

What's engaging students the most in the '20-'21 school year

This past year changed the meaning of student engagement. What was once a nice-to-have to make classrooms more lively is now a must-have to get students in the (virtual or in-person) door to learn. With so many distractions and barriers to participation, how can educators motivate students to show up and learn?

A key element of student engagement is the content teachers are using for instruction across subjects. To understand the connection between student engagement and content, we analyzed the behavior of Michigan students on Newsela during the '20-'21 school year so far.

58% of educators nationwide said student engagement is one of their top three concerns this year

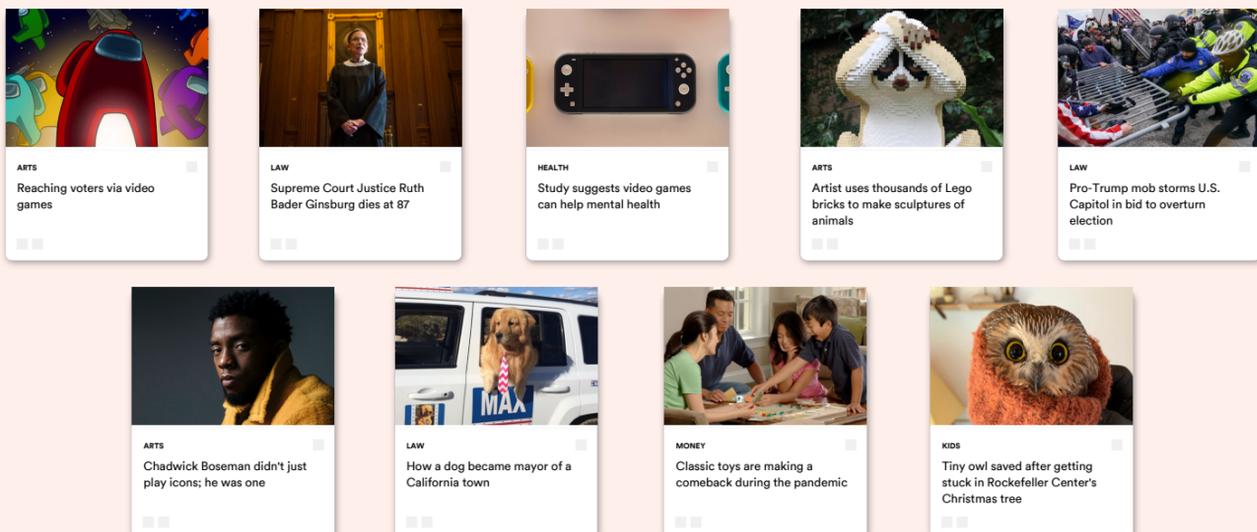
From nationwide survey conducted in August 2020

See below for insights on what content and topics are holding Michigan students' attention this school year



What Michigan students have been reading this school year

Rather than letting current events distract from learning, we're seeing teachers incorporate leveled news content into instruction to engage students while pushing content area knowledge forward.



Most read articles on Newsela by Michigan students since 9/1/20

What Michigan students have been searching for

Autonomy in learning is associated with improved academic outcomes and greater educational satisfaction. One way students on Newsela demonstrate autonomy is by searching for content that interests them. It's no surprise that current events, sports, animals, and video games are at the top of list.

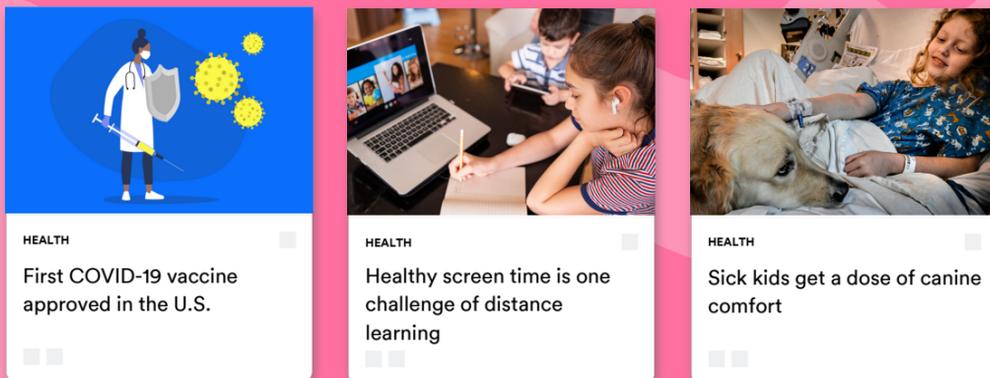


Most common search terms on Newsela by Michigan students since 9/1/20

Through it all – they're developing key reading skills, too

Every article on Newsela includes a reading comprehension quiz that's aligned to standards-based reading skills. When students complete a quiz, they're practicing important reading skills.

<p>SKILL: ANALYZING TEXT STRUCTURE Quizzes Completed 1,288</p>	<p>SKILL: WORD MEANING & CHOICE Quizzes Completed 1,270</p>	<p>SKILL: PEOPLE, EVENTS, & IDEAS Quizzes Completed 1,307</p>
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Quiz completions by Michigan students since September 2020

The best lessons start with the best content

However your students are learning right now, it's clear that one-size-fits-all content manufactured for the classroom won't be enough this year — or ever again.

It's time that we as educators renew our commitment to student engagement as a foundation for learning going forward.