

## **Who decides the news? You, that's who!**

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Cleveland, Ohio

**News Literacy Summer Institute 2010**

### **Standards Addressed:**

- Learners use information to draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge. (from the ALA/AASL)
- Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society (from the ALA/AASL)
- Reading applications, informational, technical, persuasive text.(from Ohio Department of Education)
- Reading Process: concepts of prints, comprehension strategies and self-monitoring strategies (from Ohio Department of Education)

### **General Lesson Objectives:**

Students will be able to define, recognize and use universal news drivers

### **Specific Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- Use the universal news drivers to judge the relative newsworthiness of various events and articles.
- Use the news drivers to justify their editorial decisions.
- Understand how professional journalists use the news drivers to determine the content of news sites and publications.

### **Required Materials:**

Descriptions of 10 stories, adapted from old CleveUJW articles

Stock photos that illustrate articles (optional)

Mock-ups representing website home page or a newspaper front page

## Lesson 1a

### Activity 1:

- What the news? Using the front page of a newspaper (suggestion: many newspapers have front page images on their websites.) Ask students to tell “The news of the day.”
- Ask students to explain how they arrived at decisions. Some answers might include: story placement, size of the photo, size of the headline.
- Ask students to decide on the major story of the day – according to the newspaper. Using the headline as a summary, ask student why the topic rates such high display. Solicit answers such as: interest to more people, subject is well known.

### Activity 2:

- Using words students supplied, introduce and define the news drivers.
  - Timeliness, Proximity, Conflict, Uniqueness, Prominence, Human Interest, Relevance.

### Activity 3a:

- Divide students into groups and give them a story. Ask them to identify at least two news drivers in the story.

### Activity 3b:

- Ask students who would want to read, hear or watch the story.

Introduce the concept of editorial judgment.

Define and discuss five questions editors consider in making decisions:

- What's interesting vs. what's important
- Who is the audience?
- Do you give the audience what it wants, or what it needs?
- What is the competition doing?
- What story gets the best play?

### Activity 4: Assessment

- Give students the (four) stories from the page front. Tell them the audience is their neighborhood (school, peers, church or another group that is relatively close to their experience.) Ask them to remake the front page by deciding which stories should get the most prominence, and which should get lesser prominence. Tell them to justify their editorial judgment by explaining the stories' newsworthiness for their audience.

**Scoring Suggestions:**

**Excellent:** students are able to justify their decision by answering four of the five questions on editorial judgment

**Good:** students are able to justify their decision by answering three of the five questions

**Poor, but passing:** students are able to justify their decision by answering two of the five questions

**Failing:** students are unable to justify their decision.

## Lesson 1b:

### Who Decides the News? You, That's Who

*Note to teacher: This activity functions as an assessment for the previous lesson.*

#### **General Objective:**

Students should be able to define, recognize and use universal news drivers

#### **Specific Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- Use the universal news drivers to judge the relative newsworthiness of various events and articles.
- Use the news drivers to justify their editorial decisions.
- Understand how professional journalists use the news drivers to determine the content of news sites and publications.

#### **Required Materials:**

Descriptions of eight stories, adapted from news archives

Stock photos that illustrate articles (optional)

Mock-ups representing website home page or a newspaper front page

Video: Who decides the news? You, that's who! (about 2.5 minutes)

**Vocabulary:** head list, news meeting, news budget

#### **Step-by-step instructions:**

1. Instructor explains the scenario for today's lesson. A new editor has just joined your newspaper staff S/he meets a veteran reporter, who is advising him/her about prepping for a news meeting.
2. Teacher should define the following terms.
  - **News Meeting** is the meeting where editors pitch stories for the daily paper or broadcast.
  - **Head List** is a short summary of all the events under consideration for the day.
  - **News Budget** is the list of stories that will be printed in the paper

*Note: teachers might want to check for correct terminology for radio, television or online news sites.*

3. Students will be grouped and given a set of story descriptions. Their task will be to pick the lead stories for that day's edition of the “\_\_\_\_\_ (Insert Name of your own newspaper here).”
4. Play the movie: “Who decides the news? You, that's who!” Pause at the clip listing the news drivers. Give students time to decide on the lead stories. (Teachers can decide how long to make this segment of the activity)
5. Have student recite their choices, and use the news drivers to justify them.
6. Continue the movie. Pause at the clip listing guidelines for editorial judgment. Have students answer the reporter's question. If students feel the article won't appeal to a wide audience, have them substitute an article from the head list. Have them justify their new choice.
7. Continue the movie until it ends.

**Plan For Independent Practice:** Explain that journalists use these questions and guidelines when searching for newsworthy events and trends. Tell students they will need to refer to these concepts when pitching their stories for the final journal. They will also need to refer to these concepts when writing and reporting.

**Closure:** Review news drivers and questions for editorial judgment.