

epicJax

90-Day Touchdown

Digital Literacy Challenge:
A Tiered Competition Framework
to Bridge the Digital Divide

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Addressing the Digital Divide
3. Introducing the Competition
 - a. Digital Literacy Definition
 - b. Competition Goals
4. Tiered Competition Structure
 - a. Tier 1: Foundational Skills Challenge
 - b. Tier 2: Intermediate Skills Challenge
 - c. Tier 3: Advanced Digital Innovation
5. Student Placement Plan for Tiered Competition Framework
6. Sample Project Plan
 - a. Phase 1: Pre-Competition (3-6 months)
 - b. Phase 2: Competition (90 Days)
 - c. Phase 3: Post-Competition (1-2 months)
7. Collaboration: Engaging the Community for Success
8. Impact Measurement and Success Metrics
9. Conclusion

Introduction

The EpicJax Digital Literacy Challenge is a bold initiative designed to empower students across Jacksonville to develop critical digital literacy skills while actively addressing the growing digital divide.

This competition offers students the opportunity to develop and showcase their critical thinking and digital skills by solving real-world challenges using innovative tools and technologies. In addition to gaining these essential skills, students will be recognized for their creativity and innovation, with exciting rewards and special prizes to be announced.

This comprehensive proposal outlines the framework, defines the roles of key partners, and provides a detailed project plan for how the competition will unfold. We are seeking strategic partners to collaborate with the Lead Agency, provide access to students, and help bring this transformative initiative to life.

Addressing the Digital Divide

A critical focus of the EpicJax Digital Literacy Challenge is addressing the digital divide, ensuring that students from all backgrounds, including those with limited access to technology and broadband, have the opportunity to develop essential digital skills. The competition framework tackles this challenge through several key strategies:

- **Tiered Competition Structure:**

The tiered approach ensures that students with varying levels of digital literacy, from minimal skills (Tier 1) to advanced proficiency (Tier 3), are supported in building a strong foundation before progressing to more complex tasks.

- **Pre-Competition Boot Camps:**

Workshops and boot camps will be held prior to the competition, providing foundational skills for students, particularly those from underserved communities. These sessions will equip students who may lack access to digital tools or prior experience and will also be used to assess current skill levels for tier placement.

- **Community Partnerships:**

By collaborating with local organizations, such as youth-serving organizations, public libraries, neighborhood associations, and homeschool networks, we will extend the competition's reach to include students who may not have access to digital resources in traditional school settings.

- **Access to Digital Tools:**

Through partnerships with tech companies and local businesses, students will have access to necessary digital tools (e.g., software, hardware, and internet), further bridging the technology gap.

- **Mentorship Programs:**
Mentors will provide students, particularly those with limited experience, with guidance and support throughout the competition. This mentorship ensures students feel confident in using digital tools and overcoming challenges.
- **Real-World Projects:** By focusing on real-world challenges that affect their communities and future workplaces, students will gain a deeper understanding of how digital skills can be applied to solve problems, making digital literacy more relevant and impactful.

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Introducing the Competition

Digital Literacy Definition

Digital literacy is the ability to effectively and critically navigate, evaluate, create and communicate information using a range of digital tools and technologies. Digital literacy includes competencies such as understanding how to use digital tools, discerning between credible and non-credible information online, maintaining privacy, and participating responsibly in digital environments.

Competition Goals

- 1. Enhance Digital Literacy Skills:**
Encourage participants to deepen their understanding and proficiency in digital tools and media by solving real-world problems.
- 2. Promote Creativity and Innovation:**
Inspire original thinking and innovative approaches to digital literacy challenges.
- 3. Foster Problem-Solving Abilities:** Develop participants' ability to identify and tackle real-world issues using digital solutions.
- 4. Encourage Collaboration and Teamwork:**
Support collaborative efforts among participants, fostering teamwork and the exchange of ideas.
- 5. Strengthen Communication Skills:**
Improve participants' ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively.

6. **Increase Awareness of Online Safety:**

Raise understanding of online safety, privacy, and responsible digital literacy practices.

