

## CASE STUDY: WTIP (GRAND MARAIS, MN)

### Passing the Mic, Transforming Youth Engagement in Community Media



#### Overview:

Developed by WTIP, a former [OSS Radio Station Hub](#), the program trains high school students in communication skills, focusing on active listening, interview techniques, and creating meaningful cross-perspective dialogues. Students learn the entire One Small Step conversation process, from recruitment to facilitation, while developing technical media production skills like audio recording and editing.

The initiative goes beyond traditional media programs by creating intentional spaces for

young people to have substantive conversations, helping them develop empathy, and communication skills.

By collaborating closely with local schools, particularly through an Internship program with the high school media arts program, the project provides students with real-world experience in dialogue facilitation, media production, and community storytelling. The program's core philosophy is to bring media to young people on their terms, listening to their needs and creating flexible, youth-centered engagement opportunities that encourage stepping out of comfort zones and understanding diverse perspectives.

#### Approach:

WTIP partnered closely with the local high school to recruit student interns and integrate the program into an existing media arts pathway. Interns were paid and supported throughout the process, reinforcing that their time, labor, and perspectives were valued.



Students were trained in the full One Small Step conversation process, including outreach, preparation, active listening, interviewing, and facilitation. Alongside these dialogue skills, interns learned technical competencies such as audio recording, editing, and production.

The program emphasized practice over performance, giving students repeated opportunities to try new skills, reflect on what worked, and grow more comfortable engaging in conversations that felt unfamiliar or challenging.

WTIP staff intentionally designed the internship to be flexible and youth-centered. Rather than asking students to adapt to rigid institutional norms, the station adjusted its approach to meet students where they were, encouraging curiosity, experimentation, and learning through doing.

### **Key Insights and Lessons Learned:**

WTIP observed that meaningful youth engagement requires institutions to shift their own habits. Bringing media and dialogue work to young people, rather than expecting them to come to it already confident or fluent, made deeper participation possible.

Structured conversation design mattered. Interns benefited from clear frameworks for listening and dialogue, which helped them move beyond surface-level exchanges and into more thoughtful conversations.

The One Small Step approach provided a scaffold that made difficult or unfamiliar conversations feel more manageable.

The combination of paid internships, strong school partnerships, and real-world responsibility supported student growth. Interns developed confidence not only in technical media skills, but in their ability to listen carefully, ask good questions, and engage with perspectives different from their own.

### **Notable Outcomes:**

Five high school students completed the internship program.

Interns gained experience in active listening, interviewing, facilitation, and audio production.





Students reported greater confidence engaging in conversations with peers and community members.

Several moments stood out in which interns expressed surprise at what they learned about others when conversations were structured and intentional.

**Key Takeaway:**

WTIP's experience suggests that authentic youth engagement in community media depends on humility, flexibility, and a willingness to listen. When young people are trusted with real responsibility, supported with clear tools, and invited into conversations that matter, they are capable of deep reflection, skill development, and meaningful connection.

**Project Links:**

- [One Small Step Interns Do the Work of Community Organizing |](#)
- [WTIPGroundRulesVidYouthOSS.mov](#)
- [One Small Step Summer Internship Presentation.docx](#)
- [Questions for Youth.docx](#)
- [WTIP One Small Step 2024 Wrap Up](#)
- [WTIP's One Small Step Initiative](#)
-  One Small Step Interns Eero & Amber
-  One Small Step with Grace and Kaj