

How to Start a High School or Middle School Newspaper

(So you have been asked to advise the school paper)

Also useful to yearbook sponsors

By Susan Newell, MJE

1. Recruit a staff

- Ask students to apply to be on the staff. See the final pages of this guide for an application.
- You need writers, photographers, artists and people who are good on the computer.
- Order a sample **staff manual** from the JEA (Journalism Education Association) bookstore until you have time to create one for your staff. A staff manual will list staff positions and their duties as well as your newspaper policies.
 - You may also create your own stylebook that will list things like the point size you want bylines, etc. You may attach this to your staff manual as an addendum. I add our staff manual to our syllabus.

2. Find a printer or publisher.

- Many schools use their **local newspaper publisher**. I used *The Tuscaloosa News* to print our school newspaper until *The New York Times* purchased them and our service became slow and our turn around was several weeks, so the news in our paper was too old. *The Tuscaloosa News* is now owned by the Halifax Media Group, so they may agree to print your newspaper.
- You may also transmit your paper over the Internet and your turn around time will be two or three days. We have used the printers below.
 - **J & S Printing** in Birmingham, Alabama. They have a wonderful web site that offers help to new advisors and has links to scholastic press associations. Their web site is www.jsprinting.com.
 - **School Publications Company** in Neptune, New Jersey. They have a helpful staff and offer specials. <http://www.schoolpub.com/schoolpub/>.
 - **Mullen Publications, Inc.** in Charlotte, North Carolina. Must request a price quote. <http://www.mullenpublications.com/scholastic.aspx>.
- You may place a PDF of your print newspaper online using issuu.com/.
- Create an online newspaper using Wordpress.com.
- Consider letting School Newspapers Online (SNO) help you get started online. <http://www.schoolnewspersonline.com/>.
- Use social media to help get important news to students. We use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

3. Create a budget

- Talk to your publisher about a rate chart. They will charge you by the number of pages and the number of papers you print. Color is extra. White paper is extra. Newsprint is included in the price. Sometimes folding your paper is extra.
 - Decide how many times a year you will publish. I suggest you publish only about two times your first semester. I would go slowly until you learn what you are doing. We print about once a month or eight times a year. It costs us about \$450 to \$500 each time we publish an eight-page paper. Our **printing costs** run about **\$4,000** each year.
- We have used about three cartons of 8 1/2 by 11 **copy paper** and two cartons of legal size **copy paper** each year, but we did not use that much this year, as a lot of our editing is done online now using Word and Google Docs which saves paper.
- Budget for **printer cartridges** unless they are provided by your school.
- We use a digital Canon Rebel for photographs. You can find one online, sometimes with a zoom lens for about **\$500** if you look hard enough.
- We spend almost **\$500** each year on contests and memberships to **scholastic organizations**.

- I suggest you buy red editing pens, black art pens and miniature legal pads for reporting information. Allow about **\$250** for incidentals.
- We need about **\$6,000** each year to operate.
- Check with SNO to see what they charge.

4. Secure funds

- Sell ads. If you give the newspaper to every student and place the newspaper online, advertisers get a great value for their money because every student and staff member will get a copy of the newspaper. A sample ad contract can be found on the last page of this guide.
 - Start early – the summer before school starts is best. (Remember you are competing with other schools and every other organization on your campus.)
 - Role-play ad sales – make sure students stress how the advertiser will benefit from purchasing the ad. Ads are not contributions but are a bargain for businesses that have products or services to offer teenagers. School newspaper ads are the cheapest way to target students.
 - Survey schools near you to see what they are charging for their ad space. I have attached an ad contract from the paper I advise as a guide.
 - We also survey students to see how many work, how much money they have to spend and what they spend their money on. This is good information to provide advertisers.
 - Establish a client base and go back to the same advertisers every year. Make sure you make advertisers happy with their advertisement.
 - Get ads pre-approved by advertisers before you go to press and send thank you notes along with a copy of your paper after you print.
- Ask your school board for funds. You do not have much if any time to fund-raise if you print in a timely manner.

