

Staff Motivation

Tipping The Scale

Are you looking for a method to make yearbook class fun yet productive? To get the odds of success in your favor, try tipping the scales with a fundamentally sound approach to organizing today's journalism staff. By dividing the yearbook concept into three disciplines, the yearbook advisers can analyze their staff and determine which strategies are best suited for the present staff. Getting the contemporary look that you want in the book starts in the classroom. If advisers can motivate and educate the staff throughout the course of the year, they will certainly have something to celebrate when the entire student body enjoys the product - a professional looking publication.

So take the plunge and try something new with the staff - give the students yearbook class memories which will last a lifetime.

The Magic of Motivation

Motivation: n. the act or process of furnishing with an incentive or inducement to action.

How many times have you thought to yourself: "Boy, these kids get lazier and lazier every year...What ever happened to taking pride in your work? Nobody seems to care anymore!"

All too often advisers can see the problem, yet do not know how to tackle apathy in the classroom. In order to motivate students, advisers need to regularly tailor the yearbook class to fit the specific needs of individual staffs. Break tradition by organizing the journalism program according to classroom make-up instead of forcing students to adhere to a worn

out system. Advisers will see a marked improvement in student motivation. Try shaking things up a bit; throw out what doesn't work and replace it with a system to meet the needs of today's youth.

Q. How do I determine the make-up of my new staff? I don't even know them very well!

A. Put them to the test.

To facilitate the process of learning each student's personal strengths and weaknesses, administer the following simplified version of a Learning Preference Test at the beginning of the school year. Not only do the journalism students enjoy filling out the form, it also becomes a valuable tool for the classroom adviser in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the class. The test only takes a few minutes to administer, then after the students determine their strongest learning pattern have them physically get out of their desks and move to a corner of the room which you have designated as that particular learning preference. Although students take great pleasure in acknowledging classmates who have the same learning pattern, the adviser can quickly assess make-up of the journalism class.

(See Appendix L)

Use the test to maximize on each student's potential.

1. TG learners make good section editors and interviewers. They are fiercely independent and enjoy being in charge. TG

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□ *Identify student preferences, provide working tools and make expectations clear.*

learners have a tendency to be friendly, outgoing and naturally curious. They have never met a stranger. A good rule of thumb is to always send a TG person to an interview with a person responsible for the article. Your quotes will be stronger and a TG person is not shy about getting all the facts.

2. PM learners thrive on feelings and emotions. They have a tendency to be the best field reporters and copy writers because they can capture the feeling of the moment, the thrill of victory. Although they generally consider deadlines and rules too restrictive, which hinders them in a leadership role, PM learners are the students with writer's block. Also, PM learners view relationships as important. They prefer to organize the social events for the class - birthday parties, deadline parties etc.

3. OM learners also make good Editor-in-Chiefs and Business editors. They are methodical, naturally organized individuals who prefer to make "to do" lists and follow through with them. They are always on time, and seldom lose things.

4. IG learners prefer to work alone. Logical and intellectual, IG individuals usually maintain a highly precise use of language. Highly verbal, these students also make excellent copy editors.

Q. How do I make it through the first deadline, if I have not had time to assess my staff's ability level?

A. Structure classroom success using simple structure techniques and small incentives.

Until advisers get fully acquainted with their new staffs, providing a great deal of structure for the first deadline is imperative for keeping the students on target and motivated. New journalists are like toddlers who try to master a staircase. While the entire flight of stairs seems impossible to conquer, with one step at a time the task is soon accomplished. Likewise, with small incentives along the

way, yearbook students stay motivated. Try several of the following "tried and true" methods of organization:

1. Give students a yearbook folder with pockets. All information should be kept in the folder for the current layout. Folders will be kept in filing cabinet drawers in the classroom where the teacher can easily access it in order to drop messages or photos in the proper place.

2. Make a poster board with ALL due dates on it (rough drafts, typed copy picture collection, layouts drawn). Students can visually monitor each others progress. Allow students the reward of marking off their progress as they complete each step.

3. Devise a "model layout" for each section of the book and have it laminated. Keep the models prominently displayed in the room where they are readily assessable to students. The sections of the book will be consistent. Students will refer to the master layout instead of you for questions concerning type size, fonts, logo placement etc.

