

High School Newspapers Hit By Budget Cuts

High school newspapers, long viewed as a laboratory for fledgling journalists, have a rich tradition including censorship battles between idealistic students and cautious administrators.

Now, students are also learning real-life lessons about the financial side of publishing, as drastic budget cuts leave some schools without student papers or even yearbooks.

Franklin, Ind., Community High School students will be without their school paper next year. After 40 years, *The Electron* will no longer be published.

Schools all over Indiana are being forced to make cutbacks, not only in extracurricular activities, but in elective courses as well, according to the [Indianapolis Star](#).

Dennis Cripe, executive director of the Indiana High School Press Association, told the *Star* that it's a numbers game that they just can't win.

"Anytime we lose a publication, we hear the same thing," Cripe said. "It just becomes too expensive."

And, with low enrollment in journalism classes, school newspapers become easy targets.

School administrators find it hard to justify devoting a teacher's time when, like at Franklin, just nine students enrolled in the class that produces *The Electron*.

But Cripe wonders whether school officials adequately consider the cost of not having a school paper.

“Students lose a voice that needs to be heard throughout the school year,” Cripe said. “Student journalists lose an opportunity to hone their writing skills and, just as important, they lose an opportunity to develop leadership skills and make a difference in the life of their schools.”

Indiana schools are not alone. California schools are also taking desperate measures to close the gap on the \$35 million state deficit.

For the first time in 51 years, Chester High School will not produce a school yearbook. The yearbook class’ second-year teacher, Sally Rice, has received her pink slip, according to [the Plumas County News](#). Students, meanwhile, have resorted to fund-raising in an effort to come up with \$7,000 needed to save their book of memories.

Next year will also mark the end for California’s Harbor High School newspaper, the *Gangplank*. And Santa Cruz High School’s *Trident* may also be down for the count.

Students bemoan the loss of a voice that school papers provide.

“This is like taking a baby from its mother,” Harbor High School journalism student Jordan McCavitt told the [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#). “Now we have no place to express ourselves.”

Some teachers and sponsors also worry about students who get hooked on school because of their electives. Other educators and administrators feel that the “high school experience” as a whole is going to suffer.

“The days of enjoying the opportunity to say high school should be an enriching experience, an exploratory experience, that high school should provide students the opportunity to take a multitude of disciplines and experience a multitude of opportunities, that is kind of going away,” Franklin, Ind., High School Principal Leighton Turner told the *Star*.

“Now, high schools better teach what is on the GQE (graduation qualifying exam)

and on the ISTEP tests.

“There are no questions on the GQE about journalism,” Turner said.

Newspapers and yearbooks aren’t the only extracurricular activities suffering from budget cuts, however. Plainfield, Ind., recently had to cut its middle and high school band staff from three teachers to two. And Perry Township, the *Star* reported, has cut industrial technology classes.

Some schools are even cutting classes that would seem most practical in today’s computer and business-focused world. While the *Aptos Anchor* will continue into next year, Aptos High School Principal Mike Hefner told the *Sentinel*, most business and computer classes will be cut.

“We’re going on student requests only,” Hefner said. “Perhaps there’s less interest in computers because of what’s been happening in Silicon Valley.”

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