



ERINN HARRIS, MJE

DISTINGUISHED ADVISER

TECHNIQUES, THOMAS JEFFERSON HS FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, ALEXANDRIA, VA

BEING BUSY SUITS ERINN HARRIS AS WELL AS IT DOES HER STUDENTS. SHE DECIDED SHE WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY, SHE TAKES HER TRIVIA SERIOUSLY AND SHE SPENDS MUCH OF HER SUMMERS WORKSHOPPING. HARRIS TEACHES THREE SECTIONS OF ENGLISH 9 AND ADVISES MULTIPLE AWARD-WINNING PUBLICATIONS. AND YET SHE CONTENDS THAT HER STAFFERS ARE BUSIER STILL.

It's not unusual for her freshmen to later join publications. "And they bring their friends with them," explained Harris. "Lots of our kids are really active in extracurriculars in addition to their heavy course loads. I want them to be able to pursue their other interests as well as publications." As a result, an 8th period activity block allows more students to be involved.

"All the editors have to take the class — or communication is a nightmare," she continued. Many

care enough to make the extra commitment, she said, but others to work even harder to contribute by becoming great staffers during that block at the end of the day.

And their work is among the nation's best. In fact, both the print and online news hybrid, *tjtoday/tjtoday.com*, and the 2015 *Techniques* yearbook received Crown nods from Columbia Scholastic Press Association and *Techniques* was also recognized in NSPA's Pacemaker competition.

Harris' students might be compelled by her love of learning and her desire to make publications fun — and different day to day, year to year. It's no secret that the successful groups travel to

workshops and conventions and find lots of adventures in the process. And they learn life skills that serve them well.

"I get texts all the time," reported Harris, "saying things like 'My mentor for my research project loves that I know InDesign.' TJ is a science and tech school, but they have fun and can translate the skills into other areas of their lives. I love getting those texts!"

That respect for life skills which can apply in many arenas fed her desire to know more about photography. "It started this summer; things started to click for the first time during a small photo class with some other local advisers," she explained. Since then, Harris has sought out a number of other opportunities to learn more. "It's become my passion project to get better. I've definitely enjoyed taking weekends here and there to learn more."

Like her students, she's found that her new skills are transferable. It was fun, she said, to spend Thanksgiving with her camera around her neck, shooting family

SHE'S BUSY TEACHING, ADVISING, AND INSPIRING YEARBOOKERS AND ADVISERS FROM COAST TO COAST. SHE WORKS DAYS, NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS. AND SHE STILL SAYS HER STAFFERS' SCHEDULES ARE CRAZIER THAN HER OWN.

photos. And she also learned she loved taking wrestling photos. "That's definitely not something I would have anticipated."

Harris, a former middle school, high school and college yerd who's been a teacher for 14 years and an adviser for 10, was a JEA Rising Star in 2010 and a Special Recognition Adviser in 2013. She'll be recognized with both JEA's Master Journalism Educator status and CSPA's Gold Key at spring 2016 conventions and her students' work has been recognized with Trophy Class honors from Virginia High School League and NSPA Best of Show recognition in addition to winning CSPA Crowns and NSPA Pacemaker honors.

MICHAEL SIMONS, MJE

DISTINGUISHED ADVISER

TESSERAE, CORNING-PAINTED POST HS, CORNING, NY

MICHAEL SIMONS LOVES MOST ASPECTS OF THE YEARBOOK PROCESS. HIS FAVORITE PART MIGHT BE “THE BUZZ WHEN THE TRUCK ARRIVES AND THE STAFF SEES THEIR BOOK FOR THE FIRST TIME.” BUT HE ALSO LOVES WATCHING HIS STUDENTS SHARE THEIR WORK WITH THEIR PEERS. AND WHEN THE TEAM COMES TOGETHER AS GROUP, WORKING FOR A COMMON GOAL AND GROWING AS WRITERS, DESIGNERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, LEADERS AND HUMANS, IT MAKES HIM HAPPY.

