

# Beginning an Elementary School Journalism Club: A Step-by-Step Guide



An 8-week, after-school program  
for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students  
created for the Franklin School,  
North Andover, Massachusetts  
2004-2008

# Introduction

The following course plan is designed for volunteer parents or other adults who would like to start a basic school newspaper for an elementary school but are frightened or overwhelmed (or both!) by the thought. You don't need journalism education or experience to teach the course or to start the newspaper. You should simply love working with young students, have the time to devote to the project, gain the support of your school's administration, and have access to a computer with (at a minimum) a word-processing program and printer. It's easy, fun, and a great learning experience for both you and the students. My hope is that this 8-week course plan gives novice sponsors the confidence and tools to get started quickly. For me, getting started was the biggest hurdle (I was in the frightened *and* overwhelmed camp). Once I had a couple of 8-week sessions under my belt, I started modifying the plans to meet each group's needs, and the workload was significantly reduced. By our third issue, it wasn't scary at all!



## The History

Our student newspaper started with a problem to solve. In 2004, the PTO at the Franklin School had a difficult time recruiting parents to write and produce several issues of a whole-school newsletter called the *Franklin Flyer*. Sporadically throughout the years, ambitious parents had done a great job writing the articles, photographing school events, and producing the newsletter, but it was an intimidating project produced by parents for parents. What we had going for us was an active and supportive PTO and school staff and very generous parents at our PTO fund-raising events. The annual budget of \$1,500 was already in place, which for us translates to three black-and-white printed issues a year at \$500 each (20 pages, 550 copies).

In thinking about how to better promote this project, the PTO co-presidents that year, Kathleen Keith and Karen Trowbridge, thought it would be great to have 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students contribute to the *Franklin Flyer* newsletter through writing, photography, and artwork. They envisioned a true collaboration of parents, teachers, and students. After a few meetings to discuss the nuts and bolts of how this could be accomplished, we developed and refined the plan for an after-school class called the Journalism Club, recruited a few brave students, and the *Franklin Flyer* newspaper was re-born as a mostly student-written publication.

Our Journalism Club has developed over the past few years into a fun, writing-focused, 8-week course offered three times a year completely free of charge to any interested 3rd, 4th, or 5th grader at the Franklin School. The students meet one afternoon a week from 2:50 to 4 p.m. Each 8-week session produces a school newspaper (in standard newsletter format) made up of mostly feature articles written by students. We have two adult articles in each issue: one article from

our principal on page 1 and one article from a PTO board member on page 19 and/or 20. Unlike some other school newspaper programs around the country, our students don't design the pages, although most of them offer opinions on how the pages should look. The students either handwrite their articles or they use their home computers to generate their rough drafts. I take it from there, producing page proofs on the last two weeks of the course for the final edits. Certainly if your school has a computer lab and desktop publishing software, this would be both convenient and a great addition to the course plan in the last two to three weeks.

## The Goals

So what specifically do the student reporters at our school do? Each reporter chooses and develops a newspaper project. Most are feature articles about people or events in school, but occasionally a student reporter gets a great idea for a poll, a question-and-answer article, or an opinion piece, so it does vary for each issue. The important thing is that the reporter chooses his or her own topic and loves the topic. Otherwise, it's a painful process for all. Each student reporter collects information for that project, organizes the information in an appropriate format, plans or creates photography and/or artwork for the project, and writes and edits the article. The students sharpen their writing skills and learn the basics of journalism. Mostly the students have a lot of fun and get to experience the thrill of seeing their hard work in a published form for a real audience—our school community.

Need more reasons for starting a school newspaper? Franklin School is a member of NESPA (National Elementary Schools Press Association, [www.nespa.org](http://www.nespa.org)), and this organization offers these additional reasons to start a school newspaper:

1. Students are encouraged to write about things that are meaningful to them—to write “what they know.”
2. The guidelines of journalistic style provide structure and discipline.
3. Deadlines hold students responsible and accountable.
4. Editing and rewriting are an important part of newspaper work.
5. Students have a voice. They learn about writing responsibly.



6. Newspaper writing meets the needs of students of many abilities.

7. Putting a newspaper together requires great cooperative effort.

8. Students learn and apply real-life skills by publishing a paper: organizing, prioritizing, meeting deadlines, making and keeping appointments, creative problem solving.