7. **Support Technical Proficiency:**

Promote the development of technical skills such as coding, data visualization, and app development through hands-on practice.

8. **Provide Real-World Experience:**

Offer participants the opportunity to work on projects that mirror real-world digital challenges, enhancing their practical experience.

9. **Engage the Community:**

Involve the broader community—including schools, homeschool groups, nonprofits, and businesses—to extend the competition's reach and impact.

10. **Recognize and Reward Excellence:**

Acknowledge and reward outstanding projects and participants, motivating continued growth and learning in digital literacy.

Tiered Competition Structure

Tier 1: Foundational Skills Challenge

Target Audience:

Students with minimal digital literacy experience.

Objective:

In this tier, students will develop essential digital literacy skills such as typing, internet navigation, and creating simple documents or presentations. Additionally, they will learn how to professionally communicate using tools like Word and Excel. This tier also introduces students to critical thinking by teaching them how to evaluate basic online information and recognize credible sources, helping to build a foundation for online safety and responsible digital behavior.

Core Skills:

- Typing and basic word processing (e.g., Microsoft Word, Google Docs).
- Creating basic presentations (e.g., PowerPoint, Google Slides).
- Internet navigation and safety awareness.
- Introduction to identifying credible online sources and avoiding misinformation.
- Professional communication using simple digital tools.

Example Categories:

1. Online Safety Campaign (Basic Level):
 - Task: Design a digital poster that promotes online safety tips.
 - Format: Simple graphics or a one-page poster using basic word processing or design tools.

2. Basic Digital Communication:
 - Task: Write a formal email introducing yourself and explaining why digital literacy is important.
 - Format: Email or letter format using Word or Google Docs.

3. Presentation Challenge:
 - Task: Create a simple 3-5 slide presentation on a topic of interest (e.g., “Why Internet Safety Matters”).
 - Format: Basic PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation with text, images, and bullet points.

Tier 2: Intermediate Skills Challenge

Target Audience:

Students who have mastered foundational digital literacy skills and are ready to tackle more complex tasks.

Objective:

This tier focuses on developing students’ research skills and enhancing their ability to critically assess information, helping them avoid misinformation. Projects will involve data visualization and multimedia presentations, requiring students to apply critical thinking to solve real-world problems at school, in the workplace, and in their community. Additionally, students will further refine their professional communication skills through group projects and presentations, preparing them to work in team environments and handle more complex digital tasks.

Core Skills:

- Data visualization using tools like Google Sheets or Excel.
- Multimedia presentations with embedded images, videos, and charts.
- Intermediate online collaboration and communication tools.
- Research and critical thinking for evaluating online sources and avoiding misinformation.

- Professional presentation and digital communication in team settings.

Example Categories:

1. Data Visualization Challenge (Intermediate Level):
 - Task: Use a provided dataset (e.g., local environmental data) to create a clear and engaging infographic or chart.
 - Format: Data presented using Google Sheets, Excel, or an infographic creation tool (e.g., Canva).
2. Multimedia Presentation:
 - Task: Develop a multimedia presentation that explores the impact of the digital divide in Jacksonville. Consider challenging the students to find their own data.
 - Format: 5-7 slide presentation including text, images, videos, and charts.
3. Collaborative Digital Storytelling:
 - Task: Work in a team to create a digital story highlighting solutions to the digital divide in Jacksonville.
 - Format: Collaborative Google Slides presentation or short video using basic video editing tools (e.g., iMovie).

Tier 3: Advanced Digital Innovation

Target Audience:

Students with strong digital literacy skills who are ready for advanced and innovative projects.

Objective:

This tier challenges students to apply their advanced research skills and critical thinking to create innovative digital solutions. Students will work on complex projects such as app development or advanced data analysis, requiring them to carefully assess and present credible information while addressing key challenges

such as misinformation. Additionally, the emphasis on professional communication will prepare students to handle real-world scenarios in digital innovation, fostering ethical and responsible use of digital tools at school, in the workplace, and in their community.

Core Skills:

- App development using beginner-friendly coding platforms (e.g., Thunkable, Scratch).
- Advanced data analysis and visualization using platforms like Tableau.
- Developing digital media campaigns for real-world challenges.
- Research and critical thinking to solve complex problems and ensure the accuracy of digital content.
- Professional and ethical digital communication in project development.

