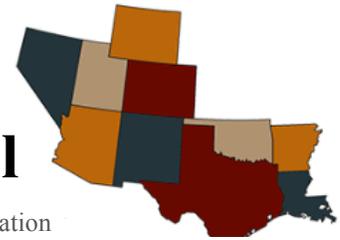


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## **It's About More Than Money: Adviser Qualifications, Racial Makeup of Staff and School Location Predict Scholastic Media Success**

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Respondents in a 2017 Gallup poll said they have little confidence in the public schools today with only 36 percent having a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the schools. While the rising tide of mediocrity so often mentioned in educational research pushes for more funding—smaller class sizes and higher teacher salaries, this research and that of others shows money may not be the leading factor in success in a scholastic media environment. When 310 of the most successful scholastic broadcast, yearbook, newspaper and online programs were examined, the qualifications of the teachers, the location of the school and the racial diversity of the school were more likely to predict success than per pupil revenues or low student/teacher ratios.

*Keywords: scholastic media, education, public schools, newspaper, yearbook, online media*

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**T**he 1966 Coleman report formally known as *Equality of Educational Opportunity* was a catalyst for change within the educational system of America everything. While the report was commonly presented as evidence that school funding has little effect on student achievement, a more thorough reading of the report showed that student background and socioeconomic status are more important in determining educational outcomes of a student. Additionally, differences in the quality of schools and teachers, has a small, positive impact on student outcomes. A decade later, his research suggested that African-American students benefitted

from schooling in non-segregated classroom. It became a catalyst for the implementation of the desegregation of busing systems.

Less than a decade after the Coleman report came out, the Commission of Inquiry into High School Journalism released its findings in a 1974 report, *Captive Voices: High School Journalism in America*. The commission examined everything from censorship to minority participation to journalism education. Commissioners found that the classrooms of the early 1970s probably looked very similar to those of today, largely white — due in large part to a small number of non-white publications advisers and a small number of non-white professional journalists. Further, the commission found that in low-income areas, the problems of journalism were further exacerbated by serious economic problems facing students. “This was reflected in extremely small publications budgets, a high rate of inexperienced and ‘assigned’ teachers and advisers in journalism programs, and in many cases, an alarming absence of any media programs” (p. 112).

Discussion of how to improve the educational outcomes of students didn’t stop with the Coleman report or *Captive Voices*, however. More recently, when the pivotal report, *A Nation at Risk* came out in 1983, it became a landmark event in educational history. American schools were failing, the National Commission on Excellence in Education found. In the opening pages, James Harvey wrote, “The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.” The report continued, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.” While the final recommendations included fiscal support, they were vague and generalized. “State and local officials, including school board members, governors, and legislators, have the primary responsibility for financing and governing the schools, and should incorporate the reforms we propose.” Their reforms largely dealt with teacher salaries as well as funding for textbooks and instructional materials. The report charged the federal government with meeting the needs of key groups of students such as “the gifted and talented, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority and language minority students, and the handicapped.” Funding was only a part of the pivotal report. Yet it did draw attention to education.

Reform at the state level, such as the infamous Texas House Bill 72 of 1984, pushed through by soon-to-be presidential candidate H. Ross Perot, followed. Provisions of HB 72 raised teachers’ salaries, but tied those raises to teacher performance. Around the same time, the courts began hearing cases regarding school funding. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1973 that education is not a fundamental right (*San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1 (1973)), so, in 1984, when San Antonio’s Edgewood Independent School District, citing discrimination against students in poor school districts, the Texas Supreme Court heard the case. In Texas, as in all other states at least in part, property taxes fund education although some have placed limits on property tax growth. District with higher property values received more money to fund the schools. Unanimously, the Texas Supreme Court sided with the Edgewood plaintiffs and ordered the state legislature to implement an equitable system by the 1990-91 school year. Eventually, with the legislature unable to devise a solution, a master appointed by the court, implemented the “Robin Hood” plan, transferring money from property-wealthy school districts to poor ones. The plan, in some form, remains in place today.

