

Radio Curriculum

Course Introduction



Sponsored by D.C. Public Schools, Prime Movers and RTNDF

Introduction

Introduction

This is a hands-on curriculum. From the first page to the last it is predicated on keeping students busy, doing actual production much of the time. They'll be gaining skills and, it is hoped, much of the time having fun in a field that is demanding but offers an amazing amount of discipline, research, writing, and organizational skills. It's our expectation that your student radio producers will ultimately gain an added benefit from what they learn here – their experience will apply to term papers, interdisciplinary projects and their lives after high school. They'll be better writers and researchers. They'll be more assured public speakers; they'll present material with more organization and confidence. They'll be better critical thinkers as they listen, watch or read the news; better technically as they gain engineering skills. We think they will eventually be better informed voters, listeners who question the details of what they are hearing, and people who can discuss ethics with authority and conviction. We hope many students will turn on to the excitement and the challenge of radio, to one day sit at a mic in the glow of an "on air" sign, fulfilling the awesome responsibilities of reporters and radio production teams.

An Overview

Teachers, whether this is your first time teaching radio production or you are a long-time professional teacher in the world of radio journalism, we hope you find this series of day-by-day lesson plans a useful guide. We want them to stimulate more ideas, clarify specifics, give you more resources, and provide a creative way to get across overall concepts in the classroom.

If you are a curriculum specialist or an administrator thinking of starting a radio program, we think there will be something here for you, too. Much of this material can be easily modified for print journalism and television production classes.

We've been writing this set of day-by-day lesson plans for almost two years and are eager to get it to you and to get feedback from you. You'll find a link on each page for comments. Please send us your thoughts and additions. We really do want you to be our eyes and ears in the classroom. We want to hear from you. What works? What doesn't? What got kids fascinated? What did they retain? What made that microphone and the students behind it "get it" and apply it again and again? What made your teens' knowledge grow?

You do not need to have a licensed radio station to make this coursework come alive. Radio is booming on the Web and in many lessons students create work for it. They can do regular webcasts or podcasts. We recommend it.

And they'll be using the Web a lot to hear other people's fine work. This curriculum is not a textbook; it's a breathing entity whose details are gleaned from the now – the evening news, the recent work of peers and from the world around them that students themselves will bring to the airways or the Web. There are textbooks mentioned in the lesson plans for your reference. But you can teach this

coursework using other books or none at all. For the most up-to-date material join the RTNDFTEACHER listserv at www.highjournalism.org/broadcast.

The Authors

Most of the lesson in this four-course curriculum guide were written by Alyne Ellis and Carol Lange. Other individuals who are noted at the beginning of the particular lesson either wrote lessons or contributed to their development.

Alyne Ellis is a long time staff member at NPR where she has been an editor for NPR's Performance Today, Horizons documentaries, and the News Cultural Desk. She has taught radio skills to many new reporters, been a trainer with NPR's Next Generation Radio Project and worked with high school students as a guest teacher. She is a two-time program director – at WUSF in Tampa, Fla. and KDAQ in Shreveport, La. She has produced three audio guides on disability issues for the National Information Center for Children and Youth With Disabilities, a federally funding clearing house that provides info to schools, students and parents. She has also produced a cell phone audio guide to Washington, D.C. and several national radio documentaries for the Soundprint Media Center. Currently she works at NPR doing on-air promotions and freelancing as a fill-in producer host for AARP's Prime Time Radio. Her work as an editor and producer has won many awards including first place in the Kennedy Awards. Her most recent work also can be heard on NPR.

Carol Lange taught for 30 years in Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools. Courses she taught include English 9, English 11, English 12 and the AP English Language and Composition course using the intensive journalistic writing modes and models she developed under the auspices of the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund (DJNF). She advised 26 literary-art magazines and 13 yearbooks, publications that received the top awards of scholastic press associations and the National Council of Teachers of English. In 1991, DJNF named her the National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year. A participant in the first ThinkQuest for Tomorrow's Teachers, an educational Web site challenge, her team received the platinum award in the content category for its site, "Only a Matter of Opinion?" Since July 1999, Lange has developed online curriculum for The Washington Post and The Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, co-directed the Prime Movers program at GWU, and taught in Dubrovnik, Croatia, at the American College of Management and Technology. Lange has served as the secretary, newsletter editor, and state and regional director of the Journalism Education Association.

Contributors

Roger Badesch, broadcast educator, Chicago Vocational Career Academy, Chicago, Ill.

