

Newspaper Project

Delivering the news:
Considering the differences
between delivering the news
in print, on film and online
and collaborating to create
a newspaper.



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Newspaper Project

Carolyn Twist, an English and media teacher at Ashton Park School in Bristol, was working with a group of Year 9 students on a newspaper project which aimed to develop students' writing for different purposes and give them an understanding of the journalism profession, whilst at the same time fostering their digital literacy.



The students worked in groups of approximately three to five of their own choosing to produce a newspaper. Students were expected to allocate tasks within their groups and were supported to think about how to collaborate effectively and to communicate as a group in order to deliver a final product.

“In your groups you need to decide who is going to write the problem page, who is going to write the sports page, who is going to write the letters to the editor.”

Year 9 teacher

The first three weeks of the scheme of work focused on developing knowledge and understanding of newspaper writing and involved activities on how newspapers communicate information. This included consideration of audience, different kinds of newspapers and how, for example, text, photos and cartoons can be used differently to represent meaning. Students then worked on creating their own newspapers using PCs and software of their choice (this was usually Microsoft Word or Microsoft Publisher).

Students followed their own interests in terms of the content of their articles and were asked to find supporting information and illustrations on the internet. One group created a games page and a 'funnies' page in addition to the articles that the teacher had asked for. Groups collated all of their information electronically on a shared space on the school's network.

The teacher aimed to support students to evaluate both the material they found on the internet and their own written work as they drafted and redrafted their articles. She moved around the groups giving them suggestions for ways they could improve their work and checking that they had planned their next steps.

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Students also researched online newspapers and were asked to **think critically** about how they differ from their print equivalent. They were given a range of examples of newspaper websites to compare with each other and with print newspapers. They worked in pairs to answer a number of questions **evaluating** which aspects they preferred, what worked best for different purposes, and why that was the case. This meant that they needed to think about reading and writing in different formats and the affordances that different types of technology, including the printing press, offered for communicating meaning.

They were also encouraged to reflect on the appropriateness of alternative media for the news stories they themselves were creating.

Students then selected an appropriate article that could be used for a filmed bulletin. They chose a story, scripted a broadcast and filmed each other. Students were given strict instructions and deadlines to try to recreate the conditions that would exist in a newsroom as the teacher felt that this would make the topic more real. Some of the sources for this section of the scheme of work came from BBC News Schools Report (news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/school_report/default.stm).



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Successes and next steps

Students were able to define the content of their stories and articles and use their existing interests to learn about writing for a newspaper as well as creating filmed broadcasts. They created detailed and extensive newspapers and reported enjoying the task.

Students were supported to think about **communication and representation** in different modes and formats (visual, textual, video etc) and how technology could support this. If there had been time, this could have been extended to a consideration of how audio formats, such as radio and podcasts, may or may not change the way in which meaning is communicated as well as to a consideration of how the growth in blogging and micro-blogging, for example, has affected the media landscape.

Students used computers, the internet and video cameras to create their own media and were asked to think about where they filmed their broadcast and what they wanted to have in shot.

There were some occasions when the teacher filmed the broadcasts rather than allowing the students to use the camera. This was due to the need to ensure that filming was completed efficiently as the time for the unit of work was running out. As the students continue to develop their digital literacy skills, they can be supported to learn how to effectively manage their time when working in groups to use technology.

As the teacher develops these kinds of activities, she could further emphasise the cultural, social and historical aspect of what students were doing. Students needed to make use of their social awareness and cultural understanding in order to successfully create articles, although this wasn't made explicit during the activities. The teacher could support students' engagement with critical concepts in thinking about, for example, the history and politics of the press, the globalisation of news corporations or citizen journalism in relation to online and printed media.