(Levin, *Kids in Print*, 4)



## The Foundation

Our journalism course coincides with several composition standards of the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework and complements writing skills students are developing in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades.

1. Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail. (General Standard 19: Writing)
2. Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose. (General Standard 23: Organizing Ideas in Writing)
3. Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions. (General Standard 24: Research)

The course is organized around the three stages of the writing process as detailed in the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework:

1. Prewriting (focusing, planning, drafting)
2. Writing (drafting, assessing, revising)
3. Revision (assessing, editing, publishing, evaluating)

([www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks))

## The Specifics

This course works well with 10 students and two adults per session. Because of its popularity, we've had as many as 15 students in a session, but that's not ideal given our printing space constraints (20 pages for each issue) and the need for students, particularly the 3rd graders, to "workshop" their articles with an adult or older peer near the end of the course. Certainly this course could be offered more often each year, or two groups of reporters each session could produce two separate newspapers—it is only dependent upon the level of interest at your school and your budget. One idea we've had recently is to expand the program to include shorter "newsflash" editions (for more timely topics) that are available on our website only, which is essentially free beyond the time it takes to pull it together and put in on the site. Website-only newspapers are becoming much more popular these days. The NESPA website has links to several across the country.

In addition to completing one or two activities during class, the student reporters complete short "homework" assignments to share at the following class. These assignments take no longer than

about one hour per week to avoid competing with schoolwork and extracurricular activities. The course is designed so that students may take the class several times and continue to build upon skills.

I think it is important to note what this course is not. Because of its basic nature, this course is probably not easily translated into a classroom setting. If you are interested in creating a unit or series of units for a journalism class or program during school or at a particular grade level, I have noted a number of excellent sources at the end of this booklet that will help you create a more comprehensive plan. This course is also carefully tailored for the very youngest writers. If you are interested in starting a middle school journalism program, you'll need to consult the same resources to expand on some of the concepts offered here. This course also does not take the place of writing experiences in the classroom or at home. At our school, we have an amazing teaching staff, and many of the writing concepts (if not all for the 5th graders) I cover in this course are review and practice for the students, which is great for me and great for them. This after-school club is meant to be an additional opportunity for students to expand upon

their skills, pursue their interests, and be recognized for their hard work.

Good luck, and I hope this booklet helps you get an after-school journalism program started at your school. Feel free to email me with any questions.

Karen Lunny,  
September 2007,  
klunny@comcast.net



**Flyer reporters find out how newspapers are made**  
By Alison L. 3D

On Thursday, December 14, the *Franklin Flyer* reporters went to the *Eagle-Tribune*. The students met Mr. Don Griffin, vice president of marketing, and Mr. Michael Moriarty, editor of *News Coverage*. Mr. Griffin showed the reporters around the offices where all reporters work and where the newspapers are printed.

After the 10 *Franklin Flyer* reporters got in and met Mr. Griffin, we followed him to the conference room, and he answered 10 questions. For example, one student reporter asked, "How many people work at the *Eagle-Tribune*?" (Answer: 425.) Another student reporter asked, "What is your favorite part of your job?" Mr. Griffin said saying no to people who ask the *Eagle-Tribune* for donations or sponsorships. Mr. Moriarty said one of the hardest parts of his job was when people don't return her calls.

The second part of the field trip was a tour of the printing presses. First, we went to see the printing plant. Mr. James Robinson showed us a printing plant. It was a large silver aluminum sheet with light blue words on it. The words and pictures were made up of lots of tiny dots of yellow ink that looked closely at it. The most fun part was that the article on the plane was about Barry Barbaard's visit to Franklin School, and he let us keep the printing plate.

Next we went to the basement level underneath the printing press. We saw big rolls of paper, and they looked like jumbo rolls of toilet paper. They were nearly as big as the *Franklin Flyer* reporters. We also saw big rolls of ink.

Finally, we went to the most exciting part—how the newspapers are made. The first thing we saw was a conveyor belt that held bundles of newspapers. It looked like a big chain. We saw stacks of newspapers that were already printed. The machines were huge.