5. Locate a classroom and secure materials.

- Your **classroom** needs to be large if possible, and you need to have several large tables for meetings. As a staff you need to plan the paper, brainstorm story ideas, an editorial idea, an editorial cartoon idea, etc. so you need space to meet.
- You need a **phone**, so you can contact advertisers, and so you can conduct interviews with persons who are off campus.
- You also need use of a **fax** machine and email, so you can communicate easily with advertisers and sources for stories. All of my students have a Gmail account.
- **Ideally**, you need a computer for every student. The software and graphics you use to publish dictate the kind of computer you must have. You can publish with two or three high-end computers, but you will not be as competitive in contests nor will you be able to come out as often. Designing pages takes a lot of time, and you need fast computers.
- You need at least one top of the line **Laser printer**, ideally one that can be networked. I try to have a few inexpensive printers as backups, and so we can print and edit often.
- A **flatbed** scanner or scanning capability is necessary, so you can scan artwork for your publication.
- You need a **35mm digital** camera, so you can get quality photos. We have had good luck with Cannon Rebels; they are sturdy and take excellent photos.
- Software:
 - Microsoft **Word** or **Google Docs**. I like the editing features in both.
 - Adobe **InDesign** and **Photoshop** (industry standards).
 - Adobe **Illustrator** if you can afford it.
 - Adobe offers packages of software that include InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator.

NOTE about page design software: Some beginning newspaper sponsors use Microsoft Publisher because it is inexpensive, but I suggest that as soon as you can get a better design

program because your graduates are marketable and can get jobs straight out of high school if they know an advanced design program like InDesign. Some newspaper sponsors prefer Macs because the professional press often uses that operating system, but I prefer a PC because most school systems, including mine, use this operating system. There is not a lot of difference in the operating systems. I learned PageMaker (preceded InDesign) at a workshop on a Mac, but then had to use a PC at school. Photoshop helps you clean up photos and artwork. Illustrator helps you create and manipulate attractive text.

- You will also need tables for computers that are at the appropriate height for students working on keyboarding and designing.
- I have also found the following helpful:
 - A LCD projector helps you teach layout and editing skills.
 - An opaque projector is handy for displaying handouts from workshops.
 - A light table, a T-square, rulers and a paper cutter help you design attractive ads and graphics for the paper.
 - A podium is handy for teaching and meetings.
 - You need a **storage unit** to help you organize old newspapers.
 - You need a file cabinet with scholastic newspapers you have collected at workshops and examples of good professional papers across the country.
- You need a bookcase to hold resource books. Try to collect the following books as soon as you can. Most of these books can be ordered from the JEA bookstore.
 - The newest edition of the **AP Stylebook**.
 - **Columbia Scholastic Press Association's Stylebook** for Scholastic Journalism.
 - Columbia Scholastic Press Association's *Scholastic Newspaper Fundamentals*.
 - *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White
 - A new **dictionary** (Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language is used by the AP Stylebook). We use dictionary.com, vocabulary.com, and thesaurus.com.
 - A **grammar** book
 - *One Word, Two words or Hyphen* book (Can be ordered from the JEA bookstore).
 - Textbook: I prefer *Journalism Today*, but *Journalism: Writing for Publication* is also helpful.
 - Miniature **legal pads** are useful for interviews.
 - **Black** rollerball **pens** are needed to outline black and white artwork.

6. Join scholastic press associations. I suggest that at first you join just your state and one national association because membership can be expensive. The web site for each organization is very helpful. Begin an honor society for student journalists through Quill & Scroll as soon as you can if your school does not have one.

- **Journalism Education Association (JEA)** www.jea.org. offers certification for journalism educators and cosponsors national conventions twice a year. JEA has a bookstore for journalism educators and provides curriculum to members online, including www.jeadigitalmedia.org/, which has materials for digital media.
- **Alabama Scholastic Press Association (ASPA)** www.aspa.ua.edu/, sponsored by The University of Alabama, holds summer and fall workshops and a spring convention. They provide critiques and contests.
- **National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA)** <http://www.studentpress.org/nspa/> is the primary national organization and resource for journalism students. NSPA cosponsors a national workshop in the fall and spring. It also provides a critiquing service and contests.
- **Student Press Law Center (SPLC)** www.splc.org is an advocate for student free press rights. Provides information, advice, and free legal service to students and educators who work with them.

- **Southern Interscholastic Press Association (SIPA)** <http://sipa.sc.edu/> at the University of South Carolina in Columbia offers workshops, contests, and critiques. At their convention in March, they have good workshop presenters and a lot of activities for advisors. It is an excellent workshop for new advisors who want to learn how to be a better advisor.
- **Columbia Scholastic Press Association** www.columbia.edu/cu/cspa is a prestigious national organization at Columbia University in New York City that provides workshops, a convention in March, a critiquing service, and contests.
- **Quill & Scroll Society** quillandscroll.org/ provides an honor society for student journalists and offers a critiquing service and contests.

