

1. Strategies for weekly current events

It would be hard to teach civic skills without using the world as your textbook. We encourage you to develop a practice of using current events on regular and consistent basis. This will allow students the authentic opportunity to connect their class work to the larger context of the city, state, country and the world

This section provides a number of different strategies to engage students in the news. We recommend you choose one of these strategies and stick with it for an extended period of time. Not only does the consistency help develop habits of mind and clear expectations, but it allows students the opportunity to improve at a task.

- A. News Bureaus
- B. Story of the Week
- C. Becoming an Issue Expert
- D. Comparing News Coverage
- E. News Discussion
- F. News Roundup
- G. Clippings File

A. News Bureaus

Have your students generate topic areas that they think are important -- local, national, international, education, politics, housing, culture etc. Have them list what types of stories might fit under each of those topics. Assign pairs or small groups of students a topic and appoint them as the news bureau for that topic. For example, they might be the Education Bureau who covers all education related stories. (Some stories might fit into more than one category and that is perfectly fine.) Choose a day each week to be news reporting day and have each bureau report on the top stories of the week in that topic area. We recommend rotating topic areas every 6 weeks or so in order for students to be able to develop expertise in more than one area.

B. Story of the Week

Lead a discussion in which students develop criteria for what makes a news story the “story of the week.” Suggestions might include: “it affects us as youth”, “it impacts lots of people”, etc. Post the criteria and have each student nominate a story each week that they think meets the criteria and is “the story of the week.” Have each student give a 1 minute report on their story and why they believe it is the story of the week. Take a vote and choose a winner. Post the Story of the Week on a designated bulletin board, along with the reasoning of why this story won for Story of the Week. NOTE: One way to avoid everyone simply voting for their own story is to give each student 5 votes to split in any way they want (they can use all 5 for one story, or 1 vote for 5 different stories, 2 votes for one story and 3 for another etc.)

C. Becoming an Issue Expert

Have students develop expertise around the issue they are working on by searching for everything and anything related to the issue in the news.

Have them keep a portfolio of news clips on the issue throughout the year, checking in, sharing with others and reflecting on trends they see periodically.

D. Comparing News Coverage

Divide your class into groups and assign each group a news source to cover (eg. local papers, reputable online sources, local broadcast news, national papers and national broadcast news). Each group should report on the top stories on a given day or throughout the week from their news source. Have students compare news coverage (you can mix up how – some weeks they can report out, others they can jigsaw with students from other groups).

E. News Discussion

Collect (and have students bring in) a variety of newspapers over the course of the week. Arrange the chairs in a circle and allow students 20 or minutes to skim and review stories from the week, looking for stories they think raise a compelling question. Students should take notes on the basic story information (who, what, why, when, where, how) and write out a compelling question. As they finish looking at a paper they can then pass the paper to their right). Quickly go around the circle having each student pitch their story and pose a discussion question that the story raised for them. Have the class choose a story to discuss and spend the bulk of the rest of the period having a discussion using the compelling question. Use the final minutes of class for silent reflective writing on the discussion.

F. News Roundup

Create a schedule small groups (co-anchors) to present a wrap up of what they think are the most important news stories of the week to present to the rest of the class. Post the schedule prominently and send a reminder email to the pair at the beginning of the week. Create a ritual by having the News Roundup the same day each week (we recommend Monday).

Each pair will be charged with choosing 5-10 stories from the past week they think were important. They should summarize each story and explain its importance.

Set clear guidelines for presentations ahead of time. Will each pair sit up at the front of the room at a long table? Can they use media in their presentations (prezi? keynote? powerpoint?) Do you want to download theme music for your broadcast (<http://www.networknewsmusic.com/wp/>)? Have the class create a banner/backdrop for their “station’s news show?” Have fun with it!

G. Clippings Files

Keeping an ongoing clippings file is a good way to track news over time. There are numerous ways you can have students create a clippings file of current events. See examples below.

Student Handout: Keeping a News File

1. Clip articles and:
 - Neatly attach to an 8.5 x 11” sheet of paper
 - Cite source article came from by providing **name** of source and **date** published. (e.g., New York Times, July 15, 2014)
 - Create **Reporter’s Notes** (“who, what, where, when, why, how” and most importantly “so what?”) for each article

NOTE: While articles printed from the Internet are acceptable, they must be from an approved source (if you are not sure, ASK) and must not be from the date the article is due (to avoid last-minute online surfing). Keeping up with the news means reading the news on a regular basis, not just the day the assignment is due!

2. Be prepared to present your article to the class. In addition to summarizing the main facts of the article you should explain why you chose it. Questions to be prepared to answer: **Why is this newsworthy? What does it have to do with politics or government? How does it affect us?**

Not everyone will present, but you should always be prepared to present that day.

Student Handout: Reporter's Notes

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

So What?

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

Student Handout: Current Events: Tracking the Big Issues

End of the Week Wrap Up

1. What trends do you see? What are the big issues at each level? How do you know?

2. Now compare with someone who tracked a different news source. Do you have similar results? Discuss.