



**The
EXPERIMENT**
in International Living

2020 IMPACT REPORT

experiment.org



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The Experiment Digital is helping youth develop leadership and cross-cultural communication skills and counteract harmful stereotypes—all despite travel restrictions and a range of challenging circumstances. This is particularly critical at this time, when students, especially those already in poverty, have fewer outlets for global understanding, peer engagement, and learning.

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Carol Jenkins

WORLD LEARNING CEO

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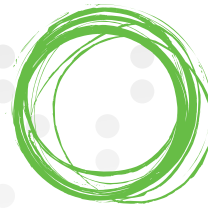
Turning a Crisis into An Opportunity

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our goal has been to ensure that The Experiment, World Learning, and SIT emerge from the crisis intact and positioned to restart activities as soon as possible, all while continuing to deliver programs through innovative and adaptive new models such as virtual exchanges.

The Experiment community is defined by our resilience, adaptability, and commitment to bringing young people together to build lasting cross-cultural ties. This year, for the first time in our history, Experimenters were unable to travel due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Instead, our 2020 cohort of Experimenters were invited to join The Experiment Digital—our interactive virtual exchange program launched in 2016.

Thanks to the support of our partners and generous donors like you, The Experiment Digital brought more than 1,100 participants together this summer to connect authentically with peers from across the country and around the world. They learned about each other's communities, cultures, and daily lives through discussions, individual explorations, group activities, and virtual homestays.





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The Experiment Digital: Building on our Flagship

World Learning's flagship program, The Experiment in International Living, is the nation's most experienced provider of study abroad programs for high school students. For 88 years, we have helped students explore the world in a personal, meaningful way through immersive cultural experiences and homestays.



Experiment Digital students come away with:

- An enhanced understanding and practice of leadership
- Increased involvement in civil society and volunteering
- Mutual understanding between youth from different countries

The Experiment Digital was started in 2016, as a pioneering strategy to connect Experimenters with students in countries to which travel and traditional programs were not possible. Originally designed to connect young people across the U.S. with peers in Iraq, Algeria, Yemen, The Experiment Digital prepares participants to be more civically engaged and lead change.

The Experiment Digital Model

The Experiment Digital retains The Experiment’s longstanding model of experiential learning and emphasis on forming meaningful relationships and moves it into the virtual space. Using popular digital platforms for teens like Canvas, padlet, flipgrid, and Zoom, our virtual program model gives young people the opportunity to build international friendships online. Peer-to-peer engagement, combined with carefully designed activities, allow students to learn from one another, and together develop knowledge and attitudes that foster cultural understanding. This fully funded program takes place over eight weeks in the summer and typically requires four hours of each participant’s time per week.

Experiential Learning Online

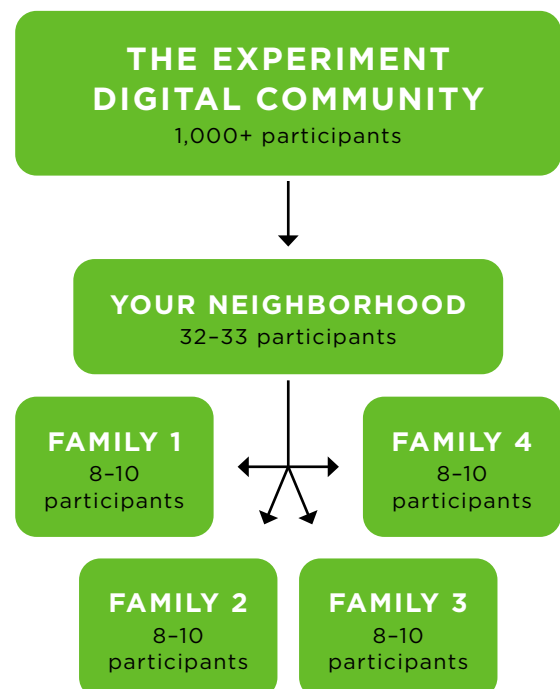
Learning with The Experiment Digital is challenging and fun. Participants learn how to facilitate digital discussions, lead online dialogues via video chat, and formulate and implement service projects in their local communities. Activities center around bringing students together to navigate scenarios that test their abilities and reflect on lessons learned through collaborative dialogue. Students practice collaborative problem solving, intercultural communication, and digital etiquette—all of which are important in our increasingly globalized world.