He loves to encourage his staffers by celebrating each shipment to the plant. Plus, he’s really proud of former staffers who have gone on to use the skills they learned in yearbook professionally. Even the trying times — like when communication gets rough and frustration arises — can have a bright side, he says. When his staffers can practice and master skills of mediation, conflict resolution and empathy, it’s further evidence of the education process known as yearbook.

“For me there’s something so incredibly powerful about a group coming together with a blank slate and working together to create a testament to the year — a history and a keepsake that’s filled with life stories,” he said. “To be the one who gets to support the kids in doing that... it’s where all my passions are.”

Simons, whose original teaching credential was licensure for K-12 Special Education, was interested in photography when he was tapped to step in and cover for an adviser

out on maternity leave. Photography is still a key area of expertise though summers spent teaching workshops have changed the scope of his photo business. Gone are the years when he’d agree to scores of senior sittings and as many as six weddings. “I continue to shoot some,” he said, “but now it’s really about personal relationships.” There’s no longer time to shoot as much because his summer workshop schedule has become more complex. In July, he’ll be on the road more days teaching than he is home.

But both in June, when plans for time in Maine prevail, and in August, when he intends to “slow it down” to spend time with his family, he will concentrate on his wife, their four children, camping and gardening.

Not that there aren’t family connections related to yearbook. “A yearbook truly is a time

machine,” he continued, citing a very personal example. “One of my most cherished possessions is my grandfather’s 1943 *Olio* yearbook from Amherst College. I often talk about its value at workshops,” he said. “It was not until I studied that book that I learned that my chemical engineering, yacht-racing, brilliant, knows-about-everything Grampa Bill was also a cheerleader.”

“That is so powerful, it’s hard to get my head around it. My hope is that when these kids (current staffers) are older, one of their classmate’s grandchildren will get to learn who that person really was.”

Simons was a Special Recognition Adviser in 2011. He has advised 18 books in his 14 years as an adviser and will be recognized with both JEA’s Master Journalism Educator status and CSPA’s Gold Key at spring 2016 conventions. On top of recognition in both CSPA’s Crown and NSPA’s Pacemaker competitions, both high school books he advised in 2013 and 2014 were honored at the national level.

“THERE’S SOMETHING SO INCREDIBLY POWERFUL ABOUT A GROUP COMING TOGETHER WITH A BLANK SLATE...”



LESLIE SHIPP DISTINCTLY REMEMBERS THE DAY WHEN SHE FIRST BECAME INTERESTED IN JOURNALISM. SHE WAS IN SEVENTH GRADE AND, IN HER SCIENCE CLASS, STUDENTS WERE ALLOWED TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN ROLES IN A “SUN DAY” PROJECT. AMONG THE OPTIONS WAS THE CHANCE TO BE A REPORTER WHO TOOK PHOTOS OF THE DIFFERENT EVENTS.

The first time she was published, she realized she liked to have a voice — and to affect the way stories were told. It didn’t matter a bit that her work had been reproduced on the school mimeograph machine. She was intrigued. “I tell my

students all the time that there’s often more to a lesson than is obvious; science taught me that I wanted to share stories,” she said.

She recalled that feeling when she registered for high school classes and enrolled in Intro to Journalism. What she learned

encouraged her to become more involved and she became a part of both the school newspaper and yearbook staffs. By her senior year, she was EIC of the yearbook and a reporter on the newspaper staff and she was in student publications classes twice each day.

Also an athlete, she attended college on a tennis scholarship. But she enrolled as a journalism major and she wrote for the campus paper (because there was not a yearbook there) as a freshman. She knew she wanted to teach and a job shortage in education was forcing many young teachers to move cross country to land teaching positions. A degree in English seemed less risky, so she changed her major.