Despite the courts, 30 years later, little of the original HB72 remains — except a watered down version of the No-Pass, No-Play rule. As Terrence Stutz noted in a July 2014 article in the *Dallas*

*Morning News*, “Even parts of the law that are no longer around, including a merit pay plan for teachers and increased funding for poor school districts, are still hot topics in the education community.” A 2018 poll showed voters in Texas were still “broadly negative” on the state’s handling of public education (Ramsey, Ross, 2018). Still, elected and appointed officials at all levels continue to talk about how better to fund the schools yet have made little progress especially how much to adequately pay educators. As Lips, Watkins and Fleming (2008) said, “Debates about how to improve public education in America often focus on whether government should spend more on education. Federal and state policymakers proposing new education programs often base their arguments on the need to provide more resources to schools to improve opportunities for students” (p. 1).

Those resources often included increasing teacher salaries. According to the Department of Education, the average teacher, in today’s dollars, earned \$43,571 in 1960, \$57,113 in 1970, \$51,446 in 1980, \$61,247 in 1990, \$60,984 in 2000 and \$62,244 in 2010 in constant 2017 dollars. By 2017, the average secondary school teachers’ salary was down to \$58,978 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). While *A Nation at Risk* recommended “professionally competitive” salaries for teachers, this has not become a finite reality. However, low salaries are not the leading cause for high teacher turnover. “Teachers quit for several reasons, but the one you’d expect to be at the top of the list — salary — typically isn’t. More frequently, the reason is dissatisfaction with administrative support (38 percent) or workplace conditions (32 percent).” The National Center for Education Statistics also found, “Poor administrative support, lack of influence within the school system, classroom intrusion, and inadequate time are mentioned more often by teachers leaving low-income schools where working conditions are more stressful; salary is mentioned more often by teachers leaving affluent schools” (Graziano, 2005).

Nationally, by 1999, *A Nation at Risk* had seemingly almost been forgotten when the National Research Council’s Committee on Education Finance (1999) issued a report *Making Money Matter: Financing America’s Schools*. “Money can and must be made to matter more than in the past if the nation is to reach its ambitious goal of improving achievement for all students” (p. 1). Eric Hanushek (1996) cut right to the heart of the matter when he asked, “Can we deal with performance problems in schools by supplying them with extra funds?” (p. 43). He concluded that statements such as “Money matters.” or “Money doesn’t matter.” are overly simplistic and ignore important policy issues such as how any additional resources would be used – not squandered. “The issue is getting productive uses from current and added spending. The existing evidence simply indicates that the typical school system today does not use resources well... .” (Hanushek , p. 69.) Multiple researchers showed how education funding continues to increase. Hanushek (1992) and Guthrie (1997) concluded that, after controlling for all that is reasonable, per-pupil school spending has increased 3 percent annually since the beginning of the 20th century Odden (1994) and Guthrie (1997), noting the rise in per-pupil spending, contended that improved productivity is definitely in order but not necessarily realized. For most districts, the majority of expenditures — about 63 percent — are on instruction, a figure that varies remarkably little across time, size, wealth, special needs, and population characteristics (Monk, et. al., 1997). By 2013, instruction and instruction-related expenses remained consistent with earlier figures, accounting for 65 percent of total expenditures or about \$11,752 per pupil in fiscal year 2013 (Cornman, 2016). Earlier education activists had thought to achieve outcomes through targeted spending on the theory that where funding flows, school improvement flourishes (Ansary, 2007).

The research over nearly a century, however, wasn't as conclusive. "There is a lack of consistent evidence on whether education expenditures are related to achievement" (Lips, Watkins, Fleming, 2008, p. 5). Some research, including that by Hanushek (1996), found, at best, a weak, inconsistent relationship between per-pupil expenditures and academic outcomes. Other researchers, including Hedges and Greenwald (1996) — in the same publication — concluded that increasing per-pupil expenditures has a significant impact on student achievement. Regardless, money remains a focal point during almost any discussion of improving education.