The *Franklin Flyer* and the *Franklin Tribune* also select journalists who are in activities sponsored and funded by the PTA. We welcome ideas, photos, notes, and comments. The winter 2007 issue deadline is March 8, 2007. Please place comments or news items in the *Franklin Flyer* mailbox in the main office, email to [klunny@comcast.net](mailto:klunny@comcast.net), or mail to Franklin School P.O. 2 Upper Town, North Andover, NH 05842.

Reporters for this issue:  
Ian B., 3rd grade  
Helen B., 3rd grade  
Nia C., 4th grade  
Caitlin C., 3rd grade  
Jay D., 3rd grade  
Zane F., 4th grade  
Alison L., 3rd grade  
Christin F., 4th grade  
Meredith F., 4th grade  
Rene S., 3rd grade

Editors for this issue:  
Ms. Kara Lunny  
Mr. Rene Munn

Back issues of the *Franklin Flyer* are available on the Eagle-Tribune website at <http://www.franklintribune.com/publications>

The *Franklin Flyer* is a proud member of NESPA, the National Elementary Journalists' News Association.

It was really exciting to see the newspapers being made!

The field trip was a nice way to end eight weeks of hard work on our own school newspaper. We learned that people who work for real newspapers have some of the same problems we do at the *Franklin Flyer*. Sometimes it's hard to know what to write about. Questions are hard because you have to read your articles even though you don't feel finished. Sometimes people don't get back in touch with you before your deadline. This sometimes you get nervous for people to read what you've written.

We also learned that people who work for real newspapers have fun. Picking topics was fun and challenging for the *Flyer* reporters. It was really fun to go to activities, and you get to wrap up watching the program that you don't take steady notes. It is really fun taking photos, too. *Franklin Flyer* reporters and real reporters both learn a lot about the town and schools, which is fun. Maybe one day a *Franklin Flyer* reporter will be a real reporter!

**Alison and Joy's Top Ten Field Trip Facts**

- 1 The circulation of the *Eagle Tribune* is 110,000, but Mr. Griffin estimates that about 300,000 people read it each day.
- 2 The *Eagle Tribune* was one of the first two newspapers in our country to use ink.
- 3 Nearly all of the materials to make a newspaper (printing plates, ink, etc.) must be imported.
- 4 The paper (all 114 has per week of it) comes in huge rolls that look like giant toilet paper. It comes from Maine and Canada.
- 5 All the newspapers combined use 1,200 pounds of ink per week, which comes from Flint, Michigan.
- 6 If the presses break down, local newspapers all have an emergency rule that they will help each other out with printing.
- 7 The typical newspaper day begins around 3:00 a.m., and the only time most *Eagle-Tribune* employees are not working is on Sunday mornings.
- 8 The *Eagle Tribune* makes money by selling ads and papers.
- 9 The Rogers family owned the *Eagle-Tribune* until 1973, when it was bought by DNH (Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc.).
- 10 The *Eagle-Tribune* isn't the only newspaper. The company also owns the *Daily News*, the *Daily News of Newburyport*, and the *Manchester Daily News*. The weekly newspapers the *Andover Newsweek*, the *Waverhill Gazette*, *Town Chronicle*, and a couple for New Hampshire are also printed in North Andover.






Photos top to bottom: Mr. Don Griffin answers questions; 1 roll of paper for printing; Mr. James Robinson shows Alison B. a printing plate; the *Daily News* in production.

Photo, page 2: Student reporters review page proofs near the end of the session.

Top photo, page 3: A reporter begins writing his article, while another reporter practices with the digital camera.

Bottom photo, page 3: Once a year, a local newspaper editor visits the class to answer questions and talk about what it is like to work at a real newspaper. We always take a silly photo at the end of her visit, which is my favorite shot of the session.

Graphic, this page: We have also taken a field trip to the local newspaper to see the publishing process. Of course, two student reporters wrote an article about the experience. We never miss an opportunity to write about ourselves.

# Week 1: Learning the Basics of Journalism

## Objective:

To introduce students to journalism, to the expectations of the after-school club, and to each other.

## Materials:

10 thin 3-ring binders (one for each student), which should include:

- Fast Facts handout (a schedule, contact names and numbers, basic rules)
- Journalism Words handout (see example)
- A sample issue of the Franklin Flyer or other elementary school newspaper

Press Pass (simple necklace for the reporters to wear when they cover a story)

Index cards or question sheets for class ice-breaking activity

## Activities:

1. Hand out 3-ring binders and introduce the class format (review Fast Facts, explain the Journalism Words, hand out Press Passes, and discuss reporter rules, such as no interviews during class, be polite, be prepared, and so forth).

