

## **Abstract**

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The objective of the High Journalism Resources Study was to gain greater insight into whether journalism teachers have the training and resources they need to teach scholastic journalism as the profession has moved into the multi-media arena. Surveys were sent out to high school journalism teachers who are members of the Journalism Education Association, one of the largest associations of journalism teachers in the country.

Fifty-seven teachers answered a range of questions including their level of education, computer usage in the classroom, and whether they are satisfied with the level of technical support and training they get from their schools.

Teachers expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with the level of training and support they are getting from their school systems, and high levels of support for additional training in all suggested technical areas. Moreover, teachers indicated school system financial support for workshops and trainings were minimal.

# High School Journalism Resource Study

By

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Special thanks to Dr. Linda Steiner for insightful suggestions, and forcing me to go big when my whole broadcasting career involved me whittling information down...

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And, to my sweet, supportive husband, Dr. Jason Fixler. Thanks for sticking with me for the past twenty years. This adventure would not have been possible without you by my side.

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## **Introduction**

Scholastic journalism, defined as the teaching of journalism practices and standards to high school students, has been linked to academic success, increased civic action, improved communication skills, and critical thinking skills (Dvorak, Lain & Dickson, 1994; Dautrich, Yalof & Lopez, 2008). Journalism classes often require students to research a topic, and learn how to effectively interview a subject. Writing for a student newspaper or online site often requires students to synthesize information, to decide what is most important and compelling in a story, and to think about how their story might impact their intended audience. Being able to communicate effectively through word and voice are leadership skills that should not be discounted, as a better communicator can potentially edge out other candidates with stronger qualifications for a job (Schawbel, 2014; Purdy, 2011).

Beyond teaching writing structure, proper paraphrasing and correct English grammar, high school journalism programs can also potentially be a great training ground for highlighting the importance of ethical boundaries and coaching students about media literacy. This may be more important now than ever before, as the proliferation of social media, blogging, and fake news have created a complex media environment for students to navigate (Wineburg, 2016). Journalism Education Association President Mark Newton says: "It is among the best, if not the best way to provide students with a legitimate and authentic way to comprehend the media.

Kids who produce media certainly understand media better and understand the role news and media play in one's civic life (M. Newton, personal communication, March 2, 2017).

Students in high school journalism programs may also acquire a range of technological skills that may not be taught in other classes, and a fluency in some technology programs that may help set the stage for greater technological fluency in college and in their careers. High school journalists can potentially learn some basic standards of photography and videography, as well as how to post and edit copy into a digital web page, navigate applications like Photoshop to create sharper images, edit video and audio, and learn how to create digital surveys to elicit student feedback on stories.

The learning potential inherent in the study of journalism seems vast. Yet some school administrators do not offer formal courses or extra-curricular opportunities in scholastic journalism, as they may not see how high school journalism programs tie in to curricular goals. Additionally, the study of journalism may require a technological investment other courses do not. School systems in low-income districts may be concerned they do not have the resources to devote to the printing of a student publication or upkeep of an online news portal. Moreover, they may be concerned that scholastic journalism may take time and energy away from more important priorities, especially given a recent focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education (Al Salami, Makela, & DeMiranda, 2017).

Despite these challenges, many high schools nationwide do invest in journalism programs of various kinds, and to different degrees. The purpose of this study is to find out what gaps in training and resources teachers say are impacting the quality of education in scholastic journalism programs. To that end questions focused on three major areas; the educational level of teachers and characteristics of the school, teacher training and support, and technology and programs teachers said they need to implement teaching goals. The questions are grouped into three subcategories on the survey; school size and characteristics, teacher training and support, and tools for the trade.

The research questions are as follows:

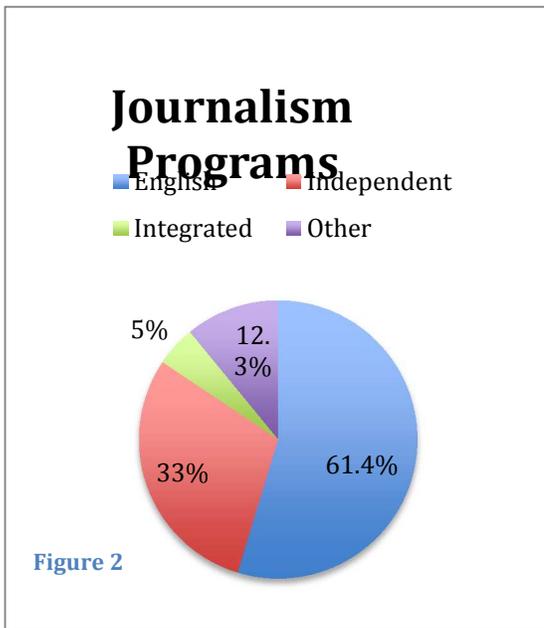
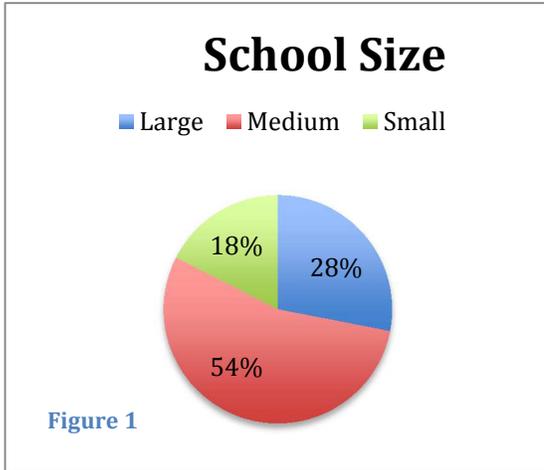
- 1: What are the curricular goals of teachers in schools that offer instruction in scholastic journalism?
  
2. For schools that do have journalism programs, what kinds of students are able to study journalism and are limitations or constraints placed on the ability of students to study journalism?
  
3. Are high school journalism teachers satisfied with the level of training and technical support they get from their school districts?

4. Is there a difference in the level of teachers' satisfaction based on the characteristic of schools as urban public, suburban public, private or charter?

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## Methods

The analysis was based on a survey sent out, with IRB approval, to members of the Journalism Education Association. The Journalism Education Association describes itself as the largest U-S scholastic journalism organization for teachers and advisors. The organization hosts conventions and provides training and assistance to its 2,700 members (JEA, 2017). Online surveys from Survey Monkey were sent directly to 150 individual members. Additionally, JEA sent out three social media advertisements with a corresponding survey link soliciting participation from high school journalism teachers. This study is limited by the fact that it only includes responses from teachers who are members of the JEA. We received approximately 67 survey responses from December 3 through January 31st before closing the survey for analysis. Fifty-seven responses were complete and therefore usable. The survey had 17 questions, with seven opportunities for teachers to post additional comments. Teachers were asked to provide general descriptions of schools as urban public, suburban public charter or private. They were also asked if they were satisfied with the technical support their schools offered, and if they would like to have additional support in the form of trainings and workshops.



## Demographic Characteristics

Over half of respondents (54%) identified their high schools as being medium in size, with a senior class more than 200, but less than 700. Twenty-eight percent identified their schools as being large, having more than 700-students, with the minority of teacher respondents (18%) identifying their schools as small, with less than 200 students in a senior high school class. The majority of respondents also said they teach journalism at suburban public high schools (74%) with nearly the rest teaching at urban public schools (21%).

