

# Get It Together

by Travis Feil

One of the most important aspects of running a successful journalism class is organization. The only trouble is, as a new adviser, you may not even know *what* you need to organize.

Because every program will need to be organized differently according to the publication's specific circumstances, configurations and needs, my goal is not to tell you how *I* do things but rather to make you aware of all (or most of) the things that will be on your plate as an adviser. I am happy to offer suggestions for solutions to problems you might be facing or to clarify what the items on the list mean.

It is my suggestion that you sit down with your editorial board (or other experienced staff members) and discuss the items on the following list. Decide together what works best for your publication's needs, and implement your plans from the beginning of the school year.

Allowing the editor(s)/student leaders to help make these decisions will accomplish two goals. First, you won't be responsible for coming up with solutions to problems you may not even know exist. Second, your student publication needs to be run by students, and making simple decisions like these is an easy way to create buy-in for your staff members.

The list is long, but it is by no means exhaustive. You and your staff will undoubtedly come up with many other issues to discuss as the year goes on. With that in mind, don't feel overwhelmed! You don't have to tackle all this at once! Choose an area, focus on it, then move on. It will be ok!!!

Also keep in mind that organizing and operating a publication is an on-going process – no one, *no one* has a perfect system in all these areas. Revisit the list throughout the year and at the end and beginning of each year to continually improve the way your program functions.

# Get It Together

by Travis Feil

## Simple Goals

- What did the staff do really well last year?
- What are two or three things we can really try to do well this year?

## Photo Equipment

- Where is the best place to consistently store cameras?
- Where is the best place to consistently store extra lenses? External flashes?
- Where should we keep battery chargers and extra batteries?
- What photography accessories need to be kept in our camera bags, and what photography accessories need to stay in the room? (CF cards, card readers, etc.)
- How should we handle camera checkout and return?
- Who is responsible for downloading and formatting our CF cards once the pictures are off? When/how will this be done?
- What other photography equipment issues do we need to address?

## Computer Equipment

- Do we have enough computers for everyone? If not, how should we handle this?
- Are our computers physically set up in the most functional way?
- Are the printers we use most frequently installed on all our machines?
- What software applications do we use most frequently? Do all of our computers have all necessary software installed? (InDesign, Photoshop, Yeartech 08, fonts, Word, Excel, Internet Explorer, etc.)
- Do we have *or need* a journalism computer use policy regarding who can use our machines and for what purposes? Do we “share” these computers with non-staff members?
- Who should be responsible for shutting down our machines daily (or weekly)?
- Are there any other computer equipment needs we should address?

## Coverage Issues

- How do we establish what goes into our publication? Is there a better way?
- How can we best encourage the staff to get the story from the source? What is our interview procedure? How tuned-in are we to what is actually going on in our school?
- What is the best way for us to handle photo assignments?
- Where and how should we document photo assignments?
- Should photo coverage of regular school events be assigned or voluntary?
- Who is responsible for going through the school calendar and newsletter regularly to look for coverage opportunities?
- How can other teachers in the building let us know when there is something going on in their rooms that we should be photographing? Do they even know we want to do this?
- Who is responsible for collecting sports results, club and sports rosters? Other documents?
- How do we prevent over or under covering individuals throughout the year? Do we have a “leper list,” and how/when do we update it as work continues throughout the year?
- Do we or should we assign “beats” to reporters on staff?
- What is the most effective way to assign pages and set deadlines?
- Do we do worknights?
- Are there other coverage issues we should address?

# Get It Together

by Travis Feil

## Document Storage

- What is the best way to make our network accessible for all yearbook students but secure from others?
- Where is the best place for us to store our in-progress documents? Who should be responsible for setting up a logical folder system on our network server? Do we want to use individual hard drives for storage?
- What is the best way for us to store our photographs so that everyone can find needed photos in a quick way? How has this been done in the past? How successful has the old method been? How can we improve it?
- What is the best way to consistently back up our documents and photos?
- Who should be responsible for backing up our files, and how often should this be done?
- How should we keep our computer desktops clear of clutter?
- Is there an official archive of our publication? Who maintains it? How?
- Are there any other document storage issues we need to address?

## “Everyday” Materials

- Is there a place in our room that staffers can store their materials (interview notes, sports rosters, game results, design ideas, etc.)
- Is our method of staff material storage the most logical and practical method possible? Would someone else on staff (an editor, for example) know where to look for *my* interview notes if those notes were needed when I wasn't available to retrieve them?
- When was the last time someone went through every cabinet, drawer, closet and binder to make sure we aren't storing trash?
- What is the best way to keep our journalism room free of clutter? Who is ultimately responsible for the cleaning our room regularly?
- Where is the best place to hang our laminated ladder for easy reference?
- Where is the best place to keep
  - a teacher/course schedule
  - a phonebook
  - a style book
  - Jostens contact information
  - journalism staff contact information
  - class rosters
  - 
  - 
  -
- Does our advertisement team have a solid system in place for keeping track of sales, art, ad proofs, etc.? When can we evaluate their system with them and help improve it if necessary?
- Who is responsible for packaging and mailing our shipments to Jostens?
- Do we “own” other materials like digital voice recorders or video cameras that we need to talk about?
- Are there any other materials issues that we need to address?

# Get It Together

by Travis Feil

## Communication

- How can we ensure that all staff members (and the adviser) can be contacted when needed?
- Does the publication have its own email address? How does the staff communicate electronically with advertisers, Jostens, local publications (photo sharing), etc.?
- What is the best way to keep all staffers, editors, and the adviser aware of progress being made on all pages?
- When do we have "staff meetings," and how often are they held?
- Is there time built into our class period for discussing issues that concern the whole staff?
- What is our "chain of command" when it comes to conflict resolution?
- What other communication issues should we address?

## Celebrating, Relaxing, and Bonding

- What regular "fun" activities should we plan for the year? Who should be responsible for planned, monthly fun?
- How does the staff celebrate birthdays?
- How do we celebrate meeting a deadline?
- Do we have a staff T-shirt? Where can we get one made?
- How can we best keep staff morale up?

## Yeah, we do that, too.

- What events take place in this school that are our responsibility?
  - What is our involvement with picture days? How does it or should it work?
  - Do we have anything to do with prom pictures?
  - Do we regularly exchange photos or stories with local publications?
  - Does the AD or administration regularly call upon us for photos?
  - Do we have regularly scheduled fundraisers like concession stands?
- What workshops or camps do we regularly attend?
- In what competitions do we participate? Could we compete more?
- What have we done/should we do regarding senior pictures? What kind of pictures do we accept? When do we need them? Do we sell senior ads?
- To whom do we regularly supply books (administration, police, etc.)
- How should we handle distribution of our publication?
- Are there any other responsibilities we need to plan on handling?

## Funds (discuss with superintendent, bookkeeper or office secretary)

- In the last few years, how much money was generated by book and ad sales? What was our final bill from last year? Our total expenditures? Our total revenue?
- What has been done in the past to market the book?
- How much money (if any) does the district contribute to our costs?
- Where can I get regular updates on our budget and account balances?
- Who collects yearbook purchase money and keeps track of sales?
- How do I purchase things for the yearbook?
- Who pays for postage?
- Who pays for camps and workshops?
- What is our contract cost? What features (color, cover treatments, etc.) are we charged for?  
How can I reduce the cost of publishing?
- Are there any other money issues of which I need to be aware?