2. Class Activity: Ice-Breaking Interviews

OPTION 1: Introduce a stranger activity. Break students up into pairs. Have each reporter interview a partner for 5 minutes, then switch for another 5 minutes. Reporters introduce partners to the class while gaining some interviewing skills.

OPTION 2: Guess Who? Have students answer general questions about themselves on an index card without writing their names on it. Collect them, mix them up, read them aloud, and then try to guess as a whole class who wrote the answers.

OPTION 3: Snowballs/Baskets! Have students answer Option 2 questions on a sheet of paper. Students read up their answers and throw the “snowballs” at each other for 30 seconds to mix them up. Have students read random answers, and the whole class tries to guess who the person is. As an alternative, have students make “baskets” in a trash can, and then select the paper balls one at a time out of the basket to read aloud and guess who. (For longer descriptions of these and other ice-breaking ideas, do an internet search for “classroom ice breakers.”)

3. Discuss the three ways we collect information for a newspaper: *research*, *observation*, and *interviews*. (See easy definitions on the Journalism Words page.)

4. Discuss what a student newsletter/newspaper is (examples from various schools) and what *articles* are (examples). Look at one article in a student newspaper and identify ways the reporter used research, observation, and interviews to create the article.

**Homework Assignment #1 Quotes:** Collect three to five student, teacher, and/or parent *quotes* about a topic of interest/theme for the upcoming issue. At this point I discuss the need for absolute accuracy of quotes and complete information: first and last name, grade or relationship to our school. Also discuss that quotes are to be gathered after school hours or during recess or lunchtime—not during class time. I allow students to interview each other if time remains.

# Journalism Words

## Week 1: Learning the Basics of Journalism

1. **newsletter/newspaper** – a short booklet filled with information for a specific audience  
For example, the Franklin Flyer is around 20 pages long, and our audience is the Franklin School community of parents, teachers, and students. It is published three times a year (December, March, June).
2. **article** – a short and organized written piece for a newsletter, magazine, or newspaper created by a writer/reporter
3. **research** – background information used to add facts and detail to an article
4. **observation** – when the reporter visits the site or person that is being written about, and then the reporter writes about what he or she sees to add detail to an article
5. **interview** – when the reporter asks a person questions about a topic to add detail to an article
6. **quote** – when the reporter records exactly what a person says to put into an article to add detail (using quotation marks or “talking” marks to set off what the person says)  
The reporter can ask questions by email, on paper, by taking notes when talking to a person, or by tape recording the conversation to record the speaker’s words exactly.

## Week 2: Planning the Newspaper, Part 1

1. **editor** – a person who collects and works on articles from reporters for the newspaper
2. **reporter** – a person who writes articles to turn into an editor
3. **news beat** – an area that a reporter watches closely (such as sports)
4. **fact** – information that is true and accurate and can be checked out by the editor
5. **opinion** – information that shows a personal point of view (editorial)
6. **5 Ws and 1 H of news** – Most of the time, news articles should answer these questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?

## Week 3: Planning the Newspaper, Part 2

1. **feature** – articles about people (clubs, teams) and their lives rather than news-related facts
2. **review** – a description and opinion of any sort of artistic activity, such as a book, a live performance, music, or artwork (for example, the Variety Show or the Art Show)
3. **sidebar** – a small article or list that is related to a larger article (for example, a schedule of events next to an article about the Historical Society)
4. **list** – words, phrases, or sentences, such as a “Top Ten” list or a “How to” list
5. **Q and A** – “Question and Answer” articles have the question of the reporter and the answer of the person being interviewed written out nearly exactly.