Journalism programs were most commonly in the Department of English (61%), although a significant number of journalism programs (33%) were stand alone, independent journalism programs. The entire survey can be found in the appendix.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Academic Success**

Researchers have linked academic success to three main factors; family influence, a student's own internal motivation and ambition, and the availability of an academic support system; and relatively recent findings are fairly consistent with findings from the 1980s and even 1970s. Social scientists for the most part agree that while family and internal motivation may be more critical to a student's academic success than academic enrichment opportunities, high school resources and academic enrichment opportunities are nevertheless important. How a student is institutionally tracked or grouped based on perceived ability, can have an impact on a students' academic motivation and future educational choices (Engberg & Wolniak, 2009; Hill, 2008). Tracking tends to result in advantages for high performing students, as those students are often held to higher standards and introduced to more advanced curricula (Maaz, 2008). This implies that academic enrichment opportunities matter, and can provide an advantage for students who get those opportunities. Many researchers suggest that school structures are critical ingredient to pathways for college (Engberg & Wolniak 2009; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Coleman et al 1966). This falls in line with Pierre Bourdieu's theory that human action is practical, and best understood within context (Swartz, 2002).

High school journalism programs can be viewed under the lens of academic opportunity and enrichment given the variety of college ready and life skills

students learn in scholastic journalism. Over the past four decades, studies have indicated that students who participate in scholastic journalism programs benefit in a number of ways, including they tend to score better on the verbal section of college entrance exams and are more prepared for the rigors of college writing.

### **Journalism linked to higher test scores**

The first student newspaper can be traced back to the year 1777, during the Revolutionary War. *The Student Gazette* was a handwritten student newspaper published in a Philadelphia school (Konkle, 2012). More than one hundred years later, the Journalism Education Association (1987) conducted one of the first large studies on the academic impact of scholastic journalism. Jack Dvorak cited this research as the basis of his book, "Journalism Kids Do Better." Dvorak noted the JEA study indicated, "In every area of analysis, the newspaper and yearbook reporters did better in their school work than did their counterparts" (Dvorak, Lain, & Dickson, 1994, p. 21). The JEA analysis of the ACT percentiles of more than 6000 students found scholastic journalists scored on average 12-points higher on the English section of the ACT's than classmates, a difference of 69 percentile to 81 percentile (Dvorak et al., 1994). Dvorak and Choi's (2009) update examined ACT scores of more than 33,000 students. Dvorak and Choi again found a tie in to higher English ACT scores for students who had taken journalism classes in high school. Their analysis indicated that, compared to other students, college freshmen who had taken journalism classes in high school had an eight-point composite score advantage on their English ACT scores and a slight GPA advantage in college level English courses. Notably, journalism students tended to score lower in the subject

areas of math and science, possibly because they may not have taken higher -level math courses in high school (pg. 84).

Dvorak and Choi also specifically examined the performance of minority students with high school journalism backgrounds and found they significantly outscored other minority students on the verbal section of the ACT's. The researchers also found minority high school journalists significantly outperformed both minority and non- journalism students on the CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) writing essay section of the ACT's (Dvorak, Bowen, & Choi, 2009, p.268). CAAP writing essays are evaluated based on student timed responses to two writing prompts.

Morgan and Dvorak (1994) had previously examined the performance of low -income students in economically disadvantaged communities in Alaska, and again found students with journalism instruction performed better on writing evaluations than students enrolled in more typical high school English classes. A smaller study on SAT scores seem to replicate these results, again linking scholastic journalism to overall improved verbal skills. In their study of 130 scholastic journalists, Brusckke and George (1999) found those students' verbal SAT scores were higher than their counterparts by an average of 40 points (p.69).

### **Other Positive Impacts**

Research on achievement motivation finds active engagement in school is critical to educational success (Wang & Eccles, 2013), and school environment can have an impact on both motivation and school engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2013;

Alonso-Tapia & Pardo, 2006). For a student to become actively engaged in content, the school environment is considered important –with some evidence that a school environment needs to fit a student’s psychological needs for engagement to take place. Rather than decrease academic performance, student participation in extra-curricular activities has been linked to increased engagement and higher academic performance. This can have an impact on a students’ educational trajectory, as the more students are engaged the more likely they are to enjoy their scholastic experience and seek further education (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Holloway, 2000). Journalism fits into this body of evidence as around half of journalism related activities occur outside of normal school hours, and are considered an extra- curricular activity (Bobkowski, Cavanah, & Miller, 2015, p.7). Students who take formal journalism classes can also and even equally experience this “extra-curricular” effect as these students are drawn together for a common purpose, to produce content about their school or student issues, and have team interactions that may not occur in other classes.

Scholastic journalism has also been shown to be advantageous in terms of setting the stage for students to become more civically engaged adults (Bobkowski, 2012; Fredricks , Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). After interviewing 45 high school journalists, Clark and Monserrate (2011) concluded participation in high school journalism pushed the adolescents to “see themselves as part of a public that extends beyond their peer group, to form a collective identity” (p.429). They assert, “We believe that involvement in programs such as high school journalism affords unique and important opportunity for young people to experience collective

identity” (p.429). The researchers concluded simply thinking about the “collective good” is an important step towards becoming active and engaged citizens as adults (p.429). Other research supports the premise that actions that begin in adolescence, such as support for journalism and use of news, often carry on through a child’s life (Schulenberg, Maggs & Hurrelman, 1997). Lopez asserts, “If we want to influence the publics’ use of news media, their support for First Amendment rights, and other civic activities, we most focus on the youth (Lopez, Levine, Dautrich, & Yalof, 2009).

The umbrella of civic participation includes the topic of First Amendment rights. The Knight Foundation surveyed more than 100,000 high school students on their feelings about First Amendment rights. Their comprehensive review indicates students who engage in media studies and scholastic journalism are stronger supporters of First Amendment rights and “are more likely to agree” that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions (Newton, 2004). In some cases where student journalists have come up against school censorship, rather than dampen their enthusiasm for civic engagement, students felt more inspired to challenge authority and produce what they considered to be important stories (Clark and Monserrate, 2011, p. 426). Adding to that body of research are findings that once civic identity is formed in adolescence it will likely persist through out their life (Lopez et al., 2009, p. 86). For this reason scholastic journalism programs can serve as an important launching point for civic engagement, and can serve to counter a trend of apathy, disengagement, and low voter turnout among young adults (Clark & Monserrate, 2011; Campbell 2005).

## **Demographic Participation**

Given these findings, the overall lack of participation in some high journalism programs, especially by minority students, is troubling. One of the key findings of The 2011 Scholastic Journalism Census by Kent State University is that poor and minority students are more likely to be left out of scholastic journalism, because the schools they attend are less likely to offer it (Goodman, Bowen, & Bobkowi, 2011). The study finds only 35 percent of minority student students in a representative sample attended high schools that offered journalism courses.

Another large study examining journalism participation found that while most high schools offer some sort of journalism program, fewer than one in ten (8.47%) students nationwide participated in a for credit class in eleventh and twelfth grades. A slightly larger group (9.53 %) participated in extra-curricular journalism or yearbook activities (Bobkowski, Cavanah, & Miller, 2015, p. 7).

Furthermore, participation in scholastic journalism programs is demographically skewed. In examining the records of more than 15,000 tenth grade private and public students in from 2002, Bobkowski et al. found journalism programs tended to be filled with mostly white upper class girls. These findings echoed Becker et al (2014), who found that being female and white predicted participation in high school journalism programs.