Example Categories:

1. App Development Challenge (Advanced Level):
 - Task: Create a functional app that addresses a digital literacy challenge (e.g., an app that teaches online safety).
 - Format: Functional app prototype with documentation using platforms like Thunkable or basic Python code.
2. Advanced Data Visualization:
 - Task: Design an interactive dashboard that provides insights into a current issue (e.g., public health data or environmental trends).
 - Format: Interactive dashboards or advanced infographics using Tableau or Google Data Studio.
3. Comprehensive Digital Campaign:
 - Task: Develop a comprehensive digital media campaign aimed at bridging the digital divide in Jacksonville.
 - Format: Videos, infographics, podcasts, and social media posts combined into one cohesive campaign.

Student Assessment and Placement Strategy

Boot Camp and Skills Assessment:

Pre-Competition Boot Camps:

Prior to the competition, all participating students will be invited to attend a series of boot camps designed to introduce the competition's framework and provide baseline digital literacy training. These boot camps will serve as the primary method for assessing students' current skill levels and determining their appropriate tier, ensuring that each student is placed according to their abilities.

During the Boot Camp:

- Students will participate in various activities such as typing tests, online navigation exercises, and basic digital tool usage (Word, Excel, Google Docs) for foundational assessment.
- For students with prior digital literacy experience, the boot camps will offer more advanced challenges (e.g., data visualization, multimedia presentations) to gauge intermediate and advanced skills.

Skills Assessment Method:

- At the end of the boot camp, each student will undergo a short skills assessment tailored to the core competencies of each tier. This assessment will include:
 - Tier 1: Basic digital tasks (e.g., creating a simple document, navigating an internet search, writing an email).
 - Tier 2: Intermediate tasks (e.g., creating an infographic or presentation, analyzing simple data).
 - Tier 3: Advanced tasks (e.g., coding a simple app, building an interactive dashboard, advanced data analysis).

Assessment Criteria:

- The assessment will focus on proficiency in the following areas:
 - Digital tool usage: How well students navigate and use basic and advanced digital tools.
 - Critical thinking: The ability to evaluate online information for credibility and solve basic to complex problems.
 - Professional communication: How effectively students use digital platforms to communicate, present ideas, or collaborate.
 - Project execution: For higher tiers, students will be evaluated on their ability to develop and execute more complex digital projects.

Tier Placement:

- Tier 1: Students demonstrating minimal proficiency in digital tools and online navigation will be placed in this foundational tier to build essential skills.
- Tier 2: Students with some digital skills, able to create basic presentations, analyze data, and collaborate in online environments, will be placed in the intermediate tier.
- Tier 3: Students showcasing advanced digital skills such as coding, data visualization, and app development will be placed in the advanced tier.

Ongoing Support:

- Students who initially place into Tier 1 or Tier 2 will have access to additional boot camp sessions throughout the competition. These sessions are designed to help them improve and potentially move up to a higher tier in future competitions.

Sample Project Plan

Phase 1: Pre-Competition (3-6 months)

1. Outreach & Engagement (Month 1-2):

- This period should focus on reaching out to schools, homeschool networks, youth organizations, public libraries, and other potential participants. This can be done simultaneously with the development of boot camp materials.

2. Workshops & Boot Camps + Assessment (Month 3-5):

- The boot camps should be spaced out over this period to allow students time to complete workshops and be evaluated for tier placement.
- Assessment and tier placement can happen during or immediately after these workshops.
- Duration of Boot Camps: Boot camps could be done over a few weeks or even as one-week intensive programs. For example:
 - Week 1: Tier 1 boot camps.
 - Week 2: Tier 2 boot camps.
 - Week 3: Tier 3 boot camps and assessment completion.
- Assessments: Should take no more than 1 week to complete after each boot camp for students to be placed into their respective tiers.

3. Tier Placement Finalization (End of Month 5):

- Finalize student placement into appropriate tiers based on assessments, mentor feedback, and student preference (where appropriate).

