



GSSPA Student Page User's Manual

www.gsspa.org/students

QUICK START INSTRUCTIONS: This guide is mainly set up to help any teacher who wants her or his students to partner with us to help create posts for the site. If you're mainly interested in giving your students the ability to comment on posts, **just email page director Tom McHale** (tmchale@hcrhs.k12.nj.us) and he'll help you create user ID's and passwords immediately!

I. WHAT this is, HOW this project will help you, and WHY GSSPA is doing this.

Welcome to the user's manual for GSSPA's student page. The student page is designed to be a home for scholastic journalism in the state - a place for students to gather, learn, and talk about journalism.

We think this page is such a great project because it is brimming with potential for students and classes who want to make a name for themselves and make a mark on scholastic journalism. There are lots of great Web pages on journalism out there, but few that are really geared toward the scholastic press and none (at least that we know of) where students run the show. With this project, GSSPA hopes to create a "living textbook" of scholastic journalism and help build some community for scholastic journalism in our state.

For schools with fully developed journalism programs, the site will be a supplement and discussion forum. For others, the site will be a resource and starting place. So this page is about enhancement AND outreach.

Students who engage in this process will be able to put on their college applications that they partnered with our statewide nonprofit group to develop this initiative. In fact, if you have particularly dedicated students we'll add them to our Web team. And supporting schools will receive credit for operating the page.

II. Being a site host: basic responsibilities and benefits.

Being a site host isn't hard, we promise! In fact, it's about as much or as little work as you make it and there are tons of rewards. The best part is, you can do this with as few as one student or as many as 100! In exchange for adopting the page's maintenance for a month, you receive:

- recognition for your school's hard work, both on the page and, if you request it, in a letter to your principal (send her or his name and address to secretary@gsspa.org)
- a chance for your students to get involved with a Web project and add convergence to their journalistic repertoire
- a really great resume booster for students who want to get involved
- some relevant assignments that will contribute to the bottom line of quality journalism in NJ, and help other schools improve or create their programs

Of course, our goal is to see that content is posted to the site regularly, so during the month that your school is operating the page, we suggest that your students contribute at least the following:

- **2 page designs/narratives for our showcase** (see section IV for examples)
- **1-2 questions for our Q&A** (just email us the questions; we'll provide the answers!)
- **5-15 quick tips** (these are really easy and can be a HW assignment; see section IV)
- **1-2 "From the resources directory" entries**
- **2-4 How-to's** (see section IV for an example)

****Note:** being a "site host" will not require you to physically host the page. All you need is a few willing students and an Internet connection to post material!**

III. Some simple ways to make this work in your class.

Your class can make this work in lots of ways - whether you have a whole room of participating students or just one or two. We'd suggest these tips to help get you going:

- Find the one or two most interested students and make them project managers. Give them the leadership experience and opportunity of reading this manual and assigning work out as needed.
- This doesn't have to happen during class time. Make post creation a HW assignment and have students submit their work to your project managers.
- Have the project managers create a posting calendar so they can stagger when postings get submitted. Don't post everything you have in the same week.
- During your posting month, spread the word that your publication is doing this project. Have your students do an e-campaign to get people looking! Send word to publications you exchange with.
- After your posting month, have the student check back to the site occasionally to see what's new! If there's something interesting online, make submitting a reply a HW assignment.
- Encourage your students to go beyond the minimum requirement. Talk as a class about how you can make a contribution to schools without advisers or programs. Think of the credit this will bring to your students and your program! (see section V for advanced project ideas)
- Weave posting into a meta-journalistic experience. Use this as an opportunity for your students to learn about the craft and explain it to others. For example, break your class into teams and have them write How-to's on design, lede writing, feature writing, etc. If you've written some award-winning stories, ask them to annotate how they did it and make it a post!

