

NEWSHOUR

Facilitator Guidelines



NewsHour is an interactive forum where middle school and high school students gather to watch and discuss current events news programming. The purpose of NewsHour is to present students with the opportunity to learn more about their world and share their opinions on important current events with their peers around the globe. Teach on the Beach International provides the forum and communities around the world to have their voices heard.

As a facilitator of a NewsHour group, you must enable students to objectively interpret the news and take notes, discuss their thoughts and feelings/reactions, and share their ideas with other NewsHours around the world. In Ghana, we watch the news together as a group and discuss right after viewing. At Bishop Luers High School in Ft Wayne, IN students watch the news and take notes on their own at home and discuss once weekly during class time. How you enable the students to watch and discuss depends on your own unique circumstances.

Duties

Helping participants set rules. There are five elements that are necessary for the smooth and successful operation of a NewsHour, but we encourage each group to take some time to set their own rules to set the tone for open discussions. Remember, you are there to facilitate, not to lead. Ideas should be questioned, but not rejected.

Notebook check. To ensure that students are taking notes consistently and truly engaged in the subject matter we recommend that every week the facilitator checks several randomly chosen notebooks. This is also a good way for the facilitator to help students develop good note-taking skills.

Timeliness/attendance record. This is basic indicator of the success of your NewsHour and it provides a necessary level of structure. This can help to identify students who are truly interested in learning.

Answer questions. When students are stuck on a topic, don't know the meaning of a word, or the background of a specific story, help them understand. Be very careful not to lecture like a teacher but rather provide a frame around which they can build their understanding.

Reaction/Reflection Reports. Sharing NewsHours around the world! To do this, students should put their thoughts and feelings down in a structured report. The structure is simple, summarize facts and expand on the summary with reaction and reflection.

These reports will come together daily or weekly with others from around the globe, posted on the **Teach on the Beach NewsHour Facebook Group (newshour@groups.facebook.com)**

How can I make my NewsHour a success?

The success of NewsHour depends on a committed and safe environment that encourages open discussion. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is also not complicated.

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Everyone in the group must share a commitment to caring about our world and a desire to learn more about it. As a facilitator, you will need to ensure that this commitment is not taken lightly by any of the participants as that will quickly ruin the experience for everyone. You may need to act unilaterally to resolve a situation where one or a group of students is disrupting the environment, but this is the only case in which you as a facilitator will need to take action. During the discussion it is important that you do the opposite and try to minimize your visibility.

Students today commonly know very little about current events and the generally important happenings going on in the world around them. They may be confused, uncertain, and unknowledgeable about the things they view on the news. They will be looking to someone older to try to explain to them what can sometimes be very confusing situations. Listen to the students as they work through their thoughts, take care to not say too much, and remember that there are no right answers and there are no right opinions. They are the engine that drives the program and you are the steering wheel.

Naturally inquisitive students typically fuel the NewsHour discussion and stir the pot of discussion amounts more than reserved students. Encourage participation by all students as long as they are comfortable talking. It is important to remember NewsHour is intended to get students thinking about the world's events and encouraging them to form their own opinions about how they think and feel about the stories they are seeing. The process of understanding and evaluating is crucial for the student's development and it is the key function in developing student participants in NewsHour. Help students uncover the world, help them to see the many things that they have never seen or heard of before. The 'fun' of discovering these new things is educational and will spur their curiosity.

NewsHour is not a lecture and should never become one, it is the discussion and interaction of participants that fuels the student's evaluative process and the facilitator must try hard not to interfere in this regard.

Managing Student reactions

All communities are different and it is important to recognize that NewsHour is impacted by the way students view and respond to the stories they are hearing on the news. Current events often contain harrowing details of devastating events around the world. Students and young people across the world are often sheltered from much of this information or they simply do not have access to it.

In Ghana, our volunteers and staff encounter a variety of reactions from students watching NewsHour. For the most part the reactions have been positive. Since 2007 each student participant in NewsHour has shown an improved concentration and performance in their school work. The real issues the students have been seeing and learning about have no doubt motivated them to approach their own lives with more confidence and thoughtfulness. Yet, these are still young people and while the NewsHour has helped them take life and learning

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more seriously, there is also a lot of new and profound contemplation that can lead the students to have a heavy heart after watching a tragic or emotional story.

Some Ghanaian students participating in NewsHour have expressed that they no longer feel akin to their peers in school. Their classmates do not know or care about the wars and injustices that are going on around them. Sometimes students can carry that sorrow and dread that comes from the world's tragedies around with them the next day. Their young minds can be overwhelmed by the images and stories of death and injustice that pervade our planet. That is why it is as important as a facilitator to keep a keen eye out for those extra sensitive students and reach out to them. Take the time to discuss with the group and have one-on-one time as needed.

This is not to say that students should be wary of viewing NewsHour. Instead, facilitators and participants must be cognizant of the powerful nature of this learning process and they must be there to help and talk with students who are likely seeing things they have never seen and thinking thoughts they have never thought.