For Youth and Led by Youth

Community Facilitators manage “Neighborhoods” and were selected because of their experience working with youth and facilitating cross-cultural exchanges. They undergo an intensive month-long training for online facilitation. Peer Mentors, alumni of our previous digital programs, offer another layer of support to participants.

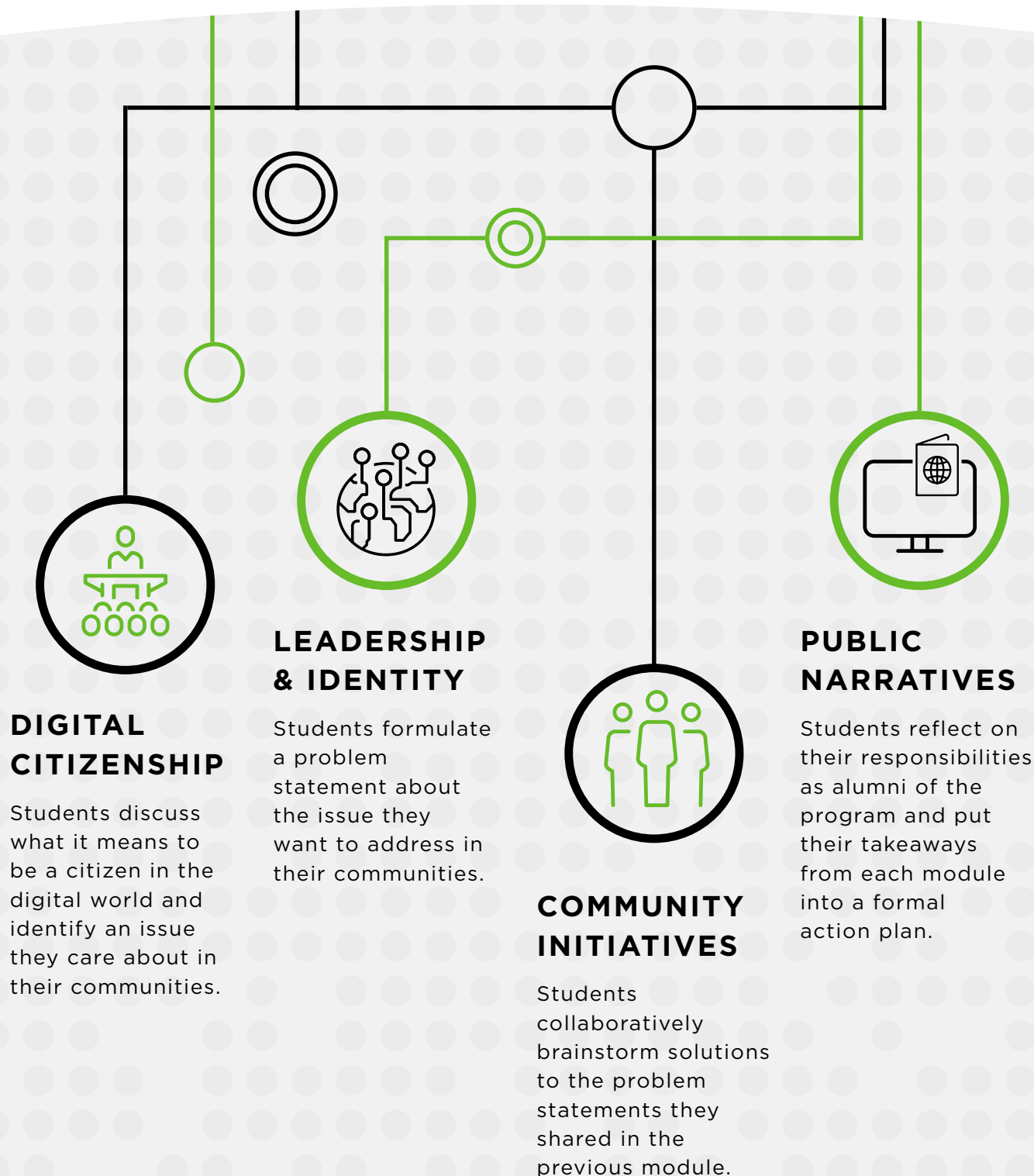
Digital Groups: Families & Neighborhoods

The Experiment Digital community is split into “Neighborhoods” of about 35 participants and are led by one Digital Peer Mentor and one Digital Community Facilitator. Within those neighborhoods are small groups of 8-10 participants called “Families.”