The solution to education's woes didn't stop with changing the funding model or throwing money at it. Indeed, money wasn't the only problem cited with the educational system. At mid-century "A probe behind aggregated national statistics and the upbeat rhetoric of [school reformers] reveals major disparities in educational opportunities. These inequalities stemmed from differences in place of residence, family occupation and income, race, and gender, and from physical and mental handicaps. At mid-century American public education was not a seamless system of roughly similar common schools but instead a diverse and unequal set of institutions that reflected deeply embedded and social inequalities. Americans from all walks of life may have shared a common faith in individual and societal progress through education, but they hardly participated equally in its benefits." (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, p. 22). "Inequity in American education derives first and foremost from our failure to educate the children of the poor" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 15).

"Whereas financially advantaged students can access opportunities outside of school that develop their talents, financially disadvantaged students cannot, and their talents largely go underdeveloped. Although all advanced learners deserve to develop their talents, a policy focus on those who are both financially disadvantaged and spatially talented could quickly level the playing field" (Wai and Worrell, 2015, p. 122). However, research has shown that advanced learners, those at the top of their class, those with access to resources, also go underserved. "We underserve advanced learners, losing countless minds and potential innovations, despite having available scientifically supported and easily implemented educational interventions. ... The current K-12 federal educational allocation to advanced learners is currently near zero, but small early investments would pay off in intellectual and technological innovations, as well as GDP" (Wai and Worrell, 2015, p. 122). Yet pumping money into schools with students from highly advantaged backgrounds matters less (Grissmer, et. al., 1997).

### **Not all classrooms created equal**

Money is one factor often studied in education. Race and gender are two others. Ideally, educational researchers contend differences among students should be openly acknowledged and addressed. The climate of the classroom facilities, the idea that differences are natural and that it is desirable for each student to be him or herself should be a part of every classroom. Differences among students are seen as assets rather than liabilities. All students are seen as having something important to contribute — some unique knowledge, understanding or perspective that only they can share (Voltz, Brazil and Ford, 2001; Hinders, 1995). "[S]chools should seek to melt away cultural differences or the view that schools should merely tolerate cultural pluralism. Cultural diversity is a valuable resource that should be preserved and extended" (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1973, p. 3).

Yet not all classrooms are created equal. Whites are more likely than members of racial/ethnic minorities to attend schools with smaller class sizes and have access to computer technology at school and at home (Council of Economic Advisors, 1998). In short, in virtually every aspect of life — from the risk of racist violence, to getting a job, to finding a place to live, to the simple act of hailing a cab — the black person will face struggles and threats that the white person will not (Jensen, 2005). Educators acknowledge that racial/ethnic and gender dynamics within classrooms have substantive effects on how individual students are perceived by their teachers and racial, ethnic and gender dynamics between students and teachers have consistently large effects on teacher perceptions of student performance (Dee, 2005).

The racial divide in the journalism classroom is not a new problem. In *Breakthrough: A Multicultural Guide to High School Journalism*, University of Iowa researchers pointed out that it was in the early 1960s that the first workshop were established for high school journalism teachers. Around the same time, workshops focusing on historically black schools were held. By the end of that decade, associations began holding workshop for minority high schools. Even toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, efforts continued as associations offered scholarships for minority students and began recruitment and retention efforts for both students and advisers (University of Iowa, 1992). Those efforts continue today and are no less valued. “When diversity is valued — indeed, sought — in the newsroom, it becomes a key element of decisions on coverage, fairness and editorial leadership” (Graff in Quill and Scroll Foundation, 2002, p. 41).