## Week 4: Taking Photos for News Articles

1. **headline** – the title of an article, which often has both a noun and a verb (think short sentence)
2. **byline** – the reporter’s name, which is printed before or after the article
3. **photos** – pictures of people, places, or things that help explain an article
4. **photo credit** – the person who took the picture; his/her name appears near the photo
5. **caption/cutline** – a sentence describing the person, place, or thing in the photograph, usually underneath the photo

## **Week 5: Organizing Articles**

1. **draft** – a rough version of an article to be improved by the reporter and/or editor
2. **show vs. tell** – using details in an article rather than simply listing events or facts  
“We had a good time at the party” tells the reader about a party. “We played pin-the-tale-on-the-donkey and musical chairs at the party. We laughed until we cried!” shows the reader about the good time. Great writers and reporters show things.
3. **lead** – the first and most important sentence/paragraph of your article  
Leads often contain answers to most of the 5Ws and 1H of news writing.

## **Week 6: Writing Articles (or “Who’s in charge here?”)**

1. **deadline** – when the article is due to your editor
2. **copy editor** – a person who checks (“edits”) for all sorts of mistakes, such as spelling errors, incomplete sentences, punctuation errors, missing facts, and so on.
3. **proofreader** – a person who reads the final pages for any errors after the copy editor’s changes have been made (This person also checks captions, headlines, and photographs for accuracy as well.)
4. **fact checker** – a person who checks to make sure all statements are true and accurate in an article
5. **art director** – the person in charge of the “look” and all artwork/photos of the newspaper

## **Week 7: Editing Articles**

1. **grammar** – our standard English language rules of word usage
2. **A.P. style** – the Associated Press book of rules to help reporters make all information look the same throughout all articles in a newsletter, magazine, or newspaper
3. **3rd person** – Newspaper articles are usually written in the 3rd person, which means the reporter doesn’t mention him/herself in the article and does not use his or her own opinions.

## **Week 8: Publishing Articles**

1. **proofs** – articles put into their finished form with photos, captions, and artwork  
The reporter and editor should proofread every word in an article to make sure everything is in place and no mistakes are made.
2. **First Amendment** – The U.S. Constitution, through the First Amendment, protects the right of journalists to report news. Journalists have the responsibility to be fair, complete, and accurate in reporting.

# Week 2: Planning the Newspaper, Part 1

## Objective:

To learn or review the concepts of fact vs. opinion and the 5Ws and 1H of news writing.

## Materials:

15 pink fact signs, 15 yellow opinion signs (one each per student)  
“Fairytale News” handout (see example)

## Activities:

1. Get reporters to select the best quote they collected over the past week from the homework assignment. Ask students what makes a good quote (detailed, specific, accurate). Ask for volunteers to read best quotes. Make sure all quotes have the person’s first and last name and grade/title. Talk about a reporter’s and an editor’s role in the information gathering and writing process. Collect quotes from students for future use.
2. Reinforce when, where, and how information (research, observation, and interviews) should be gathered, as in not during class time. Also discuss a reporter’s duty in the information gathering process: to be clear and organized, accurate, and polite.
3. Explain/review the difference between fact and opinion. Talk about the role of facts and opinions in news articles. Identify the difference between facts and opinions in game.  
OPTION 1: Play “Fact or Opinion” game as a whole group. Instructor collects 25 facts and opinions from a student newspaper (or generally about the school) and reads them aloud. Have students hold up either the Fact sign or the Opinion sign.  
OPTION 2: As an alternative, student may write down one fact and one opinion about the school on index cards. Instructor reads them aloud and the whole class holds either the Fact sign or the Opinion sign to indicate which they think each statement is.  
OPTION 3: Play “Fact and Opinion” game in 4 small groups as a race. Give each group a handout of 25 fact and opinion statements mixed up. Team leaders write F or O next to each statement. As each team finishes, their time is noted. There’s a 15 second penalty for each wrong answer.
4. Discuss the 5 Ws and 1 H of news. Identify these parts of in a news story. Use the Fairytale News handout example. I have several extremely silly fairytale versions like this one. I believe I found the original idea, which was about Jack and Jill, from an internet source.

**Homework Assignment #2 Brainstorming:** Add to a list of article ideas for the upcoming newspaper (both general ideas for anyone and ideas for their own article).

# Fairytale News

## Goldilocks arrested for burglary

by Smokey Bear, staff reporter

Late yesterday afternoon, police arrested Goldilocks at the home of the Bear family in Sherwood Forest. It was the first breaking-and-entering and burglary charge of the year for the area.

“I can’t believe she broke into our home, ate our porridge, damaged our good chairs, and then had the nerve to nap upstairs in our beds,” said Mama Bear, who was visibly shaken after Goldilocks was taken into custody.

