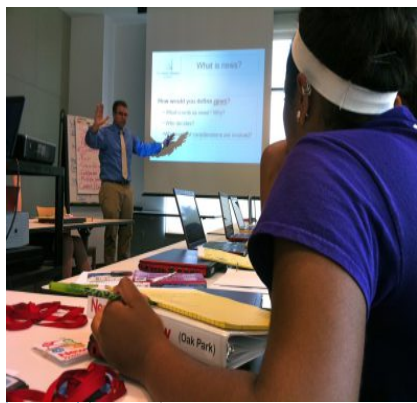


Feature | Good News

# Know Your News?

News literacy program launches in Oak Park, just one of four sites across the county to host the innovative series.

Posted by Casey Cora (Editor) , July 11, 2012 at 08:55 PM



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The exercise began with a hypothetical. You're a reporter and a tanker truck overturns, spilling an unidentified green goo onto Lake Street and into Oak Park's sewer system.

What's your first move? What happens when the chemical and hauling companies say the material is perfectly safe? What's the value of eyewitness accounts? What about Tweets and YouTube videos? Who can you trust?

"There's a reason journalism is called the first draft of history," instructor Peter Adams tells a group of nine local high school students, then guides them through the process of reporting breaking news and subsequent follow-ups.

The rapid-fire Q & A served as an introduction to one the first lessons of [News Know-How](#), a collaboration by the [American Library Association](#) and the [News Literacy Project](#).

Funded by an [Open Society Foundation](#) grant, the project is underway at four American libraries, including the . The overall goal is "to increase appreciation for our freedom of speech and for students to understand democracy is fragile," said Barbara Jones, executive director of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom.

More than just engaging lectures, News Know-How will bring in distinguished industry voices, in person or via Skype, for "watchdog" training, and students will embark on a series of projects examining news coverage and editorial policies. Those projects will culminate in multimedia presentations of their findings. A PDF document offering a look at the entire curriculum, projects, teachers and sponsors, is attached.

Over the summer, the teen participants will be asked to dedicate five hours per week (and two per week when the school year starts) to the project.

All the while, students on the lookout for inaccuracies and bias in news coverage leading up the November 2012 election. (They'll also be blogging their progress on the [Oak Park Public Library's Teen page](#).) Plans are also in the works for a community wide discussion about the roles of news, media and society.

But first, the students will begin exploring the current media climate of which they're a part — partisan cable news, dismantled or diminished newspapers, independent blogs, fact-checking websites, radio broadcasts, social media and more.

It's all information, sure. But is it any good?

That's part of what brought student Nia Smith, 15, to the program. Her goal is to "be more analytical when it comes to consuming news...I want to know how it gets regurgitated and why it gets reported."

Erich Luepke, 16, plans to write for The Trapeze, the OPRF student paper, at the start of next school year. Asked what he's hoping to take away from the program, he offered up a simple but elegant answer:

"I want to know how to pick the good news from the bad news, so to speak," he said.

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