Haves and Have Nots: 
Newspaper Prevalence Among New York City Public High Schools

A research report by 
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Among the opportunities a school newspaper program offers to students:

- Leadership experience;
- High school community-building;
- Experiential learning regarding news literacy and the value of fact-based news information;
- Experiential learning regarding the role and responsibilities of a free press in a democracy;
- Critical skills development including writing, editing, analytical thinking, fact-checking and verification, online research, photography, videography, responsible publishing, news judgment, illustration, multimedia, interviewing and meeting deadlines;
- General work skills including public speaking, team building and participation, organization and prioritizing, time management, collaboration, and positive and productive social media engagement.
From mid-2021 through mid-2022, we researched almost all of NYC's non-charter high schools to learn which have student newspapers. For many schools, that meant multiple emails and phone calls. The information is often unavailable on school websites and newspaper prevalence is not specifically tracked by New York State's Education Department [“NYSED”] or NYC's Department of Education ["DOE"].

In all five boroughs except Staten Island, several high schools without newspapers said they had other student media venues such as podcasts and literary magazines. We excluded these schools from our data set because they fall into a grey area in terms of whether they offer their students a high school newspaper-like journalism experience. Because of their small numbers, were we to add them to the data analysis, they would not meaningfully impact our results.

Excluding those schools, schools for which there wasn’t complete DOE demographic data, Charter and District 75 schools, and Youth Adult Borough Centers resulted in a data set of 439 high schools that our team determined to be yeses or nos in terms of having a student newspaper at the time of data collection.
Summary Findings Citywide

Citywide, 26.9% of NYC non-Charter public high schools for which we have clear data have newspapers. All (100%) of NYC’s specialized high schools, such as Brooklyn Latin and the Bronx High School of Science, have newspapers.

Schools with high poverty rates and economic need rates and higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students, using DOE demographic data and classifications, are less likely to have student newspapers than schools with low poverty and economic need rates and higher percentages of White and Asian students. Of the 50 high schools with the highest poverty rates for which we have newspaper data, 3, or 6%, have newspapers. Among the 100 with the highest poverty rates, it’s seven, or 7%. By contrast, 36 (72%) of the 50 high schools with the lowest poverty rates have newspapers and 62% of the 100 high schools with the lowest poverty rates have newspapers.

Schools with high four-year graduation rates are more likely to have newspapers vs. schools with the lowest four-year graduation rates: 58% and 53% for the highest 50 and 100 graduation rates, vs. 6% and 13% for the lowest 50 and 100, respectively.

An expert analysis of our data reveals that schools with poverty rates of 78% or higher tend to have higher graduation rates when they have newspapers. (In our data sample, which includes the overwhelming majority of NYC non-charter public high schools, nearly two-thirds of the high schools have poverty rates equal to or higher than 78 percent.)

We are not asserting a causal relationship between poverty rates or graduation rates or racial and ethnic composition of high schools and newspaper prevalence, but view the associations we have found as another example of a disparity in educational opportunities when comparing NYC public high schools.
Bronx and Brooklyn high schools are less likely than Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island high schools to have high school newspapers.

This is consistent with findings by Journalism Educator Jessica Siegel. (Her findings were based upon data collected from 263 NYC public high schools between 2007 and 2009. We were unable to obtain an electronic copy of her survey report.)

Her findings included a 50% overall Citywide newspaper rate among high schools vs. our 26.9% rate. We obtained results from 98+% of NYC non–Charter public high schools whereas the prior study had a 60% response rate. Even if all of the high schools that did not respond to the previous study lacked newspapers, which is unlikely, the prior study would have resulted in a 30% newspaper rate vs. our 26.9%. It’s safe to conclude that NYC high school newspaper prevalence has declined at least slightly during the last 14 years.
Jennifer Scodes, a PhD student in biostatistics at Brown University, analyzed our data and found that “among schools with poverty level[s] greater than or equal to 78%, the effect of having a newspaper on graduation rates is statistically significant such that those having newspapers have significantly higher graduation rates than those without newspapers . . .” However, among schools with a poverty rate “less than 78%, the effect is not statistically significant.”

Katrina Gross, a Statistics MA student at Columbia University, found a closer independent correlation between graduation rates and whether a high school has a newspaper than between poverty rates and whether a high school has a newspaper based on citywide regression analysis. When considering boroughs separately, poverty has a slightly stronger association with school newspaper status, particularly in the Bronx.
Student Newspaper Prevalence
Citywide

- % HS with Newspapers: 73.1%
- % HS without Newspapers: 26.9%

N = 439
Student Newspaper Prevalence By Graduation Rates, Citywide

50 Lowest Graduation Rates:
- % HS with Newspapers: 6%
- % HS without Newspapers: 94%

50 Highest Graduation Rates:
- % HS with Newspapers: 58%
- % HS without Newspapers: 42%
Student Newspaper Prevalence
Highest versus Lowest Poverty Rate Schools, all NYC

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Student Newspaper Prevalence By DOE Race / Ethnicity Data

- 50 Highest % Asian: 78% with Newspapers, 22% without Newspapers
- 50 Highest % Black: 92% with Newspapers, 8% without Newspapers
- 50 Highest % Hispanic: 84% with Newspapers, 16% without Newspapers
- 50 Highest % White: 76% with Newspapers, 24% without Newspapers

