

Estuary Extra — PRODUCING YOUR OWN

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWSPAPER

English extension

Setting The Stage

One interesting way to educate others about factors affecting the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary is to produce a student newspaper. This can be a big job, but it can also be a lot of fun for teachers and students alike.

At a newspaper, the work is divided by department, so students will work in teams representing each different division. Students should consider what each of those jobs entails. Have them begin generating ideas for *Estuary Extra*. They can refer to other activities they've done in this unit and write about the people, events, and issues that are important in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary.

Here are the major departments in any newspaper. Feel free to add any others that you might need.

| NEWSPAPER DEPARTMENT | RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| PUBLISHER | Head of the newspaper staff; assigns newspaper jobs to various teams and individuals. |
| NEWS DEPARTMENT | Led by the Editor-in-Chief; writes and illustrates all articles and features; takes photos. |
| BUSINESS / ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT | Raises money to publish the newspaper; sells newspapers; sells advertising space. |
| DESIGN DEPARTMENT | Puts stories, art, and photos into proper form for printing; prints the newspaper |

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Objectives

Students will:

- brainstorm ideas for newspaper topics and design.
- work in cooperative groups to plan, design, edit and publish a student newspaper

Materials

- Sample newspapers and newsletters
- Magazines with advertising
- Writing Materials
- Computer and publishing software
- Copies of Activity: Writing for a Newspaper (pages 20-25)

Preparation

- Gather print materials.
- Make copies of handout.

Procedure

1. Provide good models for students to review and evaluate. Show them professional newspapers as well as student-produced newsletters.
2. Develop a few whole-class activities such as selecting the newspaper logo and masthead for use by all groups. Develop a catchy thematic title, if needed.
3. Create a class "newspaper headquarters" that contains group topic brainstorm, schedule, timeline of progress, assignments, responsibility chart, and "to-do" lists.
4. Have students manage files carefully by giving them a standard way of naming files such as "*estuaryextral*."
5. Review and discuss the handouts.
6. Review rubrics with the students.



WRITING FOR A NEWSPAPER

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READY?

1. Check the diagram below and start thinking about which part of the newspaper is right for your talents and interests.



PUBLISHER

BUSINESS DEPARTMENT

Ads
Circulation

NEWS DEPARTMENT

News
Editorial
Features
Entertainment
Sports
Art & Photography

DESIGN DEPARTMENT

Layout
Printing

2. Select which newspaper assignment you would like to do, or have your teacher assign you to a department.
3. If you have chosen a writing assignment, use the pointers provided here to help you.
4. Every article should have each of these components:

HEADLINE: the words printed across the top of an article to catch the reader's interest

DATELINE: the words at the beginning of an article telling when and where the story was written

BYLINE: the name of the author of the article, the artist of an illustration, or the photographer of a picture.

Suggestions for the News Department

NEWS:

News articles are the most structured type of newspaper article. The purpose is to provide information about an event to your readers.

Write articles on coastal erosion, habitat loss, endangered/threatened/invasive species, restoration projects, loss of jobs, pollution, education or natural resources in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. Be alert for any news stories on current events occurring in your local community that you can feature in your paper.

Here are some tips to help you write a great article:

Research your story.

- Make a list of questions you want to answer.
- Identify possible sources of information such as the Internet, the library, BTNEP, and reliable subject-matter experts or scientists.
- You can also investigate by visiting a site, observing, taking notes and comparing your conclusions with the other evidence you have gathered.
- As you find answers to your questions, take careful notes, documenting each source.
- Evaluate each source; consider factors such as reliability, objectivity and currency.

Start with a headline that captures the reader's interest.

Use your lead paragraph to hook your reader by highlighting your most fascinating or interesting finding. Summarize the story by including the 5 Ws: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY of the story. The lead should be brief, objective, and limited to essential information. Use Thinking Maps or Graphic Organizers to help you organize your information logically.

- The following paragraphs should explain and develop the 5 Ws by providing details. Put the details in order from most important to least important. If possible, link the story to the life of the reader.
- Write in the third person (he, she, it, and they). Never write news articles in the first person. Personal stories are called "Features."
- Use the active rather than passive voice when reporting.
- Stick to the facts. Do not include your personal opinions. Editorials or Letters to the Editor serve that purpose.
- Use relevant quotes to add local color to your article.
- Wrap up the article. Think about using a strong quote.

