

20 Ways to Teach and Learn with the Local Newspaper

Check out these ideas for using the newspaper as a learning tool. Each item contains questions and activity suggestions that promote active reading skills, critical thinking, analysis, reflection, creative responses and/or ways to connect at a personal level with people, places and events in our local community.

1 Scavenger Hunt:

Create scavenger hunt questions that can be answered by reading articles, columns, ads, headings and photo captions. Focus on a different page or section than other individuals or groups in the hunt. Try creating different question types, such as true/false, fill-in-the-blank and multiple choice. Trade your questions with another person or group, and the hunt begins!

2 Newsy Math:

Notice different kinds of numbers throughout the newspaper. Can you connect the numbers to a math concept, such as subtraction, addition, angles, percentages, ratios, etc.? Challenge: Use information in the newspaper to create a math problem that another person can try to solve.

3 Hear Ye, Hear Ye!:

Practice the skill of summarizing and develop your speaking abilities by presenting a brief recap of a story to someone else, perhaps as part of a “Morning Show” or weekly current events activity. Extend this activity by coming up with a solution that might help in a situation covered in an article. Vary the activity by focusing at different times on different subject matter, such as stories related to science or history or sports or government or the arts.

4 Words, Words, Words:

The newspaper is a fertile source for any type of language concept being learned. Search for compound words or words with suffixes. Choose a word and generate synonyms or antonyms. See how many words you can find with a particular letter, sound, blend or word pattern. How would a passage be translated into another language? For any unfamiliar words, how can context clues help you begin to learn about it? The possibilities are endless!

5 Fact or Opinion?

Discuss how items on the Viewpoints page differ from articles elsewhere in the newspaper. Which pieces have a primarily informative purpose, and which set out to advance an opinion? Which words in an editorial piece or column express a value? Are arguments supported by verifiable facts? After reading an item on the Viewpoints page, discuss what an opposing view might include. Consider writing a Letter to the Editor if you feel strongly about presenting a different perspective to the community.

6 Find the Spark:

Professional authors often find inspiration for their literary works in the newspaper. Look for information in the newspaper that could be the spark for a creative spin-off. If possible, discuss your ideas with another person. Then choose one idea and take it from there. Creative writing responses could be fictional or poetic, spark a memory for autobiographical writing or lead you down a path of inquiry that results in informative writing.

7 Nurture Curiosity:

Choose one article and read it with a group. Cut out the article and tape it to a large piece of blank paper. How many relevant questions can the group generate to show their curiosity? How might you go about finding some

answers? Extend this activity with a mini research activity to practice using different modes of inquiry and finding various types of sources.

8 Civics in Action:

The newspaper's front and “jump” pages routinely include stories about local government, whose activity affects high numbers of county residents. Find and read an article about local government. Which local governing body took action? What did they do? Who benefited? Is there a downside? What are some possible effects of their action? What questions does the article raise in your mind and who could you contact for answers? With such articles, consider how government works and think about how it might affect your life personally. What connections can you make to social studies concepts?

9 Silly Ads:

Examine display ads, classified ads and legal ads. Think about how to use them as models for creative writing. Then invent your own imaginary product, wacky service or mind-boggling public event and write an ad or public notice about it. Afterwards, present your creative ad to someone else and explain how your ad is similar to and different than the model you used.

10 Visualize It:

To show your comprehension of main ideas, key people and significant action in news articles, make a drawing, painting, dramatic presentation or cartoon strip to capture key elements of an article you have read. Start with a mind map, if desired, then proceed in the art form of your choice. Discuss what was in the article but not in your visual and why.

11 Career Exploration:

Read an article that features a person and the kind of work they do. What kind of work does this person do? Why is their work important? What skills, knowledge and experience is important for doing this type of job? How did this person develop the skills for the role they have? Would you be interested in working in this field? Why or why not? Learn more by researching what it takes to get a job in this field, whether lots of these jobs are available and how much they pay.

12 Community Action:

Nearly every issue of the newspaper reports on people in our community who are helping each other. Find an article about a group that provided a community service. What was the need in the community? Who helped out? How did this group meet the need? Why did this service activity matter? How can you find out more about this group and what their future service projects might be?

13 Societal Groups:

Find the Community Calendar. What different types of community groups are offering events that the public can attend? Organize your findings into categories with examples of groups that fit each category. How do different groups contribute to community life?

14 Infographics:

Sometimes articles include an infographic – a chart, illustration or diagram – to present information along with the text. Can you find an article that has an infographic with it? Examine the infographic. As you read the article, notice how it relates to the infographic. How is reading an infographic different than reading paragraphs? Does the infographic contain any information not in the article? What do you think was the purpose of including an infographic with the article you read?

15 Do It!

Many items in the newspaper invite you to take action. Look in the newspaper for a Puzzle Page, Spot the Differences activity, Community Calendar item, contest announcement or advertisement that interests you and take action.

16 Then and Now:

While reading an article on the History page (in most Friday editions) or a “Way Back When” sidebar, think about how life is different now than it was in decades past. How is it similar? For differences, consider what might have caused a change over time. For similarities, consider why little or no change has occurred. Discuss your thinking with another person. Do you share the same perspective or not?

17 Personal Narrative:

In writing a personal narrative, the author tells about something that really happened to them. The true story can be deepened by adding a reflection or commentary about the experience. Often, columns on the Viewpoints page or Faith & Family pages include elements of personal narrative. Find a column that uses personal narrative. As you read, think about which parts of the story are facts about what happened. Which parts add depth by telling about feelings or insights? What personal experience of your own might you write about? How would reflection give deeper meaning to the story? Try it!

18 Role Model:

Many articles in the newspaper recognize someone for an important achievement. When reading such an article, highlight or otherwise note details that could inspire others. Why might this person be considered a role model? How can it be helpful to have a role model? Who might you look up to as a role model? Write about your thoughts or discuss them with someone else.

19 Timeline:

Many articles present information that spans a period of time. When reading such an article, highlight or otherwise note any dates that are mentioned. Then make a timeline and place the events in chronological order along the line. Are these events simply sequential or do any have a cause-effect relationship? Discuss any cause-effect relationships that you have noted.

20 The Arts:

Look for articles in the newspaper about theater, visual art, dance, literature, music or other forms of art. What art form is featured in the article? How are people involved in bringing this art form into our community? Why is it important? Would you enjoy creating this form of art? Why or why not? Write about or discuss your ideas with another person.



Go beyond just reading the newspaper.

Choose an activity above and give it a go!