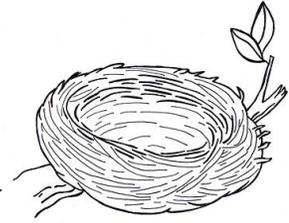


# HMSTV/TDN Staff Handbook



Hillcrest Middle School has two student-run news programs. Hillcrest Middle School Television (HMSTV) and TheDigitalNest.com (TDN) utilize student effort to produce a live, daily news show and a constantly-updated website.

Journalists at any level need to be good at many things. Not only will you be researching, writing, editing, photographing and designing, you will be leading, following, listening, compromising and learning. Being on a news crew requires that you be both a team player and an independent worker.

Rules:

- 1) Be respectful to others.
- 2) Be prepared. Be on time. Meet your deadlines.
- 3) Use school appropriate language and behavior.
- 4) Use your time wisely.
- 5) Keep the room clean.

## Our Mission Statement

We are committed to providing the HMS community with fair and balanced reporting on relevant topics.

Our focus will be on those who demonstrate a passion for community, education, and positivity.

Our promise is to deliver content that will make, not break, your day.

# TDN Positions

**Editor in Chief:** the Editor in chief or Co-editors-in-chief are in charge TDN. They supervise what topics are covered that month, make sure the staff members are meeting their deadlines and standards of work, read and edit all stories before they go into on the website and approve the photos and layouts. The editors are also responsible for helping other staff members learn the skills they need to produce a successful news website. Finally, editors in chief are responsible for doing any other work that is needed to get it updated with content. An executive editor should be responsible with a strong work ethic; strong at writing, photography and design; good at working with people and care about producing a quality news website.

**News Editor:** Responsibilities include organizing and assigning news topics, supervising students working on their news stories, editing news stories and layouts and getting the news section to press. The news editor makes most decisions concerning the news section. A news editor should be especially strong at making news stories interesting. He or she should be knowledgeable of news events at school, in the community and at the state, national and world level.

**Social Media Manager:** The Social Media Manager is in charge of every social media part of TDN. He or she will instantly inform the advisor of anything that may be in conflict with TDN Policies.

**Facebook Reporter:** The Facebook Reporter reviews TDN website daily, summarizes each article in a creative sentence or two, and posts an update on the Facebook page.

**Twitter Reporter:** The Twitter Reporter reviews TDN website daily, summarizes each article in a creative sentence or two, and posts an update on the Twitter page.

**Instagram Reporter:** The Instagram Reporter reviews TDN website daily, summarizes each article in a creative sentence or two, and posts an update (with creative image) on the Instagram page.

**Reporter:** All staff members have the responsibility of reporter. This includes coming up with story topics, writing questions, interviewing people, writing at least drafts of their stories, taking photos, helping others to put together the website articles, promoting TDN, and anything else that is necessary to get the articles published online.

# TDN Policies

## **Controversial issues:**

- a. A controversial issue will be defined as a topic which does not allow total agreement to be reached on it.
- b. Staff members will not be instructed to, nor expected to seek out on their own, any controversial issue. They will be expected to cover such issues thoroughly if they should present themselves.
- c. All sides of controversial issues will be presented as completely and fairly as possible.
- d. Political candidates or bond issues will be dealt with as any news items, with objective and balanced reporting. Although the paper will not officially endorse any candidate or bond issue, editorials on the subjects may appear on the opinion pages.

## **Misc.:**

Material that is used to embarrass or ridicule, make fun of or draw undue attention to any person or group in a negative manner will not be considered for publication.

## **Reviews:**

- a. Reviews of professional artists, books, records, concerts, TV shows and movies will put more emphasis on informing the audience of subjects of interest rather than a critique of the subject.
- b. Those writing reviews should have some sort of involvement, awareness, and knowledge of the genre beyond that of the average reader.

## **Bylines:**

- a. Articles will carry a byline.
- b. Bylines will be assigned to all articles.
- c. Photos will carry a photo credit.

## **News and Features:**

- a. The main emphasis of TDN will be to inform the readers of Hillcrest, community, city, state, and world news.
- b. Community, state, national, and international news will be included only as it affects the school district and/or individuals within the district.
- c. The school paper will avoid printing stories dealing with students, staff, or faculty members, or administrators being charged with a crime.
- d. Although the majority of features will appear for their informational value, a few will appear for entertainment value only.