7. Attend scholastic press workshops.

- You and your students can learn how to have a better publication

8. Have your publication critiqued and enter contests.

- Then publicize your victories.

9. Reward your students.

- Give them pats on the back. (Let every student have a pad of sticky notes. They write something nice about everyone else in the class or congratulate everyone else in the class on something they did for newspaper. Then they give it to the other students by patting them on the back.)
- Take them out to eat. Even if everyone buys his own, it is still a treat.

10. Plan to work after school with students.

- If you want to have a good publication it will take a lot of extra time.

11. Spend time with family or do something for yourself.

- You can let yourself do nothing but work on your publication. Make an effort to do something for yourself and your family every once in a while, so you do not burn out.

ADVICE from newspaper advisors

Donna Morgan, former newspaper advisor at Opelika High School

How did you go about putting your paper together?

Only about three or four students work on layout. Everyone writes. We brainstorm for ideas, then divide into sports, news, features and those editors give out ideas for stories and students volunteer. We discuss as a class editorial ideas, and the entire staff chooses the staff editorial (sometimes after much discussion). We have deadlines for drafts and for final copy.

What advice would you offer new advisors?

My advice to new advisors is to be organized. Organization skills are most important. They must also have an evaluation plan in place from the beginning. Students must be held accountable for what they do in the newspaper class; they must have specific guidelines and boundaries. Also, the more ASPA functions they can attend the better.

Larry Haynes, former newspaper and broadcast advisor at Montevallo High School

How did you go about publishing your paper at Montevallo?

We published our newspaper every two weeks and planned each page in advance with assignments. Each student had to contribute at least four articles during a six weeks grading period. If they did more than four articles, they received grades for their best four articles. They were counted off for missing deadlines.

How did you go about putting your paper together?

Editors were responsible for laying out particular pages, and they also evaluated the entire staff for their work with each publication. Staff members were also required to turn in a self-evaluation on how they completed their assignments at the end of each publication cycle. Photographers were graded on quality of pictures taken, and they were also expected to meet deadlines.

What advice would you offer new advisors?

My first advice to new advisors would be to contact veteran journalism teachers. They can get good advice by contacting ASPA for names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. There's no need to "reinvent the wheel." Learning how veteran advisers organize a staff, raise money, work on a publication, and evaluate students is the easiest way to become a successful publications adviser. New teachers should also join ASPA, obtain other scholastic publications to review and pick up some ideas, and take their staff to as many good workshops as possible. I also suggest joining at least two national press associations, send in your publication each year to be critiqued, and take your students to an out of state workshop at least every other year. Next, make being on your staff a privilege and fun. Celebrate birthdays, staff milestones, and always mix your high expectations with a positive attitude.

Katie Burnside, former newspaper advisor at Homewood High School

How did you go about publishing your paper at Homewood?

I would let the students brainstorm topics. We would try to cover all aspects of the student body. They would then divide up the topics. They would go out interviewing, then write their stories, and then type them in Word. I required at least two people to proofread every story before placing it on the page. For all but the last year, it was during lunch/study hall and not even a class, so I had to make it enjoyable and couldn't hold grades over them for motivation.

How did you go about putting your paper together?

Most of the years I had one to three people who could work the design software. They were the ones to place the stories on the pages. I let the staff all have input as far as deciding what went on which spreads. They then had more ownership. We all wrote headlines and captions together as a staff. We were small, so this worked well.

What advice would you offer new advisors?

Get involved in the national organizations and attend conventions. You pick up so much by attending as many classes as possible. Stay up on the technology. Don't be afraid to admit to the students that you don't know how to do something on the computer. They love teaching you things about technology.

Susan Newell advised the newspaper at Eastwood Middle School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama for 13 years and at Central High School for six years. She currently advises the newspaper at Northridge High School. She advised the yearbook at Eastwood Middle School for ten years, at Central High School for six years, and at Northridge High School for ten years.

Addendum: Hints for a Yearbook Sponsor

1. Find a yearbook company. I would recommend one of the four major companies. Do not consider a small company, as they will not be able to provide you with the service a major company can. Find a company that offers what you want and stick with it. They are all a little different, especially the design programs they offer. You do not have time to learn a new design program every year.

