

# Framework for Teaching News Literacy

Suggested Curricular Scope and Sequence
Developed using the <u>Understanding by Design</u>® template (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005)

The <u>mission</u> of the News Literacy Project is to develop active consumers of news and information able to determine the credibility of news and other content, identify different types of information, and use the standards of authoritative, fact-based journalism to determine what to trust, share and act on. The ultimate goal is to equip learners to become self-sufficient and productive with news and have an equal opportunity to participate in the civic life of their communities and the country.

The Framework for Teaching News Literacy is designed to support educators in working toward this mission by providing common standards, essential questions, and knowledge/skills objectives, along with suggested performance tasks and learning activities. Our framework can be used for integrating news literacy into existing curriculum, or as the basis for creating stand-alone courses or units.

The NLP Framework is organized around the 3-stage, "backward design" process of <u>Understanding by Design (UbD)</u>®, a widely used curriculum design framework developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). UbD focuses on building the conceptual understandings (the "big ideas") associated with becoming news-literate and preparing students to apply their learning in authentic ways. UbD connects best practices in planning, teaching and assessing based on research in <u>cognitive psychology and validated by studies on student achievement</u>. It ensures educational value by offering time to teach and time to learn through deepened understanding with clearly articulated desired results.

#### Stage 1— Identify Desired Results **Transfer** The News Literacy Project uses five Students will be able to independently use their learning to... Distinguish news from other types of information. primary standards to define the core Demonstrate a healthy skepticism toward information. competencies students need to be Identify credible information and sources. news-literate. These standards invoke Detect misinformation and faulty evidence. a combination of knowledge, skills Positively contribute to the information landscape by sharing verified and credible information and calling out misinformation. and mindsets that are required to recognize credible information, avoid being exploited by misinformation and make informed, empowered **UNDERSTANDINGS ESSENTIAL OUESTIONS** choices. Students will understand that... Students will keep considering... Different types of information exist for different purposes. In what ways do news and information shape society? No source of information is perfect, but not all information is Standard 1: Students distinguish What distinguishes facts from opinions, and why does the created equal. news from other types of information distinction matter for productive discourse? A free press protects the public interest by acting as a watchdog and can recognize both traditional What does it mean to be news-literate? on government and powerful groups. and non-traditional ads. How is quality journalism produced? Quality journalism has rigorous standards designed to produce How can we know what to believe? What makes a piece of fair, accurate and timely information about newsworthy issues and Standard 2: Students acknowledge information credible? events for the public. the importance of the First Credible information empowers individuals and invigorates Why does news matter? Amendment in American democracy democracy. How can misinformation and false beliefs undermine an and a free press to an informed Misinformation corrupts reasoned civic discourse, decisions and individual's participation in a democracy and threaten the political public. actions, and damages and distorts democracy. process? Responsible civic engagement requires individuals to be active, How do press freedoms and news literacy strengthen democracy? Standard 3: Students understand the critical consumers and sharers of information. What does it look like to be a responsible and news-literate standards of quality journalism and participant in a democracy? can use them to identify credible information and sources. Acquisition Standard 4: Students demonstrate Students will know... Students will be skilled at... increased critical habits of mind. How journalists determine which events and issues to cover in a Differentiating information based on its primary purpose among including effective verification skills given news cycle. six main "InfoZones." and the ability to detect The five freedoms protected by the First Amendment. Identifying branded content. How the press can play a watchdog role. Identifying credible sources of information and those that lack misinformation and faulty evidence. How the public can play a watchdog role. credibility about a given subject. What press freedoms are and how they are protected or Identifying and differentiating between different types of **Standard 5**: Students express a sense threatened in countries around the world. misinformation. of responsibility for the information How algorithms personalize information for individual consumers Evaluating the impact of misinformation. they share and feel more empowered in both beneficial and potentially harmful ways. Differentiating between valid and invalid evidence, and between to be civically engaged. What news media bias is and how it might show itself in coverage. sound and unsound claims, to determine the strength of an Seven standards of quality journalism. argument. What conspiracy theories are, why people find them compelling, Using digital verification methods like "lateral reading" and reverse and the impact of conspiratorial thinking. image search to evaluate information. Feeling empowered to engage in civic actions such as checking information before sharing and responding to information that is

problematic in some way.

