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# I WANT YOU

BY BRADLEY WILSON, CJE

Staff recruitment cannot be an afterthought. It has to be a well-planned priority, not only for the adviser and for editors but also for everyone on staff. Like everything else in student media, it is a team production.

Successful recruitment efforts involve visiting other classes, making personal contact with prospective students, producing fliers and videos and — perhaps most of all — making the journalism lab a place other students want to be.

As for other journalism pedagogical efforts, the best way is to learn from those who have developed successful strategies. Advisers throughout the nation willingly revealed their techniques, participated in a JEA survey that contributed enlightenment and shared materials their students produce as part of a year-round effort to recruit new staff members.

### I CREATED A SERIES OF POSTERS THAT ADVISERS IN MICHIGAN USE TO HELP WITH RECRUITMENT.

The idea was to find publication alumni who were not necessarily working in journalism so we could show how being on a staff could help students in career choices, no matter what jobs they pursue. I asked each graduate to provide a cool photo of her/himself and a 100-word statement about what journalism has meant to the individual. The series of six sold like proverbial hotcakes at the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association fall conference. | Brian Wilson, CJE, Waterford Kettering High School (Waterford, Mich.)

## JOURNALISM.

[learn to cover the action. Or actually be part of it]



I learned a great deal as the managing editor of the Carlson yearbook staff. This role helped to prepare me for my life after high school and now in my current career. Being the managing editor definitely allowed me to enhance my writing and communication skills. Furthermore, the position helped me to become a more disciplined and organized individual.

These traits and values that I gained while working in a team setting with the yearbook staff have undoubtedly helped me to be a better athletics administrator in a team setting with the Michigan State football program.

Brian Wilson  
JEA Yearbook staff  
Carlson High School  
Class of 2009

MIPA  
Michigan Interscholastic Press Association  
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## JOURNALISM.

[writing for fashion blogs right out of high school? That will never go out of fashion]



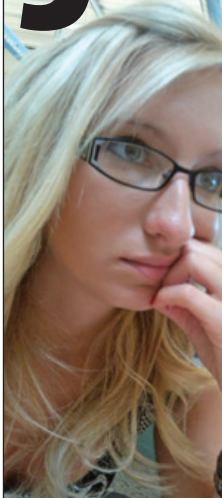
Entering the journalism program in high school changed my life. I'd always loved to write, but never knew how to apply that love to something outside my own personal, made-up stories. Being on the Main Four staff inspired me to pursue a career in journalism, and the skills I learned propelled me toward what I do today. I am a freelance writer and editor, and I absolutely hope to do this for the rest of my life.

Jenna Birch  
Main Four newspaper staff  
Hewitt High School  
Class of 2010

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## JOURNALISM.

[nothing looks better]



## Make presentations to English classes

Gay Buissink, Walla Walla (Wash.) High School, [gbuissink@wwps.org](mailto:gbuissink@wwps.org)

Right before registration for the next school year, my students organize how they will give a short presentation to selected English classes. They also plan a presentation for the photography classes. Next year's editor is in charge. He or she schedules the students and creates the presentations. Staff members also visit gifted classes in the middle schools.

Potential enrollees who hear about the class from current leaders, rather than from me, are more likely to join the class.

## Make the class fun, work with other teachers

Stan Bindell, Hopi Jr./Sr. High School (Keams Canyon, Ariz.), [stanfred53@yahoo.com](mailto:stanfred53@yahoo.com)

When journalism teachers make the class fun, word gets out. Schedule

plenty of trips and at least one out-of-state trip. Praise students at each opportunity when they excel. Work with colleagues, especially English teachers, to recruit students who can write for journalism and students who can speak for broadcast.

## Ask variety of teachers for recommendations

Alisa Wartick, Orchard Farm High School (St. Charles, Mo.), [awartick@ofsd.k12.mo.us](mailto:awartick@ofsd.k12.mo.us)

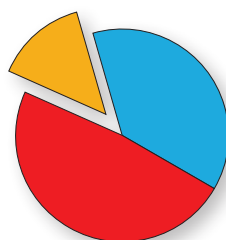
I had success recruiting for this year by asking teachers (specifically English teachers, art teachers and tech teachers) to recommend students. I went to the teachers individually so I could talk to them about specific skills or characteristics I was looking for and so they could tell me about their students. Most pulled up class lists and went through them with me.

