

# IndyKids Teaching Guide

A free resource for teachers and educators • March/April 2015

*The IndyKids Teaching Guide serves as a springboard for using IndyKids in your class. These lessons are intended to be general outlines rather than precise scripts. We hope you can adapt, embellish and enliven the lessons to the learning and teaching styles that make your classroom unique. We encourage you to send feedback and questions to [education@indykids.org](mailto:education@indykids.org). For more articles and lesson ideas, visit [IndyKids.org](http://IndyKids.org).*

Cover Page

## Featured Lesson: Non-Standardized Testing

“More Than A Score” by Sadie Price-Elliott

*This project is appropriate for any subject, though the ones that are tested annually, like math and reading, might work best.*

**Overview** • By now, state tests have become one of the central preoccupations of public education. Every year, students and teachers alike are forced to repeat the arduous routines of standardized testing. In this lesson, students take a break from testing to create their own ways of demonstrating and celebrating learning.

**Goal** • Students review what they’ve learned and experienced over the course of the year in a creative project that highlights the social and creative forms of learning that standardized tests pass over.

**Warm Up** • Have students draw a large circle on a sheet of paper. Explain that this circle represents everything they’ve learned, created or experienced in class so far this year. On a board or projector, draw a circle as an example. In the center of the circle, write examples of memorable and enjoyable activities the class shared: interesting units, field trips, creative projects, etc.

Now tell students to think about the upcoming standardized tests. How much of this learning will the test reflect? They’ll certainly cover core concepts (grammar, for instance), but will they reflect creative writing? Have students draw a pie-chart slice of the circle that represents how much of their TOTAL experience will be covered on the test. Is it a small slice? A large slice? Why? Is that fair?

**Activity** • In this activity, students will split into groups and consider alternatives to the standardized tests that the state makes schools administer. First, the class reads the *IndyKids* March/April 2015 cover story “More Than A Score.” As a class or in groups, students list the pros and cons of standardized tests on a T-chart. What makes them important? What are their downsides? Ask students to expand beyond the article and consider their experiences.

Emphasize especially the aspects of people that tests don’t cover. Do the tests account for students’ creativity, empathy, diligence, originality or unique talents?

Explain that the goal in this project will be to create an alternative to the standardized test, a “non-standardized” test. It will review what the class has learned so far (like the test is supposed to do), but in a way that is creative, personalized, relevant, unique and—most importantly—fun: the opposite of filling in the bubble.

Break students into groups. On day one, groups are responsible for two things. First, creating a list of “big ideas” and “topics” that they’ve studied this year. For instance, “identity” might be a big idea,

“characterization” a topic. Or “algebra” a big idea and “solving equations” a topic. A syllabus might assist students in this exercise. The list doesn’t have to be exhaustive but should be representative of what they’ve studied.

Second, groups come up with a nonstandard way of presenting what they learned, one that emphasizes all the creative elements of learning that standardized tests can’t reach. Examples: a play, a skit, a musical performance, a comic book, a website, a newspaper, a guided tour. By the end of the second day, students should draft and submit a proposal that explains what big ideas and topics they will cover, and in what form they’ll present them.

Depending on class time, students spend the next several days in their groups reviewing previous material, reimagining it for their present project, and creating, rehearsing or practicing for their presentations. On the last day, students present their projects for one another. This can mean putting on performances, or having a gallery walk to view static creations like posters or books.

Finally, students write a one-page reflection on how this project differed from the standardized tests. What made it more or less enjoyable? Was it “easy” or “hard” in comparison? How did it challenge them in different ways? How did it make them feel about their own learning?

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Pages 4 & 5

## Featured Lesson: Press Freedom in the United States

“Press Freedom Then and Now” by Eleanor Hedges Duroy, Alejandra Paulino and Sophia Rothman • *Social Studies, History, Writing*

**Overview** • In a healthy democracy the press is free to investigate governmental, corporate and other stories in the hope of shedding light on issues and situations that may endanger the public. Some may argue that for a democracy to work well and remain healthy, a free press is imperative. Serious investigative journalism is vital and necessary to enable the public to make informed decisions on a myriad of topics like health care, elections, government policies, which cars are safest, climate change and more.

