

CREATING STORIES

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25 Ways to Generate Story Ideas for High School Newspapers

- 1)** Ask all the members of your staff or journalism class for five news or feature story ideas. Repeat monthly.
- 2)** Ask teachers of other classes if you can spend a few minutes seeking story ideas from their students.
- 3)** Print a notice in every issue of your paper inviting readers to submit story ideas and letters to the editor.
- 4)** Consider each letter to the editor as the basis of a possible news story before printing it as simply a letter to the editor.
- 5)** Ask the principal to inform you of visits to his or her office by educators, politicians, alumni and others whose visits might be newsworthy.
- 6)** Visit department chairpersons regularly for story ideas.
- 7)** Get to know people all over the school. Many of them will turn out to be good subjects for stories, and many of them will eventually give you story tips.
- 8)** Get to know the police officer whose beat includes your school.
- 9)** Newly enrolled students from other towns, states and countries are potentially excellent news subjects. Check regularly with the appropriate school office.
- 10)** Walk around your school and its neighborhood and keep your eyes and ears open for the interesting, the unusual, the changing and the unchanging.
- 11)** Invite people in politics, business, education, the arts and other fields to speak to your journalism class or staff on topics of your choice

or theirs. What they say becomes your story. Ask to be notified of guest speakers in other classes, too.

12) Check daily newspapers for stories to which you can give a local angle in your paper. Example: From a daily paper's story on teenage record buying, use some material as background, but get most of the material for an article of your own by interviewing students from your school and record dealers from your community.

13) Go through papers from other schools looking for story ideas.

14) Ask teachers for the names of notable or interesting graduates or of alumni who have distinguished themselves in any field. Ask teachers to notify you when interesting graduates visit them in school.

15) Encourage staff members to do stories related to their special interests. Example: A student interested in animals can spend a day with a veterinarian and then write about it.

16) Find out whether any rumors are circulating in you school and write articles that either verify or destroy them.

17) Check teacher bulletin boards for memos and notices that may suggest story ideas.

18) Invite students who have had dramatic, heroic, exciting, inspiring or frightening experiences to write first-person stories about them.

19) Ask your entire staff to be on the lookout for interesting and amusing incidents and occurrences in the

lives of your school's students and faculty, in and out of school. These anecdotes can be written up as brief items appearing under a collective heading in your paper such as "Here and There."

20) Ask recent graduates who were on your staff to write first-person pieces on what it's like to be in college, the working world, the military, etc.

21) Ask English teachers to keep an eye out for composition work that may qualify as material for your paper.

22) Encourage staff photographers to shoot interesting or striking scenes wherever they find them. Print them in your paper with only a caption. The caption is the key. It must make the photo relate in some way to your readers' lives, interests or feelings.

23) Examine issues of your school paper going back one or more years for reusable story ideas. Old yearbooks are also fertile sources of material.

24) Visit other schools. Look for story ideas as you compare and contrast aspects of those schools with yours.

25) Ask your staff to ask their parents which aspects of life at your school they feel in the dark about and would like to see articles on. Articles that result must be fresh and interesting to your student readers as well as to parents.

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COLUMBIA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION

Columbia University • Mail Code 5711 • Columbia University • New York, NY 10027 • Telephone: (212) 854.9400
cspa@columbia.edu • <http://cspa.columbia.edu> • @cspa