

History of NIE

You are joining an educational program with a long and proud tradition. Here are a few milestones that date back farther than you may suspect:

June 8, 1795*

The Portland (Maine) Eastern Herald published an editorial that read as follows:

“Much has been said and written on the utility of newspapers; but one principal advantage which might be derived from these publications has been neglected; we mean that of reading them in schools, and by the children in families. Try it for one session – Do you wish your child to improve in reading solely, give him a newspaper – it furnishes a variety, some parts of which must infallibly touch his fancy. Do you wish to instruct him in geography, nothing will so indelibly fix the relative situation of different places, as the stories and events published in the papers. In time, do you wish to have him acquainted with the manners of the country or city, to the mode of doing business, public or private; do you wish him to have a smattering of every kind of science useful and amusing, give him a newspaper – newspapers are plenty and cheap – the cheapest book that can be bought, and the more you buy the better for your children, because every part furnishes some new and valuable information.”

*Consider using the 1795 quotation, or this entire history, in your teacher workshop presentations.

1930s and 1940s

A handful of newspapers, including The New York Times and The Milwaukee Journal, sponsored programs on their own, including delivery of newspapers (sometimes yesterday's, free of charge) plus curriculum aids and teacher training. Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, wife of the publisher of The New York Times, was unaware that she was becoming the “mother of NIE” when she lent her support to the requests of New York City teachers for delivery of the Times to school classrooms. As the Times program developed, it concentrated as much on delivery to individual college students as it did to public school classrooms. Later the Times program was offered nationwide, not just in New York. As other newspapers became interested in NIE, The New York Times staff often generously mentored their employees in starting programs. While no official name was yet affixed to the school use of newspapers, the “Living Textbook Program” was sometimes used to describe the newspaper's fresh curriculum material available on a daily basis.

1950s

This was the decade when the school use of newspapers became a nationally supported program. Keeping pace with educational trends that were shifting from studying the past to studying the present, the newspaper was used to teach current events. In 1954, C. K. Jefferson, a circulation executive of The Des Moines Register and officer of the International Circulation Managers Association (ICMA), persuaded the Des Moines school system to survey 5,500 secondary school students to find out how they spent their leisure time. He was upset to learn that 30 to 40 percent of them did no reading outside the classroom, and those

who did spend only one-third as much time reading as they spent watching television. Jefferson approached the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), which had already published a pamphlet series on "How to Use Daily Newspapers," and the National Council of Teachers of English. Both organizations passed resolutions supporting research on the use of newspapers in schools. In 1956, representatives of 10 major professional organizations in education and the newspaper business met at the Drake Hotel in Chicago to plan the research. It was this research in 1957 that led to the establishment of a national "Newspaper in the Classroom" program, first sponsored by ICMA and later taken over by the American Newspaper Publishers Association, which became the Newspaper Association of America in 1992. Two of the people who directed the research – Merrill Hartshorn, executive director of NCSS and John Haefner, professor of social studies education at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, and former president of NCSS – subsequently devoted more than three decades to guiding the national program. The first manifestation of the national program was the development of three annual graduate credit summer workshops that trained up to 100 teachers each year in the classroom use of newspapers.

1960s

The number of newspapers sponsoring NIC programs passed the 100 mark during this decade. The programs encouraged teachers of students aged 9 to 14 to devote two weeks to the study of the newspaper; what it is, how it is produced and how to read it. There was little emphasis yet on the continuous use of the newspaper as a supplementary text in various curricular areas. Local newspapers began to conduct their own promotional and in-service workshops. Some started graduate-credit college workshops similar to those offered on the national level. Most local programs still gave away newspapers, although some began to charge half-price, especially those serving large metropolitan school districts. In 1965, the ANPA Foundation was established as the tax-exempt, charitable clearinghouse for the Newspaper in the Classroom program.

1970s

The ANPA Foundation became well known as the major U. S. sponsor of NIC during the 1970s. The Foundation shifted from serving local educators to acting as a catalyst to help local newspapers serve those educators. By the mid-1970s, more than 350 newspapers sponsored local programs. Canada's programs became a vital part of the picture. In fact, it was the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association that originated a new title for the program, "Newspaper In Education," recognizing the expansion of the educational use of newspapers to institutions and organizations beyond the traditional classroom setting. The ANPA Foundation followed suite in 1976, and the "NIE" title stuck. Many newspapers employed educators to promote and administer the program. Educational services departments with several staff members were established at some of the larger newspapers. Because of newsprint costs and the potential for increased circulation counts, almost all programs began to charge half-price for school deliveries. The yearly NIE Conference became a "must-attend" session at which NIE professionals traded ideas about improving their programs.

1980s

This was the decade of increased development of partnerships with national education associations. The NAA Foundation and the International Reading Association joined to sponsor NIE Week each March. In 1987, more than a dozen national groups, led by the ANPA Foundation, cosponsored the bicentennial observance of the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. Newspapers were used in the classroom from kindergarten through college in almost all subjects. Newspapers could also be found outside the classroom for tutoring and adult education, in prisons, mental institutions and nursing homes. Adult literacy became an important component of many programs. The Foundation, picking up on an idea started by local newspapers, began to offer newspapers camera-ready NIE study supplements on such topics as national elections, families reading together and the Olympic Games. Many NIE programs established their own partnerships at the local level - this time with businesses willing to sponsor and pay for the delivery of half-priced copies of the newspaper to schools. By 1989, more than 700 NIE programs were in place nationwide, many of them assisted by a growing number of regional and state NIE coalitions.

1990s

In the early years of this decade the educational and marketing approaches of NIE were helping the programs grow exponentially. As publishers and editors recognized the need to invest in the future readers, the NIE program became more vital to the newspaper. There was a significant increase in youth content during this decade with both locally created content, often written by teens, and through commercially available pages and sections. More and more independent businesses saw NIE as a potential market and began producing significant numbers of curricula and in-paper content for newspapers. The number of NIE programs grew consistently with a noticeable shift in their location from the promotions/community services department of newspapers to circulation. The end of the decade saw more than 850 NIE programs active at newspapers across the country.

2000s

The new millennium brought a new vitality and focus to NIE. More than 950 NIE programs delivered newspapers and educational programs to nearly 40% of all public school students within the United States. The focus on state standards and state mandated tests brought a clear focus on education to the programs. More than 94% of all newspapers in the United States with a circulation of more than 15,000 daily have active NIE programs. The NAA Foundation moved into the electronic generation with the creation of the NIE E-Forum. This mass e-mail system gives NIE professionals throughout the world nearly instant access to each other through a computer network. Nearly 1000 NIE professionals now trade information and ideas through this network.

More than 70 years of NIE experience have indicated there is no limit to a good newspaper's capacity to interest students in learning. The growth in numbers and creativity within the NIE community appears to guarantee that this capacity will be fulfilled.