

## SOOTHING RE-ENTRY WORRIES

By Catherine Pangan

Dear Dr. P.,

My fourth graders are asking a lot about current events in the news, including everything from politics to climate change, pop culture, and even gaming. How do I (or should I) address these events in the classroom?

Thank you,  
Noticing the News

*Dear Newsie,*

The short answer is “YES!” you should address current events in the classroom, and you can do it in thoughtful ways that build community by encouraging your students to take the lead. From a larger media literacy perspective, incorporating current events in your classroom also provides opportunities to model *how* to think critically and not *what* to think when digesting all different types of media.

**Starting small.** You might try incorporating current events as part of a morning meeting. Assign one or two students to bring in a news article of their choice each day based on something they found interesting. Many teachers have cast a wide net and encourage news articles that students might find under “I” categories: Interesting, Intriguing, Investigative (a mystery), Infuriating, Impactful, or Inspiring.

**Ready to take it a step further?** If you are ready to go a bit deeper, students can take the articles they choose and create a current-events board. The articles can be categorized



on the board and students can write opinions or thoughts next to the article. This is similar to a “graffiti wall” that many people use when asking thought-provoking discussion questions.

**Connect it to curriculum.** Supporting even more meaning-making for the students comes easily when you can connect current events to your curriculum. Integrative potential seems endless when you start thinking about where events fit into your content standards—and don’t forget about aspects like writing styles, vocabulary opportunities, and reading possibilities that go beyond the immediate content of the article.

**Developing media literacy: Who made this story?** Where was the story published? How was this story made? Why was this story made? When was this story made? What is this story missing? Where do I go from here? Is this story true and factual? The “ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication” is how the National Association for Media Literacy Education (namle.net) defines *media literacy*.

These components are critical to teaching your students where to find information and how to spot false information. The questions above are from Newseumed.org, an organization that provides excellent resources to support your students’ critical awareness toward media consumption <https://newseumed.org>.

**Create your own news magazine.** From experience, once the students dig into the news and become critical consumers, they will want to create their own news source. Get ready to bring in journalists, news anchors, and other community members who can provide even further inspiration for your classroom reporters. After engaging with all the possibilities, your classroom is sure to be newsworthy!

Dr. P.



**Dr. Pangan**, a former elementary teacher and current Professor at Butler University (Indianapolis), loves to help build and support strong, healthy schools. Please send your question for Dr. P. to [cpangan@butler.edu](mailto:cpangan@butler.edu).