Suggestions for the News Department, CONT'D.

activities

FEATURES:

Features are interesting stories about people, places and events, such as the annual BTNEP paddle trip, volunteer tree planting and the *La'Fete de Ecologie Festival*. Some features explore an issue that may be too complex for a hard news item. They are less concerned with facts and more about human interest. Write an article on “The Big One,” telling what would happen if a Category 5 hurricane hit Morgan City. Pick one of the “Seven Priority Problems” of the BTE and write a feature story about it. Interview older relatives or friends about coastal land loss problems they have witnessed in the BTE in their lifetime. Possible interviewees include: C. C. Lockwood, the nature and wildlife photographer; Tab Benoit, local musician; Kerry St. Pe', Director of BTNEP; Mark Davis, Director of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; Dr. Earl Melancon, oyster expert at Nicholls State University and LUMCON; Windell Curole, South Lafourche Levee District; Archie Chiasson, Manager of the Fresh Water Levee District, or Jerome Zeringue, Terrebonne Parish Levee District. Do a photo essay on plants and animals of the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. Report on a local festival, fishing rodeo, or volunteer at a marsh grass planting event. Give recipes for your favorite seafood or game dishes. Write an article on a field trip to your favorite place in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary.

Here are tips on writing feature stories:

Be Creative.

You are not bound by the same rules as when writing a news story. Pretend you are telling a story. Use your senses; invite your readers by describing sounds, smells, sights and textures. Paint a picture with your words. Personal thoughts can be part of your feature, but always tell both sides of the story.

If your feature involves an interview, keep the following tips in mind:

- Know your subject. Gather information about the person you are interviewing by reading about his/her work or by talking to friends and associates.
- Make a list of questions to ask, but be open for any spontaneous questions that may arise.
- Develop a positive, polite relationship with the person you are interviewing.
- Explain the ground rules of your interview, if any, and respect your subject's wishes about any off-the-record topics.
- Keep the subject focused. Do not let him/her stray from the topic.
- Tape record or videotape the interview for your records.

Suggestions for the News Department, CONT'D.

activities

EDITORIAL:

This type of article gives you a chance to express your opinion and be persuasive. Write your opinion about the importance of hurricane preparedness, litter reduction or coastal restoration. Draw an editorial cartoon about pollution, wetland loss, problems in the fishing industry or coastal land loss in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. Ask others to write letters to the editor on various topics of interest in the estuary.

Do not forget these tips when writing editorials or letters to the editor:

- Get your facts straight.
- Keep your audience in mind.
- Grab the attention of the reader with your first sentence.
- Present your opinion/arguments logically and persuasively.

SPORTS:

Cover the Grande Isle Tarpon Rodeo. Write an article about wildlife management in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. Write an article about the history of trapping nutria, mink and muskrat. Interview a local fishing guide and report on the latest in fishing lures. Give dates and times for the Hunter Education Workshops and the “Outdoor Women” workshops sponsored by Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries.

ENTERTAINMENT:

Draw a comic strip or cartoon featuring “Clawdette,” the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Crab mascot. Design a maze based on a map of the BTE. Develop a crossword puzzle or a word search puzzle with the vocabulary words from a wetland unit. Cover a concert by a local Cajun or zydeco musician or band.

WEATHER:

Design a weather report for the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. Include a map, high and low temperatures, rainfall, three-day forecast, ozone index, tidal graph chart, wind speed and direction and any other information your readers might need to know.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART:

Take photographs or use computer clip art that will highlight your articles and make them more interesting. Draw clear illustrations, graphs or charts that help your readers understand the subject more easily. Remember to include captions for your pictures or cite the artist you are using!

Suggestions for the Business and Advertising Department

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ADVERTISEMENTS:

RAISING MONEY TO PUBLISH A NEWSPAPER

- Decide on a “price” for each issue of the *Estuary Extra*.
- What is your plan for marketing the newspaper?
- Who is your intended audience?
- Who will sell or distribute the newspapers?
- You can raise money for your newspaper by selling advertising space. Make a decision about the type of ads you want to feature in *Estuary Extra*. Do you want to accept all advertising, or will you accept only advertising from environmentally-friendly products and services?

