

What Route Do We Take Today?

First course, Second grading period, Week 4

The traffic report provides essential information to urban and suburban commuters and individuals who may be driving through an area. Accurate information presented succinctly is expected.



Enduring Understanding

In a society that depends on transportation, an accurate traffic report provides important information.



Essential Questions

What should be included in a traffic report? Where do traffic reporters gather their information? Does being a traffic reporter require special credentials?



Objectives and Outcome

- Students will understand how important the smooth flow of transportation is to the economy and to personal lives.
- Students will know how traffic information is gathered and presented.
- Students will be able to read maps and grids of their community.
- Students will gather accurate information and write traffic reports.



Suggested Time

Two days



Resources and Materials

- Speed Alerts (www.speedalerts.com/), real-time traffic alert information in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area
- TrafficLand (www.TrafficLand.com)
- Department of Transportation Web sites; for example, VDOT Virginia Road Alerts 9 (www.vdot.virginia.gov/comtravel/eoc/eoc-main.asp)



Procedure

1. Establish why we care about traffic information. Questions may include:
 - What traffic-related problems did students and teachers face coming to school?
 - If students walk to school, are they still influenced by congestion, accidents or other traffic/transportation problems?
 - To what extent does your community depend on the smooth flow of traffic and working signals?

- For what products do they depend on deliveries to the grocery store, pharmacy or other retailers?
- How do traffic conditions influence going to the beach, the mountains or other vacation destinations?

2. Discuss where students and parents turn for traffic information.

Getting traffic information at home—the Internet

If they lived in San Francisco, they might turn to cbs5.com/traffic to read of live traffic incidents: 7:20 PM, US 101 Northbound after MC KEE RD/E JULIAN ST Accident: 2-CAR CRASH HAS BEEN MOVED TO THE RIGHT HAND SHOULDER. While skimming the list of other incidents, a BART Transit report flashes “no problems to report; 40 TRAINS ON TIME.”

Do students use the Internet for traffic conditions?

Getting traffic information at home—the newspaper

Remember, morning newspapers are usually published between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. They will not report the most recent fender benders. What traffic information does the newspaper offer that might assist drivers?

Getting traffic information at home—television and radio

When one is busy getting ready for work or school, one is likely to have the television turned to local news or the radio tuned to the station that provides traffic updates. Planning the fastest route requires this information.

3. Make a list of the content of a traffic report. Listeners want traffic updates —the location of accidents, congestion, obstruction of flow; construction advisories, and gridlock reports. If a main artery is impacted, suggestions for alternate routes are appreciated.

4. Where do traffic reporters get their information?

One enterprising group has developed www.traffic.com that delivers traffic content to terrestrial and satellite radio, broadcast and cable television and online customers. Check it out to see the Washington, D.C., hot spots (jam factor). Where do locals and visitors in your area turn?

Review the other Web sites listed in Resources and Materials in class or ask students to visit these sites as homework. Have students evaluate these sites for the available information and rate them.

5. Write the traffic report. Share the following sample format with students. Have them fill in the blanks with the major traffic problem areas in your community.

The traffic report is brought to you by _____ (sponsoring company’s name), _____ (a short descriptor). Now here’s Charles Rodriquez with what’s happening on your streets.

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Traffic is running in all areas, except _____. An alternate route is _____. For WCAR, I’m Charles Rodriquez. Now back to Lisa Wu in the news center.

6. Students are to listen to traffic reports on several stations. What other formats are used?

7. After discussion of the formats they collected, ask students to use one of the formats to write a traffic report based on information that you provide.

To add a map reading dimension to this lesson, you could provide more traffic information than students could use in one report. Using a map of your community, students would need to determine which pieces of information would be of most interest (newsworthy) to listeners of your student radio station. They would use the information for this area to write a traffic report.

8. How do satellite-guided systems in cars — GPS — affect the information gained listening to the radio traffic report? Are there other systems that do this too? Have students do a Google search using the terms “satellite traffic” and “cars.” (Mobileslash is one.)



Homework

Just as traffic reporters have to find the information to report, ask students to find out where the radio stations get the traffic information they use. Check station Web sites to see if they reveal their sources. If not available online, send an e-mail or call the station.

or

Investigate by having students do a random survey by calling several stations. Assign five students to each make one call to a specific station to see where they get their traffic reports.

Review the Web sites listed in Resources and Materials above.

Listen to traffic reports and collect several formats used. Be sure to include the station’s call letters and the time of the report. Which format does the student prefer?



Assessment

Students complete homework assignments.

Students are able to write a concise, informative traffic report from data about existing conditions.



Academic Content Standards

Recognize strategies used by media to inform, entertain, and transmit culture (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.M.1)

Develop cartographic literacy (National Council for the Social Studies)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Professional electronic journalists should pursue truth aggressively and present the news accurately, in context, and as completely as possible. (RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.)

Professional electronic journalists should present the news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance. (RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.)

Will There Be Rain?

First course, Second grading period, Week 4

Listeners depend on weather forecasts and reports, whether they are planning what to wear to work or school, deciding if an event can remain outside, or organizing to harvest a crop or to protect family members and possessions. Especially in times of weather emergencies, the information needs to be gathered and presented responsibly.