Then I sent letters to prospective students. I revealed who had recommended them, described some



Originally published as the cover for the July 6, 1916, issue of Leslie's Weekly with the title "What Are You Doing for Preparedness?" this portrait of "Uncle Sam" became — according to James Montgomery Flagg, its creator — "the most famous poster in the world." More than 4 million copies were printed between 1917 and 1918 as the United States entered World War I and began sending troops and resources into war zones. Flagg used a modified version of his own face for Uncle Sam, and veteran Walter Botts provided the pose. The face also bears resemblance to Samuel Wilson, a Massachusetts meat-packer whose parents came to the United States from Scotland.

SOURCE: "The Most Famous Poster." American Treasures of the Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/tm015.html>



Including ALL OF THE MEDIA you advise, do you expect the student staff this year to be ...

- Larger (49%)
- Smaller (14%)
- About the same (38%)

The SURVEY was conducted online through [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com) Aug. 22 - Sept. 14. It was publicized through JEA e-mail distribution lists and social media, including Facebook and Twitter. n = 110



# JOURNALISM.

on applications and résumés]



Being on The Zebra Print newspaper staff in high school helped me excel in college. Not only did my writing improve drastically, but I also learned better communication and time-management skills. It taught me early on how to be responsible when interviewing, how important deadlines are, and it gave me an idea of what the real world of journalism is like.

As I've completed internships and gone through job interviews, employers are still impressed that I was the editor of my high school newspaper.

Erica Pender  
Zebra Print newspaper staff  
Wheat Ridge High School  
Class of 2008



# JOURNALISM.

[it just might be your ticket to a fancy new ride]

I am a Project Engineer and the lead engineer for Warfighter Support - meaning anything having to do with Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. This involves designing and testing armor, adding kits to continuously improve survivability and safety, and fielding new armor trucks.

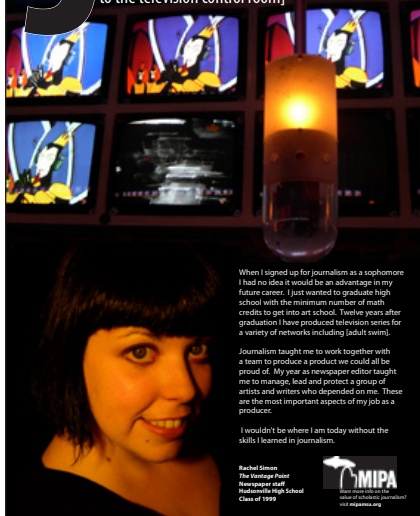
Journalism has helped me in many ways, from time management to meeting to budgeting. I have had to write papers and briefings and present them to upper management, both on the Army and the civilian side. Without the help of journalism, my reports would lack the professionalism required in this position.

Carly Gersand  
Warrior Yearbook staff  
Utica High School  
Class of 2009



# JOURNALISM.

[can take you from the high school newsroom to the television control room]



When I signed up for journalism as a sophomore I had no idea it would be an advantage in my future career. I just wanted to graduate high school with the minimum number of math credits to get into art school. Twelve years after graduation I have produced television series for a variety of networks including Adult Swim.

Journalism taught me to work together with a team to produce a product we could all be proud of. My year as newspaper editor taught me to manage, lead and protect a group of artists and writers who depended on me. These are the most important aspects of my job as a producer.

I wouldn't be where I am today without the skills I learned in journalism.

Rachel Simons  
The Hammer Press  
Newspaper staff  
Hawthorne High School  
Class of 2009



# JOURNALISM.

[it's not just for rock stars anymore]



I had an interest in writing, sure, but I was focused on pursuing a career in game design. It doesn't always go quite the way you think it will. Since then I have become a game designer, however, along the way I also became a freelance writer with articles published in several different magazines, and part of a semi-successful rock band who did all of their own management and content generation.

Deciding to join the yearbook and journalism staff when I did gave me a huge advantage in the job market and with this unexpected opportunities that still come along the way.

Morgan Brown  
Silver Yearbook staff  
Wheat Ridge High School  
Class of 2011



info on the class and asked them to consider signing up.

My fellow English teachers are also supportive and let me send staffers into their classes for about five minutes to explain the class and to invite students to sign up. We had them sign a sheet so I could see who was interested, but the students had to fill out the course requests themselves. I have 35 students signed up between two sections. At this time last year, I had 24.

## Send recruitment letter to show interest

Elizabeth Cyr, Stockbridge (Mich.) High School, [cyr@panthernet.net](mailto:cyr@panthernet.net).