### **Why study awards?**

Getting into any classroom with an objective measure would be nearly impossible. Awards serve as some measure of success including, among other things, success of the teacher in educating students, success of the students in producing a product and support from the school administration and community for entering contests. Even in the literature surrounding school improvement, researchers mention the need for incentives. “[T]he most likely changes required in schools involve radically different incentives for students and school personnel” (Hanushek, 1998, p. 12). “[T]he motivation of students themselves is critical to the educational process” (Hanushek, 1994, p. 110).

Awards serve as a motivating factor in the classroom. Hartmut Kliemt (1985) points out that, “awards play a large role in any society because they cater to the substantial human desire to be recognized by others.” Even in a business environment, Neckermann and Frey (2013) showed that awards do serve to motivate employees and losers experience a decrease in motivation. “[C]ontributions are significantly higher for awards whose winners are publicized within the company and for awards whose winners are celebrated in a public ceremony” (p. 67). Further, awards give students — and media advisers and administrators — status among their peers and, Huberman, et. al. (2004) showed, status is worth a positive amount of material gain even across cultures. Award-winning programs may attract other students who want to be a part of a successful program and could bring more resources to the program. “[P]eople tend to overinvest resources whenever ‘winning against others’ is involved because winning confers status” (p. 112). A simple correlation analysis using cross-country data suggests that there is at best a weak relationship between student achievement and education spending (Vegas, 2016).

Awards serve another purpose — they give the adviser a chance to get involved in the journalism education community. Robert Greenman (1991) said in his book *The Advisers Companion*, “...[T]he

adviser is an isolated figure in the school. Unlike professional journalists, advisers work largely without others in their craft to help them on a day-by-day, decision-by-decision basis. This professional isolation is a serious handicap..." (p. 215). And the Freedom Forum (1994) reported in *Death by Cheeseburger*, four national scholastic journalism organizations have been serving students and advisers for more than 60 years with critique services — establishing best practices for yearbooks, newspapers, websites and broadcasts, national recognition and training. "Through good times and bad, through wars and recessions, up and down the roller coaster of curriculum reform, these associations have been a motivational resource and advocate for publications at schools that could afford membership" (p. 27).

### **Hypotheses**

- H1 Schools with award-winning scholastic media programs will not significantly differ from schools with JEA certified teachers.
- H2 Schools with award-winning scholastic media programs will be more affluent.
- H3 Schools with award-winning scholastic media programs will have lower student/teacher ratios.
- H4 Schools with award-winning scholastic media programs will have more white students and be less racially diverse than average.
- H5 More urban schools will have award-winning scholastic media programs than rural schools.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Relevant information regarding everything from school district revenue to school size to free lunch eligibility to racial makeup was obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics online at nces.ed.gov. Enrollment characteristics were for the 2014-2015 year. School details including locale and Title I were for the 2014-2015 year and fiscal data was for 2013-2014. Enrollment characteristics, school details and fiscal data only vary slightly from year to year so it is reasonable to use the data from one year as a proxy for the year before or the year after especially considering the delays in award cycles. Information on schools that won Pacemaker awards and Gold Crown awards was obtained from the appropriate organization's website. Information on Journalism Education Association membership and certification was obtained from JEA.

Then information from the 180 unique, award-winning schools was compared to a control group of 180 "regular" schools randomly selected by ZIP code. Special education schools, juvenile detention schools, hospital and homebound schools and alternative schools were not included in the control group. Using a control group was more than a statistical necessity. It was, in part, an acknowledgement that there are thousands of scholastic media programs that don't submit for awards and that are not in the sample.

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel largely for descriptive data and StatPlus for more descriptive statistics and more sophisticated statistical analysis.