“I just hope she gets the help she needs,” said Papa Bear. “She’s obviously a troubled child.”

Several neighbors watched as authorities dragged Goldilocks kicking and screaming out of the Bear home.

“She yelled, ‘It wasn’t even good porridge!’ and then they put her in the squad car,” said Bambi, who lives next door to the Bears.

Spokesperson for the Sherwood Forest Police Department (SFPD) confirmed that Goldilocks was taken into custody but declined to comment further pending a full investigation.

“This is just a big misunderstanding,” said Robin Hood, attorney for Goldilocks. “My client says she was invited to lunch at the Bear home. She got hungry and tired waiting for them to return from the forest and ate a bit of the porridge and took a quick nap. She did not mean any harm, and her family is willing to compensate the Bears for any damages and missing porridge.”

Sources for the SFPD said the investigation could take up to a week to complete. Because of her lengthy police record, said Sheriff Nottingham, Goldilocks will be held in the Sherwood County Jail without bail pending the results of the investigation. \*\*\*

For review:

1. What are the answers to the 5Ws and 1H of this news story?

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

2. List one fact and one opinion from the article.

Fact:

Opinion:

3. Can you find and label these parts of the article: headline, byline, quote

**Extra Credit:** Choose one article from a local newspaper. Read it and answer the above questions about it. Bring it in to the next class.

# Week 3: Planning the Newspaper, Part 2

## Objective:

To identify the different types of articles that might appear in the newspaper: feature, review, sidebar, list, poll, Q and A. To brainstorm and narrow topics for each student's article(s).

## Materials:

large white board or paper for writing down brainstormed topics  
4 silly headlines for progressive news story leads\* (optional activity)

## Activities:

1. Share story ideas from homework assignment and write up on white board. Add more ideas as they come up in class discussion. Assign/pick article topics. I find when reporters choose their own topics, their articles are much better in the end. Get each student to think about what type of article suits his/her topic (see Journalism Words list). Do some brainstorming together on how each student can research, observe, and interview for articles.

EXTRA TIME? Sometimes brainstorming and choosing topics takes 20 minutes, and sometimes it takes the whole hour. A great activity for extra time is to break the reporters into 3 or 4 groups and have each group write a lead paragraph to match a silly headline. Some example headlines are "Enraged peacock attacks visitors at Smolak Farms," "Third graders discover treasure in the school bathroom," "Local teacher wins a spot on American Idol," and so on. I find adding a bit of local color increases the fun and creativity, and the sillier the better. In this progressive lead activity, each student takes a turn and adds a sentence. The idea is that no matter how silly the topic, you can answer most of the 5Ws and 1H in a lead paragraph. If you don't use this activity now, it is a nice alternative for Week 5's focus on lead paragraphs.

2. Discuss the various types of articles: *feature*, *review*, *sidebar*, *list/poll*, *question-and-answer (Q & A)*. Have reporters think about which format will work best for their topic.

**Homework Assignment #3 Beginning Your Article:** Students begin researching, observing, and possibly interviewing toward their own article topic.

# Week 4: Taking Photos for News Articles

## Objective:

To learn the basics of news photography and to learn how to operate a digital camera.

## Materials:

3-4 digital cameras (we've been using just one, but more is better)

3-4 small spiral photography notebooks (optional)

News Photography Basics worksheet (see example)

Examples of great news photography from recent local newspapers

1 example of a local newspaper article copied for each reporter

## Activities:

1. News team meeting: Report progress from their work on their articles/questions and answers. You can do this in small groups or the whole group, depending on how many adults you have helping. I typically do this as a whole group.
2. Discuss these parts of a newspaper: *photos*, *photo credit*, *caption/cutline*. Review *headline*, *byline*. Identify these in the articles from the last issue of the *Franklin Flyer* and from a local newspaper.
3. Discuss what makes a good news photograph, and what types of photos are best for our newspaper. Look at examples of photographs, both professional and student work.
4. Photo Field Trip: Break students into 2 to 4 groups. Each group should have a digital camera and small notepad, which is the photo log. Take digital photos of each other and the room in several ways: portrait, landscape, still life, action, and so forth. Each student should have a turn with the camera, and each student should have turn with the photo log, which is where each photo taken is identified and described for future reference. All groups continue taking photographs throughout the school on a "photo field trip" to collect shots of interest to our audience.

