

Media Coverage

Overview:

Teens research news coverage using magazines, newspapers, television, and the Internet to make the case that a local topic is not getting the fair attention it deserves.

Materials:

- Access to library, news reference database

Procedure:

1. Ask students where they get their information about current events (newspapers, magazines, television news, Internet, etc.). Say: There's a lot of information out there, yet many important issues aren't getting the attention they deserve. Because of that, they may remain problems longer than they have to.
2. Ask why this is true. Possible answers: they're being ignored by the media; people are apathetic and don't care; there's so much information out there that it's hard to prioritize the importance of what we read, watch, and hear.
3. Tell students they will research a local issue they think has been inadequately covered in the news.
4. Explain what a "local" issue is (one that concerns only the local community or is a local expression of a larger issue or problem like homelessness). Ask them to define "inadequate" news coverage: reporting on an issue without balance (not fair to all sides of the issue) or not covering an issue as much as other stories. Tell them they must back up their assertions with research from the library or Internet to confirm how much coverage there has been.
5. Reports are due in two weeks. Check in with students at least once a week to make sure they're progressing. You may want selected students to make a class presentation on their findings as well as to explain what they're willing to do to raise awareness of the neglected issue.

As a follow-up exercise, have students write reports on the neglected topics and submit them — with a letter explaining the project — to local media organizations. This can be an individual or group exercise.

This lesson is from the *Good Ideas* book, available for purchase from the CHARACTER COUNTS! online store: <http://www.charactercounts.org/materials>

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McREL standards

Language Arts

Standard 10. Understands the characteristics and components of the media.

Level IV, Benchmark 1. Understands that media messages have economic, political, social, and aesthetic purposes (e.g., to make money, to gain power or authority over others, to present ideas about how people should think or behave, to experiment with different kinds of symbolic forms or ideas).

<http://www.mcrel.org/Standards-benchmarks/>