



STARTING A SCHOOL NEWSPAPER: SENIOR 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 school 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 ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 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. Take your time. This is the best time to get to know the learners and what motivates them.

1.	Welcome the learners and facilitate an informal discussion about their reasons for wanting to create a school newspaper. Encourage and celebrate each answer. Other discussion-starters might be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do you read news stories?</li> <li>• What do you know about newspapers?</li> <li>• Do you read a newspaper? Which one?</li> <li>• What makes you care about the news?</li> </ul>
2.	Ask the learners to gather while you lay out the Free Press on a desk or table. Ask them to make observations based on how the paper is organized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the most important news today?</li> <li>• How do you know it's the most important?</li> </ul>
3.	Separate the paper into its sections (City, Sports, Arts, etc.). Ask the learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think the paper is organized like this?</li> <li>• How do you think people agree on what goes into each section?</li> <li>• How do you think they find out what's going on to report on it?</li> </ul>

**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**

- Page 1**  
Getting to know the newspaper
- Page 2**  
Newsworthiness and editorial decision-making
- Page 6**  
Roles and responsibilities within newsrooms
- Page 9**  
The first publication

## Activity 2: Newsworthiness and editorial decisions

---

Learners may complete this activity in pairs, small groups, or as a class. This activity also works as an icebreaker to get learners talking and working together. 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).

### Challenge & discussion 1:

*Note: **Newsworthiness** can be defined as a measure of how interesting a particular story will be to the audience of the paper. Learners will need to consider not only their personal feelings of how important a story is, but also the feelings of other readers and how the story will entice new readers. Prompting learners to describe and define who they hope will read the paper may help them make decisions during this activity.*

- 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.
- Ask individuals and groups to defend their choices and explain their assumptions about the newsworthiness of their stories. Encourage groups to challenge one another's choices.
- For optional additional learning and activities on these topics, visit [Free Press 101: How do reporters and newsrooms get their stories?](#) and [What's in a Headline?](#).

### Headlines:

---

Classes cancelled yesterday due to power outage

---

Volleyball season ends without championship title for school

---

New pets coming home for several school families

---

Ask the principal: what's up with the dress code?

---

Ms. Wong retiring after 34 years with our school

---

In photos: hallway fashion

---

New water bottle filling station installed in gym

---

Prime Minister to visit our city next week

---

School concert next Friday promises to be spectacular

---

### Activity 2: Newsworthiness and editorial decisions con't

---

#### 1. **Challenge & discussion 1:**

- Ask the learners to form new groups and this time, arrange the headlines into themes. These themes do not need to emulate the sections in the Free Press, but they may.
- Ask individuals and groups to explain their choices about the themes they made, and how the stories fit into the themes.
- Ask learners to defend their choices. One way to do this is to suggest they attempt to change the minds of another group or learner.

#### 2. **Challenge & discussion 2:**

*Retrieve your copy of the Free Press and ask students to apply their learning through the following prompts and questions. Encourage debate and challenge students to defend their opinions as they practiced.*

- Looking at the front page, which story did the editorial team decide was the most important? Why do you think they made this choice? Compare the other stories in the front section of the paper. What other newsworthy stories would you have suggested could be placed on the front page?
- Looking through the front section of the paper, discuss and defend what other sections of the paper various stories could have been included in. Are there several different sections represented? Why might this be?
- Looking through the other sections of the paper, ask learners to identify a story that they feel should have been included in the front section (discuss and defend).
- Notice how newsworthiness is communicated by placement, font size, photos and other design choices.

#### 3. **Challenge & discussion 3:**

- Using the template below and the headline strips from Challenge and discussion 1, ask learners to individually pick their top headlines and write them into the worksheet. Learners do not need to write an entire story, but only demonstrate understanding of news hierarchy. If you prefer, there is a separate **[PDF of the worksheet here](#)**.
- Learners can also sketch a picture in place of photos, making decisions about perspective, scale and mood of photos. For further learning about photojournalism, visit **[What is your policy on photo editing?](#)** from **[Free Press 101](#)**
- When done, ask students to discuss and defend their choices. Students should be able to define how the audience influenced their choices, why they chose the particular stories they did, and why they omitted other stories.

There are many other **[Free Press 101 resources](#)** and activities that you may wish to include as your journalists grow in skill and experience, and more are being developed. 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.

