

Title

Futures Wheels: Developing and refining journalistic story planning to better identify context, background and meaningful events, empowering journalism's social responsibilities

Description

A Memorial Day incident in northeastern Ohio raised the specter of potential First Amendment

violations, opened wounds of racial tension and created ethical questions on issues of media social responsibility. How can students localize the event and issues? How could covering these issues lead to improved audience awareness and media social responsibility?

News planning using futuristic tools can provide essential information and credible leadership empowering journalistic responsibility.

Objectives

- **Students will reflect on information, sources and procedures needed to develop this story journalistically**
 - **Students will explore sources, past and present, and apply their findings and process to develop future solutions and alternatives.**
 - **Students will produce what they, in small groups or individually, decide the strongest way to report this story choosing the platform(s) of their choice using journalistic and social responsibility principles.**
 - **Students will reflect on the various principles, concepts, legal and ethical thinking responsibilities they applied in their roles and news producers and how they can engage them in future reporting.**

Common Core State Standards

<u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.1.A</u>	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
<u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.2</u>	Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 11-12 texts and topics
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2.A	Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2.B	Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

Length 4 days of 50 minutes (more if instructors and students decide); variable

Rationale

Events of Memorial Day 2021 in Hudson, Ohio, create a range of paths for lessons. The simple task of developing local stories around incidents and concepts involved can show many ways stories can develop. This easily morphs into planning the story but examining details using different individual or multimedia platforms. Lesson paths could have students detail how use of focus, sourcing and presentation would differ as could info-gathering, attribution and fact-checking. An expanded story, approached as a single angle or with angles supported by multimedia, involves learning and applying new journalistic terminology.

Another pop-up lesson could stress story planning tools like future wheels. How to use future wheels and why can be another quick lesson.

That's two lessons, with variable lengths dependent on information-gathering student media delving into diverse sources, issues and story angles.

Plus a quickie: discussing and applying the journalistic terminology in play with these lessons and the accompanying research, interviewing, design, editing, planning and commenting to go behind surface reporting.

Through expanding story angles, evaluating their responsibility through creative thinking, adding a growing chain of sidebars, alternative story forms – and deeper, alternative story approaches – creates more complete reporting.

Additionally, Solutions Journalism, Journalism as Advocacy (be sure to have students read, discuss and apply this [Washington Post article](#)) quickly can lead to more effective and useful stories. How journalists compare with citizens in defining journalistic objectivity can bring new light to the intent and impact of reporting.

As students expand coverage, consider how legal and ethical issues might bring critical thinking as an essential part of the story or reflect reporters' ability to gather information. For example, does the First Amendment apply to the Legion's actions while honoring democracy, Or, did Legion members tear another piece of it away?

Legal and ethical questions can become the key angle or focus of the reporting, like:

- What is objectivity? Does it remain at journalism's core? Is it defensible now and for the future? (pick examples on the question and events, from the events of insurrection, BLM and climate change).
- By trying to fulfill the tradition of objectivity first, have journalists allowed false stories to appear, be believed and then mislead citizens on crucial issues?
 - Did the Legion in Hudson censor the speaker when members decided a portion of his speech should not be aired? Could answers/guides for law & ethics be different?
 - Your school has twice as many student concussions in sports than your crosstown rivals. Your editor suggests your team report the issues and why they exist. She also wants your team to offer potential solutions to your problem. How do you go about coverage? Sources? Visual reporting? Your adviser also tells you something called "Solutions Journalism," and says maybe this new tool might help report. And, BTW, principal, superintendent and school board president say this would be an excellent time to make the school look better. (A possible story to plan for your school?)

Questions like these could lead to discussion/decision and inclusion of essential story angles. Those discussions could lead to more questions and understanding how pieces join to make unified, accurate, in depth, thorough, complete and journalistically responsible stories.

Lessons' materials

Blackboard or whiteboard

Teacher laptop and digital projector

Student access to computers

Internet access

Access to relevant media reporting, processing and production

Rubric for student article summary and statement

Access to online resources about the events and related information

Live resources for local and non-local information

On-site assessment guides that fit local standards, content and context

Resources for Lesson 1

Hudson Memorial Day incident

- [Hudson Memorial Day speech](#)
- [Local leaders seek to reinstate Hudson American Legion Post after Memorial Day mic cut incident](#)
- [A veteran to credit Black Americans on Memorial Day. His mic got muted](#)
- [Read Hudson veteran's full Memorial Day speech](#)

Resources for background | lesson packages | Starting points for additional lessons