The demographic skew may also be explained by the feeling of some minority groups that journalism is a “white” endeavor, and school media studies are irrelevant to the real struggles in their lives (Marchi, 2012). Recruitment may also be a tough sell for minority students given the declining lack of overall esteem for

the profession, and the perception that journalists aren't trustworthy. A 2016 Gallup poll found "Americans trust in mass media to report the news accurately and fairly has dropped to its lowest level in Gallup history," with 26% of younger Americans aged 18 to 49 reporting they have "a great deal of trust in the media" (Swift, 2016). In particular, high school students have reported shaky trust in journalists, with only 63 percent of students reporting that they believe journalists tell the truth all of the time (Newton, 2004, pg. 24). This may pose a serious recruitment challenge for all scholastic journalism programs.

Yet studies show when minority students participate in scholastic journalism, they tend to achieve even greater benefits than their white classmates, although some of the benefits may not be measurable in standardized tests (Dvorak, Bowen, Choi, 2009). Marchi's (2012) interviews with minority student participants of a community journalism program found that students reported the journalism program left them with improved self-esteem, increased academic motivation and connectivity to each other, and a feeling of "empowerment" (pg.751). The high school students also self reported that they believed the program improved their writing, interviewing, and photography skills (pg. 760). It is important to note these kinds of attributes have been reported by scholastic journalists of various races, not just minority students (Clark and Monserrate, p. 426). But King and Stovall argue that scholastic journalism is even more beneficial to minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students, as "audience feedback is far more potent than grades as motivation with these students" (King & Stovall, 1992, p. 101).

## **Scholastic Journalism in Decline**

In the past 23 years there have been some noted declines in the number of schools across the country that offer scholastic journalism. A 1994 survey of scholastic journalism found 78.8% of schools at the time had a student newspaper (Dvorak et al., 1994, p. 72). Between 1999- and 2004 a Knight study indicated that high schools across the country were dropping their student newspapers, with the steepest declines in rural public schools (54%) followed by urban public schools (30%), and lesser declines in suburban public schools (16%) (Newton, 2004, p.36). The Knight Foundation's survey indicated 74% of schools had student newspapers in 2004. If the strength of scholastic journalism programs is measured by how many schools have student newspapers, commitment has declined significantly. An updated 2011 Future of the First Amendment survey by the Knight Foundation (Dautrich, 2011) found that 64% of schools had student newspaper outlets, a drop of around 15% from 1994.

## **What's being taught**

The 2004 snapshot of scholastic journalism found 74% of high schools had student newspapers, 3 % had radio programs, 14% had television broadcasts, and 21% had online news operations. The online numbers indicate a slow trend upward for moving student journalism content online. Sixty-six percent of schools offered a basic journalism class for credit, with 86.5 % offering extra-curriculum options (Bobkowski et al, 2004, p. 253).

A more recent 2011 Kent State survey indicates 94% of schools offer yearbook production, while 64% of schools have student newspapers, 29% of schools have television programming, and 3% offer radio. This study showed schools have been slow to move student newspapers online, with just 27% of school newspapers online at the time, a 6% increase from 2004.

Even so, some recent data seems to indicate scholastic journalism is taking a decidedly technological turn. Journalism teachers told the JEA that the top skill they are teaching is design software (92%). Other skills taught included photography, photo- editing software, social media, shooting video, the use of video editing equipment, and how to create software (Tallent, Fox, Cain, & McKerral, 2015). This study may be limited in that it only included 258 voluntary responses from teachers, and perhaps is not representative of scholastic journalism programs across a range of diverse socioeconomic communities.

### **Teacher Training**

One of the noticeable consistencies in the research involving high school journalism teacher training is that few universities offer programs specifically dedicated to training teachers for scholastic journalism (Tallent et al., 2015). These studies also indicate the experience and training of scholastic journalism teachers are varied. Early studies indicate most journalism teachers were English majors, with substandard education specific to journalism (Dvorak et al., 1994; Whittle, 1983). JEA's most recent survey of 258 high school teachers and advisors (2015) found 46.6% of teacher respondents had professional journalism experience, 37.9% had taken at least one college level course; some 69.4% of journalism teachers

taught other subjects as well, primarily English. This data suggests the current crop of journalism teachers are more prepared for the job than they have been historically, with a larger percentage holding professional experience and specific journalism training (Tallent et al., 2015).

That is not to deny gaps in training, which perhaps are linked to inconsistencies in curriculum that could provide a broader framework for training. The book “Death by Cheeseburger: High School Journalism in the 1990’s and Beyond,” contains a content analysis of 233 school newspapers and interviews with high school journalism teachers and advisors at the time. The authors of that report, the Freedom Forum, a Gannett-sponsored foundation, pointed out some of the problems that still exist today: “From state to state, the standards by which teachers are certified as qualified to teach the subject vary wildly or don’t exist at all. Standards for what constitutes a good curriculum are uneven, too” (Freedom Forum, 1994, pg. 11). More than twenty years later, evidence exists indicating these problems continue. In the 2015 (JEA) survey analysis of 284 high school journalism teachers and advisors, Tallent et al. concludes, “The 2014 study showed how few teachers are actually well- trained to teach the subject (of journalism)” (p. 217). Based on survey responses, key recommendations for the future also included “consistent curriculum design among high school teachers on the state and national level” (p. 218).

The title of the book “Death by Cheeseburger,” (1994) refers to another problem in scholastic journalism: censorship. It refers to an episode in 1971, when a principal pulled the plug on a student newspaper after a student wrote a satirical

story about a student dying from a cheeseburger in the cafeteria (Monk, 1994). The book decried the shortfalls of scholastic journalism, including the blandness of high school newspapers following the 1988 Hazelwood V. Kuhlmeier Supreme Court decision that upheld administrators' rights to censor student newspapers (Paxton and Dickson, 2000). Some educators believed the ruling created a so-called "Hazelwood Effect;" increased censorship of student newspapers by advisors based on the belief that administrators could cut out content at their discretion. But studies after the Hazelwood decision dispute the notion that censorship increased following the ruling, instead researchers found evidence censorship remained fairly even, as many journalism advisors already proactively censored content they believed administrators would find unacceptable (Kovas, 1991). Editors of the book "Still Captive, History, Law and the Teaching of High School Journalism" (Tallent et al., 2015) point out 14.3% of teachers say they "constantly worry" about reprimand for student publications, with about a third of advisors (34.6%) reporting student media's work is always reviewed prior to publication or being aired, and (88.7%) say they placed limitations on what can be aired or published.

### **Technology Frustration**

Teachers of various subjects, including journalism, have consistently complained they lacked technical skills for evolving technology and programs (Chapman, Masters & Pedulla, 2010, p. 240). Teacher frustration over training is not a new problem, and is not specific to scholastic journalism teachers. In 1998, a report by the United States Department of Education concluded, "Relatively few

teachers (20%) report feeling well prepared to integrate educational technology into the classroom instruction (Pianfetti, 2001). A later report by the National Education Association found: “Although educators do get technology training, many don’t feel comfortable using it for instructional purposes” (NEA, 2008).

Historically, the most profound barrier to teaching scholastic journalism is a lack of computer and Internet access. Over the years, that so-called “digital divide” has been shrinking. A report examining Internet access in public schools found public school ratios of one computer per 12 children in 1998. By 2001, the numbers had narrowed to four to five students per computer (NCES, 2001). Yet the Alliance for Education (2014) finds a continuing gap in technological access and in lower socioeconomic schools and communities. Fifty-six percent of teachers in high-poverty schools reported “a lack of access to digital technologies is a challenge in the classroom.” Additionally, the study found 70-percent of public K-12 schools do not have sufficient broadband to allow most of their students to engage in digital learning simultaneously. Comparatively, and unsurprisingly, private schools tend to have better computer to child ratios, better Internet accessibility; and they have been able to add more innovative educational technology to their curriculum (Education Week, 2015).

