It’s never too soon to get your child interested in current events — and doing so can have many positive benefits, from building vocabulary and improving writing, to encouraging active and engaged citizenship.

While the news might seem “boring” at first to kids, there are steps you can take to show them just how interesting and exciting current events can be:

Read Together

Ensure that your home subscribes to a daily paper. Let your children pick which articles they want to read and help them with words and concepts they don't understand. Read at least a few front-page news articles together and then allow them to skip to whichever sections of the paper they find the most interesting.

Many magazines run kids' editions in print or online, such as Time, Sports Illustrated and National Geographic. Subscribe your child to an age-appropriate magazine or newspaper.

Most children are already well-versed in using the internet for acquiring information. Guide your children to trusted online news sources that they can access on their own.

Encourage Hands-On Learning

Often, the most effective way to spark your child's interest is to offer him or her hands-on learning opportunities. Encourage your child to join the school newspaper or the school's television news program.

Even as budget cuts loom in schools, private companies are helping schools offer their students unique educational opportunities.

The Panasonic Kid Witness News program for example, a hands-on program designed to help children develop creative, cognitive and communication skills, has provided more than 150,000 children around the world access to top-notch video production equipment and an opportunity to learn a new skill they can use to make fun newscasts that are relevant to their daily lives.

Each year, schools are encouraged to submit student videos on set themes and topics in formats such as newscasts, documentaries, dramas and commercials to a national and potentially global contest. Winning schools receive a package of Panasonic products that will enhance classroom learning. The videos show “the world through their eyes.” For more information, visit www.panasonic.net/kwn.

Watch Together

Make watching the news together a part of your evening routine. Remember, kids have limited attention spans — so avoid the never-ending 24-hour news programming and opt for a half-hour program that highlights all the day’s top stories succinctly. Use commercial breaks and dinnertime to discuss what you watched.

If you're worried that the imagery will be too graphic or mature, consider recording it first and sharing with your child only the parts you feel comfortable with.

By encouraging your kids to keep up with current events, you can help them gain valuable perspective and understand the world around them.

—*StatePoint*