- [How can the press best serve a democratic society?](#)
- [Our democracy is under attack](#)
- [CNN: assault on democracy](#)
- [How journalists and the public shape our democracy](#)
- [What is mainstream media?](#)
- [Does the media have a 'duty of care?'](#)
- [Journalists, not sources, are responsible for accuracy of our stories](#)
- [Informing the news: The need for knowledge-based reporting](#)
- [Can journalism be both impartial and empathetic?](#)
- [Journalism Activism](#)
- [Re-thinking objectivity](#)
- [Teaching students to verify social media content](#)
- [B.S. detection for journalists](#)
- [It's time for the press to stop complaining – and to start fighting back](#)
- [Trustworthy journalism in a fact-checking world](#)
- [Blurred lines: journalism](#)
- [The journalism of why](#)
- [Advocacy is not a dirty word in journalism](#)
- [Why we need advocacy journalism](#)
- [Objectivity in journalism: A myth or a method?](#)

Lesson 1 (Hudson Memorial Day) step-by-step

50 minutes

Warm-up and introduction

Day 1

Give students the Hudson Memorial Day [speech story](#). Have them read it individually for about 20 minutes, noting major points and questions they have.

Then break students into groups of four and think how they would shape the story (25 minutes):

- What is the mission of your student media? What do you think it should be?
- Who should make all content decisions of student media, and why?
- What is gained from letting sources and school officials prior review of student media content and ideas? Your reactions to and planning of localized stories?
- Is there any topic, concept or story idea too sensitive for high school media
- Other relevant for your group?

(Thoughts to these questions and answers might help determine if they play a role in story planning)

When discussion slows, give students this homework for the next day's class (5 minutes):

- Based on the Hudson incident, suggest two story ideas for localization
 - 25 words or less talk about why your audience should care
 - Other points they should be ready to discuss tomorrow: Type of article(s); angle of the story, and sources; platform/media; visual elements; background information; links; sidebars; non-local sources; questions the material should cover.
 - You may build from the list of potential content/context possibilities, delete or add to them.
- Encourage students to apply creative thinking to their planning

Day2

Warm-up 15 minutes

Briefly go over student questions and their 25-word statements.

Discussion

30 minutes

The teacher will open class by discussing student questions about the assignment and their ideas.

Next, break students back into their groups for idea sharing, additional questions. The class will discuss and explore their discussion topics, story ideas and parts of the list below. They will not use the Futures Wheels at this point. Each team should reach a final decision on which story angle it would recommend and why.

Assignment/ Homework

5 minutes

Based on class discussion, ask students to use the list of Content Possibilities, research for background to support localization of the Memorial Day speech incident. Students could also choose expansion of their ideas into wider context. Each student should finalize their story planning for presentation in the next class.

*At this point (following class presentation), the class could choose story angles to pursue and extend story development for the next several classes, drop the story here, schedule a project for later completion or do something else.

CONTENT POSSIBILITIES

Story planning content basis choices (required to use this in some form) Teacher would make a handout of these points for the class, leaving room for notes and thoughts.

Students can choose, with explanation why, any coverages/content/context, which could include:

- Type of article(s) (opinion, objective, visual reporting)
- Story angle
- News stages: what happened, what it means and what comes next
- Sources (non-live, live; local/non local)
- Sources reacting, knowledgeable, authoritative, expert
- Platform/media
- Use of future wheels to plan stories (Explained to students not to use this Content Possibility)
- Contextual, background, perspectives
- Links, sidebars
- What essential question should the information answer
- Legal & ethical angles/issues
- Information gathering, attribution and fact-checking
- Student media integrity, credibility
- Visual elements, including design
- The importance of coverage following Staff Manual areas of Mission Statement, Editorial Policy (designated public forums with students making all decisions without prior review), Ethics guidelines for student media (think should, not must) and procedure (how to carry out legal & ethical, mission standards)
- Student/teacher additions

Approaches that could lead to more learning before reporting

Students can choose, with explanation why, any coverages/content/context, which could include:

- Solutions Journalism
- Advocacy Journalism
- Journalism terminology
- Student media and its social responsibility
- Skeptical knowing
- The importance of coverage following Staff Manual areas of Mission Statement, Editorial Policy (designated public forums with students making all decisions without prior review), Ethics guidelines for student media (think should, not must) and procedure (how to carry out legal & ethical, mission standards)
- Student/teacher additions

*Thus, we add another goal, that of deepening student reporting, in small steps.

**(The teacher might expand this part of the lesson by asking students to go over these terms and concepts in class. The teacher could also discuss what each might add or detract from reporting this topic).*

Assessment

The teacher will use or modify existing local rubrics or assessment forms to grade the students. Focus should be on quality ideas and suggestions.

Differentiation

The teacher could make changes to the lesson plan to accommodate students at different skill levels or in different learning environments. The teacher could include more of the pathway ideas for advanced students.