As technology continues to evolve, computer to child ratios may be an overly simplistic way to define the digital divide. Beyond the computers themselves, teachers today often need special programs to enrich their curriculum and help implement their objectives. This is especially true for scholastic journalism, where teachers need specialized training and programs to mimic the multi-media

newsrooms of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; and, for example, teach basic design through Photoshop (Plopper & Conaway, 2013). As Collins and Halverson (2009) noted: “Creating multimedia documents, putting together and critiquing videos, finding information and resources on the web, and understanding images and graphics are all becoming important aspects of communication (p. 133). Teachers may need additional training to teach students some of these specialized skills.

Lack of teacher training and concerns that students may inappropriately use digital technology in class for non-scholastic endeavors, such as texting friends, may minimize the use of digital devices in the classroom. In their study of rural Arkansas journalism advisors, Plopper and Conaway (2013) found a “lack of funding,” “lack of training,” and lack of “administrative permission” minimized the use of I pads and IPods in their classroom (pg.62). A recent survey on the use of digital technology by teachers (Deloitte, 2016) involving more than 2,800 public and private school teachers, parents and students finds 42% of teachers use at least one digital device every day, yet 40% of teachers say their school is behind the curve with technological adaption and implementation. Teachers said the top reason to acquire digital learning devices was to increase engagement. Yet this survey also found significant gaps exist between the perceived benefit of technology (79%) and how much those very same teachers are actually using technology (57%) to help implement curricula.

Little data is available on the use of student-owned digital devices, like cell phones, in the classroom. What is clear is that teachers historically have wanted more immersive technological training and assistance. Asked what hindered them

the most, journalism advisors cited the number one reason (38%) was not enough money for updating equipment (Tallent et al., 2015, p. 21). Additionally, nearly half of teachers surveyed cited a “lack of training” as a barrier to media education, with 84 percent of teachers saying they believe future teachers should receive media training. This data is consistent with earlier surveys (Tuggle, Sneed, & Wulfemeyer, 2000). Teachers across a variety of other subject areas have also expressed a desire to integrate media teaching into their other core subjects, but they listed lack of materials (65%) and lack of time (57-%) as barriers. Yates found public and private school teachers united in believing in the value of teaching media literacy, but more public school teachers than private school teachers said “orchestrating those lessons proved to be more difficult for them, given a lack of training, and time constraints” (p. 27).

## Findings

### Education and Training

The majority of respondents had master's degrees (65%). Twenty-eight percent indicated their highest level of education was a bachelor's degree. In the comments section, some of the teachers indicated they had multiple degrees and master's degrees in other subjects; including law, counseling, and philosophy.

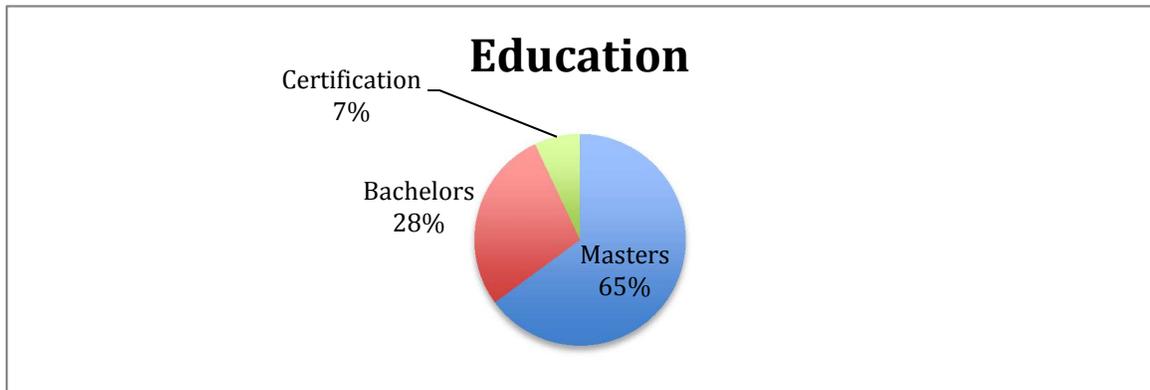


Figure 3

An additional 12 percent indicated they had received certification from an outside journalism association. There is no state or federal scholastic journalism certification program. However, some states, like Missouri, require high school journalism teachers to have taken some college level journalism courses (Kent State, 2017). The Journalism Education Association offers two levels of certification to members; Certified Journalism Educator and Master Journalism Educator. Routes to a CJE certification include journalism college credits, a history of journalism advising and a certification test, or a history of working in commercial or scholastic

journalism related fields and the certification test. Additionally, teachers can become a Master Journalism Educator based on an essay test requiring teachers to elaborate how they would respond to hypothetical ethical and procedural challenges. The certification test is offered throughout the year at testing sites and at high school journalism conferences and workshops and covers a range of topics including AP style, principles of design, photojournalism and advertising (JEA, 2017).

**Access**

The overwhelming majority (96%) of teachers said students did not need a specific GPA to participate in their journalism class. Ninety-three percent of teachers reported their journalism program was not restricted to honors or Advanced Placement students. Teachers also overwhelmingly (96%) indicated their journalism program was not restricted based on student age. Only four percent of teachers reported their journalism program is only open to juniors and seniors. Eighty percent of teachers said their journalism class was not required for graduation.

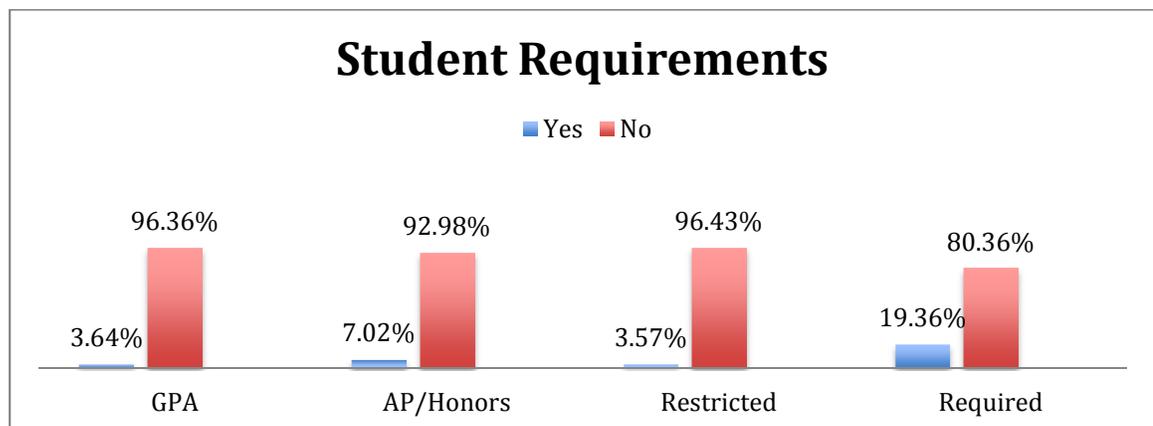
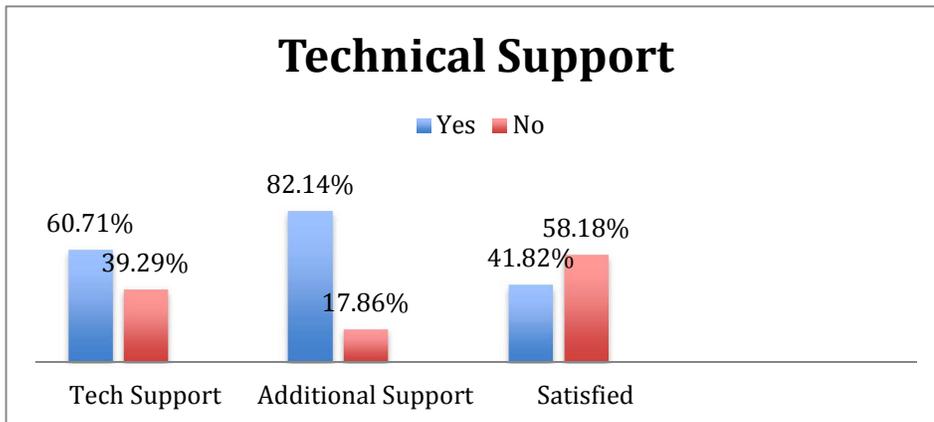


