Framework for Teaching News Literacy

Developed using the *Understanding by Design*® template (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005)

Standards, questions, objectives, performance tasks and learning activities for educator planning.

🔗 **Use in conjunction with the Grade Band Expectations for News Literacy.**

Framework for Teaching News Literacy

Overview

The Framework for Teaching News Literacy outlines thoughtful planning for instruction in news literacy by providing common standards, essential questions, and knowledge/skills objectives, along with suggested performance tasks and learning activities.

The NLP Framework is organized around the 3-stage, "backward design" process of Understanding by Design (UbD)®, 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 cognitive psychology and validated by studies on student achievement. It ensures educational value by offering time to teach and time to learn through deepened understanding with clearly articulated desired results.

How to use this resource

Our framework can be used for integrating news literacy into existing curriculum, or as the basis for creating stand-alone courses or units.

Additionally, this document, together with NLP's grade band expectations, can be used to support a districtwide approach to teaching news literacy. It can be adopted as is, but we expect that many practitioners will adapt it to better suit their needs. By nature, this document needs to be dynamic and evolve according to changes in the information environment along with your feedback. If you have ideas for ways we can make this resource stronger, please let us know at info@newslit.org.

ℹ **JUMP TO:** **Stage 1: Identify Desired Results** | **Stage 2: Evidence** | **Stage 3: Plan Learning Experiences**

About NLP

The News Literacy Project is a nonpartisan nonprofit building a national movement to ensure that all students are skilled in news literacy before high school graduation, giving them the knowledge and ability to participate in civic society as well-informed, critical thinkers. Founded in 2008, NLP is the country's leading provider of news literacy education and works with educators in all 50 states.

Stage 1— Identify Desired Results

Established Goals

The News Literacy Project uses five primary standards to define the core competencies students need to be news-literate. These standards invoke a combination of knowledge, skills and mindsets that are required to recognize credible information, avoid being exploited by misinformation and make informed, empowered choices.

Standard 1: Students distinguish news from other types of information and can recognize both traditional and nontraditional advertisements.

Standard 2: Students acknowledge the importance of the First Amendment in American democracy and a free press to an informed public.

Standard 3: Students understand why professional and ethical standards are necessary to produce quality journalism, and they can apply understanding of those standards to discern credible information and sources for themselves.

Standard 4: Students demonstrate increased critical habits of mind, including effective verification skills and the ability to detect misinformation and faulty evidence.

Standard 5: Students express and exercise civic responsibility by seeking, sharing and producing credible information as effective participants in a democracy.

Transfer

Students will be able to independently use their learning to…
- Distinguish news from other types of information.
- Demonstrate a healthy skepticism toward information.
- Identify credible information and sources.
- Detect misinformation and faulty evidence.
- Positively contribute to the information landscape by sharing verified and credible information and calling out misinformation.

Meaning

UNDERSTANDINGS
Students will understand that…
- Different types of information exist for different purposes.
- No source of information is perfect, but not all information is created equal.
- A free press protects the public interest by acting as a watchdog on government and powerful groups.
- Quality journalism has rigorous standards designed to produce fair, accurate and timely information about newsworthy issues and events for the public.
- Credible information empowers individuals and invigorates democracy.
- Misinformation corrupts reasoned civic discourse, decisions and actions, and damages and distorts democracy.
- Responsible civic engagement requires individuals to be active, critical consumers and sharers of information.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
Students will keep considering…
- In what ways do news and information shape society?
- What distinguishes facts from opinions, and why does the distinction matter for productive discourse?
- What does it mean to be news-literate?
- How is quality journalism produced?
- How can we know what to believe? What makes a piece of information credible?
- Why does news matter?
- How can misinformation and false beliefs undermine an individual's participation in a democracy and threaten the political process?
- How do press freedoms and news literacy strengthen democracy?
- What does it look like to be a responsible and news-literate participant in a democracy?

Acquisition

Students will know…
- How journalists determine which events and issues to cover in a given news cycle.
- The five freedoms protected by the First Amendment.
- How the press can play a watchdog role.
- How the public can play a watchdog role.
- What press freedoms are and how they are protected or threatened in countries around the world.
- How algorithms personalize information for individual consumers in both beneficial and potentially harmful ways.
- What news media bias is and how it might show itself in coverage.
- Seven standards of quality journalism.
- What conspiracy theories are, why people find them compelling, and the impact of conspiratorial thinking.

