



## News-O-Matic's Coronavirus Coverage: News-O-Matic Helps!

As the Daily News Just for Kids, News-O-Matic has a greater responsibility than simply delivering current events for children. It uses effective digital engagement strategies to become a critical resource for students. This has been especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kids have turned to our coronavirus coverage to help them understand what is happening, connect with medical experts, and share their experiences. In addition, our stories have supported students' physical and emotional well-being. With nearly 500 articles related to the pandemic, News-O-Matic has provided children with a safe and age-appropriate global news platform — and a conduit for critical coronavirus information.

# News-O-Matic: The Daily News for Kids (Intro)



- 260+ editions/year
- 5 original articles daily
- Text levels in grades K-8
- Accessible on all platforms
- In English/Spanish/French/Arabic



What We Did: See 1-minute video for overall project



See <https://youtu.be/a8RbtdAfRQA> for video.



## What We Did: We helped kids stay safe & healthy.



- A daily series (“**News-O-Matic Helps!**”) included articles for physical and mental well-being.
- We reinforced proper hygiene, including frequent hand-washing infographics and even step-by-step craft directions for a make-your-own mask.
- We interviewed child psychologists and art therapists to support social-emotional wellness.
- We spoke with yoga instructors, gym teachers, dietary experts, and child occupational therapists to emphasize physical health.
- We even interviewed astronauts who shared advice for dealing with extended periods of isolation. (“Stay busy!” suggested Clayton Anderson, who spent 187 days on the ISS.)

## What We Did: We focused on the positive.



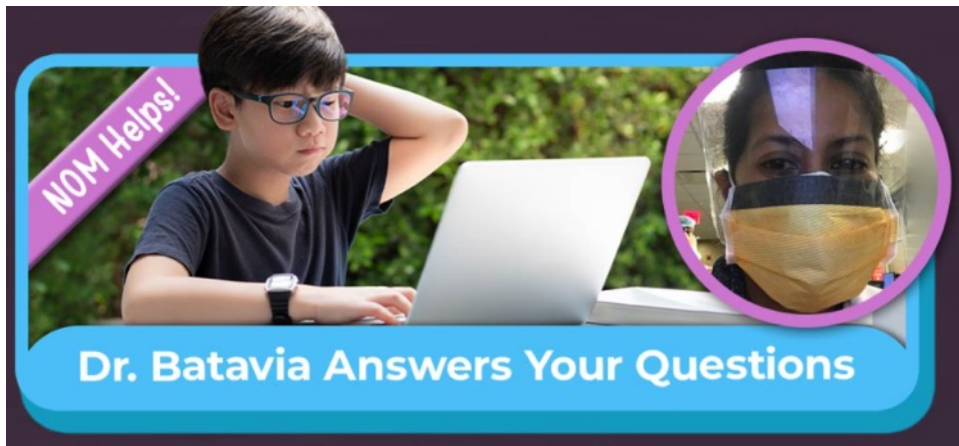
- 87 percent of COVID coverage in national U.S. media last year was negative; we flipped that narrative, transforming the news experience as positive for young readers during the pandemic. (See [March 2021 study](#) from Dartmouth Professor Bruce Sacerdote.)
- We celebrated our heroes, regularly featuring nurses and other hospital workers.
- Each member of our staff videoed themselves attempting (and failing) to set a Guinness world record from home, interjecting some levity for readers in the difficult quarantine period.
- We interviewed one of the earliest U.S. COVID-19 patients, *Diamond Princess* passenger Carl Goldman, to reinforce that a full and complete recovery is the norm.



## What We Did: We helped children get the answers.



- Students had many, many medical questions during the pandemic.
- We interviewed several experts in contagious diseases, including Dr. Jessica Yager and Dr. Ashita Batavia at New York-Presbyterian Hospital.
- We encouraged children to submit their questions for the doctors through our platform, then sent the readers' questions to the experts.
- We even facilitated real-time live Zoom calls between “junior reporters” and the medical experts, allowing young people to make powerful connections.



## What We Did: We shared stories of young helpers.



- Young people stepped up to help during the pandemic; we helped amplify their stories and inspired countless others through their actions to be “Coronavirus Helpers” as well.
- We interviewed children across the globe, from 9-year-old Nur Afia Qistina Zamzuri from Malaysia (who sewed hundreds of pieces of safety gear) to 7-year-old Stelios Kerasidis from Greece (who composed and performed a classical “Isolation Waltz” on his piano).
- We also visited 13-year-old Alex Saldana, who played “Taps” each night outside the New Jersey Veterans Home — to honor the dozens of vets there who died from COVID-19.



## What We Did: We helped kids express themselves.



Keerat, age 12



Kayla, age 10



Nils, age 10



Ria, age 11



Sarah, age 7



Audrey, age 11



Grace, age 8



Mia, age 11

- We provided our young users with a platform to express themselves visually through art.
- We received *thousands of pieces* of coronavirus-related artwork.
- We featured a new series of kids' drawings each day on our site.



## What We Did: We helped kids express themselves.



“Hi, Russ. Could you write an article on the effects the coronavirus has had on racism toward Asian-American communities? I think it’s important for News-O-Matic readers to know about. As an Asian-American myself, I’m really sad that things like this are happening.”

– Sophie, age 12

“Hi Russ! I started News-O-Matic 1 month before the coronavirus lockdown. I just want to thank you for all the amazing articles that News-O-Matic provides and all the hard work you put in every day. Stay safe and healthy!”

–Yuling, age 11

“Hi! Thanks for the COVID-19 letter. It made me feel better and braver. Thank you for continuing to write, and I hope you and the team stay safe also. I hope it will go away. Thanks again.”

