity.

Design Decision #1

I chose to organize the layout of the info-graphic using the rule of thirds. Garr Reynolds (2009), author of *Presentation Zen*, laid a foundation for this design practice and noted that "the rule of thirds, which is derived from the golden mean, is a basic design technique that can help you add balance (symmetrical or asymmetrical), beauty, and to have a static quality to your visuals (p. 169)." Using a grid doesn't just help with balance and symmetry, it also provides necessary constraints to the design process. In *Design Evolution*, author Timothy Samara (2008) also supported the benefits of designing with a grid and suggested "the benefits of working with a grid are simple: clarity, efficiency, economy, and continuity" (p. 38). I used images to create divisions of space and divide my canvas into three separate, horizontal segments. Each block features a different theme (image with figure, solid color, background texture) to keep the information differentiated.

Design Decision #2

I chose to use the design principle of contrast to draw readers into the story of economic inequality. Reynolds (2009) supported this decision and suggested that "highlighting contrasts is a natural way to bring the audience into your story and make your message more memorable" (p. 86) After I captured the attention of the viewer with a concrete statistic in the top section, I featured a comparison of Los Angeles and Orange County in the middle section of the info-graphic. Contrasting the two numbers emphasizes the disparity between the two communities despite the geographic proximity. The ultimate goal of this info-graphic is to function as a call to action. It is intended for the information to evoke an emotional response to encourage the viewer to not only believe the statistics, but to find them as provocation for change. As Heath & Heath (2008) suggested in *Made to Stick*, "For people to take action, they have to care" (Chapter 5, ¶ 15).

Design Decision #3

I used repetition of color, shapes, and graphic elements from accompanying resources to support a cohesive design of my info-graphic. "Repetition of certain design elements...will bring a clear sense of unity, consistency, and cohesiveness" (Reynolds, 2009, p. 173). The info-graphic contains three subtopics including stating the problem, making a comparison, and offering solutions. The main idea and theme for each section is different, but related.

While I chose to distinguish these sections by using the three blocks, I gave the design a sense of unity by repeating graphic styles, fonts, and using the same colors. Samara (2008) asserted that "All the parts of a project really ought to be recognizably related to each other on a visual level. That is, they must share some similar qualities in order to appear part of the same unified message" (p. 13). The colors I selected were chosen based on the design standards, logo, and educational materials for We Are the Next. I chose to keep the colors consistent because the info-graphic will be included with the other resources.

Formative Evaluation Responses

Peer Review Question #1

"Describe the problem and the solution. What parts need clarifying?" I wanted to ensure the problem and solution were clearly communicated to avoid confusion about the message.

> **Peer Review A:** From what I gather, the problem is students overcoming economic disadvantages for more opportunities in life. I think your call to action piece is clear, but I think the top section is a little busy. It was a lot to wrap my brain around at first.

Peer Review B: Clarify the LA county % in relationship to state and national average.

I adjusted two elements of my design in consideration of this feedback. I eliminated the additional information about economic disadvantages and made the opening statistic larger to fill the top third of my composition. In the middle section, I changed the text below the county names to include statistics on the state average.

Peer Review Question #2

"What mood or emotion does the info-graphic communicate?" My rationale for this question lies in discovering the overall emotion that is communicated. I wanted to keep the design both professional and positive.

Peer Review A: Your info-graphic definitely made me want to help! I think your statistics really prove a need for your call to action.

Peer Review B: Bright, engaging, cheery. Good question!

I found these responses to support my graphic design decisions and I did not make any changes based on this feedback.

Peer Review Question #3

"How is balance distributed in the layout and combination of colors, fonts, and graphics?" My inquiry on the balance of my composition reflects my interest in finding a rhythm between the text, images, and graphics.

Peer Review A: I think your fonts and colors are great. Your graphics are also good and not overwhelming. I do think the info-graphic in general is a little bit cluttered. I found it a little bit hard to navigate your info-graphic at first.

Peer Review B: Mostly well balanced, need the bar graph by the LA county piece to actually connect to the information.

The feedback received for this question also had an impact on the design changes discussed in Question #1. I removed the unnecessary information from the top section to create a stronger focus on the main statistic. In the middle section, I replaced the bar graph with icons that represented the factors that contribute to a community's economic opportunity score.

Peer Review Question #4

"How could I feature more images or graphic representations instead of text? What information could be represented graphically?" I asked this

question because I felt certain sections were text heavy, and hoped to get insight from my peers on how to present the information in a more visual way.

Peer Review A: I think your bottom section could have less text. I do not think you need all of those words to represent those statistics. However, I think the visuals you are using are great.

Peer Review B: Maybe represent the 50% in a pie chart or some other graphic that shows a relationship.

In responding to this feedback, I adjusted the bottom section of the composition to group text sections together and create a greater focus on the 50% graphic.

Peer Review Question #5

"How effective is the message? What parts could I omit without sacrificing the message?" I asked this question because I wanted to get feedback on what elements could be eliminated to keep my composition and message as simple as possible.

Peer Review A: I think your message is very effective. However, you are focusing on many different statistics and important data pieces,

and it gets a bit confusing. Perhaps reducing the amount of text throughout, or even making some of the text smaller could help make your message more effective.

Peer Review B: It's a little unclear how your organization engages students. Through community work? Through school? Both?

The feedback I received to Question #5 support the changes discussed in the previous questions. I eliminated text, replaced unnecessary graphics, and consolidated my message by refining the information presented.

Lessons Learned

I learned several important lessons while creating this info-graphic. The first lesson: info-graphics are time consuming! It took a significant amount of time to find the right statistical information to support my message. Sourcing and editing the appropriate graphics to support the graphic quality of my design also required more time than anticipated. I have a new appreciation for info-graphic design, and I realized that making a design simple doesn't mean that it is easy.

I feel this project helped me to reflect on my graphic design skills and refine the style of my work. My knowledge of editing and creating vector graphics in Photoshop was challenged, and I learned how to use new tools including

smart objects and masking. I learned how to find balance between styles through using a combination of solid colors, photos, text, and graphics. I incorporated a photo with a figure to support the story behind my message.

My graphic style was refined through multiple iterations of this design, and by the third composition I found myself excited about how it was turning out. I now have a finished design, which will not only be included in my portfolio for graduation, but will be of real use in our efforts at We Are the Next.

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