Handouts for Studying Current Events

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Please refer to the previous article in which we invite teachers to consider teaching about current events, and to avoid shying away from studying natural disasters as they are unfolding in news of the world. Indeed, classroom discussions can help learners understand stories in the news that their families are discussing, reduce their fears and concerns about stories in the news, and show them ways to enact and improve citizenship attitudes, understanding, engagement, and participation.

Here is an abbreviated lesson plan, with three Handouts.

**Monday:** Introduce the week’s current events’ focus. Each learner will complete a “Current Event Report” ([Handout A](#)). Using the same form over time, and with different news topics, allows the teacher and learners to note changes over time in their individual comprehension of (and group conversations about) current events. You may choose to show students a model of a completed form on the topic of the drought crisis in California ([Handout B](#)). Offer a list (created by the teacher) of current events for young learners to choose from. If learners have Internet access, then provide a list of youth-friendly news sources ([Handout C](#)). Allow time for learners (individually or in pairs) to begin their research of a topic using newspapers, magazines, or an Internet site.

**Tuesday:** Time is devoted to learners researching their topics. Three items on the form are designed specifically to elicit connections to transforming the social studies from learning about the natural disaster to planning and implementing ways of helping people and places.
- What do the people in this situation need to help them?
- What would you suggest that we do as a class to help them?
- How could our class make your suggestion happen?

**Wednesday:** Each learner posts a completed Current Event Report form, perhaps using Google Classroom. Engage learners in conversations to share recorded current events and analyze their suggestions for helping people and places. The overarching purpose of sharing learners’ suggestions for planning and implementing ways to help people and places is to describe various options that are both logical and reasonable. These steps in participatory citizenship provide opportunities for teachers and learners to engage in citizenship duties and construct possible options to implement in their classroom to experience authentic civic engagement and democratic processes. Allow learners to vote and determine the best opportunities and options.

**Over the School Year:** Track the locations of events that learners have studied by placing pins on a map or adding them to learners’ individual Google Maps. At the conclusion of the year, learners can share their maps with small groups or the whole class, allowing them to present and describe the locations they have explored as well as to explain their proposals for actions to help people in areas where natural disasters have occurred.

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Current Events Report Form

Name ____________________________________________ Date ___________

1. What is the title of your current-event article? __________________________________________________________

2. What is the website address (URL) of the article you found?  ______________________________________________

3. When did this event happen? _______________________________________________________________________

4. Where is this event occur? Describe the place impacted by this event: ______________________________________

5. Who lives in this place? Who else is involved?  
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

6. Write a summary of this event, using at least three sentences. Begin with a topic sentence. Describe causes of the event and its effects.
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

7. Are people asking for help? If so, what do the people on the ground need to help them?
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

8. What would you suggest that we could do as a class to help the people in this situation?
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

9. How could our class make your suggestion happen? ____________________________________________________

10. Write one question for further research on the Internet or to ask the class during discussion.
    ________________________________________________________________________________________________
Current Events Report Form
(Completed Model)

1. What is the title of your current-event article?
   “California Drought Crisis”

2. What is the website address (URL) of the article you found?
   www.cbsnews.com/pictures/californias-drought

3. When did this event happen?
   August 2015

4. Where did this event occur? Describe the place impacted by this event:
   California and Nevada. Farms, suburbs, and wild areas have been hurt.

5. Who lives in this place? Who else is involved?
   Farmers, homeowners, businesses, and wildlife. Everybody needs water.

6. Write a summary of this event, using at least three sentences. Begin with a topic sentence. Describe causes of the event and its effects.
   The drought in California and Nevada has lasted four years. The climate is changing. People use lots of water. Much of our food in the U.S. is grown in California. Farms need irrigation. People’s daily activities have changed, like cooking, cleaning, and watering lawns and golf courses.

7. Are people asking for help? If so, what do the people on the ground need to help them?
   Ways to conserve water. Native plants that don’t need lots of water.

8. What would you suggest that we could do as a class to help the people in this situation?

9. How could our class make your suggestion happen?
   Use study hall time to make posters. Make and sell stationery paper decorated with raindrop designs.

10. Write one question for further research on the Internet or to ask the class during discussion.
    How can we help conserve water in our own community?
Online Resources for Current Events Friendly to Grades 4-6

CNN Student News  
www.cnn.com/studentnews

Dogo News  
www.dogonews.com/

Library of Congress for Families  
www.loc.gov/families/

National Geographic Kids  
kids.nationalgeographic.com/ 
www.onlinenewspapers.com/

PBS News Hour for Kids  
www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/

Scholastic News for Your Classroom  
magazines.scholastic.com/

Student News Net  
www.studentnewsnet.com/

Teen Kids’ News  
www.teenkidsnews.tv/

The Connected Classroom  
theconnectedclassroom.wikispaces.com/News

Time for Kids  
www.timeforkids.com/news

Washington Post Kids Post  
www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost/

We the Civics Kids  
constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/we-the-civics-kids/

Weekly Reader  
www.weeklyreader.com/

World Newspapers  
www.world-newspapers.com/

Staff from the Office of the Superintendent and Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office with students at Bernice Curren School in Oxnard, California, celebrate their new Schoolyard Habitat. They replaced their water-guzzling grass front lawn with native, drought tolerant plants to save water, and also to create habitat for native pollinators like the Monarch butterfly, a species whose numbers have declined in recent years.

Photo by Ashley Spratt/USFWS available at Flickr.com (this image has been lightened from the original)