

HEADLINES ROUTINE

A routine for capturing essence

This routine draws on the idea of newspaper-type headlines as a vehicle for summing up and capturing the essence of an event, idea, concept, topic, etc. The routine asks a core question:

1. If you were to write a headline for this topic or issue right now that captured the most important aspect that should be remembered, what would that headline be?

A second question involves probing how students' ideas of what is most important and central to the topic being explored have changed over time:

2. How has your headline changed based on today's discussion? How does it differ from what you would have said yesterday?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine helps students capture the core or heart of the matter being studied or discussed. It also can involve them in summing things up and coming to some tentative conclusions.

Application: When and where can it be used?

This routine works especially well at the end of a class discussion or session in which students have explored a topic and gathered a fair amount of new information or opinions about it.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

The routine can be used quite effectively with think-pair-share. For example, at the end of a class the teachers can ask the class, "Think about all that we have been talking about today in class. If you were to write a headline for this topic or issue right now that captured the most important aspect that should be remembered, what would that headline be?" Next, the teacher tells students, "Share your headline with your neighbor." The teacher might close the class by asking, "Who heard a headline from someone else that they thought was particularly good at getting to the core of things?"

Student responses to the routine can be written down and recorded so that a class list of headlines is created. These could be reviewed and updated from time to time as the class learns more about the topic. The follow-up question, "how has your headline changed or how does it differ from what you would have said?" can be used to help students reflect on changes in their thinking.