

Advice for Advisers

From newbies to naturals, yearbook advisers come in all shapes and sizes of expertise, but they all seem to have one thing in common—they have been there, done that. We asked them, “What advice would you give to someone just starting this wonderful job of yearbook advising?”



“Always have a Plan B.”

“Organization, Organization, Organization! Knowing where materials are, having a plan for what (you think) needs to be completed, holding/facilitating meetings with editor(s) and staff—I feel that organization allows for the flexible and open communication that can help to provide a creative atmosphere. AND when you are behind deadline and minus your best yearbook staff (spring trip) organization will lessen your stress and enable you to give specific directions toward completing a deadline.”

“My one best piece of advice after all these years ‘It’s only a yearbook.’ The conversation can be summarized this way: While it is an important piece of the school’s history, remember to enjoy those who support you and be thankful for those who helped you get where you are today.”

“My answer would be to use your resources such as: the Jostens rep, the YearTech Helpline, the plant, and your students. Kids are full of ideas and they have their hands on the ‘pulse’ of the school. Use their instincts and their contacts.”

“Keep a sense of humor!”

“Nothing and nobody is perfect. A LOT of people will see your final project, but only you and your staff know the work that it took to get there. Do not let simple mistakes detour you or your staff from being proud of the hard work. Learn from your mistakes, so you won’t make the same ones next year but know that you will make different mistakes next year. And that’s OK!”

“Since a lot of your students may have never been on a staff before, you must be prepared to teach them how to yearbook.”

“Use your reps—local and at the plant. They have always been ‘on call’ it seems like 24/7. I have been able to contact them via e-mail or phone call and all of them have been most professional in their response time and helping me get past the rough spots. I’ve not dealt with any other yearbook company but in all honesty, I don’t see any reason to look further. I think that one of the things that impresses me most is that every year, you reinvent yourselves. There are always new things on the horizon that you get on board with and excited about and it comes through in your correspondence and meetings and workshops. Yearbook isn’t the easiest class to teach but you have a way of making us all believe we’re the best yearbook advisors this side of the Mississippi.”

“Keep it simple. That’s probably my best advice!”

“Use only focused photographs, just forgive yourself and dump the blurry ones.”

“Take lots of pictures. Lots and lots of pictures!”

“Make sure ALL sports teams are covered, both JV AND Varsity. Parents really pay attention to two things: their child’s picture, and the team on which their child played.”

“It’s all about your plan. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and to ask for help.”

“It’s all about the pictures, capturing the memories.”

“One thing we’ve found helpful is to share year-books with other schools to get good ideas for the layout/pages.”

“Survey kids to see what they like and what they would like more of next year; this has been a helpful thing we will take into consideration as we work on our book.”

“I would say, frankly, new advisors (like me 9 months ago) desperately need 2 things to make it happen. First, an experienced Jostens rep that can come up with creative ideas and provide some quality head-start work. Honestly, our book would have sucked without her. Second, you need good pictures from parents and teachers. I almost panicked in early January when I literally had about 45 pictures. I asked, begged, pleaded for more, and they started to trickle in. I ended up with over 800 (about 350 that were actually good). YOU NEED GOOD PICS!!”

“I don’t know if this goes without saying at this point, but... use digital cameras instead of regular cameras/film. It saves a lot of time and money!”

“I have four pieces of advice:

1. Get **organized!**
2. Get a **dedicated** staff!
3. Get **working** right away!
4. Get **help**, even if you don’t think you need it!”

“I would tell new advisers to never hesitate to ask questions, either of you or your plant representative. The fear I had as a new advisor was basically “fear of the unknown.” Of course, I was afraid of not meeting the expectations of the students, parents and school.”

“First, I would suggest to not hesitate asking for help. I found the support system to be wonderful. Secondly, try to be as organized as possible. Establish due dates for student ads, etc. as early as possible. Reach out to other teachers for assistance.”

“Use the students—they can help motivate their peers. Post photos of school events around the school as a sneak preview.”

“Take it one layout at a time and before you know it, you are almost there!”

“Accept that mistakes will happen and learn to be flexible as your plans may have to be altered.”

“Here’s my list ... (not in order)

1. Get a frig and microwave in your room. Keep stocked with licorice, cheezits, and chocolate. (and a coffee pot is a must, too)
2. Patience. Patience. Patience.
3. Keep Organized. (“gotcha covered” board; deadlines/mini-deadlines; samples of good/bad captions)
4. Ask other advisers for examples of any hand-outs, organizational tools, etc.
5. Create a notebook with THE INFO needed—the stuff that you as an adviser are asked each and every day: class lists (correct name spellings), deadlines, page assignments, templates, style sheet, calendars, contact info, etc. etc.
6. You gotta love kids!
7. Have a quote wall for those memorable moments/sayings.
8. Keep the numbers for pizza delivery and teriyaki take-out handy.
9. Find a system that works for storing/archiving photos. (We agree—see page 2.)
10. Have a couch and comfy blankets for naps (for you or those students that need a break on deadline day).
11. REWARDS! (candy, popcorn, brownies, cookies and milk, bingo day with prizes)
12. Design a staff T-shirt early in the year so that they can wear them all year.”

“Most of all, have fun.”