Students will be skilled at…
- Differentiating information based on its primary purpose among six main "InfoZones."
- Identifying branded content.
- Identifying credible sources of information and those that lack credibility about a given subject.
- Identifying and differentiating between different types of misinformation.
- Evaluating the impact of misinformation.
- Differentiating between valid and invalid evidence, and between sound and unsound claims, to determine the strength of an argument.
- Using digital verification methods like "lateral reading" and reverse 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.

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:

Evaluative Criteria	Coding	Assessment Evidence
Teachers should identify criteria to judge how well students succeed in these performance tasks. Think about criteria such as clarity, accuracy, organization, how well students explain themselves, and how well they critique a source.	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.
	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](#) (must be logged in to Checkology): Follow or seek out news from multiple credible sources, follow or seek out professional fact-checking sites, push back on misinformation when you see or hear it, engage in respectful debate with someone who has a different view than yours, reflect on the strengths and limitations of your own perspective, explore a variety of opinions on the same topic, reference credible sources when you share your opinion, reach out to a journalist or news outlet to offer feedback on a story.
	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 info@newslit.org.

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 exit tickets, reflection logs and concept mapping.

Stage 3 — Plan Learning Experiences

Pre-assessment

The Checkology [student growth measure](#) (must be logged in to Checkology) 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 [here](#) 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 [K-W-L](#) and [I-charts](#). 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 [framework's essential 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 **CORE** icon.

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-S5 A, M, T	**The Sift newsletter**	➢ 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 A, M, T	**Daily Do Now**	➢ This collection of 5- to 10-minute news literacy activities helps get your students focused at the beginning of a class period — as soon as the bell rings! It is updated every Friday and aligns to all five of NLP's standards.
S1-S5 A, M, T	**Newsroom to Classroom**	➢ 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 A, M, T	**NLP's TikTok channel**	➢ NLP regularly publishes engaging video shorts about a variety of news literacy topics to its TikTok account.
S1-S5 A, M, T	**News Goggles videos and slides**	➢ 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.

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S1 A, M	**InfoZones** **(and associated resources)** `CORE` ➢ I can analyze examples of information and categorize them by determining their primary purpose (news, opinion, entertainment, advertising, propaganda and raw information) Related content
S1, **S3** A, M	**What is News?** **(and associated resources)** ➢ 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. Related content
S1, **S3** A, M	**Be the Editor** **(and associated resources)** ➢ 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. Related content
S1, S3 A, M T	**Branded Content** **(and associated resources)** ➢ 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 packaging, including why it's desirable for marketers and difficult for news organizations. Related content

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S2 A, M	**The First Amendment** (and associated resources) **CORE** ➢ 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). ➢ I can explore and analyze six landmark First Amendment cases, judge them myself, and critique the Supreme Court's decision in each: ■ West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette ■ 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 Related content
S2 A, M	**Democracy's Watchdog** (and associated resources) **CORE** ➢ I can explore five iconic examples of investigative journalism and determine the impact of each: ■ Nellie Bly, 1887, reported on conditions at a women's lunatic asylum in New York City. ■ Ida B. Wells, 1892, exposed the horrors of lynching in America. ■ Seymour Hersh, 1969, reported the massacre of villagers by U.S. troops in Vietnam. ■ 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. ■ Wesley Lowery and other reporters from The Washington Post, 2015, created a nationwide database of police shootings. ➢ I can explain the "watchdog role" of the press and describe its importance. Related content

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S2 A, M	**Citizen Watchdogs** (and associated resources) ➢ I can name several ways that ordinary people can play a watchdog role. ➢ I can explain the details of four citizen watchdog case studies: ■ Los Angeles resident George Holliday captures the brutal beating of a Black man, Rodney King, by police in 1991. ■ Tobacco executive Dr. Jeffrey Wigand goes public with information about the harmful effects of cigarettes in 1996. ■ Young Egyptians bypass government media in 2011 to take part in a revolution known as the Arab Spring. ■ Diamond Reynolds uses Facebook to livestream the police shooting of Philando Castile and its aftermath in 2016. ➢ I can describe the relationship between citizen watchdogs and journalists. Related content
S2 A, M	**Power in Art** (and associated resources) ➢ I can identify the primary elements of an editorial cartoon and explain how they work together to express an opinion. ➢ I can summarize how editorial cartoons have held people in power accountable. ➢ I can distinguish between functional and harmful representations of groups in political cartoons. ➢ I can analyze and interpret an editorial cartoon. ➢ I can describe why diverse voices and perspectives are important in editorial cartooning. ➢ I can explain how modern forms of graphic political expression compare with editorial cartoons. Related content

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S2 A, M	**Press Freedoms Around the World** (and associated resources) ➚ 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. Related content
S3 A, M, T	**Practicing Quality Journalism** (and associated resources) `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. Related content
S3 4 M, T	**Evaluating Sources Online** `CORE` ➚ I can differentiate between sources of information online that are unreliable and those that provide independent, verified information. Note: Students should complete this lesson after "Practicing Quality Journalism."