I ask for recommendations from my colleagues and send prospective students a recruitment letter right before scheduling the year before. When students see that an adult saw potential in them, they are proud and encouraged to pursue it. Recommendations, however, are not

required.

I also ask for a few students who need considerable help in their English studies to give them an extra opportunity to work on skills. I can take only a couple, though, because they would eventually work on the publication and that could be a disaster for the students and for the paper. Last year, I accepted a student who had barely passed English his first three years in high school. He loved journalism and carried an A/B the entire semester. He simply had to find that interest.

## Take advantage of schoolwide events

Mark Webber, Vidal M. Trevino Magnet School (Laredo, Texas), [mwebb23@yahoo.com](mailto:mwebb23@yahoo.com)

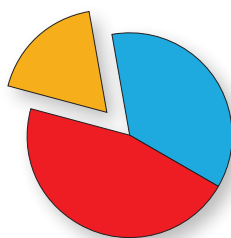
We are a fine arts/communications magnet high school, and students spend one-half the day with us and the other half at their "home" high school. While with us they take

communication classes or classes in one of the four fine arts areas and some academic classes.

As a school, the district schedules us and the two other magnet schools for presentations at the district's four middle schools. In addition to these big presentations, departments themselves also schedule mini-presentations. We participated in the big presentation, and my department also had a mini-presentation, which attracted a great number of prospective students.

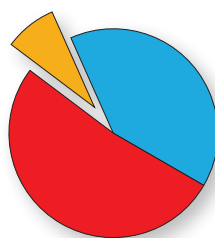
Also, I've reached out to middle school yearbook advisers but have found they are not as receptive because they are in that position only for one or two years. Their priority is the pressure they face from preparing their English or other subject area students for state-mandated testing.

In addition, middle or high school students who want to be in journalism will sometimes contact me. Usually they are strong students already in pre-AP or in Advanced



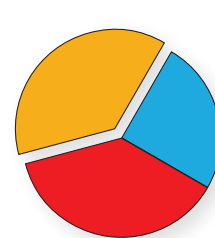
If you advise the student **NEWSPAPER**, do you expect the student staff to be ...

- Larger (46%)
- Smaller (18%)
- About the same (36%)



If you advise the student **YEARBOOK**, do you expect the student staff to be ...

- Larger (52%)
- Smaller (8%)
- About the same (40%)



If you advise **BROADCAST**, do you expect the student staff to be ...

- Larger (38%)
- Smaller (38%)
- About the same (25%)

**Testimonials from past editors:**

"Stop reading, just do it. Go sign up immediately. During those two years I learned skills that would prove to be invaluable to me later in life. Beyond learning to write and analyze critically, I learned the satisfaction of meeting a deadline and being responsible for a team. I loved that my opinion mattered. You will matter!"  
—Melissa Gonzalez, former Editor-in-Chief

"Joining the Gusher staff has set me above the curve in all of my college classes. Wolfe allows his students to further their knowledge and skills in their areas of most interest and encourages them to thrive." My three years on the Gusher staff taught me the most to prepare me for college. Not only did I improve my writing and design skills, I also learned how to manage my time and network with community members, and gained management skills at the editorial level."  
—Jenny Gonzalez, former Editor-in-Chief

"Journalism was the best class I took in high school. I was able to improve my writing skills with the help of Mr. Wolfe and my peers, which eventually led to a job writing for The Taft Independent. Being on the Gusher staff was challenging, exciting and always fun. It opened up doors to new experiences with music, books, movies and so much more! I couldn't have asked for time better spent in high school."  
—Jessica Miller, former Editor-in-Chief

"(Working on the Gusher) really improved my writing, spelling, and vocabulary. Even more than that, which I consider to be most rewarding, is the personal growth and experience gained from it. I made wonderful memories and made even more wonderful friendships!"  
—Courtney Glendinning, former Features Editor

"Journalism is the class I remember most fondly, and most vividly, out of all four years at TUHS. It's a group of people from different cliques with different opinions, writing styles and interests who join together to create a newspaper for the school to enjoy while gaining new friendships. I learned there was more to taking a picture than just pointing and shooting, but rather trying to capture feeling moments, like those of our high school days."  
—Cristina Gonzalez, former Photo Editor