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Student Newspaper Prevalence
By % Female Population

50 Highest % Female
- 38% % HS with Newspapers
- 62% % HS without Newspapers

50 Lowest % Female
- 12% % HS with Newspapers
- 88% % HS without Newspapers
Student Newspaper Prevalence
By % ESL

- 50 Highest % ESL
  - % HS with Newspapers: 24%
  - % HS without Newspapers: 76%

- 50 Lowest % ESL
  - % HS with Newspapers: 68%
  - % HS without Newspapers: 32%
Student Newspaper Prevalence by Borough

N = 439

- Bronx: 14.5% with Newspapers, 85.5% without Newspapers
- Brooklyn: 18.7% with Newspapers, 81.3% without Newspapers
- Manhattan: 30.7% with Newspapers, 69.3% without Newspapers
- Queens: 47.5% with Newspapers, 52.5% without Newspapers
- Staten Island: 50% with Newspapers, 50% without Newspapers
The Bad News: Based upon the experience of Baruch College’s High School Journalism Program during the last decade, the reasons for a possible loss of high school newspapers include the following:

1. When a high school newspaper advisor (generally a teacher) leaves their institution or is reassigned, often no trained replacement is named.

2. Resources for high school newspapers have, over the years, sometimes be reallocated to other program areas, such as STEM.

3. Teachers and administrators often lack journalism training and experience.

The Good News:

1. During our outreach to NYC public high schools, we have found that teachers and administrators recognize the value of journalism and news literacy education for their students and for society.

2. They are receptive to the idea of launching newspapers with assistance and training.

3. The availability of online platforms make publishing a newspaper easier and less expensive than ever before.
Kudos to all of the high school teachers and newspaper advisors who work to ensure their students have the opportunity to gain leadership and civic engagement experience, news judgment, research and writing proficiency, news literacy, and so many other skills and benefits afforded through high school newspaper participation.

Kudos to student journalists throughout New York City and the United States who serve their high school communities as editors, writers, photographers, podcasters, videographers and illustrators. Through their newspaper participation, they are expanding their own knowledge and abilities while gaining the expertise to contribute to a future of democratic freedoms, government accountability, and hopefully, a more news-savvy, better informed society.
Professor Geanne Belton (first name pronounced "Jean"), a Baruch College journalism professor and an attorney, directs Baruch College’s High School Journalism Program, including the annual NYC High School Journalism Conference and the Newsies Best in NYC High School Journalism Competition. She designed and teaches a new professional development certificate course for teachers to help high schools that don’t have student newspapers to launch newspapers, in collaboration with the Google News Initiative and Press Pass NYC.

She teaches media law and ethics and news literacy to Baruch College undergraduates. Her journalism has appeared in the New York Times, the National Law Journal, Columbia Journalism Review, Investor's Business Daily, and many other newspapers, magazines and online publications under the byline Geanne Rosenberg. She was a faculty associate at Harvard University’s Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society and served as vice chair of the board of directors of the Student Press Law Center.

Professor Belton has a B.A. from Bryn Mawr College, an M.S. from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, and a J.D. from Columbia University’s School of Law where she was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar.
Yadira Gonzalez, a Baruch College High School Journalism Program research assistant, is a journalism and political science double major with a double minor in film and art history. Yadira is also an editor for Baruch’s publication Dollars and Sense, as well as a production assistant for the school’s student-run newspaper, The Ticker.

Alexandra Adelina Nita is a journalism & creative writing major with a double minor in marketing and environmental sustainability at Baruch College and is the graphics editor and a writer for the school’s student-run newspaper, The Ticker. Adelina is also the marketing director for Encounters, Baruch’s student-run arts and literary magazine, and worked as a vote entry operator for the Associated Press during the 2020 general election.

Amanda Salazar graduated from Baruch College with a double major in journalism & creative writing and political science, and a double minor in environmental sustainability and communications studies. She served as editor-in-chief of the Baruch College student newspaper, The Ticker. She has had bylines in Gotham Gazette, DCReport, The Queens Daily Eagle, The Tower Times, and Dollars & Sense Magazine. She is pursuing a master’s degree in journalism at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism.

Jessica Taft, a Baruch College Macaulay Honors College senior, is a finance major with minors in journalism and interdisciplinary humanities studies. While pursuing her Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA), Jessica is preparing to apply to law school and looking forward to a career in law. Jessica currently works for New York State Senator Charles E. Schumer in the Press and Constituent Affairs departments and is a student research assistant for Baruch’s High School Journalism Program.
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Information About Baruch College’s High School Journalism Program

For information about Baruch College’s High School Journalism Program and our free programming, including:

• Baruch’s CTLE credit certificate course for teachers who wish to launch new newspapers in NYC public high schools;

• Baruch’s annual NYC public high school best in student journalism competition;

• Baruch’s annual NYC public high school journalism conference;

please contact Professor Geanne Belton at geanne.belton@baruch.cuny.edu or check out our blog at: https://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/hsjournalism/

If you’re interested in registering for our Launching a High School Newspaper course, please complete this form:

https://forms.gle/2MYfzYgpPnKTapDVA