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## ENCORE JOURNEY: Investigative reporter to civic educator

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Alan Miller was an investigative reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, and won his profession's highest honor, the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for a series of articles on the shoddy performance of the Marine Corps' Harrier attack jet.



But the turmoil at some of the nation's biggest newspapers has caused even some of the industry's best and brightest to question their future in the business, and to fear for the quality of civic life if solid journalistic reporting and investigation withers.

Miller went to his daughter's middle school in Bethesda, Md., to talk to 175 sixth graders about why journalism matters. The thank you notes he received indicated he had connected, and suggested a new way to make a difference.

Miller left the newspaper earlier this year and founded the News Literacy Project, an effort to mobilize professional journalists "to help secondary school students sort fact from fiction in the digital age." The project's [Web site](#) went live this week and pilot projects in schools in New York City and Montgomery County, Md., are planned for early next year.

The project will match active and retired journalists and teachers of English, social studies and history, as well as after-school media clubs. The journalists and teachers will help young people understand why news matters to them and what the First Amendment and a free media mean in a democracy. Most importantly, they will teach students how to assess the credibility of what they read, see and hear.

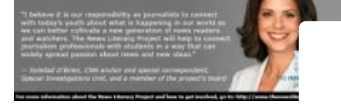
Social studies teachers, for example, might seek a political reporter, while a class exploring Latin America could request a foreign correspondent. Journalists will be able to address classes through videoconferencing as well as in person. More than 30 prominent journalists have already volunteered, and the project plans to recruit hundreds more.

Despite the explosion of information and the availability of "content," surveys show young people are increasingly uninterested in information that bears on civic life. The News Literacy Project aims to teach students how to distinguish verified information from raw messages, spin, gossip and opinion.

The project's board of directors includes Vivian Schiller, general manager of NYTimes.com, John Carroll, former editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, Soledad O'Brien, CNN anchor and special correspondent, Chuck Lewis, founder of the Center for Public Integrity, and Neil Budde, president of DailyMe.com. Also on the board is John Gomperts, president of Civic Ventures, publisher of Encore.org.

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*An advertisement for the News Literacy Project featuring CNN's Soledad O'Brien.*