- **Herff-Jones** www.herff-jones.com.
- **Jostens** www.jostens.com.
- **Balfour, formerly Taylor** <http://www.balfour.com/>.
- **Walsworth** www.walsworthyearbooks.com.

2. Helpful materials

- You need most of the materials listed for newspaper.
- Columbia Scholastic Press Association's *Scholastic Yearbook Fundamentals*.
- The yearbook company will send you a kit with some supplies you need.

3. Helpful advice

- Yearbook **copy** is written like newspaper copy.
 - Every double page needs copy.
- Every picture needs a caption.
 - The first sentence should be in present tense and should tell what is happening at the time the picture was shot. It should not be obvious in the picture.
 - The second sentence should be in past tense and should give some history behind the picture.
 - The third and fourth sentence should give additional background information and may include a direct quote from someone in the picture or someone not in the picture that knows about the event.
- **Photos**
 - Should show action. No posed photos.
 - Should be shot close.

3. Money

- One thing you must always be thinking about when advising a yearbook is money. It is very easy to run short of money because yearbook companies will add extra costs to the agreed upon and signed contract. Be careful that you know what everything cost and always ask if this is included in the contract price. Be especially careful when you pick the cover for the yearbook, as it can be very expensive and **not included** in the contract price.
- Try to keep some money in surplus and keep close tabs of all money.
 - negotiate with several yearbook printers to get the price you need.
 - lock the yearbook company into a contract price for three years. (Yearbook companies increase their prices every year.)
 - increase yearbook ad sells by adding incentives (free T-shirts, yearbooks, etc.)
 - make sure all advertisers pay for their ads by the deadline you set each year.
 - keep a close check on charges by the yearbook company and the costs agreed upon in the yearbook contract and make certain that you do not pay for things that were not agreed upon in the contract
 - sell digital photographs not used in the yearbook at the end of the school year by posting them on an online photo sales site.
 - increase the sale of senior ads
 - 1. send senior ad letters to parents in the spring of the student's junior year.
 - 2. make announcements and banners announcing the availability of senior ads.

Date _____

2014-2015 Application *The Northridge Reporter*

(Check all that apply) I want in Journalism I (class all year) _____, Journalism II (2nd class all year) _____,

Please print

Name: _____ Birthday: _____ Grade level 2014-2015 _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ e-mail _____

Parent's name: _____ Parent's work phone: _____

Mother's email _____ Father's email _____

Home (mailing) address & zip code: _____

English teacher's name (this year): _____ GPA _____

List the **classes** you plan to take in 2014-2015

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Do you have a computer at home? _____ Do you have a personal laptop? _____

What computer programs do you know? Photoshop? InDesign? Microsoft Word? Illustrator? WordPress? Others? _____

Do you have a Dropbox? _____ Do you use Google Drive? _____ Do you have Gmail? _____

Do you have a Facebook account? _____ Do you use Twitter? _____ Do you have a blog? _____

What other social media do you use? _____

What gadgets do you own? (iPhone? iPad? Video camera? Digital camera? Etc.) _____

Do you drive? _____ Will you have a car to use to run errands? Yes _____ No _____

Do you expect to **work** an after school job next year? Yes _____ No _____ If so, what job? _____

If extra work is needed to meet deadlines on the publication will you be available to help? _____

When? Before school _____ After school _____ Lunch _____ Free time in another class _____ Advisory _____

What other **activities or clubs** will you be involved with, and when will they take place? _____

What are your interests and goals? _____

What do you want to learn in this class? _____

Do you know anyone on the current staff? If so, who do you know? _____

Do you know someone else who would be good in this class (Is there someone you know who should be recruited for the class?) _____

List the subjects you took this year, the level of the subject (Honors, AP), the grade you made and your class attendance.

SUBJECT	LEVEL	GRADE	ABSENCES	TEACHER'S SIGNATURE
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

Return your completed application to your English teacher and ask her to send it to Susan Newell at Northridge through intercampus mail or bring it to room 109 at Northridge. Don't forget the teacher questionnaire.

This part is for RETURNING STAFF MEMBERS ONLY. Do not do this unless you have been on the staff before.

Position most interested in (check one).