IV. For non-Web heads: Quick start guide to posting.

A. How to find the page and passwords for access

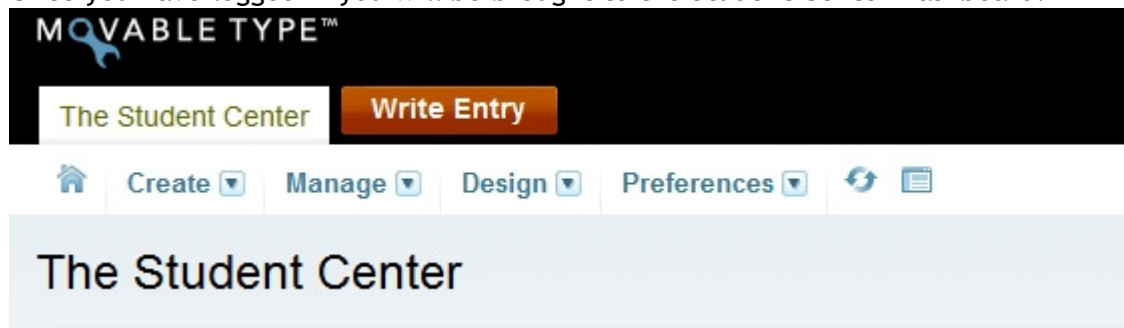
You can find the page by going to www.gsspa.org/students. If you would like to become a member, so that you can comment and post, send an e-mail to tmchale@hcrhs.k12.nj.us. Once you have been sent your login name and password, you can go to www.gsspa.org/admin.html to get started.

B. How often should we post?

We want visitors to the site to find new content, so more frequent posting is best. See section II. for minimum expectations for a hosting school.

C. Posting Basics

Once you have logged in you will be brought to the Student Center Dashboard.



Click on the brown "Write Entry" button or choose Entry from the Create drop down menu. This will bring you to the Create Entry Screen. See an example on the next page.

There are only a few areas of the Metadata section that you need to complete, and even some of these are optional.

- **Tags** - Use this field to enter tags for your entry. Tags are a means of organizing and identifying entries that is shared with users of the site. On the homepage you'll find a Cloud of tags in which the most popular tags are indicated by size. They are similar to keywords. In fact, you may use the same words in both fields. Separate each word or phrase with commas.
- **Category** - A category will appear in orange type above your published entry. To assign a category to an entry, click the "Add Category" link and then click on the category that fits best. If you aren't sure which category to choose leave this blank.
- **Excerpt** - Leave this field blank.
- **Keywords** - These words are used by search engines to return results. Think of words someone might use to find your entry if they were searching. Choose words that describe what your entry is about, such as "design" or "writing" or "objectivity." You can use the same words that you used for tags.

The Publishing and Feedback sections should remain as is. You are now ready to complete your entry by using the two buttons at the bottom of the page.

- **Preview** - This button will allow you to see what your post will look like on the homepage. It is recommended that you preview your post and make any adjustments before clicking the "Save" button.
- **Save** - Once you are satisfied with your post, click this button. It will save your entry into your database, and it will go into a queue for the editors to review and publish. You can still make changes to an entry if you need to and re-save it.

V. Examples of Posting Types

A. SHOWCASE - These are examples of work you want to share with others. Post it in a PDF file and provide a brief explanation of how you came up with the idea and the process used to create it.

The Future of Humanity

By tech_jess on October 8, 2007 11:40 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)



This cartoon was part of a double truck that we did in the March 2007 issue of the Inkblot. We tackled the issue of technology and the effect it has on our lives. Our main offering was a first-person account of a student who gave up all technology for a week except that which existed prior to 1960. That meant no microwaves, no cable TV (just the three major networks), etc.

We asked one of our cartoonists, national award-winner Jon Laing, to come up with a sketch of a human in the distant future, plagued with the effects of all this new technology. This was the result. Kind of scary, eh?

-- The staff of The Inkblot
Communications High School, Wall Township

B. HOW TO - These are short tutorials on any number of topics that might be of use to students at any level. These can range from layout and design to reporting and writing.

Localizing a national disaster

By tech_jess on September 25, 2007 9:54 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)

The bridge collapse in Minneapolis on Aug. 1:

New Jersey's state and regional newspapers jumped immediately on this story to localize it. Many of them examined the inspection records for bridges in their states and regions. It's those stories, in newspapers near you in New Jersey, that hold the key to localizing this story for your high school paper.

Continue reading [Localizing a national disaster](#).

C. Q AND A - These are questions that your students and many others might have. These are not posted directly as entries. Once your students have created some questions for us to answer, email them to our Webmaster, Tom McHale at tmchale@hcrhs.k12.nj.us. Alternatively, assign your students to hunt down the answer and have them send us both! We'll post it for you.

How do I know when I'm not being biased?

By tech_jess on October 8, 2007 11:49 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)

Q. I have been working on story where I felt that I wasn't giving the opposing side of my story a fair chance. How do I know when I'm not being biased?