OPTION: Split the class into half and have one parent/teacher take the class on a walking photo "field trip" around the school, while the other parent/teacher stays behind to discuss progress on the articles in first "writers' workshop."

**Homework Assignment #4 Parts of a News Story:** Identify parts of a current news story. The professional newspaper article should (ideally) be about local students and have a solid lead. We just love reading about ourselves!

# News Photography

*“A picture is worth a thousand words.”*

1. **Why photos?** We take photos to help “explain” an article and to add interest to our newspaper.
2. **Photo credit:** the photographer’s name near the picture
3. **Caption/cutline:** sentences that explains the photograph (use either word)
4. **Photo log:** the record of who took the photo, who is in the photo, what is going on in the photo, and when and where the photo was taken
5. **Landscape:** wide
6. **Portrait:** tall
7. **Cropping:** deciding what stays in the photo
8. **Action shot:** in motion
9. **Head shot:** from the shoulders up
10. **Still life:** objects that aren’t moving
11. **Posed:** usually a group shot of people smiling at the camera
12. **Angle:** up, down, straight
13. **Distance:** close, medium, far
14. **Level:** eye level, high, low
15. **Contact sheet:** a printout of your photos

## Tips for Your Photo Shoot

1. **Move in closer.**

2. **Be quick.**

*(“Shoot first and ask questions later.”)*

3. **Take many shots.**

4. **Focus on a subject.**

*(We love photos of small groups of students.)*

5. **Tell a story.**

## Parts of a News Photograph

Focus on the action or subject

We can crop (or cut out parts of) any photo



Photo credit

*The Franklin School’s Scarlet Skippers jump-rope team performed in front of a packed crowd last Friday, January 26, 2007, at halftime during the boys’ varsity basketball game. [The Skipper’ coach MaryBeth Chesler’s motto for the after-school activity is “Fun, Fitness, and Friendship,” and the Skippers showed all three at the performance.]*

Caption/cutline: Try to answer some of the 5Ws and 1H of news writing. You need a longer cutline if it stands alone. I’d add the second sentence if this photo didn’t have an article with it.

# Week 5: Organizing Articles

## **Objective:**

To learn about leads and sharpen each student's article lead.

## **Materials:**

Show vs. Tell cards

a few print-outs of photos taken last week

## **Activities:**

1. News team meeting: Updates on article progress. Questions/answers.
2. Review Homework Assignment #4's article and review the parts of a news story. Pay particular attention to the lead. Point out that the lead answers most of the 5Ws and 1H of news writing.

OPTION: Each student could write a caption/cutline for a photo taken last week.

3. Explain the difference between showing and telling. Find ways that the professional reporter showed rather than told in the homework article.
4. Show vs. tell game in 2 to 3 groups. Each group is given a picture card (re-use professional news photography from last week if necessary). They should write a sentence "telling" what is going on in the photo. And then they should write a sentence "showing" what is going on in the picture. Each group shares their sentences with the whole class.

**Homework Assignment #5 Lead Paragraphs:** Each reporter writes a headline and lead paragraph for his/her article(s) if he/she has not already done so. Reporters who have completed their leads should continue writing a rough draft.

# Week 6: Writing Articles

## **Objective:**

To add detail (through research, observation, or interviews) to rough drafts, and to sharpen headlines.

## **Materials:**

Rough Draft Checklist (see example)

## **Activities:**

1. Writers' Workshop: Read leads/drafts of articles to small groups (3 to 4, with one adult per group). Using a checklist, make sure that the articles are thorough, are organized, and have plenty of details and variety (answer the 5Ws and 1H). Figure out how to tie up any loose ends.

OPTION: Gather information from recent school events and write an article together as a class. Give each student a printout of a paragraph to read aloud. Together as a group, organize the paragraphs into a whole article. This gives students the experience of putting an article together and shows them that sometimes there are several good ways to compose an article. It is also a quick lesson on transitions.

2. Discuss several key jobs in a newsroom: copy editor, proofreader, fact checker, art director. If there's time, find these people in a local newspapers, magazines, and newsletters.

