

# worth promoting

by Jen Bladen  
Harvard-Westlake School  
North Hollywood, California

**I've been blessed as a yearbook adviser to work at schools where the buy-rate is over 90 percent.**

**At San Dieguito Academy in Encinitas, California, we had successful yearbook sales due to the small size of our public school and the high affinity students and parents had for our school of choice.**

Now at Harvard-Westlake, a large independent school in Los Angeles, yearbooks are offered as an opt-out line item on the tuition bill. How lucky can one girl get? When you're fortunate enough to have great book sales – or not to have to sell the book at all – how do you include the important learning of marketing and promotion in your curriculum?

After a great discussion with some of the best yearbook advisers in the country – and Taylor's best marketing team in the business – I came to an important conclusion about my yearbook program. Teaching students how to promote yearbook is essential to yearbook's survival in this turbulent time.

I developed an assignment (see sidebar) to have my students (grades 9 – 11, the seniors got a gimme on this one) think about why we do what we do and to develop a plan to tell the rest of the community.

## Yearbook Promotion Assignment

**In teams (2-4) create some THING that promotes the yearbook.**

**Some options: (use imagination)**

- make a video
- create a podcast
- print a brochure
- make an ad to run in *The Chronicle*

### SCOPE

Address one or more of these topics:

- Why are you on the yearbook staff?
- Why is yearbook important? To whom is it important?
- Tell the story behind a photo in last year's book (go beyond the caption and tell the whole story).
- Ask your parents about their yearbook and why it's still important to them.
- In what ways are we the voice of the people?

### ASSIGNMENT

Your group should complete the following:

- A project proposal outlining what you will create and what topics you will cover
- A deadline calendar of who, what and when (i.e., Jane will complete the storyboard for our video by Day, Month Date)
- A distribution plan for how you will share your creation with the rest of the community

## Their Projects

■ **One group of ninth graders turned their assignment into a community service project.**

They're holding bake sales to raise money for yearbooks for schools that cannot afford them. They are working with our local Taylor reps to find schools which did a yearbook in the past but have discontinued their program due to lack of funding. Additionally, they plan to set aside funds for scholarships to buy individual yearbooks for kids in need at neighboring schools. (Our on-campus scholarship program provides for yearbooks so we can afford to send money to other schools.)

■ **One group of sophomores is making a video in the spirit of the 5 Friends video that Leonardo DiCaprio and his friends made during the presidential election.**

The celebs recorded a PSA urging viewers not to vote unless they actually care about issues like education, the war, global warming and more. For this assignment, my students are recording their friends and teachers asking, "Are you ready for it?" Look for it on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com) and [schooltube.com](http://schooltube.com) later this spring.

■ **Our sweatshirts and press passes are a result of this assignment.**

The students are approaching these otherwise routine tasks (Order sweatshirts. Check. Order press passes. Check.) from a new perspective. They are examining how a staff sweatshirt can be a promotional tool to tell the story of how yearbook is the coolest club on campus. They are thinking about how press passes lend us a professionalism and what that means to the yearbook program in this and future years.

■ **One pair of ninth graders created an ad to run in our middle school newsmagazine *Spectrum*.**

Here's an excerpt from the ad. "I'm so excited for the yearbook to come out at the end of the year. I can't wait to see everyone's faces. The best part of getting a yearbook is looking back when you're older and remembering what your high school years were like," said Lia Seraydarian (12). Many of you probably ask yourselves why spend the money on a yearbook. Having a yearbook lets you look back and remember all the things you did in school, like your seventh grade Halloween dance, your league championship game in tennis or your part in the middle school play. Buying and saving your yearbook gives you something to laugh about when you're older.

One of the first pieces of advice I heard when I started this crazy yearbook life in 1998 was from San Dieguito Academy's adviser of the much-lauded *Mustang* newsmagazine, Tim Roberts. Tim told me that in order to build the yearbook program, I needed to make yearbook seem like the most fun, the best elective/ extracurricular out there. "Take the students on every trip offered and advertise going," he said. Make T-shirts and sweatshirts and have fun. Recruiting the best students on campus will be a lot easier when you are the best option for them. Here it is 10 years later, and I'm finally catching on to what Tim meant.



**Tiffany Scoma**

American International School of Vienna  
Vienna, Austria

It's **worth** it for two reasons. Students learn how to produce something of value, and the community is given something of value. It's fortunate that I don't have to sell ads. The cost is covered by our private school's tuition. Not one person in our school of 800 is missing in our coverage this year. This took dedication and effort, but in the end, it will be rewarding to know no one was left out. Yes, yearbook is a keepsake and memento of a year spent with friends, in the classroom and on the sports field. It's something for the kids to look back and remember school was actually a good place where they learned and had fun.

**Genevieve Garrison**

Bridge City High School  
Bridge City, Texas

Why is it **worth** it? It's **worth** it because I get the awesome privilege of working with the brightest and most dedicated students. It's **worth** it when I get to see the work on their pages and see them so excited when those pages come together. It's **worth** it because I get to interact with every grade level in the school, not just the grade I teach. It's **worth** it because I love seeing the students come together as a team for one purpose. It is **worth** it when I get to tell other students that they are on several pages in the book. Their smiles make it **worth** it all!