TJHSST YEARBOOK STAFF MANUAL

Reporter's Checklist

What makes good yearbook copy? STORIES.

Before you begin writing your copy, you must go through the following steps. Much like writing, gathering content is a PROCESS; skipping steps will decrease the effectiveness of your story.

WHERE TO FIND STORY IDEAS:

- School newspaper
- School website
- Morning announcements
- Fliers
- Faceboook
- Twitter
- Class syllabi
- Pre-interviews
- LISTEN!

RECORDING INTERVIEWS

All face-to-face interviews for the TJHSST yearbook must be recorded. Once the interview is complete, the digital file should be uploaded to our share and saved as "SubjectLastName_Date_InterviewerLastName."

Prior to your interview, make sure you have a working recording device (iPod, iPhone, iPad, yearbook-issued digital recorder).

Begin each interview by asking the subject his/her name, and asking for a correct spelling. Let them know that the interview will be recorded to ensure accuracy.

PRE-INTERVIEWS:

- Decide on a story (Rubik's Cube Club, fall play, English 11 field trip, etc...)
- Contact a "point person" (a member of the club, a performer in the play, someone who went on the field trip)
- Get the basics facts (who, what, where, when)
- For the "who," make sure that you get a list of the "major players." Who has the most unique story to tell?
- You will not be gathering quotes in your pre-interviews; you're getting information to help you form an angle for your story.

INTERVIEWS:

BEFORE:

- Come up with a list of questions based on your research and pre-interviews.
- Questions should begin with words like: why, how, "tell me about," describe, explain, etc... (i.e. OPEN-ENDED questions - you already have the facts from the pre-interview).
- Decide on a SPECIFIC time and place for the interview. "Lunch" is not good enough; what if subject shows up at the end of lunch, but you've been waiting for him/her since lunch started?
- Make sure your subject knows exactly why you are conducting the interview.
- Make sure your questions are specifically tailored to that particular subject.
- Make sure you have a working recording device (see above).

DURING:

- Turn on the recording device.
- Ask your subject his/her name, and make sure you get an accurate spelling.
- Ask your first question, and LISTEN.
- Take notes on your surroundings, especially if you are at a sports practice, club meeting, or in your subject's "natural environment" (home, job, car, lunch spot, etc...)
- Pay attention to facial expressions and body language. Take notes on anything that could be used as observational details in the story.
- Have a CONVERSATION. An interview is not an inquisition. Pretend you're with a friend and you want them to tell

you a story. How would you act in that situation?

- Ask follow-up questions. If someone says that homecoming was fun, ask, "Why was homecoming fun?"
- Give them time to answer, but don't stop until you've gotten a story!
- If you don't get through all of your questions, that's fine, but don't leave that interview without a story, or an idea for where to get one!
- End the interview by thanking your subject and asking them if there is anyone else with whom you should speak.

AFTER:

- Upload your interview to the yearbook share.
- Make plans to conduct interviews with other relevant subjects. Remember: you need at least three sources for each story!
- Once you've completed all of our interviews, develop an angle for your story.
- Conduct further interviews as necessary, following the exact same steps.
- Any hand-written notes, must be typed and saved on the share in the same manner as voice recordings.

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS:

- Virtual interviews (email, Facebook, texting, Gchat) should be a last resort only.
- Virtual interviews work best at the pre-interviewing stage, but they are still discouraged.
- If you must resort to virtual interviewing, make sure to save a transcript of all chats and messages and save them to the share in the same manner as voice recordings.
- Since you have no way of knowing who is on the other end of the conversation, you must verify any quotes in person before you write your story.

CHECKLIST (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER):

- [ ] Specific story idea
- [ ] Pre-Interview
- [ ] Who?
- [ ] What?
- [ ] Where?
- [ ] When?
- [ ] Subject specific questions
- [ ] Working voice recorder
- [ ] Pen and paper for observations and/or follow-up questions
- [ ] Why?
- [ ] How?
- [ ] Story/anecdote
- [ ] Angle for your story