

STARTING A SCHOOL NEWSPAPER:

TEACHER CHECKLIST: EARLY YEARS

Use this guide to get started incorporating journalism ideas and practices into the ways learners can demonstrate their agency, voice and curricular outcomes. You can also visit **[Getting Started with the Student Press](#)** for more resources.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the **Student Press site**. Set up an account, watch the videos and try out **PressKid**, the newspaper template app.
- ☐ Read through the rest of this document and consider which of the classroom materials you will use, and how you will adapt them to your particular classroom and community context.

DECIDE YOUR GOALS

The material in this plan can be used to enrich classroom learning experiences, display a wide array of student learning, or create a class or school newspaper, podcast or newscast. You may choose to keep student work private, share in your school community, or post publicly to the **Student Press newsstand**. Discuss the publication options and concerns with your principal. After reading through this plan, decide how your learners might best engage with the material. This startup guide assumes the goal is a student newspaper, however the learning materials can be repurposed in many ways to demonstrate learning outcomes through journalism and media literacy.

CREATING STUDENT JOURNALISM

- ☐ Facilitate the activities using this plan with your students.
- ☐ Celebrate, display and share student journalism successes.
- ☐ Continue helping your journalists grow their skills with the mini-lessons found in **Free Press 101**.

NOTES

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STARTING A SCHOOL NEWSPAPER: EARLY YEARS

FIRST MEETING TO FIRST PUBLICATION:

This plan will take you through structuring the first meeting of your student journalists through the publication of your first edition of a student newspaper. The time it takes to get through this plan will vary with the grade level, number, and experience of the student journalists and the frequency and length of the meetings together.

GOALS OF THIS PLAN:

1. Learners will demonstrate understanding of newspaper products and structure.
2. Learners will explore the importance of news and reporting, concepts of "newsworthiness" and how editorial decisions are made.
3. Learners will envision their role in discovering, crafting and communicating news that is important to their school community.
4. Learners will work together to demonstrate their learning, critical thinking and cooperation by producing a school newspaper.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Learning experience 1: Getting to know the newspaper

This is a simple discussion template to get learners thinking about what a newspaper is and how it communicates the importance of the issues it covers.

1. *Begin by reviewing what the learners know about story-telling, writing or story structure. Build on their knowledge by sharing the front page of the newspaper and explaining that a newspaper is a collection of stories about things that have happened in real life. Each story has a title (called a headline) and an author (called a byline) just the same as books. Some suggestions for discussion prompts are below.*
 - What do you already know about news?
 - What are some other ways people get news?
 - What is a news story you remember learning or hearing about?
 - Who do you think decides what gets included in the news?
2. *Ask the learners to consider that there are different types of stories in the newspaper, just like there are different types of books, such as fairy tales, non-fiction, picture books, chapter books or mystery.*
 - Using your classroom or school library, ask learners to find examples of different types of stories, then explain their choices.
 - Select a number of books and ask students to sort them into types, using their own reasoning to explain their choices. This might be something like the examples above, or could be "books about cats", "books about cars", "books with fewer than 20 pages", "books by Canadian authors" etc. Let the learners decide how they want to organize the books. This can be done in large or small groups.
3. *Separate the newspaper into sections (City, Sports, Arts, etc.). Ask the learners:*
 - Why do you think the paper is organized like this?
 - How do you think people agree on what goes into each section?
 - How do you think they find out what's going on to report on it?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Read through the teacher checklist
2. Read through this plan
3. Make enough copies of activity sheets for your group
4. Pick up a physical copy of the Free Press to share with the class.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Getting to know the newspaper

Page 3

Newsworthiness and editorial decision-making

Page 6

Roles and responsibilities within newsrooms

Page 8

The first publication

Learning experiences 2: Newsworthiness and editorial decisions

Learners may complete this activity in pairs, groups, or as a class. Print enough copies of the headlines below so that each group gets a full set. A PDF version of the headlines page is [here](#). Hand out one page per group and ask the learners to cut the headlines into strips (or do this in advance for them).