Here are some ideas for ad opportunities that you can develop:

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| a store that sells sports accessories | music or computer store |
| canoeing lessons | an organic food store and deli |
| Cajun cooking or dancing lessons | charter fisherman |
| shrimp for sale | Red Fish Tournament |
| Cajun Dance Lessons | litter prevention |
| safe septic systems | Swamp Tours |
| hunting dogs for sale | |
| jackets, tennis shoes, and backpacks made of recycled plastic | |

guided tours to Bayou Segnette, Jean Lafitte National Historic Park, the LaBranche Wetlands, Des Allemands, Grande Isle State Park, and Bayou Lafourche.

Can you think of others? Look at advertising circulars from a local paper for more ideas.

- Make your ads interesting.
- Use lettering (fonts) of different types and sizes to draw attention but not distract.
- Keep the text simple.
- Use descriptive adjectives and strong verbs.
- Add artwork or photographs to enhance visual interest and to help “sell” the product.

Suggestions for the Design Department

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GETTING THE PAPER READY TO PRINT

After the stories, artwork, and advertising are ready, the Design Department has the job of putting the *Estuary Extra* together. What does that job involve?

For a professional-looking newspaper, use a computer for your work's layout. Experiment with different types and sizes of fonts for variety as well as a look you like.

When articles are ready for publication, it's time to have another group meeting to determine layout. Consider printing articles as single columns to get a feel for length. Show students what 100 words "looks like" in a column so they can adjust content length.

Ask everyone to read the newsletter three times. Read it once for content, once for technical quality, and once backwards (back to front) to catch small errors.

- How large is your newspaper? Will readers have a hard time finding certain features of interest to them? You might want to develop an index on the front page to direct readers to the page number of their favorite section.
- Look at several different newspapers for ideas on layout. This is the arrangement you use for fitting all the pieces of the *Estuary Extra* on paper. Use a newsletter template from the Document command of your computer word processing program. Empty spaces? What will you do? Use cartoons, pictures or ads as fillers for those spots.
- How will you print the *Estuary Extra*? Will you use recycled paper? Be sure that all your arrangements are in order. You will need access to a copy machine and enough paper to print the necessary number of copies.

FINISHING TOUCHES BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

PRESS TIME!!

LOOK!

Be sure to proofread each article several times before the *Estuary Extra* goes to press. Double check the spelling of names and places. Be sure dates and times are accurate.

Do a final check on all headlines and photo captions for accuracy.

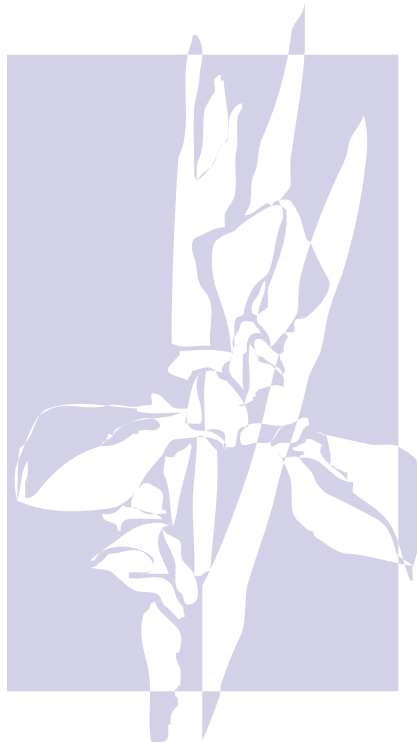
Check to see that the circulation staff is ready to distribute the paper.

activity

Questions For Journaling

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1. Why is a free press important in a democracy?
2. How important was it for you to research your subject well?
3. Did you interview any people for an article? What appreciation for their work did you gain?
4. Other than factual material, what are some of the important things you learned from writing a newspaper?
5. How did your readership relate to the newspaper?
6. Do you think people are now more informed about wetland issues? Why or why not?