4. Formulate a miniature grade sheet which each student keeps for each deadline in his/her notebook. This way, the student can be responsible for grades as well. (See Appendix M)

5. Handout guidelines at the beginning of the course which clearly states the consequences of turning in late assignments. To acknowledge the severity of missed deadlines, have parents sign the guideline sheet and place on file. Students believe in fairness above anything else...don't bend the rules stated in the guidelines (See Appendix N)

6. To guide students along the way, provide a handout check off sheet. A self check "Do's & Don't" sheet is a convenient way to have the students discover and correct their own major mistakes. (See Appendix O)

7. Hand out "extra credit" tokens for staff members who use students in their layouts who have not appeared in the yearbook yet. As we all know, a student will buy the book if he/she thinks there are photos of them in the book. Get a

computer printout of the entire school roster and put a check beside a name each time a student is pictured on a layout. Soon it will be easy to spot the segment of your student body which has been neglected.

8. Reward the first to the finish! The first student who adequately completes his/her final layout gets to select a prize from the "Fantastic Feats" box. At the beginning of the year, the business editor solicits movie passes, fast-food coupons, free pizzas, car wash coupons which get put into the box for a lucky winner or two each deadline time.

Q. When I know my new staff, how do I change procedures in the classroom?

A. Time to tailor your program to the staff.

Once you have surmised each student's learning style and survived that first deadline with eye witness accounts of student's abilities, it is time to individualize your journalism program. Devising a new system merely enhances the strength of the program already in place. Begin the second deadline by placing increased responsibility on the section editor. If the section editors you have selected carry the leadership strand in their learning styles profile, they will enjoy the challenge of accepting a bigger role in the production of THEIR yearbook. Ultimately, the ideal scenario is for the adviser to become the facilitator/mentor - not the copy writer, layout designer, spellchecker, chief cook and bottle washer. Try some of the following suggestions:

1. Develop a Section Editor Day. While other students are out on assignment or gather ads, section editors compare all the final layouts submitted in their section for consistency, copy fitting, similar type faces etc. Have students write detailed notes on post-it cards for each layout.

2. Host a by-monthly "editor's only" luncheon or brunch during an activity period. With this activity, editors come to

share ideas, express concerns and receive specific information which you impart to them. Thus, the "chain of command" atmosphere is strengthened in a fun-filled atmosphere.

3. Reward the best writer with the title of "Student Critiquer." To keep the adviser's paper flow down to a minimum, award the best journalist with the title of Student Critiquer. Place a folder on the back of the classroom door with the name of the critiquer. All yearbook stories and/or captions must be turned into this editor to be checked. After the initial corrections are made, the adviser can look at the stories. This process cuts down at the adviser's time and avoids the frustration of catching trivial mistakes.

Q. What if my staff does not make its deadline?

A. Remember slow and steady wins the race.

All too often we forget the second half of that cliché - steady. If you fear that students are moving too slowly, just remember, the adviser's job is to keep the pace steady. In doing so, you might just find that the final pages will be ready when you hit the finish line. Try some of the following tips to motivate the slow individuals:

1. Assign specific homework activities. If students use classroom time wisely, then assign specific tasks designed at getting the student motivated on his/her new layout. For example, have students complete a short answer survey in which they examine the spread topic they have just been assigned in two other yearbooks (i.e. basketball spread or prom spread). Students will turn in the sheet for a grade and perhaps get ideas for putting a new spin on an old subject. (See Appendix P)

2. To offer motivation incentives for finishing early, use the "dangling the carrot" theory. For example, offer a deadline party if everyone in the class finishes a day early. Typically, a movie and popcorn

□ Use incentives and rewards to maintain performance.

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“How many times do I have to repeat it?”

“Why do you keep making the same mistakes over and over again?”

party excites even the unexciteable. Allow students to vote for the movie of their choice from a pre-designated list you have developed. By finishing early students will have a great sense of accomplishment and you will have extra time to correct those layouts. (See Appendix Q)

Education for Everyone

Education. n. development in knowledge, skill, character, or ability by teaching/training.

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Although advisers relish the sheer joy of teaching yearbook, they also understand the deep frustration which comes with the territory. Yearbooking presents a unique opportunity for the adviser to teach hands-on material which is applicable to the workplace. Students can utilize skills acquired through yearbook class, such as graphic design, computer technology, business/accounting skills, in many aspects of daily life. Although every adviser understands the need for mastery of the basic journalistic rules, they all too often forget that learning is more effective if facts can be turned into fun. As adults, we sometime forget the age gap. Like the jokes state:

You know you are no longer a kid when...

One peanut butter and jelly sandwich just doesn't do it any more.

You actually buy gloves, scarves and sunscreen.

You don't want the sports car because of the insurance premiums.

You remember seeing Star Wars when it first came out.