1. *Not everyone agrees all stories are of equal importance. In journalism, the stories that appeal to many groups of people, or that might draw attention to an important but overlooked issue, are considered "newsworthy". A brief discussion guide for helping learners understand this concept is suggested below.*
 - Do you think everything that happens in Winnipeg ends up in the Free Press?
 - How do you think they decide which stories should be written about?
 - How do you think they decide which stories should be left out?
 - Can you think of some things that have happened recently that weren't in the news? (Prompt if needed to consider things that have happened in their own lives. Did someone in the class just welcome a new sibling or pet? Move homes? Try a new ice cream flavour?) Why weren't these things included in the newspaper?
 - Just because something doesn't appear in the newspaper, does that mean it isn't important? How can we make sure important stories get told there? What if the newspaper only held stories from our school? What might some of those stories be?
2. *Looking at the front page of the Free Press, ask the learners:*
 - Which story have the journalists decided is the most important thing for readers to learn about today?
 - Why did you select that story? How do the journalists show you what they want you to read first?
3. *Now it's time for the learners to try organizing headlines according to newsworthiness. Place learners into small groups and cut out the sample headlines below (one set per group). If you prefer, a one-page PDF with the headlines can be found [here](#).*
 - Ask the learners to work together in pairs/small groups to rank the stories from most newsworthy to least newsworthy.
 - Encourage discussion and sharing within groups as they make their choices.
 - When complete, ask learners to share their final choices one group at a time. There are no wrong answers.
 - Ask individuals and groups to defend their choices and explain their assumptions about the newsworthiness of their stories. Encourage groups to gently question one another's choices.
 - For additional learning and activities on these topics, check out these [Free Press 101](#) topics: [How do reporters and newsrooms get their stories?](#) and [What's in a Headline?](#)

Headlines:

Bus ridership: safety lesson, playtime or both?

Grade 3's have fun at the zoo on field trip

Ms. North has baby girl, will return in October

Emma G., Grade 5, wins robotics club award

Rainy recess makes for messy hallway, kids told to clean

Learning experiences 2: Newsworthiness and editorial decisions can't

4.
 - Ask learners to each pick their top three headlines from the previous exercise.
 - Learners should place, write or paste these three headlines into the "front page template" on the next page (or single-page PDF [here](#)), using their placement to communicate their importance.
 - Learners can now sketch a picture in place of a photo. Encourage them to try to create a photo that helps explain or add context or feeling to the story. For further learning experiences about photojournalism, visit **What is your policy on photo editing?** from the **Free Press 101** site.
 - When done, ask learners to discuss and defend their choices. Learners should be able to define how they chose their stories, how they made decisions about positioning them on the page, and why they omitted other stories.

Teacher guide:

The diagram illustrates a newspaper front page template with the following sections and guidance:

- Name your paper:** Points to the top header area of the template.
- Sketch a photo idea for your top story:** Points to the large rectangular area on the left side, intended for a photo or illustration.
- Write your top story headline here:** Points to the headline area of the first story on the left.
- Write your next story headline here:** Points to the headline area of the second story on the left.
- Third story headline here:** Points to the headline area of the third story on the right.

The template includes placeholder text for headlines and body text, as well as designated areas for author names.

There are many more **Free Press 101** resources and activities that you may wish to include as your journalists grow in skill and experience. Free Press 101 resources are comprised of bite-sized lessons in journalism and media literacy on a range of topics, meant to be mixed and matched, and used as needed to help learners develop their journalistic skills and understandings. One way to use them is to introduce one concept each time your group meets, giving them opportunities to challenge themselves with each issue of their paper.

Learning experiences 2: Newsworthiness decisions: Design your front page

Use your chosen headlines to complete this front page. Draw a picture to help explain your top story.

Name your newspaper

Draw a photo to help explain your top story

Headline for your top story: write or paste it here:

Write another headline here

Write another headline here

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Learning experiences 3: Roles and responsibilities within newsrooms

It takes many people working together to produce a newspaper. Use this activity to help learners learn about these responsibilities and decide how they might fulfill those roles themselves. A student handout is on the following page or in a single PDF [here](#).