Figure 4

## Technical Support



Sixty one percent of teachers responded they do have in school

Figure 5

and out of school technical support necessary for the maintenance of student newspapers/magazines/television and radio stations, more than half (58%) of respondents indicated they are not satisfied with the technical support offered by their schools involving student and online publications. Some teachers indicated in comments there is technical support available from the student platforms they use; specifically a free online blog site for teachers, called Edublogs and a subscription based mobile publishing platform for scholastic journalism called SNO. Additionally, 82% of respondents indicated they would welcome technical support in the form of additional training and workshops. Details on where they would like more training follow in section entitled workshops and training.

## Ranking of Educational Importance

Teachers rated writing, digital editing, interviewing, photography, media ethics, and social media instruction and education primarily in the somewhat important to very

important range. The category of writing received the highest numbers of teachers agreeing it was a “very important” skill, followed by media ethics and interviewing.

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Unimportant
Writing	85.96% 49	12.28% 7	1.75% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Digital Editing	17.54% 10	52.63% 30	26.32% 15	3.51% 2	0.00% 0
Interviewing	70.18% 40	26.32% 15	3.51% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Photography	33.33% 19	42.11% 24	24.56% 14	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Media Ethics	71.93% 41	26.32% 15	1.75% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Social Media Instruction and Education	29.82% 17	56.14% 32	12.28% 7	1.75% 1	0.00% 0

Figure 6



Figure 7

Grouping together the “very important” to “important” rankings, writing and media ethics ranked highest as most important skill (98%) followed by interviewing. (96%), social media, (86%) photography (75%), and digital editing (71%).

### Conferences and Training

The majority of teacher respondents indicated they do have time (89%) and would benefit from additional conferences and additional training (95%), but 74% of teacher respondents said their schools do not cover the full cost of attending yearly conferences on high school journalism.

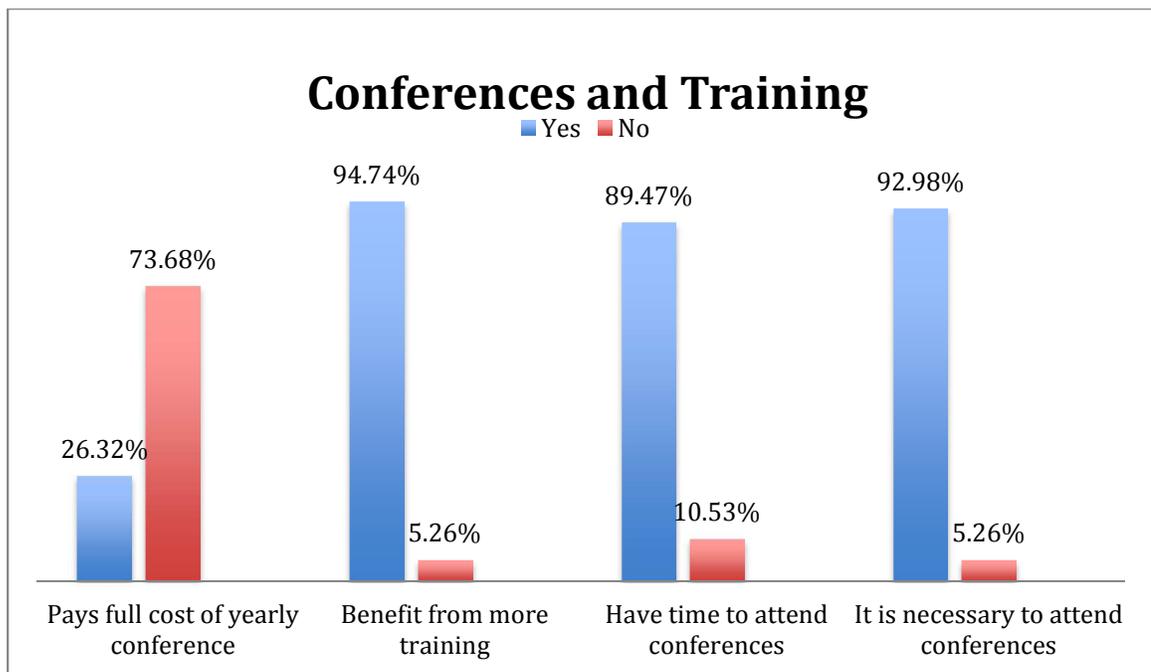


Figure 8

Teachers had a lot to say on the issue of training and workshops. Fourteen of the 57 teacher respondents posted comments, many supporting the importance of training and workshops as well as emphasizing the lack of financial support from their schools. Comments in support of conferences included, “Conferences are the

key to J sanity,” “State and national conferences have been a huge factor to my development as a journalism teacher.”

Regarding financial support, teachers commented, “Time and cost are a huge factor but the bigger piece is getting my school to see the value.” Another teacher posted, “If there was more financial support, I would definitely attend more frequently.” Another teacher commented if journalism teachers in their school attend conferences it comes out of the overall budget at a loss to the students. The teacher wrote, “I have a budget that can include teacher travel but it doesn’t cover all my conference expenses every year. I would allocate more money, but that would be at the expense of the students, as the budget is shared.” Other teachers indicated their conference expenses were paid out of publication advertising revenue, or were covered as a student chaperone.

Teachers indicated high levels of support for more training in all proposed categories, including photography, video, Photoshop, digital editing, social media and media ethics. Teachers indicated the highest degree of support (80%) for more training in photography and digital editing, and lesser support for training in media ethics (64%).



