

**Demonstration Title:** Extra! Extra! Read all about it! A unit on newspaper writing

**Presented by:** Kari Sortum, seventh grade Language Arts teacher  
Maplewood Middle School, Maplewood, MN [ksortum@isd622.org](mailto:ksortum@isd622.org)

**Objectives:** By completing this unit, students will understand the essentials of a newspaper and newspaper writing. Skills that are covered include writing headlines, writing lead paragraphs and entire articles, analyzing newspapers for content, and creating a newspaper.

**Grade level:** I use this unit with my seventh grade students, but it could easily be adapted for any grades six through twelve.

**Brief summary:** Understanding how to locate information in a newspaper is an important skill for students to possess. In this unit, there are three major activities that help students develop their newspaper savvy.

During the first week, I teach students the essentials of newspaper articles. This includes learning about headlines (short, catchy, present tense verbs), lead paragraphs (immediately tells the reader who, what, where, and when), and the rest of the newspaper article (tells why and how, puts least important information last). Students practice using their new skills by writing examples based on stories I give them. We also talk about other types of writing that are found in newspapers, including editorials and columnists.

The second week of the unit is devoted to newspaper scavenger hunts. The students get to read the newspaper every day, answering questions about specific sections in the newspaper.

The third week is definitely the heart of the unit. Now that they have learned about newspapers and analyzed how a newspaper works, students get to work in groups of one, two, or three people to create their own newspapers. In order to receive an A, students' newspapers must include twenty items, ranging from national and local news stories to advertisements to a weather section. (There is a handout which details everything that is required.) After at least five items are completed, groups can receive real newspaper paper from me and start laying out their pages. The students love working together on this project, and it is fun to see what they create!

**Length of time needed to complete the unit:** Approximately three weeks. You can vary the amount of time you spend on teaching and practicing skills, and you can choose to devote anywhere from one to five days to newspaper scavenger hunts. I would recommend doing three days of scavenger hunts - the students become bored with more days than that. You will definitely need to give students four days to plan and create their own newspapers and then one day for all groups to share their final products.

I choose to teach this unit during the last three weeks of school. Creating a newspaper keeps students focused and on-task, which we all know is important during those hectic last days!