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ASNE Reynolds High School Journalism Institute 2013 Sample Lesson Plan Assignment 3

Title: Building Good Interviewing Skills

Overview/Rationale

The key to writing lively articles is collecting good quotations. Asking good questions and collecting *lots* of quotations from *lots* of sources increases the chances of gathering those good quotations. Like anything else, interviewing well requires planning and practice. The purpose of this series of lessons is to teach students how to form good questions, to give them practice interviewing (and improvising as they are interviewing), transcribing interviews, and selecting good quotations.

Goals for Understanding

Students will be able to construct questions that are conducive to longer, more personal responses.

Students will be able to improvise and ask questions as the opportunities present themselves.

Students will be able to transcribe accurately the content of interviews.

Students will select the most interesting quotes in order to generate an interesting feature story.

Essential Questions

What constitutes a good question for a feature story?

How does a good interviewer use the information given by the interview subject to form other good questions?

What qualities make for a good quotation?

What are the ethical responsibilities of a journalist in quoting his or her sources?

Preparation

Students will read Chapter 11 of the *Press Time* text book on “Writing Colorful Feature Stories” prior to this series of exercises.

The teacher will pick an feature-worthy aspect of his or her own life about which the students can write a feature story. In my case, they write about how I came from a family of 11 and we lived in two houses. Another teacher I know had the students write about his hobby of collecting antiques. It is important that the story be true so that the students have to write genuine

questions, and that the stories they write eventually are verifiable. An ancillary benefit of this exercise is that the students and teacher get to know each other better.

Students will be given examples of the difference between an objective, factual questions (e.g., “When did your family buy the second house?”) and more generative queries (e.g., “What circumstances led up to your family’s purchase of the second house?”)

Students will be required to bring 10 questions to the first interview.

Session One

For the overall assignment, students will be assigned to write their features in pairs. Each student will be responsible for all of the quotations. Although students are allowed to use pencil and paper to record the interview, electronic recording is strongly encouraged. It is also advisable that both members of the pair record the interview electronically. Students are advised to use paper and pencil to highlight the good quotes and to jot down follow-up questions as the subject is answering a question.

The first question from the first student is always, “Do we have your permission to record this interview?”

The second is “Could you please spell your first and last name for me and tell me what your title is?”

The duty of the interview subject is to answer all questions that can be given a brief answer a brief answer. This forces students to ask good questions in order to get the well-developed, quotable responses.

The interview only lasts 20 minutes. For the rest of the period, the students work in pairs, transcribing the interview and writing follow-up questions for the next interview. They are also allowed to ask for other people they want to interview.

Session Two

Again the students interview the subject. They can also interview other people—some of whom will be available, some of whom will not.

Again, the interview will last 20 minutes, and the students will spend the end of class transcribing, cleaning up their notes, and planning their final follow-up questions for the third session.

Session Three

Students will be able to ask any follow-up questions they want. They will then transcribe notes and begin writing a 450-word feature article. They will be giving one more class period to work on the assignment and an additional day before the story is due.

Assessment

The assessment will be the feature story itself, which will be graded for accuracy of quotes and facts, correctness in style and mechanics, and in the liveliness and readability of the article itself. Each student turns in a copy of the article, and each article is returned with a grading rubric out of 100 points. Teacher comments are in red. The sample rubric that is attached with this lesson plan is an actual grading rubric. The students' names have been changed to XXXXX and YYYYY.

Resources

Adams, Julian and Kenneth Stratton. *Press Time*. Prentice-Hall: Englewood, NJ, 1985.