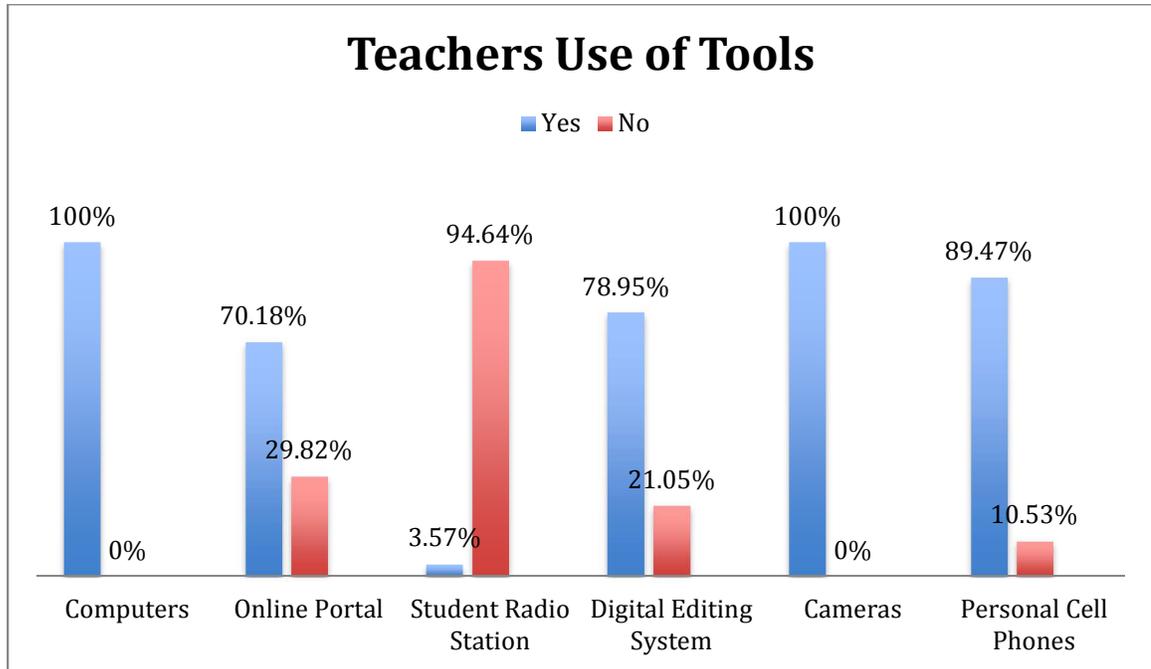
Figure 9

Comments included, “All of these programs are constantly evolving, so I think it’s important to get training in these areas offered.” “I benefit from any training I can get, as a veteran who came of age when there were few computers, so I am like a second language learner to all things digital,” and finally, “While I am proficient in these skills, most teachers are not because they are English teachers or come from another discipline. It is hard actually getting teachers who are professionals like myself. I come with a broadcasting and public relations background.”

### **Tools Being Used**

All (100%) of the teacher respondents indicated computers and cameras were being used in their journalism classes. Personal cell phones were also highly utilized (89%), followed by digital editing systems. Seventy percent of teacher respondents indicated they utilized online portals for student newspapers/magazines. Fewer

teachers indicated the use of television and or radio stations, though some indicated a television program was run out of a separate department.



**Figure 10**

In a subsequent question, 86% of teacher respondents rated an online portal for scholastic journalism as “somewhat important” to “very important” for skill building, whereas television and radio platforms got much less support, with 50% of teachers rating student radio stations as “not necessary,” and 35% of teachers rating student television stations as “not necessary.”

**Urban Public versus Suburban Public**

In comparing responses between urban public school teachers and suburban public school teachers, there were some noted disparities in educational levels, resources, and the level of technical support and satisfaction teachers reported getting from schools. Teachers of suburban public schools had higher levels of education, with thirty of forty- two teachers (71%) indicating they had master’s

degrees, compared to 33% of urban public school teachers.

Sixty- three percent of suburban public school teachers indicated they had necessary in-school or out of school technical support for the maintenance and support of online news websites, versus 50% of the urban public school teachers. Teachers of suburban public schools expressed a stronger interest in additional support in the form of training and workshops (85% versus 67%) than urban public school teachers.

Though both urban public and suburban public school teachers indicated high levels of dissatisfaction with technical support their schools offered, suburban public schools expressed a stronger dissatisfaction (60%) compared to public school teachers (50%). Additionally, teachers in suburban public schools reported their schools were more likely to cover the cost of yearly conferences and workshops than urban public school teachers (29% versus 18%).

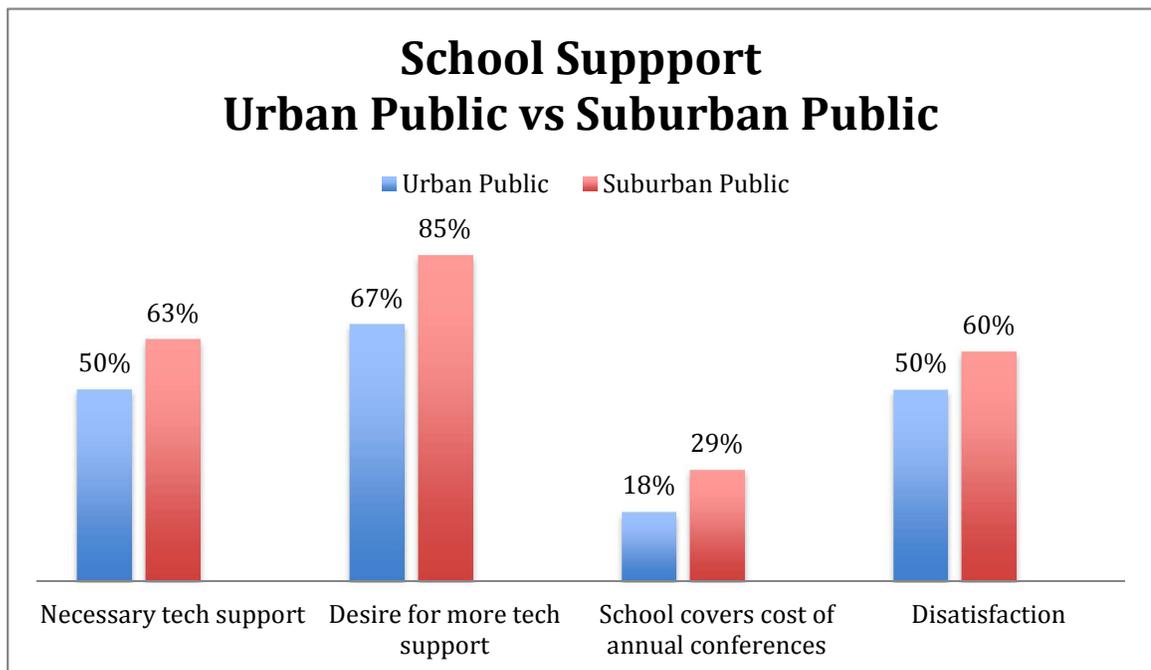


Figure 11

**Additional Teacher Comments**

Nine teachers posted a variety of comments at the end of the survey. Some expressed thanks to associations like the Journalism Education Association for providing some much appreciated support. Others expressed a desire for more support and collaboration. One teacher wrote, "I can't collaborate because I am the only journalism teacher in my private school." Another teacher wrote, "My training is mostly on the writing and reporting end, so I am kind of an island when it comes to new media/video. I have some training, but I feel behind the curve."

## **Discussion**

This study examined scholastic journalism resources from a perspective of how well teachers are trained and whether they are satisfied with the training and the support they get from their school systems. Relative to what previous scholarship and reports have found, this study suggests improvements have been made in two key areas; access to and integration of technology and advanced educational (master's) degrees by journalism teachers. All of the teacher respondents reported using computers in their journalism classrooms, and high percentages of teachers reported taking advantage of mobile technology available on student cell phones. Yet teachers had high levels of dissatisfaction in terms of specialized training and educational support. These findings indicate an on-going challenge and problem for high school journalism teachers: the failure of school systems to adequately train teachers and provide technical support as the field of journalism has increasingly transitioned into a multi-media arena.

### **Education level of teachers**

Sixty-five percent of our respondents reported having Master's degrees. This is a 12% jump from 1994 (Dvorak, 1994). Additionally; seven percent of respondents voluntarily went through the process to become a "Certified Journalism Educator" or a "Master Journalism Educator." Certification by the Journalism

Education Association is not required at either a state or local level, and shows initiative on behalf of those teachers to acquire needed skills and become as qualified as possible to teach journalism.