Program Modules

The Experiment Digital includes four modules, each of which is two-weeks long and includes a variety of activities, discussions, and tasks—some completed independently and others in a team, with family, or neighborhood groups.



Program Impact

The Experiment Digital has grown tremendously over the past few years. It began in 2016, reaching 100 participants in two countries—this summer, it reached **more than 1,100 participants in four countries**. Our post-program survey results indicate that the program has led to substantial changes in students' attitudes, skills, and perceptions.

2020 DIGITAL EXPERIMENTERS



89

from Algeria



292

from Iraq



45

from Yemen



731

from the US



62%

female



33.5%

male



0.6%

non-binary



3.9%

preferred not to
self-describe

THE EXPERIMENT DIGITAL 2020 STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS



95.2%

students are confident that they
can work with people from
other places



95.8%

students are able to adjust
to new people, places,
and situations



86.8%

students consider themselves
to be leaders



91.5%

students are confident in their
ability to lead



87%

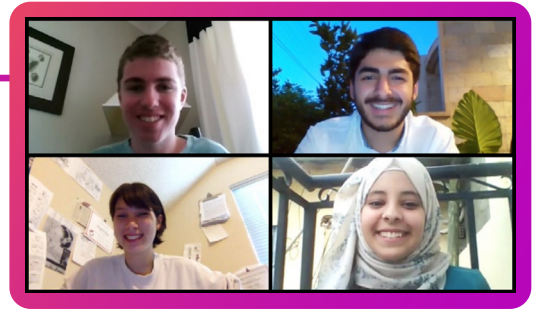
students are confident in their
ability to make a difference in
their community



94.3%

students are confident in
their ability to communicate
effectively online

Student Testimonials



“Knowing that I have peer support from around the world and seeing how we encourage one another has made me a more confident leader.”

Cross-Cultural Leadership

“I realized that I could lead a group of people that I have never met or heard of before along with connecting with them on a personal level. I met a lot of new people and friends and learned a ton about varying cultures all across the world.”

“Previously I had thought of a leader as the person out in front; the face of the operation. However, this program taught me that there are plenty of other ways to be a leader, things that I myself do.”

Virtual Engagement

“I feel like communicating with my peers in webinars, or on zoom I felt very safe and thus I took it upon myself to talk more and raise my opinions.”

“My confidence has definitely increased especially virtually. I used to be nervous speaking through a computer to people but now I don't have much of a problem with it.”

Civic Engagement

“I now have skills that can help me be more organized, empower and inspire others, and put my ideas into action.”

“I definitely feel more empowered to create change, my peers and facilitator pushed me and encouraged me so much that I feel confident to make a change.”

Building for the Future

With your help, we will continue The Experiment's tradition of youth ambassadorship and come back in summer 2021 stronger than ever.

On behalf of World Learning and the students whose experiences with The Experiment have been made possible by your generosity, thank you for providing support to a critical outlet for global cross-cultural exchange in a time of crisis. The bonds that we form today are building a foundation of mutual understanding that will be critical to overcoming to the world's increasingly complex and global challenges.

GROWING

The Experiment Digital

As schools and exchange programs plan for COVID-19, the need for high quality online education and leadership opportunities is stronger than ever. The Experiment Digital will expand its thematic offerings and regional focus, offer more digital homestays, and add accredited online language courses and internships.

RELAUNCHING

our beloved, traditional, in-person Experiment programs

Starting with a smaller, streamlined program portfolio, The Experiment's traditional in-person international programming will resume as soon as it is safe for student travel. We will be reworking our tuition model—focusing on affordability for families—while maintaining program quality and safety.

We will also be bolstering our in-person programs with accreditation opportunities through the SIT World Languages Center.

INTRODUCING

a new, hybrid model for The Experiment Leadership Institute

The Experiment Leadership Institute will resume as soon as it is safe for student travel. While the international portion of the Experiment Leadership Institute will still be in-person and abroad, the DC and VT bookend workshops and seminars will be conducted virtually online. Leadership Institute students will also have the opportunity to receive college credit.

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My time with the Experiment Digital has been a very informative and fantastic. So far, I have learned lots about domestic communities and more interestingly, communities in foreign countries such as Iran and Dubai. These communities have taught me a plethora of knowledge concerning world and cultural views, and more so domestic conflicts. I hope to continue to learn through The Experiment Digital so that I may be more acquainted with communities abroad.

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**2020 EXPERIMENT
DIGITAL PARTICIPANT**



THE WORLD LEARNING INC. FAMILY

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