

This Week's Focus: Thinking Visually

While [this data from The Poynter Institute](#) is more than 20 years old, nothing has given us reason to think our readers don't still prioritize visual cues over text. According to Poynter, we know the following:

- Ninety percent of readers enter pages through large photos, artwork or display type (headlines, promos, etc.).
- Running a visual element with text makes it three times more likely that at least some of the text will be read.
- Headlines are more likely to be read when a photo is nearby.
- The bigger the picture, the more likely readers are to read the cutline — to be intrigued.

However, despite these findings, many of our students still prioritize writing/text over visual communication methods. In [Volume 1, Issue 17](#), I provided some resources to help students think more visually (NOTE: You'll need to be a JEA member to see that archived issue). This week's issue expands on that.

THE LESSON: ALTERNATIVE COVERAGE EXERCISES (A.C.E.)

In this weekly activity, I provide my students with a current news story that contains a lot of data or factual information. Science and sports stories work particularly well for this. Then, [using this form](#), the students try to work out how they might either accompany the story with visual information or, in some cases, replace written content entirely with graphics, photos, etc. The idea is to help students change their mindset from a text-first approach to a visual-first one. In other words, rather than always thinking someone must write a story, the activity allows them to begin to prioritize the possibility of visual coverage. [Here's an example of an A.C.E. I modeled](#) for my students to get you started.

FIND IT AT JEA.ORG:

Sidebars, supplemental design formats

Description

In this lesson, students will learn about the different types of alternative story forms, also called sidebars. After studying samples from student media, they will suggest alternative story forms for a common topic. Then students will sketch their own alternative story form idea to improve an existing page or spread in student media.

Objectives

- Students will analyze a news article to determine possible sidebars to create.
- Students will produce a sidebar for a news article to enhance the story.
- Students will apply visual design concepts to create a sidebar.

The link

The link to the full lesson is [HERE](#).

NOTE: This lesson is available free to **everyone** during the dates listed at the top of this page. If you're not a member yet, consider joining JEA today for access to all of the resources.



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Team Builder

C.E. Sikkenga, Grand Haven (Michigan) High School

THE HOT SEAT

This is modified from the segment ESPN used to do on Sports Center. We have sort of a bar stool/high chair in my classroom that we call "the hot seat." In the first month or two of the year, most days we put one or two kids on the hot seat. Once they go up, it's sort of a live "Ask Me Anything" — the class peppers the

person in the hot seat with questions. We usually set a timer for five minutes or so. This achieves several purposes. One, we start it after a brief, basic lesson on interviewing so we can use the activity to work on asking interesting questions that draw engaging responses. Two, it lets everybody get to know one another. Three, more often than not, it also builds culture. Some years classes sort of adopt bizarre questions that become a running joke ("Would you rather fight one horse-sized duck or 100 duck-sized horses" was popular one year).

ADVISER ADVICE

- **Get connected with your state organization and JEA. The mentors you meet, the resources you'll acquire and the friends you make more than offset the stress of advising.**
- **Don't try to do everything at once. Getting good at this job is a process. Pick one or two achievable goals to get better at each year and build from there.**
- **Attend as many workshops, conferences, etc., as you can.**
- **Read a newspaper or two every day if you can. Share the examples you like with your students. That enthusiasm will be contagious.**

You've Got Style

*Suggestions from Cindy**

SPELLING CONTINUED

Here are more words that you can find in the AP Stylebook that are listed to help users with spelling. In some cases, the listing is the AP preference and not the only way it can be spelled.

<i>shortchange</i>	<i>successor</i>
<i>smolder</i>	<i>tattletale</i>
<i>soundstage</i>	<i>teammate</i>
<i>sports writer</i>	<i>tidbit</i>
<i>springtime</i>	<i>timeout</i>
<i>staterwide</i>	<i>ukulele</i>
<i>storyline</i>	<i>vacuum</i>

* Style pro Cindy Horchem, CJE, is a retired adviser and the current JEA business and projects coordinator