The option for certification from a journalism association comes on the heels of lapsed state certification requirements. In the mid-nineties, 28% of high school journalism teachers had state certification in the subject area of journalism (Dvorak, 1994). Over the past twenty years many states have dropped state certification requirements to teach scholastic journalism. Florida is one of the most recent states to abandon its certification requirement, dropping its requirement as of January 2017. (Florida Department of Education, 2017). Though Tallent et al's (2015) study showed higher (30%) rates of JEA certification, the lapse of state certification requirements for journalism educators is problematic in that required certification could help ensure high school journalism teachers have some base line knowledge and skills. It is also an indicator states are not taking scholastic journalism and the training of journalism teachers seriously.

### **Use of technology**

Teachers indicated expanded use of technology in journalism classrooms compared to previous surveys (Alliance for Education, 2014). Not only did 100-percent of respondents use computers, the majority of respondents (70%) indicated their schools have moved student-produced journalism into an online portal. More impressive, 79% of respondents indicated they are using immersive technology in the form of digital editing systems, and 89% of teachers said students use their

personal cell phones in connection with their journalism classes. This is relevant as cell phones can be an inexpensive way for high school journalism students to practice some basic principles of photography, video collection, and digital editing. Students can also use the voice memo application on their phones, for example, to conduct interviews; and this could lead to more accuracy in quoting sources. This data shows high school journalism teachers are trying to bridge the gap between the classroom and the journalism profession, which is increasingly transitioning into online multi-media journalism platforms, complete with video, pictures, and social media components such as Twitter, as opposed to static traditional printed newspapers.

### **Access**

Most teachers responded that any student could enroll in their high school journalism courses. In the majority of schools, teachers reported access was not limited by grade point average, and was not limited to juniors and seniors. A minority of teachers surveyed (7%) reported their scholastic journalism courses are limited to AP or honors students. This is problematic, because it may be denying some students of a rich opportunity to participate in classes that have been shown to bring students a variety of benefits, including better writing and critical thinking skills.

The vast majority (80%) of high school journalism teachers in this study also reported their journalism course is not required for graduation. This limits access, as students' social and cultural feelings about journalism may encourage them to

pass up the opportunity. As Marchi's (2012) study points out, minority students may feel disenfranchised from school, and may feel scholastic journalism is more of a "white" thing. With studies showing more girls than boys tend to engage in scholastic journalism, and schools priority of STEM subjects; boys may see journalism studies as more of a "girl" thing and not be interested in participating (Al Salami et al, 2017; Becker et al, 2014). Another problem is the sinking esteem of the profession of journalism itself, which may lead students to opt out of the academic enrichment opportunity (Swift, 2016). These factors taken together may limit interest in elective journalism classes, which is why journalism programs should be integrated into required, core content areas.

### **Curricular Goals**

Teachers indicated their top teaching goal, as ranked mostly in the "very important" category, was to improve students' writing skills (86%). Seventy-two percent of teachers rated media ethics, and 70% of teachers rated interviewing skills as "very important." This focus on the basics is as it should be; yet the teachers acknowledged that technology is also important in high school journalism classes today. The remaining skills listed, including digital editing, photography, and social media instruction and education were mostly ranked in the "very important" to "somewhat important" areas. Based on teacher responses, it seems evident high school journalism teachers are working to tackle multiple goals and teach students multiple skills.

## **Dissatisfaction**

High school journalism teachers reported high levels of dissatisfaction with the current level of training and support from their schools. Teachers overwhelmingly (95%) indicated they would benefit from more training, with most teachers saying it is necessary for them to attend training workshops and conferences (89%). This can be tied to inadequate training at the district level. Only half (50%) of the urban public school teachers said they had the necessary technical support for their high school journalism classes, compared to 63% of suburban high school teachers. Additionally urban public school teachers had even less financial support from their schools to cover cost of annual conferences, with only 18% of their schools covering the cost of those conventions, versus 29% for suburban public schools. Both numbers are startlingly low, and are indicators of the consequences scholastic journalism has suffered from its mostly “elective” designation.

Interestingly, overall dissatisfaction with technology support was higher among suburban teachers (60%) versus urban public school teachers (50%). This may fit into abundant research that urban schools tend to be in more socioeconomically disadvantaged communities compared to their suburban counterparts, and teachers are resigned to having sub-standard resources (Gehrke, 2005).

## Implications

From a policy perspective, this study points to a historic problem for high school journalism educators—i.e., that there is no consistent national or state journalism curriculum (Tallent et al., 2015). As there is no unifying curriculum, the findings here indicate high school journalism teachers often turn to their scholastic journalism associations rather than district or school leadership when they run into challenges. Workshops run by journalism associations are considered a vital resource for teachers, as indicated by one teacher who wrote, “Conferences are the key to J sanity.” Another wrote, “State and national conferences have been a huge factor in my development as a journalism teacher.” Comments regarding state or district resources were limited to complaints regarding a lack of support, including “My district provides NO support for my programming,” and “Big thing...I get no help training wise from my school.”

Organizations like the Journalism Education Association have crafted their own suggested curriculum that is aligned to Common Core Curriculum, and is intended to fill the void of a state or national curriculum. Several other disparate organizations, like Schooljournalism.org, and Education Shift, also offer helpful information and even short tutorials that could be beneficial for journalism teachers. Yet one teacher commented, “I am a one-person independent department, therefore on my own.” This raises concerns that some more isolated journalism teachers may not be aware of the range of resources and supportive material that are available to them.

For that reason, I think high school journalism instructors could benefit from a comprehensive site that includes both curricular options for lesson plans, as well as a list of national, regional workshops, and online tutorials available for journalism teachers. Having a more centralized menu of resources available to high school journalism teachers may allow teachers to more easily shore up areas where they need the most support and training. This would necessitate journalism associations banding together to create a common website that would also link directly to their independent web sites. For the maximum benefit, scholastic journalism associations would need to lobby state and federal educational leaders to pass this material on to high school journalism teachers across their respective regions.

Another area worth exploring is an expansion of free or low cost online classes for journalism instructors. This may be beneficial given findings here that teachers have free time to attend conferences, and believe in the value of journalism conferences, yet only 18% of public schools teachers and 29% of suburban schools picked up the cost of annual conventions. This forces some teachers to pick up the bill. As one teacher commented, "Training is from workshops I pay for." Some universities, like Kent State University, offer courses specific for journalism instructors (Kent State, 2017). It might be worthwhile to try and get universities that offer training specific to journalism high school teachers to share some of their courses online, or offer them at a reduced price to journalism instructors. This may be helpful in shoring up support for journalism instructors who are dissatisfied with

school technical support and may not be able to afford to attend regional conferences and workshops.

It is disheartening that scholastic journalism, despite all of its benefits, remains a low priority for school systems nationwide. Yet change may be coming. The concern over the proliferation of fake news in the 2016 presidential election (PBS, 2016) is an argument for more media literacy programs in high school. A 2016 Pew Research Center survey of more than one thousand people found “Sixty-four percent of respondents said fabricated news stories caused a great deal of confusion about basic facts.” The study found negative views on fake news crossed demographic and political lines. Incidents like “Pizza-gate,” referring to what happened at Comet Pizza in D.C., illustrates the danger fake news can present (Barthel et al, 2016). After “buying” into fake news stories, a North Carolina man threatened people at that pizzeria with a gun, thinking he was busting a child sex ring (Siddiqui, 2016). The concern over fake news is a legitimate argument for investing in scholastic journalism programs, as scholastic journalism is an ideal vehicle for teaching students how to respect information and tell the difference between opinion and verifiable facts.

