



AN EFFECTIVE EDITOR

WHAT IT TAKES

While there's no one answer, there's agreement in advisers from coast to coast on **WHAT IT TAKES** to be an effective editor.

A great editor needs to have faith in the staff (You gotta believe) and have a vision for the book so that there's something to keep in mind during the killer days of the year. And, obviously, organizational skills are crucial. He or she needs to really want to put out the best book possible and do all that is necessary to follow through each step of the way.

John Gilmour, yearbook adviser
Basic High School, Henderson, NV

Late nights and maintenance crews come to mind when I remember one of my all-time best. After saying our goodbyes at the end of many a work day, she often came back to school and worked well into the night, unknown to me until several weeks had passed. Passionate about her work, this senior editor led us from a size 8 to a size 9 book and from partial color to all color. Creative and upbeat, she took a fledgling staff of diverse personalities and formed a group of savvy designers who took great pride in their work and in being part of the yearbook staff. Attention to detail, a strong work ethic and unassuming leadership are absolutely necessary in the package of traits for my editors. A strong work ethic might be the most important, although it is hard to separate the three. An editor must be willing to dedicate himself to successful completion of the task. Often those students who are serious about their work and enjoy the challenge of detailed perfection coupled with deadline maintenance will remain on staff and become editors as they mature. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Participate in brainstorming sessions and after-school work parties. Step outside of your comfort zone and get to know older staff members. Be creative and explore new ways of presenting ideas. Let your personality shine!

Janey Miller, yearbook adviser
UMS-Wright Academy, Mobile, AL

For me, professionalism sets the best editors apart. I would expect the editor to act in the best interest of the yearbook at all times. A great editor does not discuss one staffer with another, unless both are present. Editors must appear to have a united front; the leadership team all needs to say the same things to the staff. Work to avoid situations where editors may be pitted against one another. Be public with positive communications and private when discussion is sensitive. The best editors know to leave personal issues at the door as they can cloud judgment. It's important to not appear to play favorites amongst yearbook students and to be available for any individual or group.

I suggest that my editors always make eye contact and interested facial expressions when they listen and remind them that all suggestions should be for the betterment of the yearbook rather than personal benefit. We discuss avoiding "I statements" (I don't like that, I don't think that would work, etc.) because they easily come across as "personal" and

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using phrases like “This might go better with our theme” or “That would probably interfere with your eyeline” instead. The bottom line, I tell them, is that if they use the yearbook or the spread criteria as their position, other students will be far less likely to perceive their suggestions as a personal attack. Communicating and leading effectively are crucial to the success of an editor.

Olaf Korb, yearbook adviser

Kalamalka Secondary School, Vernon, BC

Traits important to success as an editor include self motivation, dedication and organization. When they find a free moment, they find something else that needs to be done and they delegate such tasks to others as well. The editor has a planner for all aspects of life. They know the details and they keep the book cohesive. And once they’ve given over to the yearbook way of life, they definitely learn to use time well!

Jeremy Flagg, yearbook adviser

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, Acton, MA

My best editor ever was an amazing leader and go-getter. She had a creative eye for design and great ideas when it came to designing dividers and other spreads. She also cared very much about her school and peers. She always wanted to include as much of the school population in the book as possible — whether it was in pictures, through quotes or in copy. A great editor is a dedicated leader, who’s computer savvy and creative. Potential editors show a passion for yearbook, a willingness to learn and are willing to give up a lot of their time!

Sarah Rifenburg, yearbook adviser

Dover High School, Dover, CT

The best editors understand production and have a depth of experience that allows them to see a bigger picture. Enthusiasm and initiative are crucial; they must be willing to go above and beyond. My staffers are often involved in lots of activities, but they commit to do whatever it takes to get the yearbook done right. Time management’s so important. The best editors are able to set priorities. My advice for staffers wishing to succeed as editors? Learn everything you can about production. Master photography and design. Excel in copywriting and editing. Know typography. And accept every opportunity you are offered. Experience is key.

Elaine Grace, yearbook adviser

Monarch High School, Louisville, CO

A great editor has the big picture, is creative and loves the notion of preserving memories. Doing the job right means excelling in editing and a true commitment to the yearbook. In some wonderful years, an adviser is blessed by an editor with real passion who is a true inspiration.

Janette Sierra, yearbook adviser

Saint Brendan High School, Miami, FL

REACHING OUT

It’s not rare for an adviser to use a string of superlatives to describe a great editor. Many have anecdotes of amazing performance, but when yearbook adviser Janette Sierra detailed

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her one of her former editor's work, it spoke volumes.

Cristy Guerra, a senior at Saint Brendan, joined the staff of the *Invenire* yearbook as a junior and became a co-editor in chief. In her senior year, she's the lone EIC. In that role, she supervised a staff of more than 20, including four editors as they created a 500-page book. Hundreds of editors across America do that each year.

She's also president of her school's Quill and Scroll chapter, very involved in Campus Ministry, a member of National Honor Society, Key Club and Respect Life. Plus, she took five A.P and honors classes as a senior and tallied at 4.83 GPA. Impressive, but not unheard of. Yearbook staffers tend to be the best of the best at their schools.

But when Cristy learned that most students at a nearby elementary school had neither a yearbook nor school portraits, she set out to change that. Because she believed in the magic of the yearbook and the memories it captures, she set out to document the year at nearby San Juan Bosco. She sought sponsors of yearbooks for all students and she recruited the assistance of a junior, who she hopes will continue the project next year. She took many of the photos herself and got a local supplier to donate prints of the individual portraits.

Cristy's Memory-Keepers project gained traction on campus right away. In fact, the campaign for sponsorships ended the day it began. The tags she and other Quill and Scroll members made for every San Juan Bosco student contained personal messages and costs were covered by members of the Saint Brendan community and their friends and families.

"I've always liked capturing memories," concluded Guerra, who will enroll in Florida International University's Honors College in the fall. "And I gained memories of my own in the process. That's one more reason I am passionate about yearbook."

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