

Some thoughts on...

Advising the Junior High/Middle School Yearbook

We asked some experienced junior high school and middle school yearbook advisers to give us their best advice so we could pass it on to those of you who are just starting that same, wonderful job!

Always remember who you are dealing with



Junior High kids can be frustrating and endearing in the same breath. That's why they intimidate so many people. They are really off-the-wall. Yet, if treated right, they can be the most loyal, willing, hard-working staffers ever.

Their attempts to find their place in the social scene make them more squirrely than any high school freshman. That's why you sent out two kids to shoot a football game and got four usable photos back. The shooting assignment turned into a social occasion.

Remember they know what's hot

Junior high/middle school kids are much more aware of what's in and what's out than we were at their age. Check out their clothes, hairstyles, and conversations.



Have high expectations and stick to them

Set some standards for your book and their work early. Then stick to them. Make sure that the book has complete coverage of everyone in the whole school, strong copy, captions and headlines as well as consistent, solid layouts.

Watch out for the "in crowd" syndrome

Many junior high/middle school kids would gladly fill all 60 or 120



pages of your book with photos of themselves and their small group of friends. You can solve this in two ways. Strive to keep the coverage open and recruit kids onto your staff from different social groups.

Develop an attitude of excellence

Make it clear that your name and theirs goes on that book. It needs to be the best you and they can produce. There will be complaints about this. Junior high/middle school kids are highly resistant to good journalism. But stand your ground. They will respond well to having the reputation of producing a quality publication. It appeals to their budding egos and they like recognition.



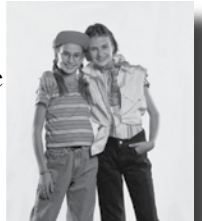
Share the decision making

Discuss most major publication decisions with your editors or anyone who that decision affects. Encourage their participation as

long as they adhere to the basic standards and values you have set up for the book.

Make them feel like they are somebody

Junior high/middle school kids like titles. Titles or positions seem to represent their commitment and investment in being part of the yearbook staff. Have job descriptions along with a suitable title for everyone on your staff. The job description will help them stay on task as well. They also like to do things together; co-editor positions work well.



Recruit well

Your staff will be the difference between a wonderful year or the "yearbook from hell." As the 1,000 year old knight said in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" – "CHOOSE WISELY"!

Take recommendations from other teachers, require applications to be filled out and interview candidates. Unlike high school where the staff may be chosen by the editors, you need to do it. You will have to live with it. An editor may transfer out of your class or quit the staff. The job is then yours for the whole year.

Do staff morale boosters and fun stuff



Try doing an exercise called "Warm Fuzzies". This is an activity that requires everyone to sit in a circle and as each staff member's name is brought up, they have the opportunity for two or three students to say something positive about that person. NO NEGATIVES!

Food can help

These folks have a short attention span. You know that, you teach them every day. Food can help beat that problem. Monthly birthday parties with cake, delivered pizza during deadlines, even investing in the staff's own popcorn popper can be a real inexpensive treat. Staffer's parents are great sources of help in this area. Their kids have not been out of grade school long enough that they have forgotten how to bake goodies for school functions.

Make them feel special

Give out awards whenever possible. Make sure they get their yearbooks before the rest of the school. Have their names and staff position stamped on their books. Have an end of the year, parent invited potluck for award presentations.

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JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL

Junior High/Middle School Advice

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Try to have fun!

Make yearbook an enjoyable experience. Above all, don't stress out. People who teach junior high or middle school have enough to be stressed about.

Some quick tips on what you need to cover in the junior high/middle school yearbook

- ✓ In order to do a good job of covering the crazy, hectic world of junior high/middle school, you need to always keep two copies of the school's master calendar. Don't miss important events.
- ✓ Set up a list of contacts for your staff. These "beats" (an old journalism term you may have heard of) are people they see each week or month to find out what's going on. They could include club advisers, administrators or department heads.
- ✓ Due to budget constraints you may need to limit division pages, but you do need to have them. At least have two, one for activities and one for people. This, in addition to the opening and closing, is where your theme will appear.
- ✓ Make sure you have a title page, with all the necessary info. Many times this is easily overlooked at the JHS level.
- ✓ When it comes to Student Life make sure that you cover the things that are different about junior high/middle school. High schools cover dating, college prep, driving, etc. You need to concentrate on best friends, lockers, the phone, dances or socials. Brainstorm with the staff on how they spend their weekends or free time. That's what people at your school will want to remember in 10 years.
- ✓ Club coverage can be very difficult at the JHS/middle school level because many times clubs are just groups of kids who meet with a teacher for a one or two time a year, off campus activity. Like a Ski club who only meets to go on ski trips. Get some disposable cameras and entrust one to the adviser or a staffer who belongs to and participates in the club. This can be a life saver when you need those photos.

If you have any more questions after you read this, please e-mail me and we will pass them on to these wonderful, experienced advisers for answering. ✕