– Tiya Fennell, University Academy Charter High School; Jersey City, NJ

A. Great question, Tiya. One of journalism's main practices is objectivity, an idea that can often be confusing because it isn't well defined.

Some people, for example, see objectivity as giving "both" sides of a story a chance to speak on an issue. But, of course, issues have as many sides as there are people involved. A journalist needs to distill an issue down into an understandable article, but simplifying an issue to two or three viewpoints will automatically add in bias! Brent Cunningham points out the problem quite well in Columbia Journalism Review piece called "[Rethinking Objectivity](#)":

Ask ten journalists what objectivity means and you'll get ten different answers. Some, like the Washington Post's editor, Leonard Downie, define it so strictly that they refuse to vote lest they be forced to take sides. My favorite definition was from Michael Bugeja, who teaches journalism at Iowa State: "Objectivity is seeing the world as it is, not how you wish it were."

Cunningham notes that the Society of Professional Journalists found the issue sticky enough that they actually dropped "objectivity" from its storied code of ethics in 1996.

D. FROM THE RESOURCES DATABASE - These are posts designed to help highlight the value of some of the links posted on the GSSPA Resource Directory www.gsspa.org/resources. In your post, please describe the value of the website, how you use it, and create a hyperlink to it.

Avoiding libel

By tech_jess on October 4, 2007 2:12 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)

This page from the GSSPA Resources Database includes links to: a handy checklist to avoid libel, advice on handling a libel complaint, a FAQ on libel, definitions and other references, all in one place! Check out the [Libel links](#) page and add a libel resource you've found.

E. QUICK TIPS - These appear at the top of the Student Center webpage and change with each visit. Therefore we would like to maintain a growing database of writing, reporting, layout, and ethical tips of less than 100 words. These can not be posted as entries. Please provide the author and source of the tip and send it to tmchale@hcrhs.k12.nj.us

The "fluff" in a news release is the material that seeks to promote the corporation, business, university, organization or political party that send the release to your newspaper or magazine. It's up to the journalist to eliminate this fluff and use only the newsworthy information.

*-- From "News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media"
Copyright 2003 by McGraw-Hill*

F. JOIN THE DISCUSSION - Although all posts, invite comment and feedback, this type of entry presents a visual or printed open-ended prompt. The objective is not to find "the answer" like a Q&A, but to promote a thoughtful discussion on the practices and experiences of students, teachers, and professional journalists.

MTV Rocks High School Journalism

By joe_edit on April 2, 2008 2:29 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)



A new MTV series follows students who are work on their high school newspaper. The first episode of *The Paper* airs April 14 at 10:30 PM.

It could be interesting on a number of levels.

Is the depiction of what the staff goes through similar to your own experiences?

What are some of the storytelling techniques used to build characters and drama?

Can any of these techniques be used by newspaper staffs to make coverage of clubs and sports more interesting?

Continue reading [MTV Rocks High School Journalism](#).

G. Posting to our resources directory

This is one of the easiest ways to strengthen GSSPA's site. Browse www.gsspa.org/resources. This directory contains more than 200 links to sites about journalism, and there's room to grow! If you want to link to a new site, first use our search engine to make sure we don't already have the page in our database.

Then, create an account/login using the link at the bottom of the page. Don't worry - it's free! Once you've done this, you can click "Post a Listing" to submit a new link for approval! We'll use the Student Center page to feature these, so consider adding a brief description of your link as a Student Center entry page under the category "From the Resources Database."

H. Story Idea Post

[Poynter High](#) has been taking national stories and localizing them for student publication for months now. Use their model to create a story idea post that can be used by high school publications in the state. Link to a story in the news and explain how student publications can localize it to their own community.

Poynter High – Story Ideas

Home > Journalism Education > Poynter High – Story Ideas

Tools: Text Size [+](#) or [-](#), Print [P](#), RSS [R](#), Subscribe via e-mail [✉](#)



Amanda Smith

Find fresh coverage ideas, inspiration and tips for finding sources that will add depth and breadth to your coverage.

Advertising - How Far is Too Far?

CNN reported recently that students taking exams at a suburban San Diego, Calif., high school are handed the test, only to see an advertisement reading, "Brace yourself for a great semester! Braces by Henry, Stephen P. Henry D.M.D."

Faced by substantial budget cuts, Tom Farber, teacher at Rancho Bernardo High School, reached out to advertisers to help alleviate the burden of printing costs for his students' exams.

Explore this phenomenon, and students' opinions on the practice.