What is the role of journalists? What purpose drives their work? In this lesson, students will explore these questions and discuss what it means to be an investigative journalist.

**Goal** • Students will learn about the work of several investigative journalists and why their work has been important.

**Materials** • *IndyKids* March/April 2015 center spread “Press Freedom Then and Now”

**Sources** • For further reading and information gathering, read or watch the following interviews on Democracy Now:

- [Rubén Salazar](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [Laura Poitras](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [Mumia Abu-Jamal](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [James Risen](#)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.democracynow.org/2010/8/31/slain\\_latino\\_journalist\\_ruben\\_salazar\\_killed](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/8/31/slain_latino_journalist_ruben_salazar_killed)

<sup>2</sup> [www.democracynow.org/appearances/laura\\_poitras](http://www.democracynow.org/appearances/laura_poitras)

<sup>3</sup> [www.democracynow.org/appearances/mumia\\_abu\\_jamal](http://www.democracynow.org/appearances/mumia_abu_jamal)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.democracynow.org/2015/1/7/will\\_james\\_risen\\_be\\_jailed\\_in](http://www.democracynow.org/2015/1/7/will_james_risen_be_jailed_in)

**Warm Up** • How do we find out about the weather? How do we know what is happening in our city, our country? How do we find out whether our government is going to war or not, and why? Who provides us with important news? Students will come up with ideas such as TV, newspapers, social media, journalism, etc. Write any key words on the board. The warm up leads the class to a brief writing brainstorm, then to reading the *IndyKids* article.

**Activity** • Give students the “What is Journalism” worksheet at the end of this guide. After students have finished the brief writing activity, have them share what they wrote about journalists and the purpose of journalism. Together, make a list of why journalism is important. Have students add this list onto their worksheet, along with any other ideas they might have.

Next read the *IndyKids* center spread “Press Freedom Then and Now” with your class. Have different students read different sections in small groups. At the end, bring the students back together to allow each group to share what they learned with the rest of the class. The homework assignment at the end of the worksheet can also be done as an in-class activity if students have access to computers in the classroom.

### What is Journalism?

Name:

Date:

Quick writing brainstorm: Answer the following 3 questions:

1. What is a journalist? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the purpose of journalism? Why do journalists write for the public?  
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\_\_\_\_\_

3. How does the work of investigative journalism impact you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Class notes on importance of Journalism:

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Notes on Journalism:

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*After reading article answer these questions:*

What was the purpose of **Ida B. Wells's** work as a journalist? What did she expose? What was/is the impact of her work when she lived?

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Why was **Rubén Salazar's** journalism work so important? Why did he put himself in danger to do investigative journalism? What was he trying to achieve? What is the impact of his work?

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Why is **Mumia Abu-Jamal's** journalistic work from inside prison important? Why do you think Pennsylvania where Abu-Jamal is incarcerated, passed a prisoner gag law in 2014?

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Why do you think **James Risen** chose not to reveal his sources to the U.S. government? What happens if journalists cannot keep their story sources safe and secret? If no sources were secure, what impact would it have on journalism, on our society?

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How does the information **Laura Poitras** exposed about Ed Snowden impact us? What if journalists like Poitras do not report on what happens behind closed doors? What happens if there is no record to show what happened?

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What do you think it takes to be a journalist?

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Are whistleblowers important? Do we need them? Why/why not?

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**Homework:** Chose one of the journalists you read about and find out more about them. Write a short essay or create a presentation that reveals five new pieces of information about the journalist you choose. You may also pick a journalist from the following list: Joseph Pulitzer, Nellie Bly, Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, Frederick Douglass, Juan Gonzalez and Amy Goodman.

Note the following questions: Why is the journalist you chose noteworthy? What was the impact of their investigative journalism work on the larger society? Why did they choose to become a journalist?