## Stage 2 - Evidence

#### **PERFORMANCE TASKS**

Performance tasks are rich, authentic learning experiences which teachers can assess with specific criteria. The News Literacy Project currently only offers descriptions of some suggested performance tasks. We recommend developing performance tasks and rubrics for your students that fit their unique interests while also addressing the essential questions and desired understandings.

## Some suggestions include:

<b>Evaluative Criteria</b>	Coding	Assessment Evidence
Teachers should identify criteria to judge how well students succeed in these performance tasks. Think about	Standard 1	InfoZone Coordinator — Students choose something they're interested in and find as many examples as possible from different InfoZones that relate to it. For example, a student can choose "Tik Tok," and find and accurately classify examples of advertisements about the social media site, entertainment about Tik Tok, opinion about Tik Tok, etc. Students are able to explain how each piece of information might affect a consumer's perception of the chosen entity. Then students will create an infographic to teach their parents or other adults about the different ways topics can be presented in an information ecosystem.
criteria such as clarity, accuracy, organization, how well students explain themselves, and how well they critique a source.	Standard 3	Be a Reporter — Students write a news report for their classmates using the seven standards of quality journalism. Students will annotate their finished article to demonstrate how they addressed each of the standards of quality journalism. OR Students analyze the top stories of a local news outlet — on the front page of a local newspaper, on the homepage of a local news website or the top stories in a newscast — and decide which story they think is the most newsworthy that day. In a response, students will justify their decision using the four factors of newsworthiness (timely, important, unique and interesting).
	Standard 2	Press Badge — Students utilize online press freedom indexes to investigate what conditions impact a country's press freedoms ranking. Students then contribute to a class discussion about what the term "press freedoms" refers to. What should journalists/reporters be able to say or do and why? How can the government affect press freedoms? What is it like for journalists, reporters and concerned individuals in countries that do not have certain press freedoms? After the discussion, students design an aspirational press badge — one that includes all the freedoms they think a country with a healthy, strong democracy should have. On the back of their press badge, students answer the question, 'Why are these freedoms important for a strong democracy?"

	Standard 4	Fact-Checker — Students review examples of misinformation on major fact-checking websites (such as Factcheck.org, Snopes and Politifact) and identify a rumor pattern or cluster about a given topic. They should create a list of "red flags" — signs that content might not be credible — to watch out for, using examples from the debunked viral rumors. Then ask them to create a social media post warning others to be on the lookout for this misinformation trend and directing them to credible sources about the subject. To conclude, they will describe the impact of misinformation on society, and in a democracy in particular, with the class.
	Standards 1, 3 and 5	Self Moderator — Students keep track of the social media posts they share for a week. At the end of the week, students calculate what percentage of their social media shares featured fact-based statements (versus opinion-based), what percentage they fact-checked or otherwise verified before sharing (versus what percentage they shared un-checked) and what percentage were from credible news sources based on the standards of quality journalism (versus other types of content). At the end, students write a written report sharing their percentages and reflecting on the following: What makes for a healthy information diet? Did you share content that fits with your vision for a healthy information diet? Did anything you share have the potential to misinform people or spread confusion? Why or why not? What, if anything, might you do differently on social media as a result of this exercise?
	Standard 5	Civic Bucket List — Students create a list of civically engaged actions and rank them in order of which they'd like to try first. Then, students write a short reflection answering two questions: 1) What makes you feel more ready or excited to try actions higher up your list? 2) What might make you feel more confident or excited to tackle actions that are currently further down your list?  Tip: Challenge students to actually complete three! Use the options from NLP's Checkology® student growth measure: correct a piece of misinformation or a false comment on social media; pay attention to political debates; contact a reporter or news organization by email, social media or phone; participate in a discussion about politics or current events — in school, with friends or family, or online; vote in an election when eligible to do so; pay attention to ongoing discussions about journalism and the state of the news media; volunteer for a mission-driven organization or political campaign; document something in the community and share it with others; question or engage in conversations with elected officials on social media or by email or phone; participate in a protest.
	Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	A News Artist — Students create an artistic interpretation of what news literacy is and why it is important to be news-literate, aimed at people who tend not to engage with news. They should be sure to address how to distinguish news from other types of information, the importance of the First Amendment, the standards of quality journalism, how to detect misinformation and how to be civically engaged.
		* Have a suggestion or example you want to share? Email us at <a href="mailto:info@newslit.org">info@newslit.org</a> .

#### SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE

The News Literacy Project offers numerous checks for comprehension:

- The Checkology student growth measure assesses student knowledge using questions about key understandings and skills from the framework.
- **Formative assessments** are embedded in all Checkology lessons that require students to demonstrate comprehension and practice skills. These come in many forms, such as traditional and media multiple choice questions, re-ordering and ranking items, matching items, choosing the correct image or answer, text explanations, and more.
- Exercises allow for additional practice with assessments that mimic those found in Checkology lessons.
- Challenges allow for extensions of concepts introduced in Checkology lessons.
- Missions allow for additional practice of fact-checking skills learned in Checkology lessons and the Check Center Toolbox.

This list is not comprehensive. Each Checkology lesson overview contains topical essential questions to guide discussions (click on the links in Stage 3). You can also use popular methods like assigning graphic organizers, checking students' notes, and documenting student growth in questions and understanding. Teacher-designed assessments like these, along with informal checks for understanding through observations and anecdotal record-keeping, are invaluable. You should determine what types and quantities of evidence would best suit the needs for your classrooms.

#### **Student Self-Assessment and Reflection**

Periodic response-to-text writing tasks are embedded in Checkology lessons. Teachers can support additional student self-assessment and reflection with instructional strategies like <u>exit tickets</u>, <u>reflection logs</u>, and <u>concept mapping</u>.

## Stage 3 — Plan Learning Experiences

#### **Pre-assessment**

The Checkology <u>student growth measure</u> assesses key understandings and skills from the framework. Students take a pre-assessment before using Checkology and then they answer post-assessment questions (as listed in Stage 2).

Note: There are a number of questions that are important in the field but are not included in the Checkology student growth measure assessment. This assessment is used for NLP purposes to evaluate the efficacy of our resources and focused on acquiring data for internal purposes. Click <a href="here">here</a> for a broad list of questions you may use to independently assess news literacy skills, knowledge and habits of mind.

### **Learning Events**

Engage or "hook" students in a study on news literacy in whatever manner you deem best. Some popular methods are <u>K-W-L</u> and <u>I-charts</u>. It is crucial to get students thinking and wondering about key concepts and questions surrounding news literacy before diving into lessons. Introduce and discuss the <u>framework's essential</u> questions, and then plan your lesson sequence. We recommend the content topics listed below.

Pick and choose which Checkology lessons, supplementary exercises and challenges (Practice and Extend), missions (Fact-Check), and other learning experiences — such as inviting journalists from our Newsroom to Classroom program to speak with students — fit your course structure. Click on the lesson title to preview it and view associated materials, including overviews with topical questions, full lesson plans and tips from the field. Try to select at least one from each standard. We've marked

specific lessons we feel are strong "core" lessons with the

As you work through lessons, think about how to extend learning by providing opportunities to return to and reflect on essential questions and understandings; teacher-led discussions about domain-specific vocabulary, concepts and difficult and provocative questions are crucial in furthering students' understanding. Be sure to tailor lessons for your students' interests, needs, and classroom dynamic.

The sequence is outlined in terms of standard progression, but this may not be the best way to organize materials for your classroom or district. Consider integrating the lessons in a spiral format that allows for a recurring, ever-deepening inquiry approach to news literacy. Periodically revisit content with which students struggle; when students are confused, this is prime learning time. Probe trouble-spot content and skills in more complex and deeper ways through additional practice with supplemental materials and different teaching strategies, such as collaborative learning and discussion.

Whatever order you choose, be flexible and move back and forth between what is known and unknown: design related challenges for students to maximize learning so that students systematically increase their knowledge in depth and breadth, periodically demonstrating their growth through various assessments. Ultimately, the order of material should reflect the learners' needs.