**FINDINGS**

**National awards**

For scholastic media, two awards, the National Scholastic Press Association Pacemaker and the Columbia Scholastic Press Association Gold Crown are given to the top publications. Any NSPA member school’s adviser can submit his or her publications to the Pacemaker contests for online, yearbook, newspaper, magazine or broadcast. Membership cost \$109. The National Scholastic Press Association gives out the Pacemaker Award in five categories each year: online, yearbook, newspaper, magazine and broadcast. The contests are open to any NSPA member publication. The NSPA Pacemaker was used for the initial list of awards winners with the CSPA Gold Crown pulled from that list (Table 1), excluding the private schools for which governmental census data was unavailable.

Table 1  
*National Awards*

	Award-winning group	Control group
Pacemaker	262 (100%)	3 (1.7%)
Pacemaker AND Crown	59 (22.5%)	1 (1.1%)

JEA membership costs \$65/year/adviser. Registration for the fall or spring JEA/NSPA national conference is \$90/person with total convention costs easily exceeding \$1,100 per adviser not including the cost of entering contests. NSPA membership is \$189/year/publication. Best of Show competition at each national convention is \$20/publication. CSPA membership starts at \$199/year/school.

For the 2014-2015 academic year, CSPA said 1,186 newspapers, magazines, yearbooks and digital publications were eligible for judging in the Crown competition. CSPA awarded 76 Gold Crowns, the association’s highest award. In other words, 6.4 percent of eligible publications received a Gold Crown (Columbia Scholastic Press Association, 2016). Given that there are more than 24,000 public secondary schools in the United States, it is clear that few even enter the competition and fewer still receive top recognition.

Money comes into play in other ways when it comes to recognition for the program and the adviser. While it is clear that being a member of the professional associations, JEA, NSPA and/or CSPA, is desirable for advisers in award-winning programs for many reasons including that it will them broaden their knowledge, network with other scholastic media advisers and give them access to supplemental materials, such resources are not without cost, costs, often paid by the individual, not the school, costs that may become a barrier to entry.

Schools in the control group were finalists, had won Pacemaker or Crown awards in other years and had students win individual national honors by the same organizations. Only four of the schools in the control group received Pacemaker or Crown awards exemplifying how unique these awards are.

**Adviser certification**

The Journalism Education Association is a non-profit organization for 2,694 scholastic media advisers providing services to members including a quarterly print magazine, online curriculum and a

national certification program. As the association's website states, "Put simply, we educate teachers on how to educate students" (Journalism Education Association, 2017). JEA provides two levels of certification for association members. The Certified Journalism Educator program is available for members who have taken 18 or more hours of journalism at the college level or who have advised or worked in a related business for at least three years and who pass an exam. CJE certification application cost \$60 initially and \$10 for renewal every five years. The Master Journalism Educator program is for members who have already achieved CJE status and who have been teaching/advising for five years. In addition, MJE applicants have to pass an exam, with in-depth questions on media law, media ethics and pedagogy, and complete a project, paper or teaching unit approved by a committee. While no state recognizes the JEA certification in lieu of state certification, indeed state certification in journalism does not even exist in many states, JEA says the certification demonstrates both qualification to teach and commitment to journalistic training.

JEA members were counted if advisers were members during the years studied, 2014, 2015, 2016. Of the advisers of award-winning programs in the study, 84 percent were JEA members. Many others, including some in the control group, were JEA members at various times but not during the period studied.

There are 439 advisers with CJE certification and 150 advisers with MJE certification as of the fall of 2017 (Journalism Education Association, 2017). The application for CJE cost \$60 and \$85 for MJE. The study, including the 57 advisers (41 percent) that held either MJE or CJE certification, did not consider the difference between CJE or MJE and only examined certified or not. High quality teachers (as measured by teachers' capacity to generate learning in their students, or teacher value-added) are the most important determinant of student learning (Vegas, 2016; Hanushek, 2011). The advisers who advised award-winning media were significantly more likely to be certified than the control group (Table 2), disproving hypothesis 1. While states may not officially recognize the program, as Darling-Hammond (2000), said, "Recent evidence also indicates that reforms of teacher education creating more tightly integrated programs with extended clinical preparation interwoven with coursework on learning and teaching produce teachers who are both more effective and more likely to enter and stay in teaching" (p. 166). This merits additional and rigorous study. Better teachers produce better students (Fuller, 1999; Strauss and Sawyer, 1986).