# Starting a School Newspaper: Senior Years – First Meeting to First Publication

## Design your front page:

- Using the headline strips, **pick** your top three stories and write the headlines into the worksheet on the next page.
- **Sketch** a picture in place of a photo (grey box), making decisions about perspective, scale and mood of photos.
- When done, you'll be asked to **discuss and defend** your choices. You should be able to define how the audience influenced your choices, why you chose the particular stories you did, and why you omitted other stories.

The diagram shows a newspaper front page layout. At the top is a header area for the paper's name. Below it is a large grey box for a photo. The page is divided into three columns of text. Each column has a headline area above the main text. Arrows from external labels point to these specific areas: 'Name your paper' points to the top header; 'Sketch a photo idea for your top story' points to the grey photo box; 'Write your top story headline here' points to the headline of the first story; 'Write your next story headline here' points to the headline of the second story; and 'Third story headline here' points to the headline of the third story.

## Headlines:

Classes cancelled yesterday due to power outage	Volleyball season ends without championship title for school
New pets coming home for several school families	Ask the principal: what's up with the dress code?
Ms. Wong retiring after 34 years with our school	In photos: hallway fashion
New water bottle filling station installed in gym	Prime Minister to visit our city next week
School concert next Friday promises to be spectacular	



## Starting a School Newspaper: Senior Years – First Meeting to First Publication

### Activity 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 can each fulfill those roles themselves. Learner handouts are on the following two pages or in a [single PDF here](#).

1.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hand out "How many people does it take to put a story together" (page 8 or <a href="#">PDF here</a>) or direct learners the <b>Free Press 101</b> site.</li> <li>Ask learners to identify and define the roles or responsibilities they find in the document. This can be done in any number of ways. Learners 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 <b>Padlet</b> to collaborate on a co-created list of roles.</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retrieve your copy of the Free Press</li> <li>Ask learners to find an example in the paper of each role's work. For example, knowing that a pagemaker would have been responsible for shading a particular block of text, or a graphic artist would have been responsible for a chart or map.</li> <li>This challenge can be done in several ways. Choose an approach that works for your group. Learners could each be assigned a particular role and then find and share their impact on the current edition of the paper. Learners could work through the full list of roles in pairs or small groups, annotating the paper with role titles as they work. You may use an app to collect and display learner ideas live.</li> <li>Ask learners to share and compare, discuss and defend their findings.</li> <li>Have the learners self-assess for which roles they feel they could fulfil most readily, given their individual skills, competencies, experiences or community.</li> <li>Notice which roles aren't being chosen by the learners. Decide how these roles will be fulfilled by the group during the next activity.</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the instructions on the handout "Roles at a newspaper" (page 9 or <a href="#">PDF here</a>), work with your learners to decide upon which individuals will fill each role.</li> <li>Roles may be combined, omitted, or shared, depending on the characteristics of your group of learners.</li> <li>You may need to fill some roles yourself and/or facilitate learners' rotations through various roles.</li> </ul>

#### Roles discussed in this activity:

Below are all of the possible roles discussed during this activity. Some are very closely related or various versions of similar jobs (for example "Editor" vs. "Duty/Desk/Graphics/Copy Editor". 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.

Editor-in-Chief	Duty Editor	Desk Editor
Photo Editor	Graphics Editor	Copy Editor
Reporter	Correspondent	Columnist
Photojournalist	Production manager	Web designer
Freelancer	Distribution manager	Customer service
Advertising manager	Accounting	Graphic designer
Marketing & Public Relations	Journalist	Community member
Reader	Editor	Page maker (paginator)
Web news team	Press workers	Delivery person

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

NADYA PANKIW – Winnipeg Free Press Multimedia Producer

From the birth of a story idea to its placement in the Free Press, our content is produced by many sets of hands and departments to ensure it's fit to print. Get to know the process.

## In the beginning...

There is a story idea – and it most likely started with you. Our readers and members of the community drive our journalism. Whether it be taking action in our city, sharing something unique on social media, or submitting a tip to our newsroom, story ideas can emerge from anywhere.

## The Newsroom knows

As a tip, press release, or phone call reaches our newsroom, it is often editors who see it first. Editors help decide what tips can grow to become stories or have potential to hit dead ends.