- Would you be ok with this type of advertisement?
- What message does it send to the administration?
- Is Farber simply trying to raise awareness of the budget problems plaguing his high school?
- Should administrators set guidelines for this type of advertising practice?

Farber explains in the Dec. 4 CNN report that he hopes his practice -- mini ads on each page of the exam -- will not become the standard, as he views it more as a short-term solution to the current economic crisis than any novel norm. But imagine this: You're sitting for your exam, and the bottom of the page advertises the best pizza found in your city. Don't you think students might get a little distracted?

-- Amanda Smith

Posted at 7:31 AM on Dec. 8, 2008

- I. Lesson Plan - Has your class participated in an activity (one or two classes in length) that was engaging, educational and that others might benefit from? Please share the activity, what the objective was, and student reaction.

[Lesson Plan](#)

What is News?

By Tom McHale on February 7, 2009 11:15 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)

One of the first things we discuss in my Journalism 1 class is what makes something news. We review some of the qualities of newsworthiness ([qualitiesnews2009.doc](#)) and how editors might use these in determining what to put in their newspaper, or on their website or broadcast.

Next, I ask each student to find a story they think is newsworthy or interesting and to explain why. I also ask them to list which qualities of news the story contains.

After reviewing some of these stories we play the Be an Editor game from [NewsU](#). This is a video simulation that asks the player to make decisions on what stories to cover and put on the front page of a small town newspaper.

The game takes about 20 minutes to play and can lead to discussions on what to cover in the school newspaper. Registering for NewsU is free as are many of the courses including this one.

VI. For advanced projects: Some possibilities

A. Podcasts, Vodcasts, Flash movies

Depending on your class or school, your students may have the ability to create advanced content for the site. This could take the form of audio podcasts, videos, flash movies or something else! Our vision is that the site will collect these items over time and build into a living textbook for its students. If you have students who are interested in this sort of work, we're happy to help your brainstorm projects that will add to the site. GSSPA will honor classes or students who contribute in this way.

Some possibilities (be sure to include your school and students' names in anything you create!):

- use Flash to create an on-screen tutorial of how to do a certain technique in InDesign
- create a movie on journalism techniques (i.e. interviewing) or something journalism related (i.e. a historical reenactment)
- interview journalists about what they do. Create thoughtful Q&A's with people about how they write features or the story that got away
- Got a talented artist? Have her or him create a visual diagram of how to make an editorial cartoon or how to draw basic cartoons!
- Create a slideshow of great photos with captions on how they were taken (we can help you do this!)
- Create a 360 degree photo of a local newsroom with a brief description of what's visible

B. Creating Original content

Even if you aren't interested in creating multimedia presentations, there's plenty to do with good old solid reporting! For our site, some meta-journalism would be really useful! Create original reporting on topics like: diversity in the newsroom, how to find great stories, where to locate statistics, ethical decision-making or brainteasers... Visit www.poynter.org for an example of a Web site that solely provides stories on journalism. We're looking for articles that could be used in another classroom to teach or prompt discussion.

C. Posting to our resources directory

This is one of the easiest ways to strengthen GSSPA's site. Browse www.gsspa.org/resources. This directory contains more than 200 links to sites about journalism, and there's room to grow! If you want to link to a new site, first use our search engine to make sure we don't already have the page in our database.

Then, create an account/login using the link at the bottom of the page. Don't worry - it's free! Once you've done this, you can click "Post a Listing" to submit a new link for approval! We'll use the Student Center page to feature these, so consider adding a brief description of your link as a Student Center entry page under the category "From the Resources Database."

D. I'm not advanced, but I have a student who is.

Helping a talented student make the most of this: leadership opportunities.

If you have a student who is interested in getting more involved, please ask him or her to consider joining our Student Web Team! Have them contact President Steve Chiger president@gsspa.org and Webmaster Tom McHale tmchale@hcrhs.k12.nj.us. We're looking for student leaders to help produce new content, brainstorm ideas for the site and help us grow traffic! This is a wonderful opportunity for your students to supercharge their college resumes!

VII. A quick note about posts.

GSSPA will not edit posts, but may chose to remove or not post any material that it considers offensive or inappropriate to the site. In these cases, posts will be removed in their entirety.

VIII. You've got questions, we've got answers!

When you get stuck, please contact Tom McHale at tmchale@hcrhs.k12.nj.us. As a secondary, contact President Steve Chiger at president@gsspa.org.