Instead of moving away, Shipp accepted a pair of half-time jobs at schools 16 miles apart. She taught English at both schools and coached basketball and tennis on her “afternoon” campus. And she found herself wondering whether advising publications could help her get a full-time job.

Less than two hours north (near where she went to college), a growing school district imagined creating a journalism program and starting a student newspaper. Shipp’s first full-time teaching job included advising the yearbook, teaching intro to journalism and laying the groundwork for the school paper.

Twenty six years later, she’s still the adviser to both publications — and still the men’s tennis coach.

While technology has changed the production process (no more darkroom chemicals, X-acto knives, triplicate layout sheets or grease pencils), the interviewing, writing, revision and editing processes have changed little. “Journalism has always been about gathering information and presenting it to the masses,” Shipp said.

A former Iowa High School Press Association Adviser of the Year and Dow Jones Newswatch Special Recognition Adviser, Shipp is Iowa’s JEA State Director and has been active in IHSPA from the start. Both the newspaper and the yearbook have been recognized repeatedly by CSPA, NSPA and IHSPA.

While traditions of excellence and lots of family legacies are by-products of Shipp’s tenure at Johnston, the program is popular with students in all grades and first-year staffers who are seniors aren’t uncommon.

You never know when a student will find joy, pride and purpose in being published for the first time.



LESLIE SHIPP, MJE

SPECIAL RECOGNITION ADVISER

THE DRAGON, JOHNSTON (IA) HIGH SCHOOL

“THERE’S OFTEN MORE TO A LESSON THAN IS OBVIOUS; SCIENCE TAUGHT ME THAT I WANTED TO SHARE STORIES.”



SARAH VERPOOTEN, MJE

SPECIAL RECOGNITION ADVISER

QUIVER, LAKE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, ST. JOHN, IN

SARAH VERPOOTEN HAS DONE YEARBOOK MORE YEARS OF HER LIFE THAN NOT. SHE'S "ONLY" BEEN ADVISING 14 YEARS, BUT SHE STARTED YEARBOOK IN 8TH GRADE AND WAS BOTH A HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF. "I LOVED THE IDEA OF YEARBOOK FROM THE START," VERPOOTEN SAID. "IT SEEMED IMPORTANT TO CAPTURE THE YEAR AS IT WAS AND TO CREATE THAT TIME CAPSULE OF THE PEOPLE AND EVENTS OF THE YEAR."

As eight graders, Sarah and her friends on staff worked on page and took photos. "We were so cool carrying those point-and-shoot cameras in the hall," she remembers.

One of her major journalism influences is her high school adviser, Nancy Hastings. Hastings, who taught and advised at Munster (IN) HS for nearly 40 years inspired

many media professionals and scholastic journalism advisers to pursue related careers.

Verpooten even chose her college because of her experience at Munster. "We always went to conventions and workshops," she explained. "When we went to Franklin College for IHSPA (the Indiana HS Press Association

convention), I loved it and knew immediately that where I wanted to go."

She so headed off to a college smaller than her high school (she loved the small school with its strong sense of community and good journalism program), where she enrolled as a journalism major. Halfway through her sophomore year, she had the "teacher epiphany."

She called her mother and then she called Mrs. Hastings. Neither was surprised and both reminded her that a change to journalism education didn't change all that much. She would still work on the campus newspaper (she did all four years) and she was the yearbook EIC her senior year. The biggest change Verpooten remembers? The extra credits required by the change — and taking 22 hours a term for the rest of her college career.

The year she graduated, there were just three jobs teaching journalism open in the entire state of Indiana. She interviewed with all three schools and considered Lake Central the best fit. Everything fell into place when she was offered the yearbook job there, teaching alongside another young Munster

grad, Carrie Wadycki, who had started there three years earlier as the newspaper adviser.

Eventually, the two decided to co-advise; the Lake Central student media group includes 60 students who contribute to the print and online news publications and the yearbook. The program has been completely converged since 2011-12. It just makes sense, according to Verpooten. "When they shoot an event, it'll definitely be online and likely be social," she said. "It might also be in the newspaper, the yearbook or both."