Coding	Learning Event		
	Coding Key: S= standard (If more than one standard is addressed, the main standard is bolded), A= acquisition, M= meaning, T= transfer		
S1 A, M	<u>InfoZones</u> CORE		
A, IVI	I can analyze examples of information and categorize them by determining their primary purpose (news, opinion, entertainment, advertising, propaganda and raw information)		
	Supplemental activities can be found here.		
	Bonus: Educator Brett Benson had his students provide evidence of their learning with InfoZone "menus" using Canvas.		
S1, <b>S3</b>	What is News?		
A, M	> I can explain what newsworthiness is and name the four major factors (timely, important, interesting and unique) that determine it.		
	> I can develop my own sense of news judgment by evaluating the newsworthiness of a series of examples.		
	Supplemental activities can be found here.		
S1, <b>S3</b>	Branded Content		
A, M T	> I can identify advertising content that has been labeled in some way and explain how it differs from traditional advertising (this includes native ads and placements of ads, and all relate to the concepts of transparency, independence and credibility).		
·	I can describe some of the major factors that have influenced the development of such ads, including why it's desirable for marketers and presents potential conflicts of interest for news organizations.		
	Supplemental activities can be found <u>here</u> .		
S1	Be the Editor		
A, M	I can apply and extend my news judgment skills by comparing the newsworthiness (a measure of how timely, important, interesting, and unique a story is) of a group of dissimilar news stories and support and defend my choices.		
	Supplemental activities can be found here.		
S2	The First Amendment CORE		
A, M	> I can name the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment (of the press, to assemble, of speech, to petition the government and of religion).		

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	<ul> <li>I can explore and analyze six landmark First Amendment cases, judge them myself, and critique the Supreme Court's decision in each:</li> <li>West Virginia Board of Ed v. Barnette</li> </ul>		
	Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District  New York Times Co. v. Sullivan  Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier  Texas v. Johnson  Reno v. ACLU  Supplemental activities can be found here.		
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S2 A, M	Democracy's Watchdog  ➤ I can explore five iconic examples of investigative journalism and determine the impact of each:		
	<ul> <li>Nellie Bly,1887, reported on conditions at the Women's Lunatic Asylum in New York City.</li> <li>Ida B. Wells, 1892, exposed the horrors of lynching in America</li> <li>Seymour Hersh, 1968, reported the massacre of villagers by U.S. troops in Vietnam.</li> <li>Richard Marosi and Don Bartletti, 2014, documented unsafe working conditions, unethical payment practices and the brutal exploitation of child laborers at large produce farms in Mexico.</li> <li>Wesley Lowery and other reporters from The Washington Post, 2014, created a nationwide database of police shootings.</li> </ul>		
	> I can explain the "watchdog role" of the press and describe its importance.		
	Supplemental activities can be found <u>here</u> .		
S2	Citizen Watchdogs		
A, M	➤ I can name several ways that ordinary people can play a watchdog role.		
	➤ I can explain the details of four citizen watchdog case studies:		
	<ul> <li>LA resident George Holliday catches brutal beating of a Black man, Rodney King, by police in 1990.</li> <li>Tobacco executive Dr. Jeffrey Wigand goes public with information about the harmful effects of cigarettes.</li> <li>Young Egyptians bypass government media and start a revolution known as the Arab Spring</li> <li>Diamond Reynolds uses Facebook to livestream the police shooting of Philando Castile and its aftermath.</li> </ul>		
	> I can describe the relationship between citizen watchdogs and journalists.		

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	Supplemental activities can be found <u>here</u> .		
S2	Press Freedoms Around the World		
A, M	➤ I can explain what press freedom is and compare the ways that different countries protect — or restrict — it.		
	Press Freedom is the degree of the legal and/or constitutional protections that journalists have to do their jobs, and whether they are able to report freely without fear of retaliation. It includes four main elements: legal protection, treatment of journalists, judicial protection, and ownership of the media.		
	> I can synthesize information from watchdog organizations that track how journalists are treated in different countries to create a profile explaining the level of press freedoms in a specific country.		
	Supplemental activities can be found here.		
S3 A, M, T	Practicing Quality Journalism CORE		
	I can list and explain seven major standards of quality journalism (multiple credible sources, verification, avoidance of bias, balance, documentation, context and fairness).		
	> I can apply those standards to differentiate between a credible news report and an unreliable news report.		
	Supplemental activities can be found here.		
	Students should complete the <u>"Evaluating sources online"</u> mission.		
<b>S3</b> , S4	Understanding Bias		
A, M	> I can explain how bias in news coverage is a complex issue.		
	> I can discuss the role people's own biases play in perceptions of bias in media.		
	I can recognize five types of bias (partisan, demographic, corporate, "big story," and neutrality) and five forms (framing, absence of fairness and balance, tone, story selection, and sourcing) these biases can take in news coverage.		
	Supplemental activities can be found <u>here</u> .		