Enduring Understanding

Having accurate and lucid weather information is essential to the safety, economic viability and comfort of a community.



Essential Questions

What should be included in a radio weather report? Where do weathercasters gather their information? Does being a weathercaster require special credentials?



Objectives and Outcome

- Students will understand the personal, societal and economic impact of weather.
- Students will learn the vocabulary associated with meteorology.
- Students will know how weather information is gathered and presented.
- Students will gather and write a weather report.



Suggested Time

Three days



Resources and Materials

- NOAA Weather Service (www.NOAA.gov) and other online weather sources
- Copies of USA Today and several other newspapers, including your local one
- Taped weathercasts from a variety of radio stations
- "Weather," Announcing, page 270
- "Radio Rundowns," Writing for Television, Radio and New Media, pages 134-135
- "The Radio Script," Writing for Television, Radio and New Media, pages 142-145



Procedure

1. You might do an informal survey among your students. How often and for what occasions do students seek weather information? Do they look to the newspaper, television, radio or Internet for current temperature, forecasts and other weather information? Do any have their mobile phones programmed for weather? How many have family stories that involve weather conditions influencing what took place?

Compare and contrast the coverage of weather found in newspapers, television, the Internet and radio.

2. First find out students' perceived quality and depth of coverage of each medium. Which would they go to for this evening's weather, tomorrow's weather, and next weekend's weather forecast? Which is the best source of international weather information? You may wish to return to these questions after students have reviewed and evaluated each source first hand.

3. Give students copies of the newspaper that you have collected: USA Today, The Washington Post and others. Where is weather information found in these publications? How in-depth is the coverage? Have students list the various categories of weather information provided. If students were to use one of these publications as a source of weather information, which would they use? Why?

4. Radio stations develop a format for presenting daily weather information. Review weather report formats. Give students "Weather — Current, Breezy or Windy?"

Teachers may refer to the Associated Press wire weather information found on page 277 in *Announcing*. Have students use this information to write a weathercast for Williamsport, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. You may wish to divide into nine groups with each having a different city and format style to draft a weathercast.

Write the weathercast.

5. Give students the homework assignment to use Web sites for weather information in order to write a weather report. See "Online Weather Resources." Teachers may use this handout for their own background or provide students these as starting points for their Web search. Review "Check out Weather Coverage" with students to use when reviewing weather reports.

6. Based on what they have learned from listening, have them write 45-second weathercasts in both commercial and public radio styles.

Review the weather reports written by students. How many are accurate for the weather conditions at 8 a.m. and for the current time of day? Who would be considered a reliable weather forecaster?

7. Stations have procedures in place for emergency weather broadcasts. Either just mention now or take time to review these procedures in more detail. What do newspapers do in addition to the weather page information? What do television stations do to alert viewers to approaching dangerous weather conditions? See the "Emergency Alert System" lesson (second course, second grading period) for more information.

8. Discuss the advantages of a local weathercaster being trained in meteorology. Instead of being a “rip and read” announcer of weather conditions and expectations, what will someone trained to use the advances in technology bring to the station and listeners? Why is it important to recognize the path of a tornado, snowstorm or downpour?

9. Why might it benefit listeners to know weather conditions in another part of the U.S. or world?



Homework

Have students review several online sources of weather information. Evaluate the information that is available at these sites. Write a weather report based on this information that could be broadcast at 8 a.m. on your student radio station. If you wish to direct students in their Web sources, include NOAA Weather Service (www.NOAA.gov).

Have students watch television weathercasts. How many are using Accu-Weather or other programs, high-tech graphics and special effects? Do students note the seal of The American Meteorological Society displayed at some point in the broadcast? If yes, who has it? Does the weathercaster use scientific data? Did that weathercaster have a more professional presentation? What do they note as a contrast to radio weathercasts?

If teachers wish to have specialties in upper level Radio Production courses, one or more students could maintain a weather station (perhaps in conjunction with a professional television or radio station; the school’s weather data would become part of weather reports: “____ degrees reports Blank High School”).

Any student particularly interested in exploring weather further may want to integrate it into a topic for a piece as these lessons progress and certainly include it in the “Career Search” lesson.



Assessment

Evaluate students on having the essential information that should be included in a weathercast. You may wish to include an assessment of their source of data and how well they incorporate it.



