

Activist research – What would you do?

This week we have seen examples of youth (and even a couple adults ;)) who are working to make a positive change in the world. What are you passionate about? Today your challenge is to think about an issue that is important to you. It might be something broad that is affecting the whole world (like climate change), or maybe it's something very specific to your own community, like a problem at your school or in your neighborhood. Identify that issue, learn about it, and consider how you can use your special talents to affect change.

Remember to think about these questions when looking at tackling an issue. It will help you better understand what the problem is and how you might address it.

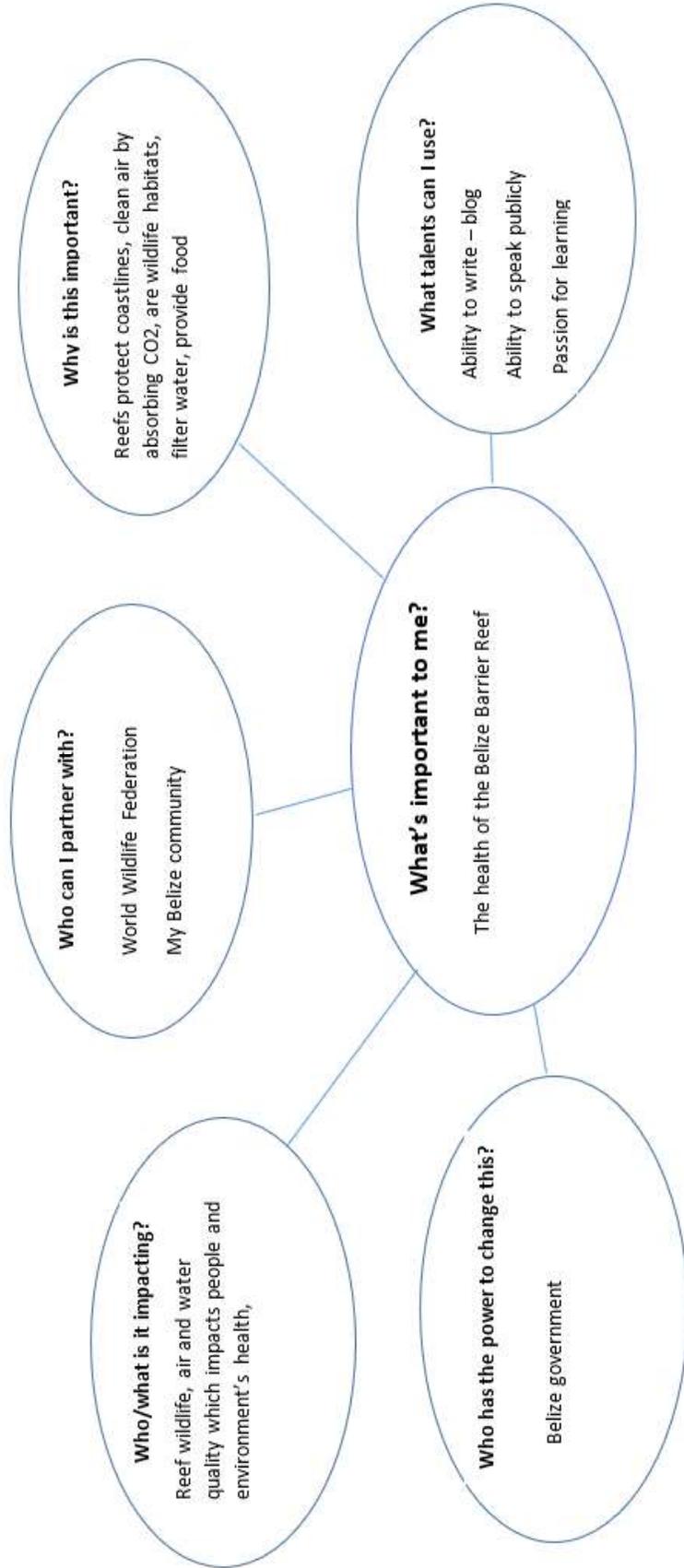
1. What is the issue and why is it important to address?
2. Who/what is it impacting? Is this something that is directly impacting you or is it an injustice that is not affecting you, but is impacting others. If the answer is the latter, then you are an ally. Refer back to the sheet on allyship.
3. Are there groups or organizations that are already working on this who you can partner with? If not, are there other individuals who are interested in this issue as well?
4. Is this an act of charity that is connected to a bigger social issue that requires change? If so, how can you support both?
5. Who has the power in this situation? In other words, who do you need to talk to in order to bring about change?
6. What are your talents? How can you use your talents to make a positive difference?

One more note: When we look at solving a problem, we need to make sure that we are not just doing our research on the problem, but that we are also thinking critically about our solutions and their greater impact. Remember to consider different voices and perspectives so you can come up with responsible solutions. That's part of being in community!

You may use the Activist Bubble Brainstorming sheet in the Student Activity Pack to help you organize your research. There is an example of the Activist Bubble Brainstorming sheet on the next page that was completed based on Madison Edward's story.

Example using Madison Edwards' story

My activist bubble brainstorm!



Allyship

To be an ally means to stand up *alongside* a group who is being treated unfairly (other words for this are being discriminated against, or oppressed) even though you are not part of that group. The first thing an ally does is listen to and learn from those who are receiving unfair treatment. Allies can be helpers in many different ways—and they play an important role, even though they are not the leaders of a movement!

Why is it important to understand your role as an ally?

An ally doesn't have the same personal experience or lived perspective to fully understand and know the situation. When we try to act, but do not fully understand, we are likely to make mistakes, cause more harm, and damage relationships.

Secondly, allies have to trust that other people are the experts in their own lives and experiences, and that they know what support they want or need. It is not our job to exert our power over a group by thinking that we know what's best for them, or that they need us to lead—we are here to support and help.

Why is it important to be an ally?

Because an ally is not a target of oppression, they have that as an advantage. It is often easier to speak up as an ally in the moment because there is more emotional and physical distance from the harm occurring.

Allies can also be particularly effective at helping change the hearts and minds of people who are acting harmfully, since people are often more receptive to hearing from members of their own identity group or social group. For example, if you saw your friend hurt someone else, you might be able to get your friend to understand the harm she caused, and get her to repair that harm more easily than the person she hurt.

Allies have been important for every social justice movement throughout history—there have always been people willing to stand in solidarity with others and fight against oppression.

Review In Lak'Ech and our Bible verses for the week. What did we learn about how we are to be in community with one another? How does being an ally align with these teachings? What would the world look like if we chose to ignore these teachings? What would the world look like if we carried out these calls to love one another, be compassionate, humble and act justly?

One more note on allyship: What happens when we make a mistake? None of us are perfect, so while it's important to try our best, at some point we will probably get it wrong. As allies, when we make mistakes, we do what we should always do when we hurt someone: We apologize sincerely, and we listen and learn so that we understand what we did wrong. Making mistakes feels uncomfortable, but they happen when we learn and act! (And not acting—so that we never make mistakes—is a worse option!) Whatever you do, don't give up! Your support is important! This is what you do when you are part of a community!