Q. How can I make class fun while educating the staff?

A. It is time to play name games.

Although the wealth of information in the Taylor Manuals effectively covers the actual yearbook process, it is important to remember that mere knowledge of yearbook fundamentals is not enough. Think about your favorite class in high school. What made it memorable? Although the teacher imparted knowledge, it was the process of learning that gave you a lasting impression. Likewise, yearbook class can be much more effective, if advisers use creative means to educate their students.

1. Test students general knowledge of yearbook terms with an adapted BINGO game. After teaching the rudimentary yearbook term, use the adapted sheet entitled “YRBKS”. Played like BINGO, students fill the sheet with the terms, creating their own board. Then the adviser calls out the definition and the students must recall the term. (See Appendix R)

2. Pit sections against each other with an adapted game of jeopardy. Devise five categories on the black board dealing with information pertinent to the class. Using the general rules of jeopardy, play through the questions on the board. At the conclusion the team with the highest score wins. (See Appendix R)

3. Warm up to interviewing with a scavenger hunt. A fun way to get students comfortable with approaching strangers and talking to teachers is to devise a scavenger hunt game. However, instead of looking for items, students will be finding out facts about students, teachers, clubs, sports etc. Of course the first student to bring back the correct facts wins the prize! (See Appendix S)

Q. How do I teach students to work together?

A. Create a team concept from Day One.

Like the business world, the team con-

cept is widely acknowledged as the premiere method of acquiring a finished product. Students need to acquire the team skill and what better place to train than in the yearbook classroom. Using the modern trend, yearbook journalism can work toward a common goal - producing a quality finished product for the student body.

1. Allow the general staff to pick which section they want to work in all year long. First, students feel empowered by making their own selection. Secondly, if students stay within a section, the yearbook layouts are much more consistent and polished. Additionally, if students in the clubs and academics sections go one step further and select their layouts for the entire year, that staff member can be photographing events all year long in anticipation of that layout. The layouts will then show a complete year of the activity, not just five to seven pictures of one event.

2. Physically place desks in pods of four and five. By forcing the section members to sit together, they will in time begin to think of themselves as a unit.

3. Play games which involve team effort. After every deadline devise some type of a game in which the students must win as a team. For example, Pictionary, charades or Jeopardy once again forces the group to work together.

4. Reward the section with the least amount of mistakes on their final layouts. Cokes and snacks often lead to laughter and camaraderie.

Q. What can I do about a student who just does not seem to catch on quickly?

A. Treat them as professionals, and you will get professional results.

1. Require that all new students and section editors attend a summer workshop together. Here, fundamentals of yearbooking are introduced; the theme and spinoffs are composed and the ladder finalized. These workshops make the dif-

ference between marginal books and superior ones.

2. Select mentors to work with the new students. Just like first year teachers who have experienced professionals to guide them, treat the new rookies with the same professional courtesy. Sometimes the class can seem overwhelming with all the new material to master; however, the mentor can guide them through the first year.

3. Hold brainstorming days. Place the desks in a circular fashion to facilitate the brainstorming process. Have the entire class help individual students with problems they are having. For example, Susie just cannot think of an original way to start her homecoming story. Students go around the room contributing their best ideas to help break her writer's block. Also, don't just hand back stories or layouts to students at the beginning of class. Take them to read the best passage to the entire class or admire the eyeline of a layout. By repeatedly seeing and hearing quality work, students will soon catch on to the idea.

Q. How do I keep the stress levels to a minimum in yearbook class?

A. Recognize the warning signs of stress.

All too often advisers forget that they are working with children, unequipped to handle great amounts of stress. Let's face it—adults cannot cope with high levels of stress; how can we expect children to cope? Students need reassurance and guidance. You need to be able to recognize the warning signs of anxiety before the emotions get out of control.

1. Don't be afraid to stop the presses. The adviser's job is to keep students from getting so discouraged that they lose all motivation. Since dealing with deadlines can be stressful and students' tempers flair at times, take a breather. Have students participate in the Secret Message Game. With this exercise students invent

A creative mess is better than a tidy idleness.

“Give yourself a hand if no one else will!”

“Never forget to reward a job well done.”

*“The only thing I really hate-
Is when we do not CELEBRATE!”*

inspirational sayings/messages to share with each other. The slogans do not need to be original; however, with this exercise students enjoy laughing at themselves. For example, a student started crying one day when she could not find her photos among the unorganized mess of her section drawer. Someone wrote a message to her: “A creative mess is better than tidy idleness” and attached it to a new folder with pockets. Although the exercise didn’t bring her pictures back, it made humorous light of a tense situation and gave her time to put her problems into perspective. (See Appendix U)

2. Handout stress-reducing tips. Sometimes students need reminders on how to prioritize their time. Spend five minutes every Monday morning just discussing strategies with handling stress and time management skills. (See Appendix V)

Q. How do I get kids to take yearbook class seriously?

A. Begin on a professional note.

It is important to start class on the right note. If advisers take a professional stance from the onset of class, students will have more respect for the program and the rules.

