

SECTION 9: A NOTE FOR TEACHERS ABOUT NEWS LITERACY

This article was especially written for MakeBeliefsComix by Howard Schneider, executive director of the Center for News Literacy, Stony Brook University.

The shocking images that unfolded in the Capitol Jan. 6, 2021 have underscored numerous challenges for sustaining and protecting our democracy. But arguably one of the most urgent is how we can prepare students to become more discerning news and information consumers, especially on social media. Studies by researchers at Stanford University have found alarming deficits on the part of students at every level in identifying reliable news sources online. Students are often easily misled by bogus websites, deceptive social media posts and manipulated video content. The consequences, of course, can be disastrous.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THERE'S HELP AVAILABLE FOR TEACHERS

More than a decade ago, my colleagues and I at Stony Brook University in New York launched the Center for News Literacy to train the next generation of college students to separate fact from fiction and to use critical thinking skills to *interrogate* rather than consume news and information. Two years ago, we began working with area school districts and K-12 teachers to adapt our material for middle schools and high schools

Resources and more information are available at the Center's main website: <http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/> and at the Center's Digital Resource Center for educators.: <https://digitalresource.center>. And Stony Brook is not alone. There are other useful resources, lesson plans and training materials available, especially at these sites

- The News Literacy Project: <https://newslit.org>
- Mediawise: <https://www.poynter.org/mediawis>

FINALLY, SOME EDUCATORS HAVE ASKED ME:

"HOW EARLY CAN WE START PREPARING STUDENTS?"

MY ANSWER: "IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY."

A few years ago, at a summer News Literacy workshop for college instructors and high school teachers, a second-grade teacher arrived. I was baffled. But the director of the workshop urged me to wait until the participants made their final presentations.

"I bet you're all wondering how a second-grade teacher can teach News Literacy?" the teacher began. Then she explained how she would read her class the story of the "*The Three Little Pigs*." Predictably, students would express horror and outrage at the menacing Big Bad Wolf and offer sympathy for the poor, victimized pigs

A short time later, she would read her class, "*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*," a book written by Brooklyn schoolteacher Jon Scieszka and illustrator Lane Smith that tells a far different story. In this version, the wolf tells a reporter how he approached the pigs to innocently borrow a cup of sugar and wound up being falsely arrested

“So who do you believe”? the teacher would finally ask her students. After a long pause, a small hand would inevitably go up. “We really can’t tell who’s right until we get both sides of the story,” the student would say “And *that’s* how I’m getting my students ready for News Literacy in the second grade,” the teacher said, prompting a hearty round of applause
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