
The Production Phase

Following training of staffers, you are ready to put their knowledge into practice. Three production cycle calendars are included in the Student Activity Book and in the Pacing Guide: 2-week, 3-week and 4-week. If you are publishing a news magazine that will come out quarterly, you will want to adapt the 4-week schedule to your needs. If you are advanced enough to be doing a weekly publication, you probably don't need this book in the first place.

The editors should prepare a calendar from the information in the production schedule, showing due dates, dates of scheduled meetings, and any other information that the staffers need to know to be able to do their jobs. The schedules provided will work for some staffs with no changes needed, but other staffs will need to make some adaptations. It may be necessary to go through one production cycle before students realize what changes need to be made. They should keep a notebook of questions and problems that come up during the production cycle, then work with you to see how best to implement the changes. Editors need to check the school calendar to take note of any upcoming holidays or testing days which might affect the production cycle, and formulate a plan to work around these. Before each issue begins, ads should be sold so that the number of pages can be determined at the beginning of the production cycle. All page templates should be updated and ready to go for the issue.

Objectives:

The learner will:

- Practice and perfect writing, editing, photography and production skills
- Develop stronger leadership skills
- Learn the importance of teamwork in achieving goals
- Understand the importance of fiscal responsibility in keeping the newspaper within budget.

Understand that the satisfaction that comes from a well-executed project is one of the most valuable rewards they will receive from their education.

Day 1: The Staff Meeting

Each new production cycle actually begins right before the previous one ends, as students receive their story idea forms and begin to think of content for the upcoming publication. The first day of the physical production cycle should include a staff meeting, conducted by the editor-in-chief, or members of the editorial board, who lead the staff in a discussion of the story ideas, and help the students brainstorm for additional ideas. It is important that ALL staffers participate in the planning.

The Production Phase

Each staffer needs to have ownership of the entire process. As adviser, do not become an active participant in the meeting unless you are asked for some advice. However, be an active listener. If concerns come up during the meeting, meet with the editors following the staff meeting and talk about them. But let the editors be the ones who communicate with the staffers under most conditions. Let them have the authority to do their jobs.

Day 2-Printer Day (depends on production cycle)

The interviewing, photographing, writing and editing begin, followed page production and proof reading. Staffers should use the various resources, rubrics and checkoff forms found in the Student Journalist Toolbox at the end of the Student Activity Book to help the process along. Explanations on how to use each item are included in the Toolbox. The important thing is that students need to stay on schedule in order to get the publication into the hands of the readers on the designated day. Let the editors be the ones to communicate with the staffers about meeting their deadlines, but as adviser, you need to keep tabs on who may be having some trouble. Have the editors assign other students to help these staffers. When students are caught up with their work for the current issue, they can work on ad sales for upcoming issues.

Staff meetings are scheduled throughout the production phase in order for staffers, photographers and editors to touch base and discuss and solve problems. The staffers need to understand and put into practice the concept of open and honest communication. Unsolved problems will grow and cause major problems later. Encourage them to get any kind of troubling situation out in the open and get it taken care of early. If you see that personality conflicts are cropping up, you may need to have personal conferences with those students immediately to get them worked out. Personal problems need to be left at the door when the students come in to work on the paper.

The Day After Printer Day:

Get organized for the next issue. Prepare page templates for the next issue. Straighten the room. Hand out story idea forms. Do a skill building activity, such as copyediting, or do current events or journaling.

Critiquing Day:

On the final day of the production cycle, a special staff meeting should be held to critique the paper. This should not be a cursory glance at each page but an in-depth look at what the staff has accomplished, what they have done well, and what they need to improve upon. Discrepancies in style should be noted, misspelled words and grammatical errors should be discussed. Design errors should be addressed. It can be a painful process for those who did not do their jobs right, but it will help them do them better in the future. The meeting should not be accusatory in nature, but should help students to understand that their efforts need to be more in the direction of perfection than away from it.

The Production Phase

If the staff finds that several students have made the same types of mistakes, editors may want to devise some exercises that will strengthen these skills to be done at the beginning of the period for a few days to get the students back on track.

Also on this day, if students have not already done so, they should update their portfolios with the just published material.

And just when you thought you could take a deep breath....

It's time to start the next cycle. Repeat everything.