Phase 2: Competition (90 Days)

1. Ideation Round (First 30 Days):

- Students submit their concept notes and receive mentor feedback within the first month. This allows ample time for adjustments and refining ideas before moving into development.

2. Development Round (Second 30 Days):

- Students build out their digital projects, working closely with mentors to develop their ideas.

3. Final Presentation (Last 30 Days):

- Finalists will present their projects to a panel of judges, who will evaluate submissions based on innovation, technical proficiency, and real-world impact. Awards, determined by the Lead Agency, will be given to top-performing teams in each category. The specific modality of the presentations (in-person or virtual) will also be determined by the Lead Agency.

Phase 3: Post-Competition (1-2 months)

1. Feedback and Reporting (Immediately after competition):

- Survey students, mentors, and stakeholders for feedback and assess the impact within 1 month.
- The Lead Agency will provide a detailed report on participation rates, skill development progress, and community engagement metrics, ensuring continuous improvement and long-term success of the program.

2. Long-Term Impact (Ongoing):

- Introduce opportunities for top students to engage in internships, longer-term mentorship programs, or continued digital literacy development.
- If possible, start placing students into internships or additional programs 1-2 months after the competition wraps.

Collaboration: Engaging the Community for Success

Invitation for Partnership:

We are seeking organizations to help coordinate this initiative and drive its execution. The Lead Agency will select partners to support and execute key aspects of the competition framework. Partner organizations will take ownership of critical components such as:

- **Access to Students:**
Engage youth accessing your services and/or who live in your neighborhood.
- **Category Sponsorship:**
Lead the development of competition categories, such as Online Safety Campaign, Data Visualization, and App Development.
- **Mentorship and Training:**
Provide expert guidance and resources to students as they prepare their projects.
- **Resource Allocation:**
Ensure students have access to digital tools, software, and training.
- **Co-Hosting Events:**
Collaborate in organizing workshops, webinars, and the final presentation

event.

- **Promotion:**

Help promote the competition through your networks, enhancing its reach and impact.

We believe your organization's expertise and commitment to education and/or digital literacy make you an ideal partner for this initiative. By joining forces, we can create meaningful opportunities for students and businesses to engage in impactful digital projects that drive community growth and innovation. Whether your focus is on education, skill development, or preparing students for the future, your support will help create a brighter future for Jacksonville's youth.

We encourage you to join us in this transformative initiative now, as we prepare to shape the future of Jacksonville's students. By partnering with EpicJax, you'll play a critical role in equipping the next generation with essential digital skills and closing the digital divide. Reach out to [Insert Contact Information] to discuss how your organization can contribute to the success of the EpicJax Digital Literacy Challenge and make a lasting impact on our community.

Impact Measurement and Success Metrics

- **Skill Development:** Track students' growth in digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- **Participation Rates:** Measure the inclusion of underserved communities, homeschool groups, and diverse student populations to ensure broad accessibility.
- **Community Engagement:** Evaluate the involvement and contribution of local organizations, businesses, and mentors in supporting the competition and students.
- **Project Outcomes:** Assess how student projects address real-world challenges, with a focus on innovation, collaboration, and the practical application of digital literacy skills.

Conclusion

The EpicJax Digital Literacy Challenge represents a bold step toward bridging the digital divide in Jacksonville. By engaging students from all backgrounds and skill levels, this tiered competition framework ensures that no student is left behind, regardless of their starting point. Through the development of essential digital literacy skills—such as online safety, data analysis, and app development—students will gain the tools they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Addressing the digital divide means more than just providing access to technology—it's about equipping students with the critical thinking, research, and communication skills necessary to navigate digital environments responsibly and effectively. This competition not only empowers students with these skills but also fosters creativity, collaboration, and innovation, preparing them for real-world challenges that impact their communities and future careers.

We invite your organization to partner with us in this transformative initiative. Together, we can make Jacksonville a national leader in digital education, ensuring that every student graduates with the digital literacy skills they need to succeed. By supporting this competition, you'll play a vital role in closing the digital divide, fostering innovation, and creating meaningful opportunities for students to build a brighter future.