Kitty Eisele, NPR producer, Washington, D.C.

Michael Janssen, Current editor, Takoma Park, Md.

Brian Jarboe, NPR engineer, Washington, D.C.

Janet Kerby, broadcast educator, Roane County High School, Spencer, W.Va.

Kee Malesky, reference librarian, NPR, Washington, D.C.

Gregg Neilson, general manager KNHC, Nathan Hale H.S., Seattle, Wash.

Skip Walters, program director, KMON, Great Falls, Mont.

Background on the Project and the Funders

In the Spring of 2005, the District of Columbia Public Schools' Career Technical Education program, Prime Movers at George Washington University and the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation's High School Electronic Journalism Project partnered to develop a radio broadcast curriculum. The project came out of a combined vision to support new and existing high school radio-broadcast programs and to provide instructors access to quality, instructor-developed, industry-validated, high school-focused curriculum.

This curriculum is made available through generous grants from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, which supports RTNDF's High School Journalism Project as well as Prime Movers at George Washington University.

Some Specifics

The curriculum for the four years or courses of radio production study integrates many disciplines: journalism, technical skills and sound engineering, mathematics, speech, and English Language Arts and Composition. Lessons provide both historic perspective and current programming. Most lessons are hands-on, interactive, and include information on theory and practice. All aspects of radio are addressed here: journalism, ethics, radio arts, writing, reporting, engineering, audio science and business.

The lessons are designed to be sequential – the numbering system makes that clear. You will see skills build on each other and reinforce one another as the four years progress. This is a hands-on curriculum, necessitating that students jumpstart into honing their engineering and production skills. That's why microphones, mini-discs and the digital workstation are all in the first lessons. Students will be going in the field and bringing back audio, editing it, and making CDs right away.

The news lessons are sequential, too, building from news spots, to newscasts, to pieces, to shows, and documentaries. So are some of the listening sessions that delve into the details of what sound is. We come back again and again to ethics and law. There are increasingly sophisticated lessons in sound gathering and ambience.

Many of these lessons, while they make sense as part of a whole piece, can also stand alone. Like a quilt, each piece is necessary to the final product, but essential on its own. Obviously, you will make the lessons your own with your examples, handouts and projects. The lessons do not have to be taught in the order we chose, but recognize that some lessons will refer to earlier lessons or assume certain skills have been introduced in previous lessons. You can parse out the ethics sections or the engineering classes, the newscasts, the ambience lessons; please use whatever is relevant to the classes you already teach or follow along in the order we have chosen to bring this material to you.

You have a complete listing of the curriculum by individual lesson plans per term. This is your road-map and provides a summary and order for the curriculum. In the addenda, you will find the template for each lesson, the history of radio sequence, and the District of Columbia Public Schools' CTE program of studies descriptions for the four-course sequence.

Some Information that Applies to All Lessons

The Inclusion of Current Events

We highly recommend a weekly or bi-weekly current events quiz. Encourage students to get their news from several sources – print, radio, television and Web as well as around the dinner table and hallways of school. This is a good habit to carry into their post-graduation lives.

Suggested Time for Units and Lessons

We realize school systems are no longer uniformly following the nine-week, four-quarter organization. Class periods also vary in length; some classes meet daily while others meet every other day. Some schools have trimesters, others semesters and others diverse blocking plans. We offer a general idea of the amount of time a lesson will take. One day to two weeks is the general span for lessons. We have organized this curriculum into nine-week units for grading periods in order to have a point at which teachers may offer a project that requires application of skills that have been developed in previous lessons.

Newspaper and News Media Citations

References are generally geared to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area where many of the lessons were piloted. Teachers are encouraged to use their local media. With the convergence of media, many examples can be found online.

Textbook Citations

The textbooks cited have been adopted by D.C. Public Schools Career Technical Education for use in its Radio Production courses. Since DCPS was a partner in the development of this curriculum and piloted the first year's lessons, the books are included. This is not intended as an endorsement of these texts.

Web Site Citations

The authors of the lessons have attempted to provide educational, informative sites that are “ever-green” in content and likely to continue to be hosted on these sites.

Course Numbering

Rather than use page numbers, this curriculum uses a decimal number system that will allow additional lessons, handouts and feedback to be easily added as they are submitted by teachers across the country.

Thank you for making our effort a real experience in your classroom. We welcome your input and look forward to hearing your students' work.

— Alyne Ellis and Carol Lange