1.	- Hand out "How many people does it take to put a story together" (page 7 or PDF here) or use the slide presentation of the same material. - Ask learners to identify and define the roles or responsibilities they find. This can be done in any number of ways. Students could highlight the roles on hard copies of the document, they could discuss roles as they find them, write roles on a whiteboard, or use an app such as Padlet to collaborate on a co-created list of roles.
2.	<i>There are three learning experiences to choose from or lead sequentially:</i> - Whole-class learning: using the activities in these slides, work through a news story from news tip to publication. - Kahoot: testing our knowledge of who does what job at a newspaper. Kahoot link here. - Matching game: matching up the person with their role at the newspaper. Available in digital or hard copy.
3.	- Decide what form your newspaper will take, so that you can consider what roles will need to be filled by your learners and yourself. Will this be a whole-school paper, a club, or a way to showcase student work? - Work with your learners to decide upon which individuals will fill each role. You may need to fill some roles yourself and/or facilitate students' rotations through various roles. - Roles may be combined, omitted, or shared, depending on the characteristics of your group of learners.

Roles discussed in this activity:

Below are some of the possible roles discussed during this activity. Learners should debate, combine, share or delete roles as they feel necessary to make their paper successful and fulfil the vision they have for it.

Community member
Journalist
Press worker

Editor
Copy editor
Delivery person

Photographer
Page maker

Ensuring we're printing the truth is essential to everything we do. Visit "[How do we ensure accuracy in our reporting?](#)" for further learning on this topic.

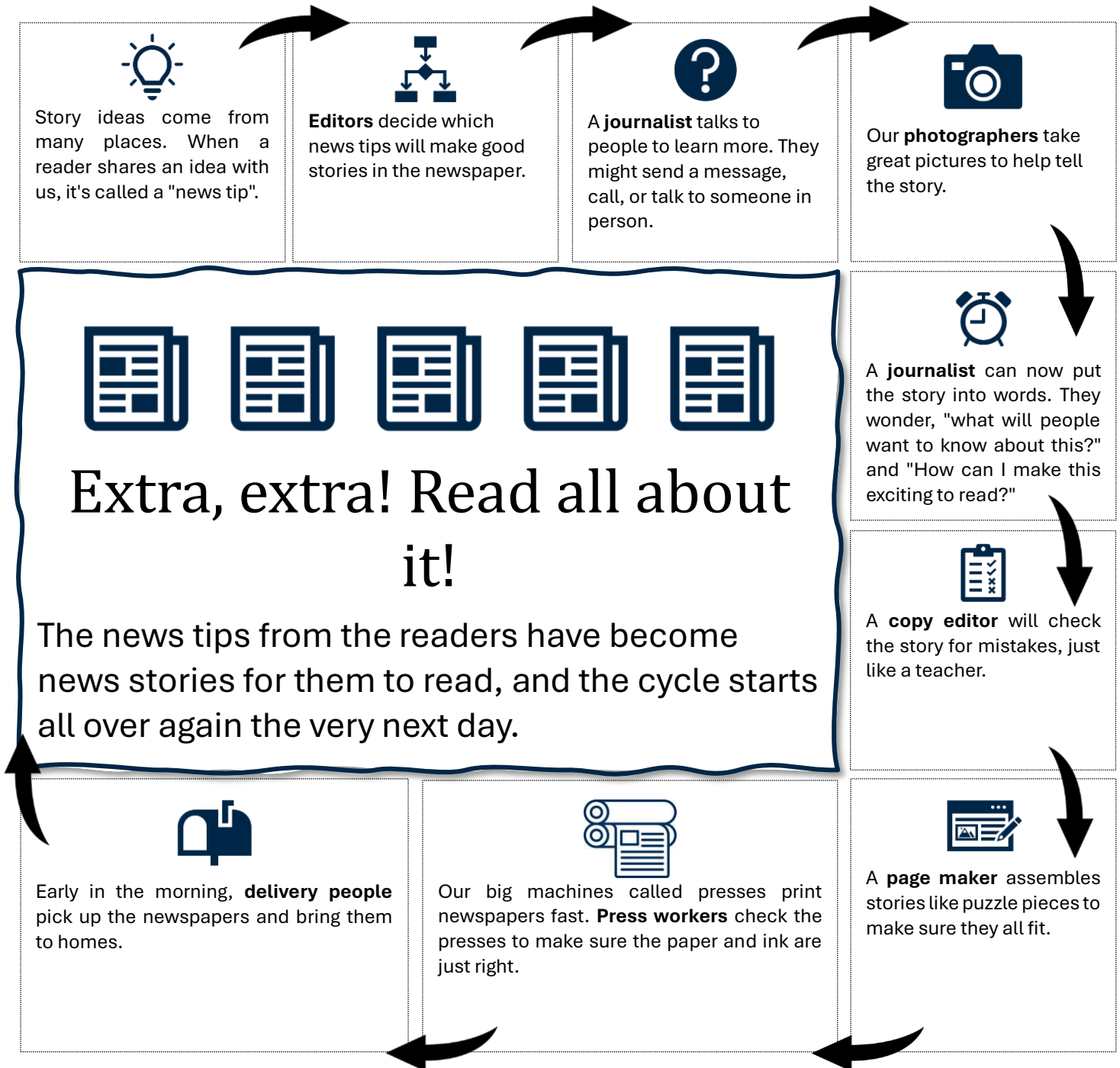
For deeper additional learning and activities on these topics, visit [Free Press 101: What do copy editors do?](#) and [How do reporters gather and use quotes?](#)