### **The purpose of TDN is:**

- a. To inform readers of interests concerning Hillcrest and its community.
- b. To interpret the facts reported upon clearly and precisely.
- c. To analyze subjects of interest and present them to the reader in a fair and honest way.
- d. To provide stories to entertain the reader.
- e. To serve as a public forum for student expression.
- f. To function as an educational tool to allow students to develop skills in writing, editing, and dealing with people.

### **Profanity:**

- a. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Although no laws exist that restrict the use of profanity, the staff must be sensitive to community and school values and take into account the school policy. Therefore, no profanity will be allowed.
- b. The staff must also take care to avoid language that is of a sensitive nature, offensive, demeaning, or prejudicial to any ethnic group, race, religion, or creed.
- c. The editors will consider any issues that may be controversial and rule on them.

### **Content:**

- a. TDN staff is responsible for the content.
- b. The editors will determine what subjects are to be covered and warrant placement on the website.
- c. Once this is determined, the staff reserves the right to select and to limit the amount of content and determine priorities as to the coverage.
- d. Materials which will not be considered publishable involve content which is considered libelous, slanderous, obscene, an invasion of privacy, and which cause physical disruption of normal school activities.

### **Staff writing:**

- a. The staff is responsible for writing articles assigned and approved by the editors and advisor.
- b. Students outside of the staff are encouraged to submit materials for publication which will be reviewed by the executive editors for inclusion.
- c. Special columns may be submitted and included for publication by faculty or administration by executive editor approval.

### **Editorials:**

- a. Staff editorial subjects will be determined by the executive editors; viewpoint taken will be consensus of the staff.
- b. Staff editorials will not be signed as they are a consensus of the staff. One should be included each month and will be written by one of the coeditors whenever appropriate.
- c. Signed editorials are the views of the writer and not necessarily a staff consensus.

### **Obituaries:**

- a. As tragic as deaths of the members of the school district may be, they are considered newsworthy and will be covered onTDN.
- b. Deaths of school personnel (students, faculty, staff, etc.) will be dealt with as straight news unless circumstances call for an editorial (i.e. accident at a bad intersection).

### **Errors:**

- a. Whenever necessary, major content errors will be corrected as soon as possible.
- b. The staff is intent on checking, editing, and proofreading for all mistakes and will try to guard against carelessness, bias, and distortion by emphasis or omission.
- c. Because of the human element involved, mistakes may appear. The staff apologizes for any such occurrences.

### **Manner of distribution:**

- a. TDN is published online and as articles are submitted and edited.
- b. Promotion will be via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the Hillcrest website and on HMSTV.

### **Illustrations and Photos:**

- a. Photographs will be used to promote school activities and student/faculty achievements as well as to provide an insight into Hillcrest and community life.
- b. Illustrations must be approved by the editors before they will be accepted as newspaper material.
- c. No suggestive, implicative, or obscene gestures will be tolerated, nor will photos that make people appear foolish.
- d. All illustrations must be of a news or entertainment value and relative to an article being covered. Caricatures or artwork must be carefully done so as not to over exaggerate features which may result in unintended malice.

### **Staff dismissals:**

- a. Grounds for dismissal include but are not limited to plagiarism, vandalism of equipment, violation of Code of Ethics, missed deadlines, continued misuse of proper English (grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.), excessive school discipline, and failure to meet minimal education requirements and attendance requirements in accordance with school policies.
- b. The advisor and editors will review and decide whether staff members in question need to be dismissed.
- c. The dismissed staff member has three school days to submit a written appeal to the advisor.
- d. The advisor and editors will consider the appeal and make a final decision.

### **Prior review policies:**

All articles and photos have to be read and approved by the editor in chief and advisor before being published.

## HMSTV Positions

**Floor Manager:** The Floor Manager or Co-Managers are in charge of the daily live broadcasts and will direct the team to produce effective news programming that informs the students of Hillcrest important announcements.

**Director:** The Director works with the Floor Manager or Co-Managers to start the intro, play any videos, and direct the anchors when to begin.

**Audio Mixer:** The Audio Mixer uses the headphones and sound mixer to adjust the levels for microphones and computer/video sound.

**Camera/Mic Operator:** The Camera/Mic Operator checks the cameras and microphones for power and working order. They also power off each device at the end of the broadcast.

**Anchors:** The Anchors read the printed script or teleprompter during the broadcast. They must smile, use appropriate body language, and speak loud enough and clear enough to effectively communicate the announcements to the school.

# Code of Ethics

## **Preamble**

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

## **Seek Truth and Report It**

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.

- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.— Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

### **Minimize Harm**

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.

- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
  - Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

### **Act Independently**

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, and special treatment, if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to special interests and resist pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

## **Be Accountable**

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.