_____ Editor-In-Chief

_____ News Editor

_____ Feature Editor

_____ Copy Editor

_____ Sports Editor

_____ Infographics Editor

_____ Art Editor

_____ Advertising & Sales Manager

_____ Computer Design Editor (Page Editor)

_____ Distribution Manager

_____ Photographer (must be present at events)

_____ Reporter Write a paragraph stating why are you interested in

How To Start a High School or Middle School Newspaper

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE (NEWSPAPER)

(Get your English teacher to do this questionnaire)

Teacher's Name _____

Subject Taught _____

_____ has applied for a position on newspaper or yearbook staff.
Please respond to the following questions which will help me in my evaluation of this student. Additional remarks are welcome.

Circle your response:

1. Does this student have trouble meeting deadlines?

Often Sometimes Rarely Never

2. Does this student use nonstandard English in writing assignments?

Often Sometimes Rarely Never

3. Does this student have trouble working without close supervision?

Often Sometimes Rarely Never

4. How would you rate this student in terms of absences and tardies?

Absences: Never Infrequently Frequently

Tardies: Never Infrequently Frequently

5. How would you rate this student in terms of maturity?

Mature for age Average maturity Immature for age

6. How would you rate this student in terms of overall writing skill?

Excellent Good Average Poor

7. How would you rate this student in following directions?

Excellent Good Average Poor

8. How would you rate this student on his ability to accept criticism?

Excellent Good Average Poor

9. Rate this student on his ability to work well with others.

Excellent Good Average Poor

10. What kind of job would this student do for the newspaper staff?

Excellent Good Average Poor

Thank you for your help.

Susan Newell, newspaper and yearbook sponsor

Dear teacher: This questionnaire should be confidential. Place it in a sealed envelope if possible. Please return it to Susan Newell at Northridge as soon as possible. You may send it to me through intercampus mail if you are at another campus or place it in my box in the main office if you teach at Northridge.

***The Northridge Reporter* Advertisement Contract 2014/2015**

Northridge High School
2901 Northridge Road
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35406

Principal: Kyle Ferguson
School Phone: 759-3590
School Fax: 759-3605

Adviser: Susan Newell
Newspaper Phone: 759-3590 ext. 3432
Adviser E-mail: snewell@tusc.k12.al.us

Complete Name of Business _____

Address _____ City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____ Fax Number _____ Email _____

Date of Transaction: _____ 2014/2015

The client agrees to purchase the indicated ad space in *The Northridge Reporter* for the designated number of issues.

	Ad size	Price per issue	4 Issues	Savings	8 Issues	Savings
_____	Full page 11 in. x 17 in. (one per issue)	\$310	\$1000	\$240	\$2000	\$480
_____	Insert (8.5 in. x 11 in.)	\$250	\$850	\$150	\$1600	\$400
_____	1/2 page (7.5 in. x 10 in.)	\$160	\$540	\$100	\$1080	\$200
_____	1/4 page (7.5 in. x 5 in.)	\$85	\$290	\$50	\$580	\$100
_____	1/8 page (5 in. x 4 in.)	\$55	\$185	\$35	\$380	\$60
_____	1/16 page (5 in. x 2 in. or 2 in. x 5 in.)	\$35	\$110	\$30	\$230	\$50
_____	Subscription for all issues of the paper	\$20				

By purchasing an advertisement, the client agrees to supply the correctly-sized advertisement copy at the time of purchase or to approve an advertisement created by *The Northridge Reporter*.

Duration of Advertisement

*** Please indicate the projected publication date(s) you would like your advertisement to run.**

Issue 1 (September 19) _____ Issue 2 (October 24) _____ Issue 3 (November 14) _____

Issue 4 (December 12) _____ Issue 5 (February 6) _____ Issue 6 (March 6) _____

Issue 7 (April 3) _____ Issue 8 (May 8) _____

Payment is expected on the date of purchase unless special arrangements have been made otherwise. Make checks payable to *The Northridge Reporter* - Northridge High School.

Number of Issues _____ Total _____ Paid _____ Billed _____

One copy of the issue containing the advertisement will be sent to the client immediately after publication.

Business Contact's Name (Please print) _____

Business Contact's Signature _____

Student Salesperson's Name (Please Print) _____

**The Northridge Reporter* expects to be an award-winning newspaper with a distribution of 1200 or more. It is read by students, teachers, parents, community leaders and city board personnel. The newspaper has several links on the web: issuu.com, Facebook, twitter, <http://northridgereporter.wordpress.com/> and <http://nhsrecipes.weebly.com/>.

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