Lesson 2 (Futures Wheels) step-by-step

Same/similar objectives.

Day 1

The second lesson might immediately follow the first or come later as the teacher and students decide.

50 minutes

Story planning in some depth, plus cause-effect and implication of decisions, can be important in more complex coverage and issues. Finding the right sources, right context and right direction can take more definitive planning tools than talking with students involved in preparing it.

Enter future wheels.

Futures Wheels are used to plan plus and minus future decisions of events happening now. Another goal of their use is projecting them into the future to find ways to prevent or support possible events or decisions. Their journalistic use adds points like interview actions, sources, background – story angles, platform of choice and much more commonly not evident in typical story development.

Previous: homework assignment immediately before this second lesson.

- Students, as homework, will access the articles below, recording notes and thoughts on what they consider key points, in class today. Discussion will occur after the Warm Up exercise.

- [What's a journalist supposed to be now – an activist? A Stenographer?>You're asking the wrong question](#)
- Read [In a pandemic, what is essential journalism?](#)
- Read [10 basics today's journalists need](#) (and tomorrow....?)
- Read [Do Americans share journalism's core values](#)

Students, also at home, will access materials on Futures Wheels so, with a quick teacher-led review, know how use of the wheel proceeds. Go to [What is Futures Wheel?](#)

Warm-up

In a 5-minute rapid-fire exercise, have students go to a common writing/posting spot and add an aspect, word or phrase that shows future story possibilities or stories they would really like to cover involving issues facing teens (national or locally, more). Student posts can be positive, negative or neutral. The point might be unknown, unthought of so far. Think in terms of invisible voices and diversity in its widely based meaning. (Story posts could be more localized or what teacher and students decide.)

That will be the starting point for today's lesson and may come from their readings.

The teacher will divide the class into the previous groups of 4 and instruct them to choose one story or issue from those on the board. Ideas can be added to the list, or modified, to focus on other angles. Try not to permit groups to duplicate choices unless they take a differing approach.

The teacher will review guidelines for using the model wheel students did last night for homework:

- Go to [What is Futures Wheel?](#)

Practice your own Futures Wheel exercise. First, copy one of the templates. Enter development of the Automobile in the center spoke. In the next ring of spokes, write down a

positive, negative or other outcome brought about by invention of autos. Positive could be used to plan to improve; negative could be used to plan ways to keep such a future from happening.

Keep going until you have at least five outer rings with all circles filled. Think about the outer rings of your model; in the 1880s, would inventors of the auto be pleased? We will discuss the wheel's use journalistically and think of other values for its use. (don't forget about the Content Possibilities list topics).

Students will work for the remainder of the session in groups on designing a group futures wheel brought back to the next class.

Day 2 Lesson 2

50 minutes

Warm up

Students will form their teams and work to explain how they used the wheel in story development. Teacher and students can discuss decisions and suggest changes. All groups will present their work and take time for questions. 40 minutes. Time and process can be changed to suit local constraints.

At the end of the session, students should have a team story idea and some of the Content Possibilities finalized.

Assignment

The teacher will conclude the lesson with an evaluation set of questions due in the beginning of the next class:

- What are your most valuable takeaways from examining use of the Futures Wheel for journalism?
- What are your least valuable takeaways from examining a use of the Futures Wheel for journalism?
- What would you change with the exercise to make it more valuable/productive?
- Do you think you can plan stories with more depth and meaning for your readers?
- What might topics be for that kind of planning?

Assessment

The teacher will collect and examine everyone's answers and share potential story ideas in the next class. Choices of what to practice next range from additional basic story skills to information gathering practice to developing skills in alternative story planning creation.

Given the skills variety involved and understanding the key pieces, determining the "right" sequence for learning and application may well vary significantly and for many reasons.

Those considering designing a story planning unit might better do so by adding a large amount of content, like working on 1-4 story packages during a semester.

The teacher will use or modify existing local rubrics or assessment forms to grade the students. The focus should be on quality of ideas and suggestions. Grading could be based on points (10/question); credit/no credit based on thoroughness/participation or check, plus, minus or zero.

Differentiation

The teacher could make changes to the lesson plan to accommodate students at different skill levels or in different learning environments. The teacher could add a *third day of using the wheel concept to plan story ideas. The class might also have a vote in what comes next to strengthen their story development skills.

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For example:

***Day 3 Lesson 3**

50 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes)

The teacher could add a third day of using the wheel concept to plan story ideas. The third day should reflect final work of planning stages. This could also be done as teamwork outside class, live, remote, etc.

Teams and class content will transition to gathering information, critiquing and verifying it.

The class might also have a vote in what comes next to strengthen their story development skills.

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