

Damond Moodie’s Current Events Lesson

Damond Moodie encourages his seventh-grade students to use multiple media avenues—television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet—to access current events, develop opinions about them, and then express and support those opinions in writing.

In Damond’s current events lesson, students bring in written summaries of news stories they’ve found and share them with the class. The class selects three of the stories to research further, and students ultimately write letters to the editor from topics that originated from these news stories.

Instructional Goals

Damond’s editorial lesson enables students to:

- Connect with the current events and stories of the world around them.
- Formulate opinions about current events.
- Understand editorial writing.
- Use the Internet and discussion boards to find stories that fit particular topics.

Materials

- Current-event assignment sheet
- Current-event rubric
- Computer with Internet connection
- Access to radio, television, newspapers, and Internet

Description of Lesson

Damond begins the lesson with a quick review of the guidelines—students must find a newsworthy story and write at least a one-paragraph summary including two or more sentences on why they chose the story. Students can use the Internet, newspaper, television, or radio as the source for their story. They also must be prepared to share and discuss their summary in class.

The following day the students share the current events they have selected and summarized, and then they engage in lengthy and lively discussions about the meaning and importance of the stories. Each student also answers classmates’ questions about his or her topic.

Following the discussion, the students vote (anonymously) for their favorite stories. The three with the most votes become the “stories of the week,” and the authors of the winning stories identify the important facts from the story—who, what, when, where, why, and how—and record them on the board for the whole class.

Damond uses the stories of the week to create the topics the students will use as a focus for the next writing assignment—a broader variation on the themes addressed in the stories. For example, in the classroom segment featured in *Write in the Middle*, one of the stories features a study on the increase in trans-fatty acids in snack foods. Damond expands the topic to healthy eating in general.

Once the topics are determined, students working in groups move to the computer lab to find stories based on their topic. They use a computer-based discussion board to post messages describing the stories they've found, and each group decides on a story on which to focus the individual letters to the editor they will be writing.

Once the students have written drafts of their letters to the editor, they work in pairs to assist in the editing and revision process. Damond has the students use a rubric to provide a focus for the peer conferences.

The students revise and edit based on the rubrics completed by their classmates, and Damond will use the same rubric to assess the letters to the editor once they are in final draft form.