

# Reporting-Based Commentary:

Each week, we will invite students to write a small piece of reporting-based commentary on a topic related to our lead story.

The idea here is not to just tell a story about something that happened to you, or that you witnessed, but to listen to someone describe their own experiences, before you share your own views.

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## Sunday Update 2/19:

**If you have a student newspaper,** you should interview your student editor-in-chief and teacher advisor. Ask them the questions below, and feel free to add more if you want to.

- Name some of your paper's successes and challenges. How did you achieve/overcome them?
- What have you learned about the public, journalism, and yourselves through the process of creating a newspaper?
- What story are you most proud of? Why?
  - If your paper is digital: Send us the link to your story and a photo from it
  - If your paper is not digital: Share a pdf of your final story and a photo from it
- Do you have a group photo of your newspaper class or club? Send us the image file.

Begin your commentary with the responses to the interview questions, then introduce the article you want to share.

**Word count:** 100-250 words

**Deadline:** March 15th

**It's not too late to submit a response to our first two Sunday Updates!**

## Sunday Update 2/17:

Read this Sunday Update [here](#).

This week, we want to hear from students about the upcoming school budget votes in their communities. What does the proposed budget look like? Does it cover what teachers and students think it should? What do voters think?

## **Your assignment:**

### **Option 1:**

Visit your local polling place and interview a voter on Town Meeting Day, March 7th. Make sure to get their consent to publish their comments in VTDigger.

Please be sure to include the following questions in your interview(s):

- What connections do you have to the local school district?
- What are your thoughts on the proposed school budget?
- What successes or challenges have you seen or heard about in the school district?
  - How could the budget be used to continue these successes or address these challenges?

Note: If someone gives you a short answer, ask a follow up question. (Ex: you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about that?)

### **Option 2:**

Interview a student or teacher at your school. Make sure to get their consent to publish their comments in VTDigger.

Please be sure to include the following questions in your interview(s):

- In the story, the South Burlington Superintendent talked about how there is always something that has to be cut in schools.
  - What is that issue at your school? How does lack of funding and support affect the people in your school community?
  - Has your school ever overcome funding challenges without the help of a larger budget? What did this look like?
- What do you know about the proposed budget for next school year? Do you think it adequately addresses the schools needs? Why or why not?

**Word count:** 200-500 words

**Deadline:** March 15th

## **Sunday Update 2/12:**

**Read this Sunday Update [here](#).**

This week, we want to hear from students about the impacts of social media on their school and larger community. Are there stories from your community about the ways social media has empowered students? When has social media led to real changes on the ground? Or examples of moments when social media went awry, or was widely viewed as performative?

Interview a peer, but not someone you already know well. Make sure to get their consent to publish their comments in VTDigger. Ask them these questions:

- How has social media impacted your opinions on different social and political issues? Can you give a specific example?
- To what extent does student activism on social media impact the real world? Can you describe a moment when this has been successful or when it has fallen short?
- When you learn about a local event on social media, how often do you look for a news article on that event? Again, can you give an example?

**Word count:** 200-500 words

**Deadline:** March 15th

### **Writing your reporting-based commentary:**

1. Convert the best examples & quotes from your interview into a paragraph or two-- this will be the evidence for your commentary. Begin by identifying the person you interviewed, with their age, name, and job, or grade and school if they are a student.
2. Once you share your story, we're also curious to hear your opinion. Keep it pretty short, and connect it to your reporting. Feel free to back up your thoughts with links to other news stories, facts from research, etc, but keep a light touch.
3. Take photos, or find an image or two to accompany your commentary (again, be careful to get consent).

### **Reporting Guidelines:**

- Record all interviews with Otter.ai, a free app, to ensure that you quote people correctly. Get their permission to

record before you start.

- Share with all interviewees that your work may be published in VTDigger.
- Photos are optional but encouraged.
  - Get permission from anyone featured in a photo.
  - Let us know who took the photo(s) so we can give them credit.
- If you have any questions about the reporting process, please feel free to reach out to [undergroundworkshop@vtdigger.org](mailto:undergroundworkshop@vtdigger.org) to get help from a student editor.

### **To submit:**

- Email [undergroundworkshop@vtdigger.org](mailto:undergroundworkshop@vtdigger.org) with this subject line: “Sunday Update [prompt date] Response”
- When sharing a Google Doc, please change access to “all with the link can edit” so we can offer editing suggestions promptly.
- We will not publish a story before you have responded to our suggestions in some way, but we will not make edits directly and publish without your knowledge either.