

eEditions in Education

by **Scott Lubeck**

More than ever, newspapers fill an important role by providing reliable, sourced information in the face of proliferating online content, which is not self-regulated with the checks and balances of quality reporting. Thus, journalists and educators agree that Newspaper In Education (NIE) programs provide students access to valuable information from credible sources on the complex issues in the news. For newspapers, these programs offer invaluable reach to a new generation of readers and fulfill key community and literacy objectives. They also extend the awareness of the newspaper's brand while introducing students to fundamentals essential to the democratic enterprise—open dialogue. There's no doubt NIE programs are valuable to their industry and the new generation of leaders.

Yet, NIE programs walk a tight rope because of rising expenses and changes in reader behaviors. Increasingly, newspapers are challenged to manage profitability and streamline operations as newspaper readership continues to decline and advertisers look to other media for audiences. To avoid the reduction, or even the extinction of NIE programs, some leading publishers are going electronic in the classroom.

In today's newspaper publishing environment, there is still surprising skepticism about substituting electronic editions (eEditions) for paper in the classroom. But, from an economic perspective, eliminating hard copies and their delivery to schools can easily result in substantial cost-savings. In the "last mile" newspapers are challenged to deliver their product to schools efficiently and ensure they are used effectively in teaching.

Newsprint has several inconvenient truths; it's costly to manufacture and deliver, and it also has to be recycled. Moreover, today's students do not communicate with the world like their parents and grandparents—they are continuously connected to the Internet; they don't "go online," they live there. Thus, to reach them, some prominent newspapers are finding that taking the paper out of the equation has more benefits than just cost savings: the online edition is simply a more relevant way to reach students. The Houston Chronicle is a good example of this.

Publishers and the communities they serve are increasingly concerned about the environment and about sustainability. When the Houston Chronicle recently converted its Chronicle in Education (CIE) program to an eEdition-only format, it eliminated nearly one million hard copies. But the Houston Chronicle found many more benefits than just cost savings and sustainability.

The Houston Chronicle's NIE platform is more than just a replica of the print edition of the newspaper. It is an online educational experience that is specially designed for the classroom. The Chronicle has created a secure, CIE branded Web portal where teachers and students can gain access to reliable content and useful tools. Today's eEditions can offer customized delivery, access to back issues of the newspaper, specialized search tools, access to new curriculum materials, and tools for classroom teaching. Moreover, they can drive direct collaboration between Newspaper in Education programs and real-world classrooms.

For example, the Houston Chronicle's customized education portal can be set up to filter daily news content and deliver it for student use. It is searchable by students

and links to existing CIE classroom tools. Curriculum for teachers and access to numerous education-specific programs provided by the Chronicle's CIE program are key to its functionality and value.

"The new format allows schools to receive the benefits of daily newspaper content and integrate it into classroom technology—a key objective for Texas educators," said Ed Vaughn, Chronicle in Education manager, Houston Chronicle.

What's more, many states now require technology to be integrated into classroom curriculum. For example, the Texas Board of Education has outlined a variety of requirements for ensuring students are leveraging and exposed to technology in the classroom. For states and school districts with this priority, eEditions have the ability to meet requirements, while providing invaluable content.

Creating compelling online and digital experiences with newspaper content will be an ongoing challenge for leading publishers. And, Newspapers in Education programs online is a significant step in meeting some of the most difficult of those challenges: finding young readers where they are and on their own terms while teaching them the value and excitement of great journalism. For almost 80 years NIE programs have reduced illiteracy and enriched and strengthened our democratic society, and it is a harbinger of a bright future that they will continue to contribute effectively to this great work. **M**



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