## A journalist's calling

When a journalist decides to chase after a story, the first thing they need is a source. Reaching out to people and businesses by text, phone, email, social media message, or just asking a witness in-person, "what's happening," helps create the background needed to type out the copy.

## Pics or it didn't happen

A picture is worth a million words, and journalists don't usually have that kind of space to write a story in the paper. Our team of award-winning photojournalists hits the streets to capture the visual elements of the stories.

## The looming deadline

Ever feel like there aren't enough hours in a day? A journalist with deadlines on several stories certainly knows that feeling. Once interviews and background information have been sourced, the journalist must organize it all to create a cohesive, objective and clear understanding of the events that took place.

## There, their, they're – an editor knows best

In the race to meet deadlines, it's easy to make mistakes. A slight typo, a spelling error, misuse of punctuation – an editor methodically and thoughtfully combs through each journalist's submitted stories to make it all right. Add a headline here, a photo caption there, and the stories are nearly ready to see the world outside the newsroom.

## Pop it on a page

Once editing is completed, stories are sent off to graphic designers and page makers who are in charge of laying out the articles and photos on the pages of each newspaper section (while being mindful of the placements of advertisements). Page makers also use special technology to transpose the layout of the pages onto aluminum sheets, which are used in the pressroom for reproduction. Individual stories are also sent out to the web news team who format each for the website.

## Print and package

Did you know we print our newspapers in-house? We have state-of-the-art computerized presses that can print newspapers at a rate of 75,000 per hour. The presses use the aluminum sheets created by the page makers to replicate the pages as each are designed. The Press workers must keep a close eye on the press to monitor paper and ink levels, and that all the inserts such as flyers are compiled correctly.

## A special delivery

In the wee hours of the morning, newspaper carriers arrive at the Free Press to receive their respective bundle of newspapers to distribute to our subscribers from Monday to Saturday.

## Extra, extra! Read all about it!

We've come full circle – the news inspired by you and your neighbourhood returns to your mailbox or computer screen daily. While the stories change, our commitment to producing quality journalism will remain the same.

### Activity 3: Roles at a newspaper

#### Editors

<b>Editor-in-Chief</b>	<b>Duty Editor</b>	<b>Desk Editor</b>
Decides the main values and strategy of the paper. Supervises all other editorial staff.	Ensures everything is on time and has final say on what appears in the paper.	Responsible for a particular portion of the paper, such as Sports, Arts, or Local news.
<b>Photo Editor</b>	<b>Graphics Editor</b>	<b>Copy Editor</b>
Finds or produces the photos for the paper.	Finds or produces the graphics for the paper, including graphs, maps or diagrams.	Edits for style, grammar, spelling, and length. Writes headlines and captions.

#### Journalists

<b>Reporter</b>	<b>Correspondent</b>	<b>Columnist</b>	<b>Photojournalist</b>
Acts on news tips, finds information, interviews people, writes stories.	Reports from somewhere specific and often remote.	Writes opinion or commentary on current events, topics or news.	Captures photographs that give information about stories.

#### Other roles

<b>Production manager</b>	<b>Web Design</b>	<b>Freelancer</b>
Responsible for the layout and printing of the paper.	Responsible for the newspaper's website.	Someone who isn't employed directly by the paper but sells their journalism to them from time to time.
<b>Distribution manager</b>	<b>Customer service</b>	<b>Advertising manager</b>
Decides and ensures where and how the paper will be distributed.	Interacts with readers and resolves any disputes.	Coordinates with advertisers about timing, placement, and price.
<b>Accounting</b>	<b>Graphic designer</b>	<b>Marketing and Public Relations</b>
Keeps track of the newspaper's finances.	Produces original graphic art for the newspaper.	Works to broaden the readership of the newspaper.

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?](#)

#### WHAT TO DO

1. Read through the roles on these two pages.
2. Decide which roles and responsibilities are essential for your newspaper to be successful, and which roles can be filled only occasionally.
3. Based on the learners in your group, decide who will take on each role.
4. Decide whether people will stay in their roles or switch roles from time to time.
5. Combine or share roles among learners as needed.
6. Remember, teachers may need to take roles too!