Learning experience 3a: How many people does it take to put a story together?

Adapted from **Free Press 101** - Edited for length and literacy level

How many people does it take to put a story together?

NADYA PANKIW – Winnipeg Free Press Multimedia Producer



Learning experience 4: The first publication

Before you begin, make copies of the Storybuilder (page 9 or [PDF here](#)) and retrieve your copy of the Free Press.

1.	Challenge & discussion 1: <i>Working with the Storybuilder (p. 9 or PDF here) on a single story</i> • Ask learners to suggest some story ideas from within their school. • Collect the ideas and have the learners come to consensus on one story they'll work on together. • Model how the "Storybuilder" can be used to build up the necessary elements of a news story by walking through it with the selected story, having students contribute to the decision-making process. Encourage them to explain their decisions, and ask for conflicting choices to enable discussion about why particular decisions are being made.
3.	Challenge & discussion 3: • Work with the learners to select another story from their initial suggestions. • This time, in small groups, learners should make their own decisions about how the story will be covered, using the Storybuilder. Learners should all be working on the same story for this part of the activity. • Learners can now write a brief story using the decisions made with the Storybuilder as their guide. There is a template for the story on page 10 or PDF here. • Have learners display their finished story alongside their completed storybuilder. Ask them to move throughout the room, reading one another's work. • Use the discussion guide (page 11 or PDF here) to debrief this activity.
4.	Challenge & discussion 4: • Decide upon learner and teacher roles and responsibilities for the first issue of your newspaper. • Decide upon the length of the paper, the proposed format, and whether or not you'll be using PressKid to help design your paper. • Decide on deadlines for the first issue. Review roles and responsibilities to estimate how much time will be needed for the work. You may wish to plot this on a timeline with the students, so they can visualize their own involvement and responsibilities. • Decide on the stories that will be covered in the first issue. Discuss length, placement and any photos that will be needed. • Learners can now begin working, according to the roles and deadlines they've agreed upon.

Learning experience 4: Storybuilder

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This page will help you navigate the decisions you need to make in covering your story.

1.	One sentence that describes your story idea.
2.	Who do you need to talk to to get more information? What questions could you ask?
3.	What other research is needed? Where will you find it?
5.	Who will think this is an important story?
6.	Write your first sentence here.
7.	Would a photo help enhance your story? If so, what would it be?

Starting a School Newspaper: Early Years – First Meeting to First Publication

Name of your newspaper		
Headline		
Photo/Picture		
Story		

Learning experience 4: Discussion guide

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Below are some sample questions you may want to use to encourage critical conversations around newsmaking. Learners should be able to critically assess the impact their decisions have on how a story is told, and be able to identify opportunities to influence the outcome. Look for consensus and dissonance on ideas and processes, and encourage learners to recognize the different ways people make decisions and solve problems.

1.	Which version of the story did you think was the best? Why?
2.	Are you happy with your version? Why or why not?
3.	Which stories grabbed your attention? Why do you think this was?
4.	Were there any common ideas that showed up across different versions? What are they?