



MIND THE GUTTER PODCAST PROJECT LIST

EPISODE 28 // MASTERING MIDDLE SCHOOL // JENNI PARSONS, CJE

1. Ask a lot of questions.

Compile a list of 10 questions you had as a new staffer — and answer them — to contribute to a staff-wide FAQ document. You might include questions about policies, processes, guidelines and more.

If everyone does this assignment at the same time, there are some interesting possibilities for follow-up. Why did the same question appear so many times? What could you do to make that aspect less confusing? If you allow students to choose projects that interest them, someone could decide to categorize questions and make sure that the master list is inclusive. The master list might be the basis for staff training and/or mini-lessons going forward.

2. Create a school-wide survey.

Ask questions about hobbies, interests, trends, achievements and challenges. Some staffers start with personal questions (Have you..., Do you...) and follow with another section where the questions are focused on others (Tell us about someone who..., Who do you know that...) because they have found people are excited to share names of friends who might be covered in the yearbook. Come up with at least 30 questions that students can quickly answer while providing you legitimate, usable leads/information. Executing the survey as school begins in the fall will be a great way to collect information for use in the 2021 yearbook.

3. Practice increasing the power of headlines.

Choose three spreads with standard/not-so-enticing headlines from your book or the online showcase at yearbookdiscoveries.com and brainstorm five more powerful hooks to the content. Make a screen shot of each for reference, and then the fun begins. For each spread, begin with a brainstorm of visual/verbal connections, popular phrases and plays on words and then craft five different headline/secondary headline combinations using the standards for both components. (Main headlines attract the readers' attention and draw them in. Secondary headlines add year and topic specific content that bridges to other verbal content on the spread.) For each of the three spreads, turn in the screen shot, your brainstorming list and five new — and more compelling — headline packages.

4. Show your best self. Or your COVID-19 self.

Demonstrate your best understanding of design, photo selection, coverage, story telling, copy writing, captioning and headlining guidelines in a single spread. The topic is YOU. This could be an overview of your year, a longer view covering your interests, achievements and experiences or a recap of events since the coronavirus first affected you and your community. Complete the spread and make a PDF to submit. This project will require more time than many of the others.