**The Gusher Staff**  
put yourself in the picture

**Looking for that special class that will make a difference in your day?**



**The Gusher might be for you!**

**Need a Netbook?**  
Staff members receive their own netbook, which can be used in Journalism and all other classes.

**What will I learn?**

- Journalism is less like a class and more like a working newsroom. You'll:
  - write a variety of stories (news, features, sports, entertainment, and opinion)
  - interview all kinds of people including students, teachers, & community members
  - learn how to manage time in order to complete multiple stories on deadline
  - work as part of a team to produce a high-quality product: a newspaper everybody wants to read
  - take photographs that tell a story ("photo-journalism") & use professional equipment
  - use Photoshop and InDesign (page design and layout software)
- You'll work hard, develop confidence, and have a lot of fun working as part of a great team!
- If you're planning to attend college, you should know that admissions officers look for leaders in academic areas...like editors of the school paper. Past Gusher editors have gone on to attend such schools as UCLA, UC Berkeley, Cal Poly SLO, Pepperdine University, CSU Northridge, Cal Lutheran University, Cal Baptist University, UC Merced and CSUB.

**Requirements to join:**

- a grade of A or B in your current English class
  - a good attendance record for the current school year
  - a writing sample (ex-your best milestone essay)
  - an interest in learning about journalism and improving your writing and thinking skills
- What's in it for me?**
- "High School Journalism Month," a study conducted by Indiana University and released by the Newspaper Association of America, showed journalism students:
  - had a higher high school grade point average, ACT composite score, and higher scores in ACT English, compared to non-journalism students.
  - had a higher college freshman GPA and did better in their first college English classes.
  - GPA's were also higher in math, social studies, science, foreign language and art.
- Not only did these journalism students do better in the classroom, they were also more likely to be involved in extra-curricular activities or take a leadership position at school.

**How do I apply?**

Attach this application form to a recent writing sample and deliver to Mr. Wolfe in Room 107 or drop it off in Mr. Wolfe's mailbox in the Principal's Office.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level (circle one):  
9th 10th 11th 12th

Fall Semester Grade in English: \_\_\_\_\_

English Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Any previous Journalism or Yearbook experience? \_\_\_\_\_

Any experience using Photoshop, Illustrator, or other graphics software? \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS IS THE BROCHURE I HAVE USED THE PAST TWO YEARS TO RECRUIT STUDENTS FOR THE GUSHER.** I give some to current staffers to give to friends they think would be good additions to the staff. Then I take a couple editors and visit the ninth- and 10th-grade English classes to make a five- or 10-minute pitch to students. I hand out the brochure to students who express immediate interest and leave some with the teacher for those who might decide later to investigate journalism. ¶ Also, other teachers occasionally recommend students to me. I either find a way to connect with that student and give them the brochure to take away from our chat, or I mail it home with a brief cover letter. ¶ Finally, the four counselors have copies of the brochure on hand to give to students they think have the right skills and interests. ¶ I teach at a school with about 900 students, and my staff varies from a low of 12-13 to a high of 20. Our biggest problem is getting boys to enroll. They do not enroll in yearbook or other electives that have any academic rigor. At our school, girls dominate in most academic endeavors, in extracurricular activities and in electives of this type. | Bill Wolfe, CJE, Taft (Calif.) Union High School

Placement classes and have an interest in journalism so I will accept them. Students in the program often recruit others who have an interest in what we do.

## Host eighth-graders for journalism visits

**Steven Baker, DeSoto (Texas) High School, sbaker@desotoisd.org**

We take recruiting serious at DeSoto High School.

This last spring we had all the eighth graders from four schools visit the journalism rooms. The process works smoothly. We give them a tour, hand out materials and take their group photos. Then before registration we participate

in Freshman Campus Showcase in which parents and students can visit one evening and see what courses are being offered. We show videos, display work and sign up students at that time.

As a way to welcome my two freshman classes, we host a reception in the spring during the middle of the day and invite all the students to my classroom for cookies and soft drinks. They get a chance to mingle with the staffers. We also visit the pre-AP classes on the freshman campus.

I want only the best and the brightest. I want students who are graduating at the top of their class.

*Always be thinking about recruitment .... One-on-one recruiting seems the most effective .... Once they can put a face to how they are valued, they are more likely to sign up.*

### SURVEY RESPONSE



Don't ever let up. Kids reaching kids works best.  
The perception that it is cool or fun is worth a ton.  
Try a variety of promotion ideas.