Verpooten was one of JEA's inaugural Rising Stars, she's an ISHPA past president and she and Wadycki shared teacher of the year honors in 2013. She says the collaboration at Lake Central is not uncommon for northwest Indiana. "Nancy's (Hastings) reach is so wide," she says. "There are lots of us from Munster in journalism and journalism education; we all got started the same way."

"I LOVED THE IDEA OF THE YEARBOOK FROM THE START. IT SEEMED IMPORTANT TO CAPTURE THE YEAR AS IT WAS AND TO CREATE THAT TIME CAPSULE OF THE PEOPLE AND EVENTS OF THE YEAR."

LAURA ZHU, CJE

SPECIAL RECOGNITION ADVISER

JAMBOREE, TOBY JOHNSON MS, ELK GROVE, CA

LAURA ZHU FINALLY GOT HER WISH. SHE WANTED TO BE ON YEARBOOK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL... AND FINALLY, SHE IS. SHE DOES STILL HAVE THE REJECTION LETTER FROM THE MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISER WHO DEEMED HER "TOO INVOLVED." SHE WAS BUSY; AS A SOCCER PLAYER AND THEATER KID WHO WAS IN THE PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS, THERE WASN'T LOT OF EXTRA TIME. FOR THE ADVISER, ZHU NOW CONCEDES, IT WAS PROBABLY MORE ABOUT GIVING SOMEONE ELSE A CHANCE TO BE CONNECTED AND TO HAVE A PURPOSE. AND IT ALL TURNED OUT OKAY.

Fast forward through high school, lots of travel, a degree in Marketing, a year in Sweden, a skiing accident that sent her reeling when her father was paralyzed, and Laura was back in the classroom — this time teaching English in China.

Then came years in business school and an MBA, which later led to a career epiphany.

"I was interviewing for jobs when someone actually said that they wanted to hire me — except I lit up

when I talked about my time as a teacher... and they suspected I would be in the classroom sooner rather than later," she remembered. "They were right. I enrolled in an educational credentialing program and started subbing in middle school. It didn't take long at all; I knew I had made the right decision."

She taught half-time math and half-time theater for awhile. Then there was a keyboarding assignment that was tied to

yearbook. Almost magically, her wishes came true; Zhu had a chance to do middle school yearbook after all. There was definitely a learning curve at the start, she says. At first, she worked hard to stay ahead of her students. She needed to learn to trust them with the equipment, but she got comfortable in yearbook quickly. Then she suggested offering Photoshop classes rather than keyboarding. The school was impressed with her tech savviness and saw her as a resource. Soon, other schools in the area were noting her many talents and skills.

As the educational pendulum swung, Zhu was in the right place at the right time; schools were looking to add some arts education alongside technology/computer training. The district was looking for a way to add a Special Ed "flourish" and they sought a STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) pathway to the high school. And

the yearbook adviser really wanted to develop a broadcast program.

Everything came together at the new school. Her passions for education, expression, technology and creativity merged and she worked to create an environment conducive to learning, raising the bar and independence.

She easily blended privilege and responsibility, hard work and fun, visual and verbal; then she set out to help her staffs feel ownership of their project.

Jamboree's success is based on an intensive training regime and high expectations. The process begins with applications, recommendations and a task-oriented interview. Parents are involved from the start. "The first parent meeting lasts an hour and a half; there's lots to know about what it takes to be a yearbook parent," she says.

After 11 years in the classroom, Zhu still loves teaching but she sees things a little differently. Today, she stresses to students and parents and everyone who will listen that yearbook is about teamwork and leadership, storytelling and communication. That's true no matter who is producing that permanent record of the year. Her students just happen to be in middle school.

HER PASSIONS
FOR EDUCATION,
EXPRESSION,
CREATIVITY AND
TECHNOLOGY
MERGED.