It is unlikely even widespread concern over fake news will inspire national and educational leaders to suddenly embrace scholastic journalism, and substitute it for traditional English or writing classes. However, it may inspire educational leaders to try and find ways to integrate scholastic journalism into current programs. Schools do not necessarily need stand-alone journalism or multi-media courses to integrate journalism into their curricula. For example, three Maryland

high schools have partnered with researchers from the University of Maryland College Park to test pilot a multi-media curriculum on climate change. In class, students are working as “Science Beat” reporters. They are conducting interviews, posting pictures, creating charts and posting content about what they are learning as student science reporters (Yaros, 2017).

In conclusion, there is rich opportunity for multi-media journalism to be soundly tied to other academic areas that would fulfill multiple objectives, including media literacy, while simultaneously offering some basic technical skills, and help preparing students for the rigor of college writing. This is becoming a more viable option as more schools are closing the “digital divide,” as defined as higher ratios of computers per students. It is vital these programs be supported on the national and state level, and teachers get the training and support they need from their school systems to meet their program objectives.

Scholastic journalism associations have worked hard to bridge funding and curriculum gaps. A more centralized menu of resources for teachers, as well as free or reduced-cost online classes would help. But it is now time for policy makers and educational leaders to pick up the baton. The current crisis over fake news could be the tipping point to convince educational leaders that scholastic journalism is a necessary and valuable tool for student education and development.

## Appendix

### Consent Form/Survey

Jenny Glick a graduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park, is conducting this research alongside Co-PI Dr. Linda Steiner. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a member of the Journalism Education Association, an organization with a large membership of high school journalism teachers. The purpose of this research project is to find out what tools journalism high school teachers feel they need for the optimal teaching environment. We are seeking this information in order to identify potential trends in thought as to what tools and teacher training journalism teachers believe is needed to create the optimal high school journalism programs for students.

The procedures involve filling out an online survey at your convenience, at a location of your choice. We do not expect the survey to take more than a half an hour to complete. The survey is divided into three sections; program history, teacher training, and tools of the trade. One question will ask you what essential tools do you think are necessary for skill building in your class. Another question will ask you how important you believe it is to attend conferences and training.

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

This research is not designed to help you personally. However, the results may improve understanding of what tools a wide variety of teachers across a broad spectrum of environments feel are necessary to help students grasp key concepts.

The surveys are anonymous and will not contain information that will personally identify you. Data results will be stored initially on a password-protected computer, and then moved into a password-protected file on an external hard drive for a time period not to exceed three years. Original data will then be deleted from computer. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact the investigator:

**Jenny Glick, JGlick12@terpmail.umd.edu, at 5711 Greenleaf Road, Baltimore MD 21210 at 410-370-6519. You may also contact CO-PI Dr. Linda Steiner at lsteiner@umd.edu, 3103 Knight Hall, University of Maryland College Park, 20742 or at 301-405-2426.**

**If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: University of Maryland College Park, Institutional Review Board Office, 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, MD, 20742. Email: irb@umd.edu. Telephone:301-405-**

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0678.

**This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.**

**Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You may print a copy of this signed consent form.**

**If you agree to participate, please write your name and click “I agree/consent” below.**

Name

\* Date

\* I consent to participating in this study

YES

NO

## Section One: Journalism Program History

1. The number of years I have been teaching is

- 1 to 5 years
- 5 to ten years
- 10 to 15 years
- More than 15 years

2. My educational background includes

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Outside certification from a journalism association
- Other (please specify)

3. The journalism class I teach is

- Part of the English Department
- Part of a stand-alone journalism class/program
- Integrated into other academic courses
- Other (please specify)

4. The name of the journalism class I teach is....

5. Please click YES, NO, or NOT APPLICABLE to the following questions.

	Yes	No	Not Applicable		
My journalism class is only available to honors/AP students	<input type="radio"/>				
Only eleventh or twelfth graders can enroll in a journalism class	<input type="radio"/>				
Students need a specific GPA to participate in the journalism program	<input type="radio"/>				
My journalism class is connected to a student newspaper/magazine/tv station	<input type="radio"/>				
Students are not required to take a journalism class to graduate	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Which of the following most accurately describes your school?

- Large (senior class more than 700 students)
- Medium (senior class less than 201-700 students)
- Small (senior class less than 200 students)

7. Please check the following which most accurately describes your school

- Urban Public
- Suburban Public
- Private
- Public Charter

## SECTION 2: TEACHER TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

8. For each statement, please click yes or no.

Yes No

I have in school or out of school assistance if necessary for ongoing maintenance of my school's online student newspaper/magazine/tv and or radio station.

I have no outside support for the ongoing maintenance of my student newspaper/magazine/television and or radio station.

I would like to have additional support in the form of training and workshops for the maintenance and improvement of our school's student newspaper/magazine.

I am satisfied with the technical support my school system offers.

Additional comments:

9. For each statement, please click yes or no.

Yes No

My school pays the full cost for me to attend yearly conferences on high school journalism.

As a journalism teacher, I would benefit from additional training and workshops.

I do not have time to attend conferences on journalism.

It is not necessary for me to attend conferences and workshops on journalism.

Additional thoughts:

10. For each statement, please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

I regularly collaborate/meet with other journalism teachers in our school district.

I occasionally collaborate/meet with other journalism instructors in our school system.

I see collaboration with other journalism teachers as essential to skill building.

I do not believe teacher collaboration greatly helps students master skills.

My school/school district provides adequate resources and materials to practice New Media skills (including social networking, blogging or online newspapers or magazines)

My journalism program has the technological tools to fulfill my curricular objectives

My school recognizes the career-ready skills offered by the study of journalism.

### SECTION 3: TOOLS OF THE TRADE

11. Rank the topics you see as most important to least important in terms of student skill building.

Very Important			Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Unimportant
Writing	<input type="radio"/>				
Digital Editing	<input type="radio"/>				
Interviewing	<input type="radio"/>				
Photography	<input type="radio"/>				
Media Ethics	<input type="radio"/>				
Social Media Instruction and Education	<input type="radio"/>				

12. What aspects of additional training do you think you would most benefit from as a teacher?

	Yes	No	Not Applicable		
Photography	<input type="radio"/>				
Photoshop	<input type="radio"/>				
Video	<input type="radio"/>				
Digital Editing	<input type="radio"/>				
Media Ethics	<input type="radio"/>				
Social Media	<input type="radio"/>				

Additional comments:

13. Which of the following do you use regularly in your journalism program?

	Yes	No			
Computers	<input type="radio"/>				
Online portal for student newspaper/magazine	<input type="radio"/>				
Student radio station	<input type="radio"/>				
Digital editing system	<input type="radio"/>				
Cameras	<input type="radio"/>				
Personal cell phones	<input type="radio"/>				
Student television station	<input type="radio"/>				

Other tools used:

14. Which of the following do you feel is necessary for skill building in your class?

	<input type="radio"/>					
	Very Important		Somewhat	Important	Important	Slightly Important Not Necessary
Photoshop applications	<input type="radio"/>					
Digital editing systems	<input type="radio"/>					
Cameras	<input type="radio"/>					
Student cell phones	<input type="radio"/>					
Video cameras	<input type="radio"/>					
Online portal for student newspaper /magazine	<input type="radio"/>					
Student television station						
Student radio station						
Other (please specify):						

15. Please add any additional thoughts you would like to share on your journalism program

Thank you for participating in this survey!

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