3. Discuss deadlines for our articles and all supplemental materials.

4. Begin meeting with reporters individually to sketch out the layout of their pages.

**Homework Assignment #6 Editing Drafts:** Using a checklist supplied in class, finish making changes to article and organize all supplemental material to turn in next week. Students who turn in articles next week will get "page proofs" to look at during the last class.

# Self-Review Checklist

Reporter's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Headline of article \_\_\_\_\_

*Help me "edit" your article. Answer the following questions to guide me as I put your page(s) together. You don't have to write in complete sentences.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Check your headline. Does your headline "tell" or "tease?" Do you think the reader will know what your article is about from your headline? Is it in short sentence form?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Check your lead. Does it give your reader the main idea of your article and answer at least a few of the who, what, when, where, why, and how questions?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Check the first word of each paragraph. Are these words different? Do you begin each paragraph in a different way? If not, think about ways to change this.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Is each sentence a complete thought? When you read your article aloud, do you stumble on any words or sentences? Rewrite those sentences if so.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Did you use colorful words and do more "showing" rather than "telling?" Count how many places you showed your readers something rather than telling them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Have you included at least one quote from someone? Do you have that person's full name and a short description of who they are near the quotation marks? Are your quotes in good spots in your article? Double-check all quotes to make sure they are exactly right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Did you include research or facts in your article? If so which piece of information is the most interesting or surprising? Double check all your facts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Is your last paragraph interesting? If it repeats your lead, look for ways to change it so that your reader has something to think about after they finish your article.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When you read your article aloud to a parent or friend, can they sum up your article in a few words after you are done? Quiz them at the end (parents love this!). Ask them what their favorite part was. If they have questions or want more information, consider putting more into your article.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Think you're finished? Read through your article backwards to look for misspelled words, missing words, punctuation problems, and so on. Sometimes reading it backwards highlights errors or problems you didn't see the first 30 times you read your article from start to finish. Write any notes to me on the back of this sheet.

# Week 7: Editing Articles

## **Objective:**

To proofread and finalize articles and supplementary materials.

## **Materials:**

Extra Self-Review Checklists (I never have enough!)

## **Activities:**

1. Writers' Workshop: Break into the same groups from last week, read each article aloud, show/organize supplemental materials (photos, artwork), and turn in assignments if ready. Write cutlines for photos. Find possible pull quotes. Think of sidebars. Sharpen headline. Have students sketch out how they want their article to appear in the newspaper.
2. Discuss grammar vs. style. Bring in a variety of style manuals to look at (Chicago, APA, AP, etc.). Discuss an editor's role in this process.

OPTION 1 : Invite a local newspaper reporter or editor in for 30 minutes to answer questions about his/her role and what it's like to be a journalist.

OPTION 2: Visit a local newspaper office as a field trip.

We never seem to have enough time to do it all this week, so I have been taking the reporters on a field trip or inviting a local newspaper editor in to talk on the optional (but very fun!) Week 9.

**Homework Assignment #7 Final Drafts:** Finish editing articles/marketing up page proofs.

# Week 8: Publishing Articles

**Objective:**

To proofread articles and enjoy the finished product.

**Materials:**

Special photo collages or award certificates for all reporters

**Activities:**

1. Proofread articles on proofs if students turned in articles beforehand. Make changes in red ink (more fun than black or blue ink, of course) and hand in as the final edit.
2. Read articles aloud and enjoy!
3. Collect article ideas for the next issue, including brainstorming the theme for the next issue. This is their gift to the next session of student reporters. It really helps out.

As a parting gift for the current group, I like to give each student a collage of photographs taken of themselves on Week 4. We always take one silly group shot as well, which is in the center. I also hand out certificates that give them lifetime *Franklin Flyer* reporter status.

# Resources for Teaching Journalism

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- Osborn, Patricia. *School Newspaper Adviser's Survival Guide*. West Nyack, N.Y.: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1998.

National Elementary School Press Association  
[www.nespa.org](http://www.nespa.org)

Journalism Education Association (middle and high schools)  
[www.jea.org](http://www.jea.org)

National Scholastic Press Association (high schools)  
[www.studentpress.org/nsa](http://www.studentpress.org/nsa)

American Society of Newspaper Editors  
[www.myschooljournalism.org](http://www.myschooljournalism.org) (elementary and middle schools)