

MARCH 28, 2022
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OPINION • 09

STAYING CURRENT

East teachers should include current events in class lessons to prepare students for real world conversations

by peyton moore

"BREAKING! RUSSIA INVADES Ukraine." "Can Ukraine Recover?" "NATO will not be joining the war."

In the span of one morning, the tragedy 5428 miles away of Russia invading Ukraine filled every platform on my phone. I felt ignorant as the years of historical tension came to the surface, crowding my mind with questions. How is the US going to help? How are surrounding countries going to deal with a surplus of refugees? How can I help?

I ran into my APUSH classroom thinking surely someone had to know the answers. But when I asked my classmates, all I received in return was blank stares. No one even seemed concerned. The only thought that seemed to occupy my classmates' minds was why their ForYou page was infiltrated with 'newstok' and if they would be drafted to fight in the next week.

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Looking for anyone that might have an inkling of information, I asked my teacher. The answer was short and sweet because there was no time to talk about the complexities of Ukraine and the Soviet Union's history. We had to cover the remnants of the Progressive Era by the end of this week.

That's the problem. Our school system relies heavily on a fixed curriculum that gives teachers little time to talk about current events that are affecting us and our futures. We end up learning about hundred-year-old events like Reconstruction instead of the thousands cramming into shopping malls as mortar shells demolish their homes.

Interested students should research the war

on their own, but all students could benefit from discussing relevant worldly events — and not through a screen.

Learning online can spread misleading information from teen to teen, and Our generation finds its news fix through their everyday Tiktok. And sadly enough, some might not realize that just about anyone can create and post spoofed news on the app — rendering our main news source unreliable. If schools mixed real-world issues into the daily classroom talk, then students would learn real facts in a safe setting instead of on social media.

There isn't one person to blame for this knowledge gap. Yes, teenagers, teachers and all parents are responsible for learning about the world outside of the KC suburban bubble, but there should be time to learn about current events at least once a month. Why are we still spending weeks on outdated books and material? It's constricting, and a waste of time.

At East, teachers aren't stuck to a certain curriculum, but do have certain material they must cover. If the national school system had a less structured curriculum, then we could have compelling conversations about significant events like the first black woman Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

It's as simple as Winston Churchill's famous phrase, "those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." Yes, we need to learn about 19th century history, but our current decade will soon be history — one that some might've never learned. Learning about breaking news in school can allow students to learn about history authentically and from the right sources.

And saying there is nothing to discuss or that an event is too far away to affect us is simpleminded. I'm not saying the school system needs to ditch the curriculum entirely, but integrating current events

into class every day could be simple.

In Environmental Education, we could learn about the Saharan Dust Cloud depositing through Europe due to climate change over the years. In English, we could debate the 'Don't Say Gay' bill proposed in Florida that would restrain conversation on gender and sexuality. Economic lessons could cover the new-aged dollar — crypto currency. Why are we stuck learning about systems that are outdated or topics that are over taught?

And this comes into question almost daily here at East. Students maintain that we'll never use calculus integrations, the biology of a soybean or the symbolism of a 400-page book in the real world, but if the system changes and integrates current events, we will be learning, growing and potentially advocating for change in the real world. Learning how to explore and develop opinions on relevant headlines is a real-life skill that can be used outside East.

Core classes don't have to be the only outlet where students can learn about what's going on today. YouScience to a conversation about the intricacies of the 'Don't Say Gay' bill or watching a five-minute news update instead of a Crash Course video on the printing press are a few out of a thousand ways for schools to be socially responsible.

Individuals share the responsibility. Insert yourself into the conversation. Follow the New York Times on Instagram to get updates throughout your feed on the war in Ukraine, tune in to NPR on your drive home from school or even download the Apple News widget on your phone.

Whatever gaps you might miss when following along, school should do a better job of filling you in with thought-provoking discussions and seeing all points of view, not just the one on your feed.

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Links to credible sources with
information about current events



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