Digital multimedia lives at the intersection of technology and art. That powerful combination captures the attention of middle-school students in subject areas that are often underrepresented in urban public schools. By creating multimedia projects, students learn about digital technology while gaining the discipline and critical thinking skills that will help them in school and in life.

The Digital Youth Network (DYN) provides structured mentorship and training in new-media tools to middle-school students in the five Smart Communities. DYN runs as an after-school program that serves 40 to 60 students at a Chicago Public School in each of the neighborhoods. Working together over the course of a school year, the cohort of kids meets for two hours every day from Monday through Thursday, focusing on specific projects where developing new-media literacy is essential for accomplishing their goals.

**Learning by doing**
The DYN curriculum is built around digital artifacts that the students create. For the introductory session, for example, students work as if they owned a record label. They learn how to write lyrics, record songs, design CD covers and posters, shoot and edit music videos, and record podcasts about their products. Subsequent “pods” allow students to go deeper into topics they find appealing, including digital storytelling, fashion and animation.

Students learn graphic design, principles of sound, how to storyboard and write a script, how to use cameras, editing software and other digital tools, and more. The students volunteer to join DYN. The program at each school is run by an experienced team of four mentors with skills in graphic design, audio and/or video.

**A proven model**
Students in the program share their work on a social learning platform designed by the Digital Youth Network. The platform, Remix World, allows the youth to easily post their work and exchange ideas and critiques.

The nonprofit Digital Youth Network is a hybrid digital literacy program founded in 2005 that creates opportunities for middle-school students in both in-school and out-of-school contexts. In addition to its Smart Communities program, DYN operates programming at University of Chicago charter public schools and for the Chicago Public Library’s YOUmedia program. DYN is housed at DePaul University.

*(turn over for more)*
For More Information
The Smart Communities Digital Youth Network operates in a Chicago Public School in each community. To learn more about Digital Youth Networks, please contact DYN or LISC/Chicago.

Auburn Gresham
Perspectives Middle Academy
8131 S. May Street

Chicago Lawn
Talman Elementary School
5450 S. Talman Avenue

Englewood
Miles Davis Magnet Academy
6740 S. Paulina Street

Humboldt Park
Cameron Elementary School
1234 N. Monticello Avenue

Pilsen
Orozco Fine Arts and Sciences Elementary School
1940 W. 18th Street

Digital Youth Network
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Smart Communities
The Smart Communities program works to ensure increased digital access and use for families, businesses and other institutions in five Chicago neighborhoods: Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, Humboldt Park and Pilsen. Funded through the federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program and supported by LISC/Chicago, Smart Communities is part of the City of Chicago’s Digital Excellence Initiative and operated by key agencies in each of the communities.