Assessments

Cooperative Learning Group Performance: *Estuary Extra*

Project: _____

Group Members:

**3
OUTSTANDING**

**2
SATISFACTORY**

**1
NEEDS
IMPROVEMENT**

Each member of the group contributed ideas and suggestions for setting goals, assigning roles, and developing a plan of action for the newspaper.

Each member of the group carried out the duties of his/her role.

Each member of the group contributed to the development and distribution of the newspaper.

A positive atmosphere was maintained during group meetings.

Group goals were achieved.

OVERALL RATING: Total Possible Points = 15

OVERALL RATING:

Estuary Extra STUDENT NEWSPAPER RUBRIC*

| CRITERIA | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| The 5 Ws Who, What, When, Where & Why | All articles adequately address the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why). | Most of the articles adequately address the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why). | Some of the articles adequately address the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why). | Few of the articles adequately address the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why). |
| Layout Headlines Captions | All articles have headlines that capture the reader's interest and accurately describe the content. All articles have a byline. All graphics have captions that adequately describe people and/or action. | All articles have headlines that accurately describe the content. All articles have a byline. All graphics have captions. | Most articles have headlines that accurately describe the content. All articles have a byline. Most graphics have captions. | Articles are missing bylines OR many articles do not have adequate headlines OR many graphics do not have captions. |
| Layout Columns | Columns are neatly typed in the "justified" type style. There are adequate and even spaces between all columns and articles. The newspaper makes you think "professional." | Columns are neatly typed. There are adequate and even spaces between all columns and articles. The newspaper makes you think "fairly professional." | Columns are typed. There are adequate spaces between most columns and articles. It is easy to read, but does not look professional. | Columns are not neatly typed and/or spaces are not adequate; newspaper is somewhat difficult to read. It looks unprofessional. |
| Contributions of Group Members | Each person in the group has contributed to the newspaper without prompting from the teacher or peers. | Each person in the group has contributed to the newspaper with few reminders from the teacher or peers. | Each person in the group has contributed to the newspaper with some minimal assistance from the teacher or peers. | One or more students in the group required quite a lot of assistance from the teacher or peers. |
| Spelling and Editing | No spelling or grammar errors remain after one or more people (in addition to the typist) read and correct the newspaper. | No more than 3 spelling or grammar errors remain after one or more people (in addition to the typist) read and correct the newspaper. | No more than 5 spelling or grammar errors remain after one or more people (in addition to the typist) read and correct the newspaper. | More than 5 spelling or grammar errors remain in the final copy of the newspaper. |
| Objectives | All of the articles establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. | Most of the article establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. | Some of the articles establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. | Few of the articles establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. |
| Requirements | All of the required elements are present. | Most of the required elements are present. | Some of the required elements are present. | Few of the required elements are present. |

Total Possible Points = 28

OVERALL RATING:

* Adapted from C.A. Bennet Newspaper created (n.d.). Retrieved August 27, 2006 from http://coe.west.asu.edu/students/creuss/newspaper_rubric.htm

Resources

Loyola University's Center for Environmental Communications

<http://www.loyno.edu/lucec/>

Society of Environmental Journalists

<http://www.sej.org/index.htm>

Knight Center for Environmental Journalism

<http://ej.msu.edu/index2.php>

School of Communication, Northern Arizona University

<http://www.nau.edu/~soc-p/ecrc/>

CNN Learning Resources: This site offers news stories, but includes an outline so that students can see how stories are structured. Many stories also contain audio or video, plus vocabulary quizzes, reading comprehension questions, and word searches.

<http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/>

An interactive language arts and journalism project for middle schools developed by ThinkTVNetwork, Dayton, Ohio. An OET/SchoolNet Project

<http://www.writesite.org/>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Federal and State Regulations—Louisiana Legal Materials

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/states/louisiana.html#codes>

Federal and State constitutions, Statutes and codes

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/statutes.html>

Bureau of the Census

<http://www.census.gov/>

BTNEP online Self-Guided Tours of the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary and “When I was your age...”

www.btnep.org

Weather: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

www.noaa.gov/wx.html

The Weather Channel

www.weather.com

Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium website

www.lumcon.edu

Lesson Source