Table 2

*JEA Certified*

Certification	Winning group	Group	Difference
None	83	174	
CJE	32	4	
MJE	25	2	
Certified	57 (40.7%)	6 (3.3%)	p<0.001
Total	140 unique advisers	180 advisers	

### Impact of revenue

Publications in award-winning programs tended to come from larger schools than other schools. However, the revenue per student was less in the award-winning group, disproving hypothesis 2. Future studies might compare not only revenue per student but also expenses per student. The National Center for Education Statistics divides revenue into federal, local and state. Presumably, all of the revenue is ultimately spent on things that benefit students. However, as noted under expenditures, instructional expenditures account for less than one-third of total expenditures, including student/staff support, administration, operations, food service and capital outlay. Further, schools with award-winning programs tended to have a larger student/teacher ratio, disproving hypothesis 3. In 2014, the student/teacher ratio nationally was 16:1 (NCES, 2016). (Table 3)

Table 3  
*Revenue*

	Award-winning Group	Control Group	Sig. of Difference
Revenue per student	\$12,740.85	\$14,294.89	p<0.05
Population	1,828.26	984.69	p<0.001
Student/teacher ratio	17.74	15.68	p<0.001
Free lunch eligible	355.09	333.73	—

### Impact of race

Publications in award-winning programs tend to be less diverse than schools in the control group, proving hypothesis 4. Specifically black students were under-represented and Asian students were over-represented. (Tables 4 and 5)

Table 4  
*Race*

	Award-winning Group	Control Group
White	1,073.3	526.9
Non-white	630.2	439.5
Sig. of Difference	p<0.001	—

Table 5  
*Race*

	Award-winning Group	Control Group	Sig. of difference
White	62.46 %	56.07 %	P<0.001
American Indian	0.42 %	1.05 %	—
Asian	10.90 %	5.89 %	—
Black	10.19 %	20.28 %	—
Hispanic	16.03 %	16.71 %	—

### Impact of rural nature of schools

Schools in the award-winning group tended to come from large, suburban schools and much less from rural schools of any kind, proving hypothesis 5. (Table 6)

Table 6  
*Urban vs. Rural*

NCES Locale	Award-winning Group	Control Group
City – Large (11)	10.1 %	7.3 %
City – Midsize (12)	9.7 %	4.5 %
City – Small (13)	12.4 %	7.8 %
City SUBTOTAL	32.2%	19.6 %
Suburban – Large (21)	55.4 %	33.5 %
Suburban – Midsize (22)	2.3 %	2.8 %
Suburban – Small (23)	1.2 %	2.8 %
Suburban SUBTOTAL	58.9 %	38.8 %
Town – Fringe (31)	1.6 %	1.7 %
Town – Distant (32)	1.2 %	5.0 %
Town – Remote (33)	1.2 %	2.8 %
Town SUBTOTAL	4.0%	9.5 %
Rural – Fringe (41)	4.3 %	14.5 %
Rural – Distant (42)	0.8 %	8.9 %
Rural – Remote (43)	0.0 %	8.4 %
Rural SUBTOTAL	5.1 %	31.8 %
TOTAL	258	179

## CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Respondents in a 2017 Gallup poll said they have significantly less confidence in the public schools today with only 36 percent having a “great deal” or “quite a lot” than they did 40 years ago in 1977 when 58 percent had such confidence hitting the low in 2014. After 1969—the year when the Gallup organization began systematic yearly surveys of public opinion about public education—it became clear that the doctrine of steady educational progress no longer made sense to most people. As criticisms of education mushroomed, polls revealed lower rankings of the schools and of teachers year by year. On average, citizens rated schools as B-institutions in 1974 and C- institutions in 1981. In 1978, 41 percent of Americans declared that schools were worse than they used to be, and only 35 percent thought they were better (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, p. 13).