1. Initiate the class in a formal manner, then later you can ease off. Begin by handing out the exam review on the first day of school. Letting the students know that there will be a test/exam, sets the tone immediately. As the learning days progress, advisers can address the various topics on the review sheet so all items are covered. (See Appendix ?)

2. Always spend the first five minutes of class in a formal manner. By taking roll, reviewing student progress, reading good body copy to the class or awarding a prize, students know that class has an official starting time. Like conducting an interview, the first five minutes of class establishes the tone for the day. To get productive results, adviser’s need to begin

in a constructive manner.

3. Require students to enter writing contests. Making a writing contest a requirement for the year, not only will help students get first-hand experience at entering competition, but the contest will also make students focus serious attention on writing. Check with the English department for available contests. Usually local contests involve essays.

4. Allow the staff to host its own in-house writing and photography contest. Conducting a contest can be as educational as entering one! Have the staff develop the theme, the focus of the contest, draw up the rules, judge the entries etc. The first place winners can receive a yearbook or area organizations may be willing to contribute a cash prize. The winning photos and essays should appear in the yearbook.

5. Allow the advertising staff to develop its own sales campaign. Local advertising firms and the high school marketing class welcome the opportunity to share their marketing strategies. Let students create and launch their own campaign. The results will be profitable! Use the valuable tools from the Resource Kit. Students can order posters and other marketing items from Taylor Publishing Company.

6. Invite guest speakers to class. To show students that job opportunities exist in the journalism field, host a careers day of sorts. Local journalists from the newspaper, yearbook sales representative or even yearbook alumni will be willing to speak to the class. A local college will have an editor, who could discuss pursuing yearbook journalism in college.

Celebrate Successes

Celebrate. v. to observe with proper ceremonies or festivities.

“Give yourself a hand if no one else will!”
“Never forget to reward a job well done.”
*“The only thing I really hate-
Is when we do not CELEBRATE!”*

Celebration of successes is simply the

most difficult task of all yearbook production because it is often overlooked. Although it is vital that we take time to reflect on our achievements, advisers seldom find the time or the energy to do so. Celebration should be the cornerstone of the yearbook program; for it is the pure joy of accomplishing a task that needs to be recognized.

Q. How can I make celebration an integral part of my program?

**A. Celebrate in small ways.
Celebrate at key points of yearbook production to keep the staff motivated.**

1. Organize an "I Survived" Party. Celebrating each deadline provides a common goal and closure to each segment of yearbook production. If there are not enough class revenues to host a deadline party, have each section take turns (ads, student life, academics etc.) hosting a party. This way, students only have to bring in food once, but will get to celebrate six times!

2. Celebrate birthdays & holidays. At the start of the year organize a secret pal list. Each student who participates will bring in birthday food for the class on his/her pal's birthday. Secret Pals can also be used for \$5.00 holiday exchange. Make the holiday celebration extra special by arranging to meet out of school (breakfasts or luncheons).

3. Hand out candy bars to individual students in recognition of sweet successes. For example, a student has struggled with writing a story. When the story is finally completed, pass out the candy for a job well done.

4. Acknowledge accomplishments by placing stickers on exceptional stories, rough layouts and caption writing. As

juvenile as it seems, students love to collect stickers.

5. **Form an area ice cream social.** When the books come out, organize an area celebration with rival schools from your district. Even simple ice cream sundae party at a local picnic shelter will let students realize that all journalists should celebrate their successes. Area get together allow students to realize that they do not live in a microcosm. This even provides ample opportunity to exchange ideas about things that work, advertising prices etc.

Q. What other forms of celebration exist?

A. Get the staff recognized.

1. Toot your own horn. Write info bites for the local newspaper so area residents can be made aware of your yearbook awards and achievements. Have students submit articles for the school newspaper. Use the newsprint to your advantage.

2. Ask to be recognized by the school board. At a monthly school board meeting, bring your staff before them to highlight individual as well as group accomplishments.

3. Place recognitions on the morning announcements. Give the school something to talk about by keeping the yearbook highlights in front of the public eye.

4. Award donated prizes. Have the business team solicit door prize items from area businesses, such as movie passes, free pizzas etc. then reward individuals for milestones on their yearbook journey.

5. Celebrate with free days. As stated in the motivation section, reward students for finishing a deadline early by hosting a movie day.

Life is about 10% how you make it. . . and 90% how you take it.