## Starting a School Newspaper: Senior Years – First Meeting to First Publication

### Activity 4: The first publication

---

Before you begin, make copies of the Storybuilder (page 11 or [PDF here](#)) and retrieve your copy of the Free Press.

1.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 1:</b></p> <p><i>Working with the Storybuilder (page 11 or <a href="#">PDF here</a>) on a single story</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask learners to suggest some story ideas from within their school.</li><li>• Collect the ideas and have the learners come to consensus on one story they'll work on together.</li><li>• 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 learners contribute to the decision-making process. Encourage them to explain their decisions, and ask for conflicting choices to promote discussion about why particular decisions are being made.</li></ul>
2.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retrieve your copy of the Free Press</li><li>• In small groups, ask learners to analyze a story in the paper, identifying the components from the Storybuilder. They can write their findings into a copy of the Storybuilder sheet.</li><li>• For example, their answer to "Who do you need to talk to to get more information?" would be the names of any sources that are quoted or referenced in the article they've chosen. <b>How do reporters gather and use quotes?</b> from <b>Free Press 101</b> will be useful to help them develop the answers to these questions.</li><li>• Circulate and help learners begin to understand a journalist's process for deciding what to include in a story and how to tell it.</li></ul>
3.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with the learners to select another story from their suggestions.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Learners can now write a brief story (perhaps 100-200 words), using the decisions made with the Storybuilder as their guide. They should print the finished story.</li><li>• Have learners display their finished story alongside their storybuilder. Ask them to move throughout the room, reading one another's work.</li><li>• Use the discussion guide (page 12 or <a href="#">PDF here</a>) to debrief this activity.</li></ul>
4.	<p><b>Challenge &amp; discussion 4:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decide upon learner and teacher roles and responsibilities for the first issue of your newspaper.</li><li>• Decide upon the length of the paper, the proposed format, and whether or not you'll be using <b>PressKid</b>, our newspaper formatting app.</li><li>• 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 learners, so they can visualize their own involvement and responsibilities.</li><li>• Decide on the stories that will be covered in the first issue. Discuss length, placement and any photos that will be needed.</li><li>• Learners can now begin working, according to the roles and deadlines they've agreed upon.</li></ul>

## Activity 4: Storybuilder

.....

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

1.	One sentence summary of story idea
2.	What kind of story is it? (e.g. A review, a column, a feature)
3.	Who do you need to talk to to get more information? What questions could you ask?
4.	What other research is needed? Where will you find it? How will you make sure it's factual?
5.	Who does this impact? How might they react?
6.	Who is your audience?
7.	What kind of opening will your story have? An anecdote? A fact?
8.	Would a photo help enhance your story? If so, what would it be? How can meaning be conveyed in the photograph?
9.	How can you balance your story? What are some other perspectives that may need to be represented?
10.	How long does your story need to be?

**Activity 4: Discussion guide**

.....

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 most successful? What is it about that version that makes you feel that way?
2.	Are you happy with your version? Why or why not?
3.	How did the choices you made in the Storybuilder appear in your finished story? Were some more difficult to integrate than others? Did you need to leave any out?
4.	Did any part of the writing process surprise you? For example, did a source lead you in an unexpected direction, or did your research shift the story focus?
5.	How do you think your personal perspective influenced your decisions as a journalist? Did you notice any bias or assumptions in the way you told the story?
6.	Which decision in the Storybuilder felt most important to the outcome of your story? Why did that one choice have such an impact?
7.	If a reader only saw the final story and not the Storybuilder, what might they miss? How do the behind-the-scenes decisions change how we understand what journalism really is?
8.	What's one decision another group made that you wish your group had thought of? Why?
9.	Compare your sources or quotes with another group's. How did their choices affect the tone or credibility of the story?
10.	What kinds of openings did different groups use? Which were more effective at grabbing your attention? Why?
11.	Look at the balance of perspectives in each story. Which stories felt more balanced or fair? How did the writers achieve that?
12.	Did anyone take a risk with their story – in structure, voice or angle? How did it pay off (or not)?
13.	How did the audience influence each group's story. Can you tell who they were writing for just by reading the story?
14.	Were there any common patterns or themes that showed up across different versions? What might that suggest about how stories get shaped in group settings or by shared assumptions?
15.	Did any groups include elements like a photo idea or headline that made their story stand out? What impact did those decisions have?