

Student Involvement Committee

A student's perspective: How media is affecting education

By: Kate Battaglia

Media is everywhere. The media has impacted more than a portion of one's daily life; it has morphed the entire nation's livelihood, including almost every aspect of education. It can be utilized and proved beneficial towards the learning environment, but can also delude the public on what the problems in high schools truly are.

Recently, in my AP Language and Composition class, we have been focusing on how mass media affects society. We (the public) are mechanisms for feedback. We give the media our opinion, the media uses it and reports back what we want to hear, and we give our opinion again; it is a continuous cycle.

Technology has become a vital role in the classroom environment as well. In the past month alone, I have been in classes where we read articles from the LA Times, projecting the newspaper's website onto the board. I have watched and analyzed videos from YouTube, covering everything from the BBC's regular programming to human interest stories on dolphins. I have seen videos that discuss problems with invasive species in Australia. I have listened to French radio stations, streaming directly from the internet. There is no argument that the media has expanded education to include worldwide exemplification, and has the capability to teach at the same time.

However, the media can be detrimental. On the popular television show, "The Secret Life of the American Teenager," the teenage dramas portrayed are exaggerated to the extremes. Amy Juergens, the main character, gets pregnant and spirals into a life of chaos, bullying, and ultimately, drama. And while I will readily agree that teenage pregnancy and bullying are serious issues that need to be faced, the show is no more than a fictitious drama. The audience wants to see it, so the media provides it.

However, shows such as this one also provide the public with a false view of modern high school students. The reason why teenage pregnancy is so dramatic is because it isn't an everyday occurrence. In my suburban high school, (though we may not be the perfect example of a typical high school) teenage pregnancy is practically unheard of.

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In June of 2008, articles broke out suggesting that a “Pregnancy Pact” was formed by a group of female students at Gloucester High School. The reason why this story was so widely publicized was because it was real drama: unexpected and unprecedented. It was not common. A movie was later based around this startling story, widely spreading this rare occurrence through media. If these types of situations are what the public is seeing, and interpreting as modern schools, how are they going to fix the issues? If the public doesn’t truly know what is going on, and the media is spreading false realities about high schools, then what action can the public, and more specifically the PTA, take that will be effective?

All in all, media is unavoidable. While it has the capability to teach, media is often deceiving. This simply makes it more difficult to accurately identify the problems in each school. When looking to help, make sure you aren’t trying to fix a fictitious problem from television, but a problem plaguing the students instead of actors.



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STUDENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

WHY AND HOW TO INCREASE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT WITHIN YOUR PTA/PTSA.

WHY?

STUDENTS ARE AN INCREDIBLE ASSET TO ANY PTA/PTSA:

- Students are considered full members with the same privileges, responsibilities and credibility as adult members.
- Students can serve as officers in the PTA/PTSA.
- Students are a direct line to what is going on within a school.
- Students are able to draw in more students to a PTA/PTSA, undoubtedly increasing membership.



HOW?

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE ~ Form a student involvement committee whose membership includes students and adults.

SCHOOL SURVEY ~ Survey the school community to find out what type of activities students identify as having value and can encourage their involvement.

DEVELOP A PLAN ~ Develop a plan for student involvement based on survey results.

SET REASONABLE GOALS ~ Set reasonable goals based on what the unit needs to accomplish.

- Develop activities that interest both your students and adults.
- Seek input from all students, not just those who traditionally are seen as “leaders.”

REACH OUT ~ Reach out to other groups to co-sponsor events or activities of interest to students:

- Student leadership and school organizations/clubs;
- Other student-focused groups in the community;
- Parent advisory committees
- Other unit, council or district PTAs.
- Have a PTA/PTSA meeting during the students’ lunch period; provide a snack or a simple meal like pizza. “Have food, and they will come.”



PUBLICIZE ACTIVITIES ~ Publicize activities through the PTA/school newsletter, PTA/ school web site, fliers, e-mail, marquees, local newspapers, social media, and personal telephone calls. Promote positive student involvement through publicity.



- Make sure to advertise the benefits:
 - ❖ Volunteer opportunities. Many schools have community service requirements.
 - ❖ Scholarships
 - ❖ Looks good on college applications.

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