
A proposal to promote Open Data from and for the schools

by

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Author introduction: Marco Fioretti

- Freelance writer for several Free Software magazines
- Author of the Family Guide to Digital Freedom (2007)
- Co-author of the O'Reilly Open Government book (2010)
- Author of
 - The Open Data, Open Society report (2010/2011)
 - Digital Citizens Basics Course
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- Parent

We have two problems with Open Data...

- Getting enough data in the right formats, as soon as possible
- (much more serious) Getting enough citizens really interested in Open Data, and using them on a regular basis
 - Understanding data requires Math and other skills
 - Do enough citizens have them today?

...and more big problems with (public) schools

- lack of funds for (innovative) textbooks and other courseware
- lack of motivation in students
- deep disconnect between school curricula and real life

Open Data and schools: a natural, necessary marriage

- Connecting the two worlds can greatly contribute to solve the problems just presented
- It must become the rule, not the exception
- It's natural and necessary
- Data journalism of today =
Active citizenship skills of tomorrow

isn't this something that education should provide?

Open Data and schools: a natural, necessary marriage

- We promote Open Data by saying things like

If the budget of your City Council were Raw Open Data, you could check it yourself

- But wouldn't that be wonderful/ interesting/ useful/ relevant homework exercise for any school that teaches accounting?

(Repeat for almost any topic taught in high schools...)

Wouldn't it be great (and right) if...



ddjournalism DDJ

RT @flygirltwo: LOVING #eurohack! Doing really cool stuff, lots of cool stuff being scraped, hacked & built + exploring solutions #ddj

8 hours ago



Fscrollini Fabrizio Scrollini

wrote his first scrip with the help of @pudo at #eurohack #thrilled @OKFN #empowered

8 hours ago ☆ Favorite ↻ Retweet ↩ Reply

- Open Data were **systematically** used to give all high school students the same feelings of empowerment felt by those who took part to #eurohack yesterday?

Open Data and schools need each other now

- Connecting the two worlds can greatly contribute to solve the problems just presented
- Open Data needs students to get data and stay relevant
- Students need Open Data to learn better

(Please note that this is not the same issue as Open Access)

Example: learning local history with HistoryPin

- HistoryPin interactively displays, sorted by time, geotagged photos over maps



- The same thing could be done with tons of other Open Data to prepare interactive, real-world based lessons on any topic

How to "sell" Open Data to school teachers?

- Today's teachers are often
 - Disenchanted, bitter
 - Not really computer-skilled
- It is necessary to present:
 - Practical activities
 - Directly related to, and integrated with, the official curriculum
 - Possibly Web based, that is doable even without a computer lab or the skills to set it up

Two main lines of actions: use Open Data...

- **Use Open Data to teach**

- Homework
- Other exercises
- Explanations
- ...

... and have students produce them

- **Produce Open Data**

- Request students to scrape data using existing tools
- Routinely put online as Open Data everything produced **during normal school activity**
 - wandering around, observing and reporting about something is already part of many school projects
- Make an official school policy of it
- Starting with OpenStreetMap?

Necessary tools

- Databases of
 - scraping tools useful in schools
 - ready to use Open Data based courseware
 - “Open Data in Schools” success stories
 - “Open Data friendly” teachers, available to support colleagues and exchange experiences with them
- App contexts **reserved** to students
- Open Data for Schools Manual?

What next?

- Let's start:
 - Exchanging experiences
 - Cataloguing relevant resources
 - Reaching out to teachers
 - (maybe with specific events?)

Thanks for your time!

- Please give feedback and keep in touch!
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