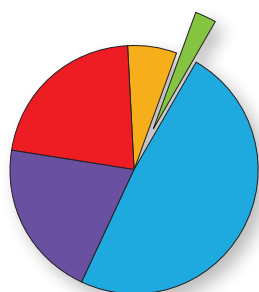
## SURVEY RESPONSE



At Kirkwood High School each sports team creates a **PROMOTIONAL POSTER** with the team's schedule. We thought, "Hey, let's have some fun and do the same." We are always trying to find ways to be visible, promote the J program and, most importantly, have fun. The first year, we sort of just shot the shot.



Last year, however, we did the "Glee" and "Modern Family" theme. This year: "Pioneer Parkour" and "Call of Duty." We put them up around school, in hallways, offices, rooms, etc. The staff loves trying to come up with the next creative idea. Mitch Eden, MJE, Kirkwood (Mo.) High School



Which of the following items has had the **MOST INFLUENCE OVER STUDENT ENROLLMENT** in your media program over the last year — either positively or negatively?

- It's a fun place to be. (49%)
- Being a part of the student media is "cool." (22%)
- Students can make a positive impact on the campus. (20%)
- Counselors just need somewhere to put students. (6%)
- Students want to work professionally in media. (3%)
- It's an easy class. (0%)
- Parents encourage students to participate in student media. (0%)

Some respondents listed **OTHER** things that influenced enrollment in their classes. Below are their responses.

- Journalism is seen as THE college prep class in our school.
- Students are recruited into the program and find a "home."
- The new students joined because I taught them in English in seventh and eighth grade. Between my encouragement and already knowing and having rapport with me, they decided journalism would be good for them.
- Competition with other healthy electives during the same period results in a decline in enrollment.
- Students like to work with me and feel the experience will be good for college.
- Multimedia journalism builds digital footprints and teaches students skills they can use in non-journalism related fields.
- Interest in journalism adds to the expectation that the course will help with college applications.
- Students understand the necessity and the responsibilities of scholastic journalism. They want to make a difference.
- The staff becomes a family.
- Some have a passion, and some think it's cool.
- It is a fun place to be, and intro classes are open to all grades.
- Students want to be on an award-winning team.



*Once you have established a culture that yearbook is cool, kids will want to be a part of it.*

CRYSTAL KAZMIERSKI

## Start recruiting for next year

**RANK** (from most successful to least successful) of items in terms of their importance in recruiting students into scholastic media programs at your school in the past year.

- Direct mail recruitment
- One-on-one contact from current staff members
- Visiting the middle school to recruit students
- Social media presence in recruiting students
- Fliers across campus
- Contact with parents at open house or other events
- Website presence in recruiting students
- Visiting with counselors to get student enrolled
- Teacher recommendations
- Visiting classes
- Student organization recruitment events such as org fairs.
- Visiting the middle school to recruit students



Visit [jea.org](http://jea.org)  
for even more  
responses from  
the survey.



**SARAH NICHOLS, MJE, Whitney High School (Rocklin, Calif.)** | Every day is a recruitment opportunity. Students notice the staff shirts and the way yearbook staff members conduct themselves, from professionalism during interviews to excitement and pride at the distribution event. Younger students from other classes see the framed photos in my classroom from convention trips and workshops. Every post from a yearbook account on Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram ... if it's good, we look good so people want to be part of it. We work to create a daily buzz about the publication, and we frame that dialogue as something fun and exciting — something important — rather than simply something time-consuming and potentially stressful.

**SURVEY RESPONSES** | Push the classes' strengths, especially how this class will help students.

Talk to students and have your staff talk to students. If each staff member is able to convince just one new student to join the staff, you can replace the "retirees" and still add to your numbers.

Find a way to promote your program that impacts the entire campus.

Try to establish links with middle school media advisers.

Recruit in middle school. If you don't recruit, you will never discover students that will become valuable for the staff.

Visit feeder schools. Work hard to make Journalism 1 fun and interesting. I use my J-I students to work like a junior varsity yearbook staff, and that helps them get excited about yearbook.

The counselors can be your best friends if you use them wisely.



**CRYSTAL KAZMIERSKI, Arrowhead Christian Academy (Redlands, Calif.)** | We get referrals from English and art teachers and invite those students to attend an informational meeting that is open to anyone. Somehow getting invited because a teacher recommended them helps to get them there.

Sometimes I send a team to English classes of ninth- and 10th-graders to tell them about yearbook and how to get into the class and some of the cool things we do and places we get to visit. Once you have established a culture that yearbook is cool, students will want to be a part of it.

