



Engaging with current events is an essential part of educating young people to be informed and humane participants in society, helping them develop the capacity to examine issues from multiple perspectives and think critically about the world around them. This guide offers tools and strategies to help teachers organize discussions on current events in their classrooms.

For more guidance on how to help students engage in meaningful conversations on emotional or controversial topics, use our guide [Fostering Civil Discourse: How Do We Talk About Issues That Matter?](#)

1. Start with Yourself

Your own identity, values, political positions, and beliefs influence how you respond to current events and how you address them in the classroom. There may be times when your identity or background gives you a particular emotional connection or useful insight into an event. For events that touch on issues outside of your lived experience, it can be helpful to seek out the voices of those with lived experience to inform your teaching. If possible, consider building a network with other educators who teach current events in your community to share teaching resources and to support each other in the wake of troubling news.

Reflect

- What factors make up your identity (for example, race, religion, nationality, political beliefs) and how do these factors influence how you respond to different current events?
- How can you build professional networks that support your teaching of current events?
- How can you incorporate the voices of those with lived experience of the issues you teach?

2. Build Current Events into Your Routine

Teachers in our network set aside anywhere from 15 minutes to a full class period per week for current events discussions. We recognize it can be hard to prioritize current events and fit it into the limited class time you have with your students, so we recommend protecting the time you set aside for current events and establishing routines to minimize the amount of extra planning it requires. Keep in mind that some news stories may impact students more than others, and that occasionally it will be important to suspend your planned lesson and instead make space for students to reflect on and discuss the news.

Reflect

- How much time can you regularly set aside per week for teaching current events?
- How can you ensure that students have enough time to process particularly emotional or challenging events?

3. Use a Range of Reliable News Sources

We live in a time when it can be difficult to identify reliable news sources. Misleading and fabricated news stories proliferate online, and even reliable news sources can have political perspectives that affect their coverage.

Use Ad Fontes Media's [Interactive Media Bias Chart 5.0](#) to help you select a variety of quality news sources you can use in your teaching. You can also share this chart with your students to help them better understand how you evaluate the quality and perspective of different news sources.

The following resources may also be helpful for teaching current events:

- For news from a variety of perspectives, consider [AllSides](#) and [The Week](#)
- For condensed news stories and digests, consider [Axios](#) and [CNN 10](#)
- For radio journalism and podcasts, consider [Listenwise](#), [The Daily](#), and [Today, Explained](#)
- For news stories “leveled” to a variety of lexile levels, consider [Newsela](#)

We also recommend including local news sources in your area for their coverage of community and national events.

Reflect

- What are your “go-to” news sources, and where do they fall on Ad Fontes Media’s [Interactive Media Bias Chart 5.0](#)?
- Which sources do you plan to use in your current events teaching?

4. Incorporate Media Literacy

To prepare students to be thoughtful and active participants in democracy, we must help them develop critical thinking and media literacy skills. These skills help students judge the reliability of information they encounter in the news, assess how their own biases influence their responses, and make careful decisions about how they share news through social media.

Explore the following resources to help your students hone their media literacy skills throughout the year:

- Teaching Idea: [Where Do We Get Our News and Why Does It Matter?](#)
- Teaching Strategy: [News Article Analysis](#)
- Teaching Strategy: [How to Read the News Like a Fact Checker: A Media Literacy Strategy](#)
- Partner Site: [Checkology](#) by the [News Literacy Project](#)

Reflect

- Which of these resources is most relevant for your students?
- How can you help students evaluate the news they consume?

5. Recommended Teaching Strategies

In order for students to engage in meaningful conversations on complex, divisive, or emotionally challenging topics, they need to build trust and community. Before you begin teaching about specific events, we recommend that you create a class contract using our [Contracting](#) strategy. You can also find more ideas for how to build community in our resource [Back to School 2021: Building Community for Connection and Learning](#).

The following table provides suggestions for teaching strategies that you can apply to discuss specific current events with your students.

When you want students to...	Try this strategy...
Process breaking news or an emotionally difficult event	Head, Heart, Conscience Toolbox for Care Journaling Color, Symbol, Image Graffiti Boards S-I-T
Understand diverse perspectives or discuss a contentious topic	Four Corners Save the Last Word for Me Big Paper Barometer Town Hall Circle Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn
Uncover the complexity of an event	Iceberg Diagrams
Analyze images and videos	Close Viewing Protocol See, Think, Wonder Crop It
Connect a topic to their own lives	Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World Connect, Extend, Challenge