MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY COMMISSIONER'S DIGITAL CHALLENGE FOR 2021!

This will be the third year in a row that my Digital Challenge has been offered to South Australian children and young people. This year I've added 'Zoom Out' into the mix - another exciting destination along my digital learning journey.

'Zoom Out' is a systems thinking challenge that can be completed alongside my design thinking challenge 'Space to Dream' and digital thinking challenge 'Learn to Speak Robot' to create a suite of digital learning challenges that take children and young people on a digital learning journey.

WHY A DIGITAL CHALLENGE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN?

My role as South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the core international treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that belong to all children.

Since commencing as Commissioner in April 2017 I have spoken with thousands of children and young people across South Australia to find out what they think is important and what they would like to change about their lives if they could.

Hearing directly from SA children and young people led me to develop my strategic plan (Front & Centre 2018-2022) that includes four key focus areas. One of these is to 'Engage and Empower Young Digital Citizens'.

This focus area was chosen because South Australian children asked me for ways to be creative, ways to learn what they need to know now, and ways to start preparing for the jobs of the future – and so my Commissioner's Digital Challenge was born.

I want children and young people in South Australia to be informed, skilled and fearless in their approach and participation in the digital world. I want them to be confident they have the knowledge they need to be engaged and empowered digital citizens.

BRIDGING DIGITAL GAPS

Children and young people born this century are growing up in a digital world. On the one hand this is changing the way they view their world, how they access information and services, gain knowledge, form opinions and participate in the things that matter to them. On the other hand, it involves ensuring all children and young people have access to digital technology and are being taught the skills and information they need to feel digitally empowered; not digitally threatened or left behind.

Beyond easy access, children and young people need inclusive, active opportunities to understand digital technology and to develop their digital literacy. This enables them to operate confidently as digital citizens, reaching their full potential through digital empowerment.

COMMISSIONER'S DIGITAL CHALLENGE

A free design thinking challenge for children in South Australia. Learn more at: CommissionersDigitalChallenge.net.au

Commissioner for Children & Young People

Let's be open to the possibilities that technology can be used to build a more humane society – a more inclusive and democratic world. By working together to bridge the social and economic gaps we know exist across our metropolitan, regional and remote communities, we can help all South Australian children and young people gain the digital skills they'll need to enable them to contribute to this aim.

> 'My annual Digital Challenge is about increasing digital opportunity for the children and young people of South Australia.'
>
> SA Commissioner for Children and Young People,
> Helen Connolly

A DIGITAL LEARNING JOURNEY

In its inaugural year my 'Learn to Speak Robot' Challenge was completed by an estimated 19,026 South Australian children and young people involving 217 schools, 31 libraries and number of SA Scouts and Guides groups. In 2020, I added my 'Space to Dream' design thinking challenge to my digital learning journey. Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19 an estimated 20,000 children and young people completed both digital challenges last year. This year I am adding Zoom Out into the mix. Zoom Out teaches children and young people about systems thinking. Systems thinking is a crucial skill for 21st Century Citizens. There are limited teaching resources currently available, which is why I collaborated with GROK Academy to create a brand-new world first comprehensive introduction to systems thinking that is being launched this year.

LEARN TO SPEAK ROBOT

Learn to Speak Robot is a coding and computational thinking challenge that recurs each year. It includes activities from Code.org's Hour of Code, GROK Academy, Microsoft's MakeCode, Digital Technologies Hub, CS Unplugged and Code Club Australia. Most activities use computers but some also only require paper, pencils, sticky notes, white boards, pebbles, chalk and beads to learn the basics of thinking like a computer. Children completing this challenge earn a Learn to Speak Robot Certificate of Achievement. Schools submitting their Challenge Completion Forms are also in the running for digital rewards (kindly made available through Challenge partners).

SPACE TO DREAM

Space to Dream is a Mars-themed design thinking challenge that recurs each year. Space to Dream enables children to design their own 'invention' applying a design thinking process. Children can create their design using free 3D design tools from Challenge partners Makers Empire, or hand-draw their idea. All children completing Space to Dream earn a Space to Dream Certificate of Achievement. Selected 3D designs will be 3D printed by Makers Empire and selected drawings will be 2D printed and showcase for the public to view in a public exhibition each year. The school submitting my favourite design will also win a 3D printer donated by Makers Empire.

ZOOM OUT

Zoom out is systems thinking challenge that recurs each year. To learn the fundamentals of systems thinking your class can complete a series of online micro-activities by accessing a 3-minute video followed by interactive micro-learnings that are designed to fit into any class schedule. As well as the video and micro-activities there are two dynamic unplugged lesson plans to complete with your students – completing any one of these will mean your students have successfully completed the challenge, or you might decide to undertake all three as a complementary suite.

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IT'S FREE

The Commissioner's Digital Challenge is a free digital challenge made available to everyone – it has been designed for schools, libraries, community groups and children who would like to take the Challenge at home.

AN ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGE FOR EVERY EDUCATOR

My digital learning journey includes Australian Curriculum aligned options. Schools and students can also choose to take any or all of my digital Challenges inside or outside of school. Or if they're really keen, they can do all three challenges both in school and outside of school!

Some schools have jumped headfirst into the digital learning journey our children and young people need to be embarking upon right now. Some have dipped their toes in while others aren't quite as game. However I'm confident even more schools will support their students to participate in the suite of Digital Challenges that are on offer again this year.

My digital Challenges are opportunities

1   for early adopter educators who are motivated to push further and share their expertise with their students.
2   for educators who are not yet on the digital bus who want to climb aboard and realise the journey to digital empowerment is well within reach.
3   for those educators whose students have limited access to the Internet, to computers or to devices but who opt to use unplugged versions of my Challenges, which are predominantly paper-based.

UNPLUGGED OPTIONS

Many of the Challenge activities are available as unplugged versions. These can therefore be explored without the need for any devices.

EXTENDED LEARNING

There are optional extended learning resources for those who are keen to expand on their learning. These include comprehensive Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and a range of other free resources, that include a robotics lending library. These extended learning resources have been carefully curated for ease of access via my dedicated Commissioner's Digital Challenge website.

KEY DATES

All three challenges open on the first day of School Term 1 and close on the last day of School Term 3 each year. To take part and be eligible for prizes and certificates for students who complete the challenges, schools can register at any time before the last day of Term 2 each year.

It is my hope that my Digital Challenge will encourage children, and the important adults in their lives, to start to engage with the abundance of free quality digital learning materials that are already available online.

I look forward to seeing students leaning into their innate creativity and limitless potential, as they learn to master these amazing digital tools, gain confidence in their digital skills and use them for the good of humankind in ways not yet imagined.

Helen Connolly
Commissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia

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