**SURVEY RESPONSES** | Current staff — students' peers — are a much stronger recruitment tool than anything that can come from an adult. I will have each staff member choose two students who they think would be strong staff members and write them a personal note suggesting they take the class (with a piece of candy of course).

It's personal. It makes a difference when you speak to potential "journalists" in person and let them know why you think they would be a great addition to your staff.

Students are the best recruiters — and the adviser asking teacher-recommended students personally also makes a big difference. Having a good product is key. People want to be part of it.

Don't ever let up. Kids reaching kids works best. The perception that it is cool or fun is worth a ton. Try a variety of promotion ideas.



**KIM GREEN, MJE Columbus (Ind.) North High School** | Our yearbook seems to recruit itself. We have 47 students on staff, but that does not mean we are on easy street. We lost seven talented students from last year's staff at the end of their first year, and we cannot afford to let that kind of experience walk out the door. After speaking with each of those who chose not to return, I related to my editorial

board what I learned: Students leave when they do not believe their ideas matter or when what they do gets redone without the chance of learning what to do to fix their work.

**SURVEY RESPONSES** | The better current staff members feel about their involvement, the more they will talk it up to classmates. Also, the better the book, the more people who are represented in it accurately, the more students will want to be a part of it.

Pound the pavement early. Start recruiting for next year now.

Never let up on recruiting (my school now drops classes that are not full so we have to be ever-vigilant), send students to middle schools to show prospective students your print and online publications, publicize your successes in local newspapers and school newsletters to reach parents and have a quality product that students want to be associated with.

Word of mouth is what works. Students encourage one another to join because of the balance of fun and hard work.

Let the students sell it to other students.



**H. L. HALL, MJE, retired, Hendersonville, Tenn.** | Yesss! Yesss! Yesss! Recruiting is important. The best recruiters are current staff members. My editors would visit all English classes to talk to students about the newspaper and yearbook. They also went to the middle schools to talk to English classes there.

I found that the best thing that worked for me, however, was to ask English teachers for recommendations. Then I would write a personal letter to those students they recommended and encourage them to come to the informational meeting. Most did, and most eventually joined one of the staffs.

**SURVEY RESPONSES** | Students want a family away from home, a tribe. Get your staff to make a 4-minute video with photos and video and music from the past year, they should show students working and having fun. Send two staff members to every English class in the spring before course sign-ups. They show the video, answer questions and hand out applications.

Personalize it

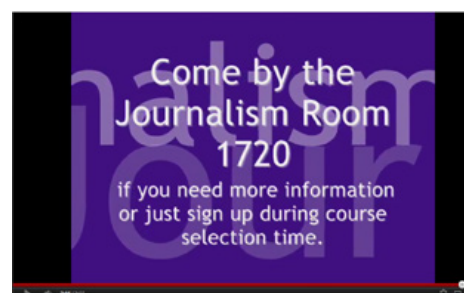
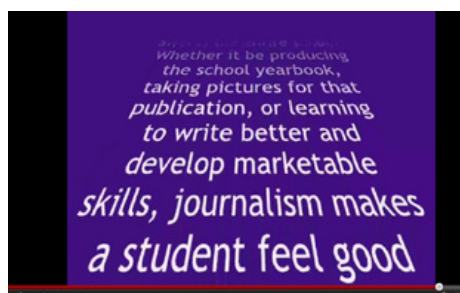
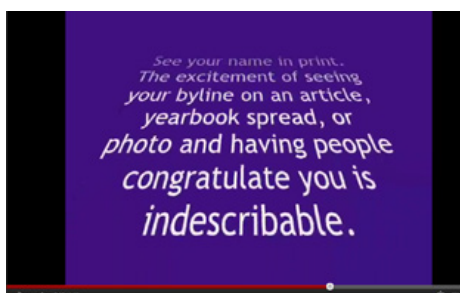
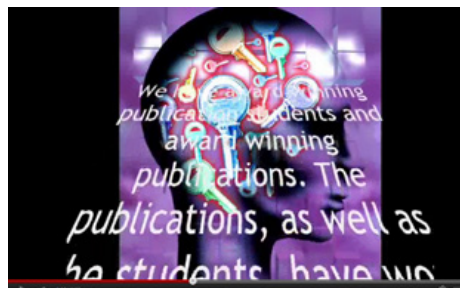
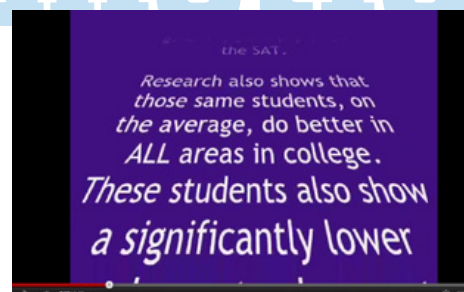
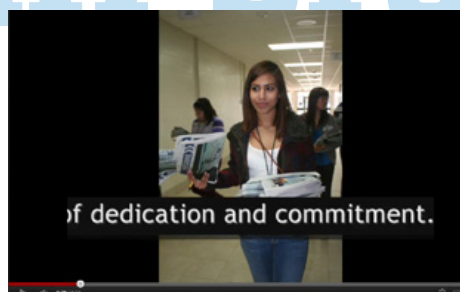
Make sure you brand your program and you are the face of it. Students will come and go, but you are the constant driver of the class. You must be out there. You can allow students to do the talking, but you must be there so future students and parents know who you are.