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S4	Introduction to Algorithms
A, M	<ul> <li>I can explain how algorithms use data to personalize information for individuals.</li> <li>Algorithms are used to suggest content that is the most relevant, interesting and helpful to a given user — often to hold their attention so targeted ads can be delivered. Algorithms draw on enormous collections of data that include our browsing histories, the location of our IP addresses and even keywords used in communications on free email and social media platforms. Algorithms can also work to reinforce our</li> </ul>
	biases, perspectives and blindspots rather than challenge them by serving us content that they've learned we'll be drawn to.  > I can describe the advantages and disadvantages of this technology.  Supplemental activities can be found <a href="here">here</a> .
<b>S4</b> , S5 A, M	Misinformation  I can identify and differentiate between different types of misinformation (satire, false content, imposter content, manipulated content, fabricated content).  I can explain why understanding and debunking misinformation matters.  I can evaluate and explain the possible consequences of misinformation.  Supplemental activities can be found <a href="here">here</a> .  Students should complete the "Verifying social media content" challenge.
S4 A, M	Arguments and Evidence  ➤ I can differentiate between claims supported by actual evidence and sound reasoning and those that rely on faulty or inauthentic "evidence" and logical fallacies (ad hominem, false equivalence, slippery slope, false dilemma, and straw man).  ➤ I can determine the overall strength of an argument.  Supplemental activities can be found here.  Students should complete the "Evaluating evidence online" mission.

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	Coding Key: S= standard (If more than one standard is addressed, the main standard is bolded), A= acquisition, M= meaning, T= transfer
S4 M, T	Evaluating Evidence Online  > I can distinguish between posts that don't provide strong evidence in support of the claims they make and those that do.
S4 M, T	Evaluating Sources Online  > I can differentiate between sources of information online that are unreliable and those that provide independent, verified information.
<b>S4</b> , S5	Conspiratorial Thinking
A, M, T	I can explain what "conspiracy theories" are (unfounded explanations of an event or situation that blame the secretive work of sinister, powerful people, such as a government, a company or even one person), and why people find them appealing and compelling (motivated reasoning, institutional cynicism, illusory pattern perception, etc.).
	I can describe what conspiratorial thinking is (thinking based on faulty logic, complex psychological needs and false evidence) and the role it plays in making conspiracy theories engaging and compelling to people (they offer simple narratives, take advantage of our vulnerabilities and provide a sense of community).
	> I can evaluate whether an explanation for a scenario is based on either strong or faulty evidence.
	> I can explain how the need to reconcile contradictions in worldviews leads people to cling to false beliefs and find "evidence" that doesn't exist or dismiss credible evidence that does.
	<ul> <li>Proportionality bias, intentionality bias and confirmation bias are key cognitive biases that address cognitive dissonance.</li> </ul>
	> I can demonstrate the social and political impact of conspiratorial thinking and conspiracy theories.
	Supplemental activities can be found <u>here</u> .
S4	<u>Viral Rumor Rundown</u> blog
Т	> The VRR blog reviews significant and timely examples of mis- and disinformation along with important news literacy lessons and insights.
S4	Key Word Wall terms (verification, transparency, fairness, bias, watchdog role, misinformation/disinformation, propaganda, conspiracy theory, and more)
A, M	

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S1-S5	Newsroom to Classroom	
A, M, T	> This program connects educators with trained and vetted NLP journalist volunteers who will visit classrooms either in person or virtually. It is free but only available to registered Checkology users.	
S1-S5	The Sift newsletter	
A, M, T	> This weekly email newsletter delivers relevant media news and recent examples of misinformation, along with prompts and tips for classroom discussions and activities.	
S1-S5	News Goggles videos and slides	
A, M, T	News Goggles annotations and activities offer news literacy takeaways on timely topics. These resources feature examples of actual news coverage, including full news reports, headlines, breaking news alerts or excerpts. They can be found under "Classroom Activities" in the resource library.	

## **Progress Monitoring**

Look over student notes, organizers and responses in Checkology, and evaluate student contributions during discussions. Offer appropriate feedback and follow-up activities.

Students who need additional practice will benefit from supplementary activities, such as the ones linked in this section.

Sample unit plans will be available here when they are ready. If you have one you'd like to share with us, email us at <a href="mailto:info@newslit.org">info@newslit.org</a>.