Academic Content Standards

Use general and specialized dictionaries, thesauri, glossaries, or related references as needed to understand the meaning of new words (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.L.9)

Critique the consistency and clarity of the text’s (author’s) purposes (DCPS English Language Arts, 11.I.3)

Distinguish among different kinds of evidence used to support conclusions (e.g., logical, empirical, anecdotal) (DCPS English Language Arts, 11.I.4)

Determine the accuracy and truthfulness of one source of information by examining evidence offered in the material itself and by comparing the evidence with information from multiple sources (DCPS English Language Arts, 12.I.4)

The student identifies climatic patterns and weather phenomena and relates them to events in the contemporary world. (DCPS World Geography, Content Standard 1, Performance Standards, Grade 9)

The student operates a weather station and makes daily measurements of temperature, pressure, humidity, wind direction and rainfall. Maintains graphs of these data and compares with daily weather maps as well as radar maps of cloud cover. Identifies the types of clouds. Makes weather predictions. (DCPS Science, Earth and Space Sciences, Content Standard 4, Technology Integration, Grade 6)

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Industry Standards and Expectations

A meteorologist is an individual with specialized education who uses scientific principles to explain, understand, observe or forecast the earth's atmospheric phenomena and/or how the atmosphere affects the earth and life on the planet. This specialized education would be a bachelor's or higher degree in meteorology, or atmospheric science, consistent with the requirements set forth in "The Bachelor's Degree in Meteorology or Atmospheric Science," Bulletin American Meteorological Society, 1987, Vol. 68, No. 12, p. 1570. ... The designation meteorologist applies to individuals who have attained the professional knowledge outlined above. Individuals who have little formal education in the atmospheric sciences, or who have taken only industry survey courses, and who disseminate weather information and forecasts prepared by others, are properly designated "weathercasters." (What Is a Meteorologist? A Professional Guideline, American Meteorological Society, www.ametsoc.org/policy/whatisam.html).

Distinguish between different forms of media and their specific applications. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Explore career opportunities in Journalism and Broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Check on Weather Coverage

Name _____ Date _____ / _____ / _____

Use the following questions to help evaluate how weather is covered in your area.

1. Listen to WTOP and two or three other commercial stations. Listen to several reports.
2. Also check the public stations — in the D.C. area: WETA and WAMU.
3. How much time is given to weather and how often on commercial stations?
4. How often do the reports get updated on all the stations?
5. How many use the term Accu-Weather forecast — or use the name of another weather data provider — and why? Not sure? Visit <http://home.accuweather.com>.
6. How many stations combine weather with a traffic report?
7. How many stations combine the weathercast with the station call letters? With a slogan?
8. How many have a wider geographic range?
9. How many weathercasts use tape in the report?
10. What do you note about the content and style of delivery?

11. How many weathercasters have personalities? Does this add to the delivery? To listeners trusting the likelihood of the forecast?

12. How many stations simply state the information?

Weather — Current, Breezy or Windy?

Below are sample formats for presenting weather information. Some stations simply provide the basic information. Others introduce the weathercaster who gains a personality and viewer recognition. A few others add sound effects to entertain while providing the necessary information.

After listening to radio weathercasts, add an example. Which approach do you prefer and why?

1. At _____ o'clock the local temperature is _____ degrees. Sunny skies/scattered rain showers/cloud cover/a light snow is expected by/through the afternoon. Back to _____ (name) for today's news.

2. Good morning/afternoon/evening. The time is _____ a.m./p.m./o'clock. I'm John Kim with your local WCAR-FM weathercast for Washington, D.C., and the surrounding area. Currently at Reagan National Airport the temperature is _____ degrees.

Add in here 35 seconds of copy about current weather conditions. This may include breezes, sunshine or cloud cover, storms, tides and long-range forecasts.

That's your WCAR-FM weather forecast for this hour. Stay tuned for _____ (name of the next show or personality). Stay tuned to WCAR-FM for your weather news every hour on the halves. This is John Kim wishing you a good morning/day/afternoon/evening.

3. [Sound of rain hitting puddles] Good morning to you out there is KCAR land. It's _____ degrees today with a heavy cloud cover. Make sure the kiddies have their bumbershoots [sound of umbrella opening] before they go out. Mid-sixties downtown so grab a sweater. [boom of thunder] Lightening and thunder are forecast for our northern listeners in time for the afternoon commute. [car sounds] A storm brewing in the Pacific could influence your boating plans for the weekend. [Sound of gong] Veronica Lake for KCAR until 20 past the hour.

4. Station: _____

Example of their weather format: _____

Online Weather Resources

Below are United States government and commercial sources of weather information. Review these sites to determine which has the most comprehensive information you need and could use to produce a weather report on a daily basis and in times of weather emergency.

Add to this list as you find useful sites.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Weather Service

(www.nws.noaa.gov)

Maps, warnings, forecasts (local, graphical, aviation, marine, hurricanes, severe weather, fire weather, climate), observations (radar, satellite, snow cover, surface weather), air quality are among the features on this U.S. government Web site. Check “Glossary” for more than 2,000 terms, phrases and abbreviations. Career and education material also available.

The Weather Channel

(www.weather.com/)

Maps, current temperatures, satellite images, precipitation forecasts, video features; national and international information; How Weather Affects Your Life section. Review the Education and Weather Tools sections. Both “Dave’s Dictionary” and “Glossary” will provide defined terms for a forecaster’s use and for the listeners’ knowledge.

National Weather Overview

(<http://home.accuweather.com>)

Maps, weather news and features

USA Today Weather

(<http://asp.usatoday.com/weather/weatherfront.aspx>)

Maps, radar, satellite, precipitation, temperatures; latest weather news; local and international forecasts, storm center and resources including beach and ski conditions