

## Trust the writing in the yearbook

Being full swing into fall, we have excitement around finalizing our cover designs and bringing our books to life. This time of year, we typically spend most of our time focused on the visual part of our yearbooks – which, for most of us, is the most exciting part! However, it is important to ensure the writing is strong. Students often struggle the most with writing.

As we transition from planning and design into full-speed production, I want to share some tips and resources to help your students improve their yearbook copy.

**Captions:** Captions are the most-read copy in yearbooks. They are mini stories in themselves and finish the story seen in the photo. Every photo deserves a complete caption that should follow the ABCD formula.

A – Attention Getter (Mini-Headline)

B – Basic Information (Who, What, When, Where, and Why)

C – Complementary Information (What Can't Be Seen in the Picture)

D – Direct Quote (Personal Anecdote from Student Pictured)

**My Tip:** Practice makes perfect! Once a week choose a recently photographed image. Let your staff brainstorm what they know about the image's content, and have everyone draft a caption. Have your editor(s) review and name a weekly winner. The more staffers practice, the easier caption writing will be!

**Resource:** Review Walsworth's [A Simple Approach to Great Captions](#)

*Renee Burke, MJE, the JEA 2015 Yearbook Adviser of the Year, outlines a four-step process to creating effective captions.*

**Body Copy:** Yearbook writing is different than writing for an English class. It is simple and shares a story – a specific moment in time.

**My Tip:** Coach your students to avoid SAT prep words and spitting out every fact they learn from an interview. Good body copy tells a story, doesn't give an overview or meet a set word count. Have your students focus on a specific moment that complements their spread. They should be contributing another moment to the many moments being shared on the spread.

**Resource:** Review Walsworth's Fall 2017 [Idea File article: Rethinking Writing](#) (found on page 28)

*Bonnie Katzive, adviser from Monarch High School in Louisville, Colorado, shares storytelling strategies and how to build success with smaller pieces.*