

Alternative Story Forms to Enhance News Coverage

Charticle or Listing

Use this for a comparison. Then/Now. Our school/Their School. Old/New. AP/Honors/Dual Enrollment. In State College/Out of State College.

Or use the charticle to contrast extremes:

- School/non-school
- Work/play
- Sanctioned/non-sanctioned
- Formal/informal
- What we wanted/what we got

Choose what ties into the news best to add to the news, not create it!

Timeline

At least six plot points within a specified period of time. Can be years, minutes or any time span in between.

(Example: From plans through construction through opening of a new school. Homecoming countdown. How the minutes of lunch period are used.)

Quote Collections: Make sure you ask an open-ended question.

What did you like best about ... (homecoming, fall dance, pep rally, football season ... favorite computer games to play when there's free computer time? WITH MUGSHOTS!

Info Boxes / Fast Facts

List the facts of a story, particularly if you're writing a follow-up.

Add key info: How to get there. Where to find it. When/where it's happening.

Highlight additional resources, web sites to visit.

Provide sports scores, results or schedules.

Add information about a key player or personality. (Favorites: book, movie, singer, hero, pet peeve.

This is good for teachers, superlatives, class officers.)

Club Profile (Name of club, purpose, number of members, officers, major activities, best fundraiser)

By the Numbers, another type of info box with numbers, trivia or statistics (Example: choices in the cafeteria, different countries represented in school, books in the library, computers in the school, languages spoken ...)

How-to or Step-by-Step

List how to do something in a logical or chronological order. (Example: How to choose a college. How to apply to college. How to avoid a long cafeteria line. How to make an appointment in student services. How to run a club.)

Map

The hardest part of this is figuring out how you will reproduce it. Don't do it if you can't get it in print! Think color, perspective and what you are showing. (Examples: Where the best wi-fi or cell phone reception is in the school. Nearby restaurants for after-school snacks. School security camera zones. Best tailgating spots for the football game.)

Annotated Photo or Diagram

Provide information visually using a sample photo or diagram. Example: Cost of prom outfit from head to toe.

HOW TO CONDUCT A POLL

THE SAMPLE

A representative sample includes each major group in proportion to its size and number in the overall school population.

- ✓ Male/female. Grade level. Race/ethnic breakdown. Honor student / SPED/ regular ed.
- ✓ Choose your sample groups based on what you want to know in your poll.

PROCEDURE:

- ✓ Select students alphabetically (every fifth name on the list of all students)
- ✓ Every student with English in third period (with permission of teachers/principal)
- ✓ A selection of homerooms from each class level
- ✓ A selection of classrooms in one period in which teachers have given you permission to poll. (Might require follow-up.)

SAMPLE SIZE:

- ✓ In smaller schools, maybe you can survey everyone, or almost everyone
- ✓ In larger schools, the sample size will affect the accuracy. Aim for about 10 percent of the total. If your sample reflects the population of the school, you'll have a reasonable result. The more people surveyed, the more accurate the results.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- ✓ Questions should be interesting and related to the topic of your news story.
- ✓ **Close-ended** (easy to ask, but not much info): Should a salad bar be added in the cafeteria?
- ✓ **Open-ended** (more variety in answers): What improvement would you like to see in the cafeteria?
- ✓ **Intensity Scale:** If there were a salad bar in the cafeteria, I would eat it at least once a week. (Strongly agree, Agree, No Opinion, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

THE INTERVIEWS AND INTERVIEWERS

- ✓ Ask questions as written or have respondents write their answers on paper.
- ✓ Explain that "cute" or "clever" answers will be discarded, not counted.
- ✓ If conducting the poll as an interview, do it in a place where others are not listening, as that may affect answers.

PROCESSING AND ANALYZING

- ✓ Separate forms by grade and count by gender in each grade level.
- ✓ Divide again by any other background data you have collected (such as ethnicity, honors program enrollment or where students live)
- ✓ Make sure your reporting on the data is fully supported.

THE FINAL REPORT

- ✓ Always include the sample size, the exact wording of each question and the survey methodology (how you collected the information).
- ✓ Be careful not to make a conclusion that is not supported by your data!