– Devin, age 12

“Hey Russ! I know a lot of people are scared of the coronavirus right now, but it’s important to remember we are in this together. We all want this virus to end and even though we physically can’t be together, emotionally we all are.”

– Inc, age 14

“Hi, Russ. I really liked the letter that you wrote. It filled me with more hope and now I know that more people are helping all of us in this crisis.”

– Nishi, age 10

“Hi, I am really interested in the coronavirus updates. My family and I talk about it a lot and I am glad to hear about it from a second source.”

– Lewis, age 11

“Everything is shutting down! The coronavirus is messing up everything! I hope this does not happen for too long because there will be nothing to do.”

– Jackson, age 9

“I like how you are not just only making articles on the coronavirus. I also like how you are able to find stories about people helping other people get through the spread of the coronavirus.”

– Eleanor, age 10

- We encouraged our young users to ask questions, submit comments, or just share ideas.
- We answered questions every day, responding to their comments on the site all week long.
- No comments were published in real time; each was vetted by our staff prior to publication.

# How We Did It



- Our team is small but dedicated; we have 10-12 full-time employees, including our editorial team based in New York City and our tech team based in Paris, France.
- We worked with partners to distribute our content to youth audiences around the globe. Those include Renaissance Learning, which reaches 40%+ of American students in elementary and middle school.
- We partnered with Amazon to deliver our daily news content — in audio form — via Alexa.
- We are self-funded, with school subscriptions covering the cost of our coronavirus coverage.
- We made all our content 100% free from March through June 2020.

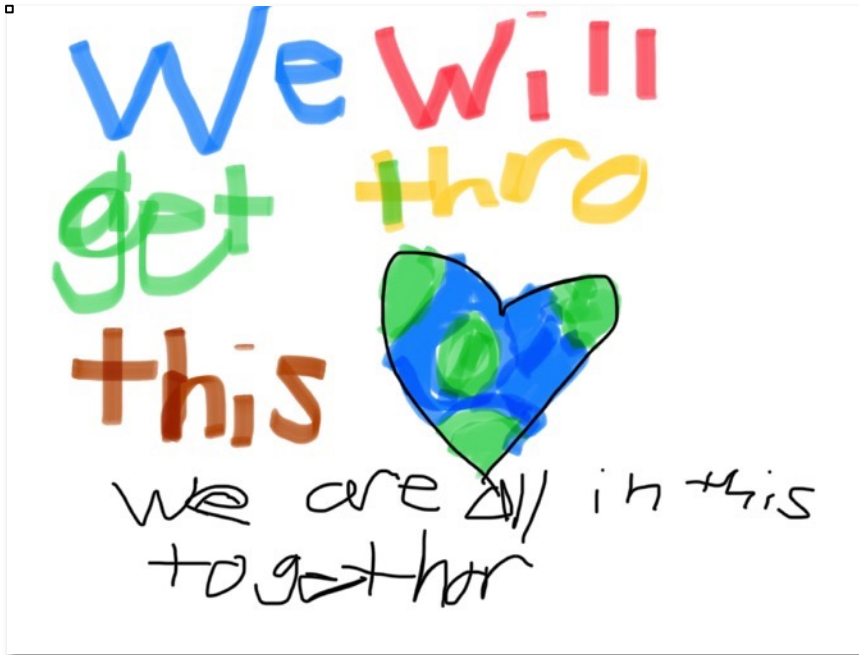
# Why We Did It



- Students needed a digital resource for remote learning; we were able to give them a tool to continue learning from home.
- Students needed the opportunity to learn what was going on in the world — with a safe and age-appropriate approach.
- Students needed to feel a sense of calm and comfort with so much chaos going on in the world.
- Students needed the chance to express themselves and feel heard during a difficult period when many young people were not being seen or recognized.



## How We Know It Worked



Aubrey, age 11



Kitty, age 12

- Thousands of drawings, questions, comments, and words of gratitude from children — all reinforcing important ideas for safety and security during the pandemic
- Incredible engagement from students who wanted to participate in our Q&A with experts
- Hundreds of schools signing up for our free access during the end of the 2019-20 school year

## Advice for Others



Valeria, age 10



Manny, age 11

- Make sure children are given a voice — and that they can see they are being heard!
- Give young people a platform to react through art and not just with words; many kids cannot fully express themselves verbally yet, so art acts as a powerful conduit for communication.
- Be positive! Not all news needs to be so scary, even when dealing with difficult subjects.
- Treat kids honestly and fairly, being up-front about what we know and don't know.

# Links for Complete News-O-Matic Access



Here's a login you can use to access News-O-Matic from any device:

- iOS (optimized for the iPad): <https://apple.co/1JStB7N>
- Web: <https://login.newsomatic.net>

**Level 1:** Global1 (Grades K-2) | **Level 2:** Global2 (Grades 3-5) **Level 3:** Global3 (grades 6-8)

**Password:** Global

(Login is case-sensitive.)





# Direct Links to Example Articles



## *Article Headline*

## *Text Level*

Feeling Isolated? Advice from Astronauts!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Tips from Kids! Kaydri from Hong Kong	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Life After Coronavirus: Carl's Story of Recovery	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Make Your Own Mask!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Let's Try Yoga!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Stay Strong!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Get Moving!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
"Thank You, Heroes!"	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Dr. Batavia Answers Your Questions	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>

## *Coronavirus Helpers!*

Song Rings Out for Heroes	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Sammie Sends Smiles	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Quinn Cares for Nurses	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Giving Back with Snacks!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
Afia Sews Safety Gear	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
A Song to Show Support	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>
A Mask-Making Hero!	<a href="#">Level 1</a>	<a href="#">Level 2</a>	<a href="#">Level 3</a>