Have teachers speak to and encourage students in their classes who they feel would be strong candidates for student media programs.

Word of mouth about the program by students who are involved and teachers whom I talk to about the program has helped a lot.

Start early.





## HEY YOU!

### TOP 10 REASONS TO JOIN

## the broadview

1. Hours of fun with Zoë, Sara & Anjali
2. GPA credit
3. Improve your writing skillz, pass APs
4. Quality time with Sena-nator
5. Travel the country
6. Press access to events (photograph concerts, meet Obama)
7. High-tech training in layout, design & photography
8. Learn AP Style; impress your friends
9. See your name in print, win awards & be famous
10. We are *magical*

See Ms. Sena, Zoë Newcomb, Sara Kloefer, or Anjali Shrestha to apply.

The students made a video last year, and we tried showing it during lunch periods. We did not get a big audience during lunches, and newspaper numbers were lower than ever this year. Yearbook numbers were lower than the previous year, but 31 kids was still enough for two classes. They will try again with some changes to this and push it through the school's Facebook page, the publication's website ([www.jvhsnews.com](http://www.jvhsnews.com)) and other social media outlets. If we get the phone application a student is working on, we will push it through that too. | Margie Comstock, Jersey Village High School (Houston), margot.Comstock@cfisd.net



The staff members of *The Broadview* uses everything from posters to personal contact to wearing T-shirts as part of their recruitment efforts | Tracy Anne Sena, CJE, Convent of the Sacred Heart High School, San Francisco, [tracy.sena@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tracy.sena@sbcglobal.net)

I am proud that *The Broadview* staff has always been diverse — and not merely in terms of ethnicity. We have had a number of students with a wide range of learning differences: sequencing problems that made it difficult to remember steps in curving a photo or even following a set of commands to a student who was so dyslexic she could not differentiate between a printed period and a comma although she understood the function of both.

We actually recruited many of these students for staff because we knew they were great storytellers, designers, artists or photographers. Most of the time, these students did not see themselves as newspaper "material" — fortunately we did. The fact is, some of our most successful staffers over the years have been students whom either the editors or I have encouraged to enroll in journalism. It is pretty human that sometimes all of us like to be asked to be part of a group or organization that we already admire.

There have been a few times that I have personally recruited students on staff specifically because a teacher or a counselor or an administrator has come to me about an individual who has not yet found her niche in high school. She was not a member of a sports team, the performing arts or other clubs and activities on campus. Being a teen is hard enough, but when a teen feels like she does not belong, life can be miserable. Scholastic journalism allows students to be part of a team that does real work and puts out a real product while providing a real service.

In years during which numbers have been low, I have asked the staff — or students in my other classes — why they think the numbers were down. For two of the last four years, we had issues because a schedule change made it next to impossible for students to sign up for Intro and J-1. Because there was strong empirical evidence (and because journalism was not the only elective affected), we had another schedule revision that has bounced the numbers back up.

It is also important to find out what the perception of the atmosphere of the newspaper staff is to the student populace. "Oh, it's so hard!" "Deadlines are so stressful," and the other realities taken out of context can detour students from joining staff. Talk to the staff about possible misconceptions. Encourage staffers to get out the word about the fun things the staff does — the great food parents bring in for work nights and how much they love the camaraderie. Wear staff T-shirts, sweatshirts and other swag often.