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**NAA FOUNDATION STUDY SHOWS POSITIVE LINK BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM PROGRAMS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

*Research offers evidence that high school journalism programs have positive impact on standardized test performance, high school and college GPAs*

Arlington, Va. – High school students who participate in school journalism programs earn significantly higher grade point averages, score better on college entrance exams and demonstrate better writing and grammar skills in college compared with students who had no involvement with their school’s newspaper or yearbook, according to a study of more than 31,000 students released today by the Newspaper Association of America Foundation.

“This study provides evidence that high school journalism programs can have a profoundly positive impact on a young person’s present and future academic success,” said Margaret Vassilikos, senior vice president and treasurer of the NAA Foundation. “The results emphasize the importance of maintaining strong journalism programs in high school. Consider the benefits: Not only does participation in high school journalism programs put students on the path to academic success, but - as previous NAA Foundation research has shown – newspaper programs aimed at youth also helps nurture a future generation of informed and involved citizens, a path toward active participation in our democratic process.”

The research, “High School Journalism Matters,” confirms findings from a study conducted by the Journalism Education Association and ACT in 1987, which also showed positive academic performance among students involved in journalism programs. In both the 1987 and 2008 studies, students with journalism experience had higher scores than non-journalism students in these areas: High school overall grade point average, ACT Composite score, ACT English, college freshman GPA and college freshman first English course grade.

"ASNE applauds this NAA Foundation study, which is must-reading," said Gilbert Bailon, 2007-08 ASNE president and editorial page editor, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Journalism helps students get a rounded education. It teaches literacy, critical thinking, diversity and community connection. It helps youth emerge as tomorrow's leaders and stewards of our precious democracy."

**2008 Study Findings**

The latest Foundation research, led by Jack Dvorak of Indiana University, demonstrates that students who participate in journalism programs have significantly higher scores than non-staff members in 12 of 14 areas of academic comparison: college freshman GPA; first college freshman English, overall high school GPA; high school grades in English, math, social science, science, foreign language and art; and ACT Composite score, ACT English score and ACT reading score. Non-journalism students perform significantly better than newspaper or yearbook staff members in only two of the areas of academic comparison – ACT Mathematics score and ACT Science score.

Of the 31,175 respondents in the study, nearly 20 percent – or 6,137 students – were on the staff of their high school newspaper or their high school yearbook. The researchers point out that in research involving such a large sample, “statistically significant results” mean that the variance in

the findings is caused directly by the factor being studied, not by chance or by an unrelated element. An executive summary is available at [www.naafoundation.org](http://www.naafoundation.org).

**For further information on the research, please listen to [NAA's Podcast](#).**

### **Increased College Success**

According to the 2008 research, young people who participated in high school journalism programs jumpstart their college careers with higher GPAs and impressive scores in college English. The findings:

- Those with journalism experience in high school have significantly higher first-year college GPAs than those without such experience (2.80\* v. 2.73 GPA).
- Those with journalism experience scored higher in their first college English course than those without it (3.05\* v. 2.94)

(\*Difference significant beyond .01)

### **Positive Link between Journalism programs and Elevated Standardized Test Scores**

Students with journalism experience scored higher percentiles on the ACT than non-journalists:

- High school journalism staffers scored in the 64<sup>th</sup> percentile on the ACT Composite compared with scores in the 56<sup>th</sup> percentile for non-journalism students.
- In the ACT English scores, student journalists finished in the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile compared with the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile for non-journalists.
- On the ACT Reading test, student journalists scored in the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile (compared with the 56<sup>th</sup> percentile for non-journalists).

### **Elevated High School GPAs**

Students who participated in high school journalism programs had significantly higher GPAs than their counterparts without journalism experience:

- English: 3.52\* vs. 3.37
- Math: 3.23\* vs. 3.18
- Social Studies: 3.60\* vs. 3.49
- Science: 3.41\* vs. 3.32
- Foreign language: 3.42\* vs. 3.29
- Art: 3.88\* vs. 3.84

(\*Difference significant beyond .001)

### **Characteristics of Student Journalists**

On ACT test days, students also completed an Interest Inventory and Student Profile Section that provided insight into the characteristics of those who work on their high school newspaper or yearbook. Highlights:

### **Journalism Experience and Leadership**

Students who worked for their high school newspaper or yearbook showed a strong aptitude for leadership roles in student government and advocacy:

- 37.5 percent of students with journalism staff experience were appointed to a student office (vs. 20.7 percent)
- 27.1 percent of high school journalism students participated in a student movement to change institutional rules, procedures or policies (compared to 17.9 percent of those without journalism experience)
- More than half (50.9 percent) received an award or special recognition for leadership of any kind (vs. 38.4 percent)

### **Journalism Experience and Participation in extracurricular activities**

High school journalists are more involved in extracurricular activities than non-journalism students.

- Student government: 31.6% of journalism students v. 17.6 percent non-journalists.
- Debate: 8.3% v. 4.9%
- Drama/theater: 36.8% v. 30.7%
- Varsity athletics: 57.0% v. 52.8%
- Political organizations: 7.3% v. 4.3%
- Social clubs: 15.0% v. 10.9%
- Special interest groups (skiing, sailing, drill teams, etc.): 33.2% v. 27.5%
- School or community service organizations: 65% v. 51.7%

### **What Others are Saying about the Study and High School Journalism Programs**

“If you are engaged in your school newspaper or your yearbook in high school, the research suggests you will be better with critical thinking skills, better with your grades and a more rigorous contributor to society,” said Bruce Bradley, publisher, *The Virginian-Pilot*; president, Landmark Publishing Group; and chairman of the NAA Foundation Board.

“If schools want to motivate and have motivated students who are involved in a multiplicity of activities, clearly journalism is a significant component of that,” said Gene Policinski, vice president, Freedom Forum First Amendment Center

“In this day and age, when school systems are so concerned about academic performance, no school can justify not having a student newspaper and yearbook,” said Mark Goodman, Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism, Kent State University, and member, NAA Foundation Youth Services Committee.

### **About the study**

This research is based on a study of 31,175 students who took the ACT Assessment college entrance exams during the past five years as either juniors or seniors in high school. One of the questions in the Student Profile Section of the ACT test asked students to respond to the following question, “Worked on the staff of a school paper or yearbook.”

In this study, 6,137 of the students or roughly 20 percent responded “yes, applies to me” to that question. Using the data collected for the entire group of students, it was possible to compare the

outcome for non-journalism students and journalism students in a number of areas including scores on the ACT tests, collegiate performance, final high school grade point averages and grades in the last high school courses taken in various subjects.

### **About the Foundation**

The NAA Foundation strives to develop engaged and literate citizens in our diverse society through investment in and support of programs designed to enhance student achievement through newspaper readership and appreciation of the First Amendment. Information about the Foundation and its programs may be found at [www.naafoundation.org](http://www.naafoundation.org).

### **About ASNE**

Like other media industry groups and foundations, ASNE is at the forefront with [highschooljournalism.org](http://highschooljournalism.org), the most heavily visited scholastic journalism site on the Web, and serves as the nation's largest host of online student media.

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