While confidence is going down, spending is going up.

Nationally, spending on elementary and secondary education increased in school year 2014–15. This is the second consecutive year spending has increased, reversing a decline in spending for the prior four years after adjusting for inflation according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018). About as many books and articles show a relationship between student outcomes and money spent as the number of books and articles that show there isn’t a relationship. While this research did not show a relationship between school district revenue and success, only one measure was used – school district revenue.

In a 2012 article, Daniel Willingham (2012) reported, “[O]n average kids from wealthy families do significantly better than kids from poor families. Household wealth is associated with IQ and school achievement, and that phenomenon is observed to varying degrees throughout the world” (p. 33). However, three years later, research specifically on school newspaper programs showed that schools that recognition in the spring National Scholastic Press Association Best of Show competition — a competition that requires students to be on-site at the national convention held that year in Denver — showed that the median household income of winning schools was \$71,800, nearly \$20,000 above the national median (Wilson, 2015). In “Vignettes of Poverty,” scholastic media adviser Thomas Kaup (2015) said, “The system is rigged for the rich. I am sure that none of the winning students or schools would consider themselves rich, but if they have constant electricity, a working stove in the kitchen and heat, they have more than many of my students” (p. 27). Adriana Chavira (2015) said, “Teaching journalism at a school with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students takes a lot of work because it requires the students and me to be more resourceful and creative when it comes to funding the media program. But the work is worth it when I see the students winning awards, getting scholarships, meeting professional journalists and getting out of their comfort zones as they explore all that scholastic journalism offers them” (p. 33). The impact of family income and poverty on scholastic media education warrants even more investigation.

Clearly education is about more than money. High-quality schools generally shared five characteristic: strong administrative leadership, high expectations for achievement, an orderly learning environment, an emphasis on basic skills and frequent monitoring of student progress (Mehta, 2015; Edmonds, 1979; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). High expectations for achievement include winning local, regional, national and international awards. High expectations come from highly qualified teachers. The 140 advisers represented 231 awards. Successful programs tended to be successful over more than one year. So, another criteria worth examining is adviser tenure.

The role of the journalism class in the curriculum warrants additional study. This June, the Arkansas Legislative Council voted 25-14 to remove the requirement that journalism be an elective in Arkansas high schools. The backlash from professional media outlets and scholastic media associations was swift and it went right to the heart of the value of mass media courses in the scholastic curriculum. “There’s no discounting the importance of your core history, English, science and math classes, and it’s not the state Department of Education’s responsibility to promote the news industry. But if our schools aren’t teaching youth how to sniff out the truth when so many today seem determined to give us anything but, who will?” (Tolliver, 2018). Students need to learn to effectively communicate and respectfully interact with people of different races, national origins and religions. Those with the skills and sensibilities to solve problems for which there are not rule-based solutions will have an edge in the global era. Working collaboratively in a variety of environments has never been more important. Group work and cooperative learning, in which the teacher becomes a facilitator rather than an instructor, need to play an ever-expanding role, replacing ‘chalk and talk’ pedagogical methods that confine students to their desks and dissuade them from interacting with peers in their own classroom or around the world (Suárez-Orozco, 2009).

Jack Kennedy (2015) echoed these sentiments in his article “How Journalism Leads the Way.” In his examination of how the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts were already a part of the journalism classroom, he said, “[T]he high school journalism/media programs provide students with at least the opportunity to develop all the skills . . .” (p. 43). And he points how the value of learning marketable skills and ethical standards such as fairness, accuracy and clarity. “The true test of any educator is whether graduates can use the skills, knowledge and attitudes they ‘learned’ in school throughout their lives” (p. 47). In the top programs, it appears, money doesn’t matter nearly as much as the opportunities the students are given to excel.

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