

CSPAA NOTES



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CREATE A STAFF MANUAL: *a critical tool for students, advisers*

As many advisers continue to take on the responsibility of more than one publication and publication editors are usually involved in several activities in their schools, staff organization and the development of a comprehensive staff manual become critical.

Advisers and editors need as many tools as possible to make their jobs easier. By working together they can develop a “how to” manual that will answer all staff questions and ensure a successful publication. The staff manual also helps staffers become more independent. It will be their most valuable resource.

For a staff manual to be complete, one needs to include the following items:

POLICIES

Content policy

This is determined by your primary audience. For example a K-12 literary magazine’s content would be different from that of a high school only magazine. A private school yearbook or newspaper may face more limitation as to what can be covered. When generating a content policy, the editors and adviser need to ask these questions:

- Is the editorial board the decision-making body of the publication which governs its day-to-day operation?
- Is the publication an accessible public forum?
- Is a prior review by the administration policy in effect?

Goals and objectives of the publication

Does the publication have a mission statement? Who are the primary audiences? Secondary audiences? How often will it be published? The staff needs to know why the publication exists and the goals it hopes to achieve.

Advertising

Does the publication sell ads? Make sure the staff knows the pricing and guidelines for ads. For example, in the yearbook, a set

of parent guidelines for what is acceptable in a memory block; for the newspaper establish that the paper has the right to object to any advertisement that does not meet the paper’s standards as specified in their editorial policy.

Letters to the editor

Make sure your letters to the editor policy is made clear. It could state that your newspaper will not print anything deemed libelous, obscene or in poor taste; that the paper reserves the right to postpone, edit or withhold from publication anything submitted which does not meet those specifications.

The publication should also state that the meaning of submissions will not be altered, but the editors reserve the right to correct spelling, grammar and punctuation if necessary. The editors and adviser will make the final decision on all material appearing in the newspaper.

Death policy

Establish this policy before such a tragic event occurs. Decide under what circumstances the publication may not include the manner of death.

Two examples are:

– The newspaper will acknowledge the death of a student or faculty member with a straight news story which contains a picture of the deceased (if available), the date of birth, the date of death, and the cause of death, if appropriate. The publication will also run a feature story on the deceased with a minimum of two appropriate candid (if available) and quotes from family and friends.

If there are siblings of the deceased in the school, an advance copy will be taken to the parents/guardians.

No heavy rule lines or religious symbols will be used.

– The yearbook will acknowledge the death of a student or faculty member with a feature story which contains a picture of

the deceased (if available) and one action candid (if available), the date of birth, the date of death, and the cause of death (if appropriate) with quotes from family and friends. The story will emphasize the “good” memories.

If there are siblings of the deceased in the school, an advance copy will be taken to the parents/guardians.

No heavy rule lines or religious symbols will be used.

MANUAL NUTS AND BOLTS

Staff directory

Include staff names, staff position, homeroom, e-mail, phone number, cell phone, address, birthday. Set up an e-mail notification system.

Organizational chart

This is the “who’s the boss” of the staff. The purpose is so everyone understands the chain of command and how stories will move through the editing process.

Editors and staff job descriptions

It is important to delineate what the responsibilities are for each position on staff as well as for what the adviser is responsible. This ensures that all jobs are completed.

Submission deadlines

The editors and adviser need to sit down and do their page submission deadlines for the yearbook and literary magazine, and their deadline schedule for each issue of the newspaper as well as the mini deadline schedule for separate page elements (advertising, standing columns, editorials, dated and non-dated news/features, photo assignments etc.) The staff needs these dates so they can plan their work to make the deadlines. Consult a school calendar when setting these due dates to make sure they are not in conflict with any major school activities.

10 different caption lead-in styles

This helps the writer use different lead-ins to avoid redundancy. The options are: proper noun, common noun, adverb, adjective, participle, gerund, infinitive, dependent clause, prepositional phrase, direct quotation. Provide an example of each for the writers.

Wait, there's more!

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