

# The Newspaper: It's a Class Act

**I**t's been called the alternative textbook — an up-to-date, comprehensive source of information that not only motivates students but broadens knowledge and reinforces basic skills.

It's the newspaper. And no classroom should be without it.

At least, that's what the thousands of participating Newspaper in Education teachers across the country are saying. They're among the educators — young and old, new and experienced — who use the newspaper in their classrooms.

But we don't need to tell you that. You probably wouldn't have this special activity guide in your hands if you didn't already know the educational value of the newspaper and the NIE program.

In case you are new to NIE, or if just need a refresher course in using the newspaper in

the classroom, the following information will help you make the most of all your NIE experiences.

## BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

- The newspaper is one of the least expensive learning tools you can make available to your class. It's also readily available. Just call your newspaper's Newspaper in Education office to find out how to have classroom sets of the newspaper delivered on a regular basis. One newspaper per student is preferable.

(continued →)



- If you haven't already become familiar with your newspaper, do so before introducing it to the class. Get to know the paper from the inside out, making note of its contents, the general layout and page numbering system, and the writing styles used.
- Review this guide to get an idea of the types of activities and topics that are included. Keep in mind that the activities range from simple to complex and might take a few minutes to a few days to complete.
- Organize the classroom so that students are able to handle the newspapers with ease. If possible, have them sit at tables or on the floor, where they have plenty of room to spread out. Encourage students to use only the section of the newspaper required to complete assigned activities. They can fold the rest of the newspaper and put it aside until needed.

## INTRODUCING THE NEWSPAPER

- The best way for students to get to know the newspaper is to read it — daily. But for a quicker introduction, have them collect a week's worth of newspapers. Have them go through each edition, section by section, to find out the types of



The newspaper is one of the least expensive learning tools

you can make available to your class.

news and information the newspaper contains. Then have them write a brief description of each section of the newspaper, including the similarities and differences from one issue to the other.

- Engage the students in a discussion about the things they like to read about in the newspaper. Then ask them to find stories, pictures, advertisements, and other newspaper features relating to their interests.
- Conduct a newspaper scavenger hunt. Give students a list of specific items found in the newspaper and allow them a set amount of time to find them. (Examples of items to find: a movie they would like to see, an apartment for rent, a score for a professional sports team, and a letter to the editor about a local issue.)
- Have your class create a current events bulletin board featuring newspaper stories and pictures that will keep their schoolmates informed and up-to-date. The display can be geared to the news and information that is relevant to the student body or current events in general.
- Talk about the roles of a newspaper: to inform, protect, influence, and entertain. Have students demonstrate understanding by finding stories, photos, and information that would fall under each of these important roles.

# FROM FRONT TO BACK

## A SECTION-BY-SECTION LOOK AT THE NEWSPAPER

A newspaper is what its name implies: news on paper. But there's more to a newspaper each day than just the news. There are also feature stories that tug at our emotions, editorials that attempt to persuade us, advertisements that help us make decisions, and comics and other items that entertain us. Together, these newspaper features provide a world of opportunities to help your students become more knowledgeable and strengthen a variety of important skills. Take a look:

### THE NEWS

In most newspapers, news falls into four basic categories — local, state, national, and international. The most important news of the day is found on the front page, with the rest of the day's news located throughout the main news section. Front-page selections will vary from newspaper to newspaper and are based on the judgment of a paper's editor and management staff.

In the classroom, the news section of the newspaper can be used across the curriculum. It's ideal for current events studies, for analyzing the relevance of current and past events to our lives today, for vocabulary building, problem solving, and so much more. Information contained in the news section is often used as background for research activities. A newspaper's archives at the public library or on the Internet can be particularly helpful.

### FEATURES

It wasn't too long ago that a newspaper's sole purpose was to present the news. That was before television and the Internet came along and gave people the opportunity to find out what was happening as it was happening. Today, newspapers must give their readers more — more emotion, more human interest, more insight.

The features section fits the bill. Though based on facts, like news stories, the newspaper feature provides emotional appeal. It might make readers laugh or make them cry. It might be humorous and entertaining or serious and thought-provoking. Many feature stories are tied to news events, digging deeper into the “why” and “how” of a story. The feature story can also take shape as a how-to or self-improvement story.

Using the features section in class also fits your across-the-curriculum needs. It is especially useful with language arts activities, arts and humanities studies, and any study involving human factors and characteristics.



### THE EDITORIAL PAGES

Thanks to the First Amendment, Americans have the right to say what they think. There's no better example of this freedom than on the editorial, or opinion, pages of a newspaper.

That's where the newspaper's management has its say, where other writers get an opportunity to speak out in signed columns, and where readers can spout off in letters to the editor.

Activities that are issues oriented, as well as those that help students learn the basic differences between fact and opinion, provide perfect tie-ins to a newspaper's editorial pages. Students love to engage in debate, and the newspaper's editorial pages are sure to spark lively debate on a variety of subjects.

(continued →)

## FROM FRONT TO BACK

### SPORTS

The fact that most newspapers devote an entire section to the subject of sports offers proof positive that the influence of sports on American society is powerful. Further proof is the fact that the sports section is often the best-read section of the newspaper.

In addition to scores, statistics, and play-by-plays, the sports section provides a unique glimpse of the American way of life. Many of life's toughest lessons and glorious achievements are played out each day on the sports pages.

Using the sports section in the classroom can be fun and educational. Science, math, language arts, history, geography — all can be taught through the world of sports.



### THE COMICS

It's been more than 100 years since American newspaper publishers first featured comic strips in their papers to attract new readers. It was a strategy that is still paying off. Today, the comics are among the best-loved features in the newspaper.

Where else can we turn each day for a few moments of amusement; to meet old friends like Nancy, Garfield, Dennis the Menace, and Ziggy? What better way to take a less serious look at life; to poke fun at ourselves and learn to laugh along the way?

Teachers who integrate the comics into their curriculum know firsthand that opportunities for learning abound. The



comics teach children about society, both past and present. They help students learn problem-solving skills

and the consequences of many of life's choices. And the comics provide the ideal backdrop for learning basic math, science, language, and social studies skills.

### ADVERTISING

If it wasn't for advertising, there would be no newspapers. The amount readers pay for their newspapers would seldom even buy the paper used for printing. But by selling ads to manufacturers, businesses, and individuals, newspapers can go about the business of keeping their readers informed.

It's not a one-sided bargain, however. Advertising in newspapers is one of the most effective ways to reach people with a message.

Advertising is designed to sell a product, a service, or an idea. In newspapers, there are two types of advertising: display ads and classified ads. There are also inserts — paid sections that stand alone in the newspaper.

Not surprisingly, newspaper advertisements offer teachers a slew of material for classroom use. Whether you're studying economics, math, or social studies, the advertisements in the pages of the newspaper can be a fun, exciting classroom tool.