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S3 A, M, T	**Harm and Distrust (and associated resources)** ➢ I can summarize the role journalism aspires to play in American democracy. ➢ I can explain why news coverage that fails to fairly and accurately reflect the experiences and realities of all communities and groups of people falls short of the standards of quality journalism. ➢ I can explain why it's important for communities to be able to trust news organizations to tell their stories accurately. ➢ I can list historical examples of legacy media failing to live up to its duty to minimize harm in relation to Black communities in the U.S. ➢ I can explain why many Black Americans distrust legacy media and can apply this understanding to coverage of other groups of historically marginalized people. ➢ I can summarize the essential role the Black press played in countering biased and racist narratives during Reconstruction and beyond. ➢ I can recognize examples of overt racial bias in contemporary news coverage. ➢ I can describe the watchdog role I can play in advocating for changes to make newsrooms more equitable and representative of the communities they serve. Related content
S3, S4 A, M	**Understanding Bias (and associated resources)** ➢ 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. Related content

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S4 A, M	**For Elementary: Search and Suggest Algorithms** (and associated resources) ➤ I can explain how algorithms use data to personalize information for individuals. ■ 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. ➤ I can describe the advantages and disadvantages of this technology. Related content
S4 A, M	**Introduction to Algorithms** (and associated resources) ➤ I can describe how algorithms shape the information we see and find. ➤ I can explain how algorithms can be biased. ➤ I can analyze the benefits and costs of "free information" in the attention economy. ➤ I can argue the potential risks and benefits of generative AI. ➤ I can create a plan to avoid the pitfalls posed by algorithms and to train them to promote more balanced and credible information. Related content
S4, S5 A, M	**Misinformation** (and associated resources) `CORE` ➤ 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. Students should complete the "Verifying social media content" challenge. Related content

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S4 A, M	**Arguments and Evidence** (and associated resources) ➢ 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. Related content
S4 M, T	**Evaluating Evidence Online** CORE ➢ I can distinguish between posts that don't provide strong evidence in support of the claims they make and those that do. Note: "Evaluating Evidence Online" pairs well with "Arguments and Evidence" and "Evaluating Science-Based Claims."
S4 A, M, T	**Making Sense of Data** (and associated resources) ➢ I can explain why data isn't objective or infallible. ➢ I can differentiate between credible and questionable sources of data. ➢ I can explain some of the primary ways data can be distorted in misleading ways. ➢ I can interpret different ways data is presented. ➢ I can identify charts and other data visualizations that are misleading and explain why. Related content

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S4 A, M, T	**Evaluating Science-Based Claims** (and associated resources) ➢ I can differentiate between science-based claims and nonscience claims. ➢ I can explain why science is never 100% certain about anything and why this is one of its strengths. ➢ I can differentiate between a scientific hypothesis and a scientific theory. ➢ I can explain what makes people vulnerable to pseudoscience and why some people doubt, resist and deny the scientific consensus about some topics. ➢ I can evaluate science-based claims using plausibility judgments, evidence and the scientific consensus. ➢ I can recognize common problems with science news coverage. Related content
S4 A, M, T	**Be Health Informed** (and associated resources) ➢ I can evaluate health and wellness information. ➢ I can explain why people are vulnerable to health misinformation. ➢ I can list key characteristics of quality health information. ➢ I can describe common red flags to watch out for when encountering health misinformation. Related content

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S4, S5 A, M, T	**Conspiratorial Thinking (and associated resources)** ➢ 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. ■ Proportionality bias, intentionality bias and confirmation bias are key cognitive biases that address cognitive dissonance. ➢ I can demonstrate the social and political impact of conspiratorial thinking and conspiracy theories. **Related content**
S4 T	**RumorGuard** ➢ RumorGuard curates significant and timely examples of mis- and disinformation and provides key news literacy takeaways and insights.
S4 A, M	**Key Word Wall** terms ➢ Verification, transparency, fairness, bias, watchdog role, misinformation/disinformation, propaganda, conspiracy theory and more. ** Must be logged in to your Checkology account*

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.

A sample unit plan for grades 3-6 can be found here (and a template here).

If you have a unit plan you'd like to share with us, email us at info@newslit.org.

To see how the concepts, content and skills listed in this document can progress from PreK-12, view our Grade band expectations for news literacy