

THE MOST CRUCIAL MEDIA SOURCE: STUDENT JOURNALISM

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A soft exhale left my body as the clock still showed an hour left in my geography class. After getting done with our homework, my friend to the left of me was browsing her iPad's home screen. Recently, a shortcut was programmed into our iPads that links to the Bear Tracks Newspaper site. Upon seeing this, my friend turned towards me.

"Ugh! I can't believe they put this back on my iPad! I already deleted it once," she said.

I turned to meet her gaze once she finished speaking. I studied her face for a moment, to see if there was a glimpse of sarcasm slipped in between her words. As seconds passed without her giving me her usual smirk that insinuated her pointed joke, I realized what this simple remark actually entailed. This person is my friend. She knows I'm on the newspaper staff; she KNOWS about my love for journalism, yet she holds no regard for the program I am so passionate about. In my best unconcerned voice, I exasperatedly asked her to keep the app. She tilted her head as if deep in thought, then let out a single two-lettered word. With one swift motion, her hand hovered over the app and pressed "delete".

Now, taking a step back from this encounter, it was not, and isn't, as serious as I wrote it to be. However, her total lack of compassion towards our school's paper mirrored the same attitude that many students and faculty share: indifference. This encounter left me with one question: why should they care about student journalism?

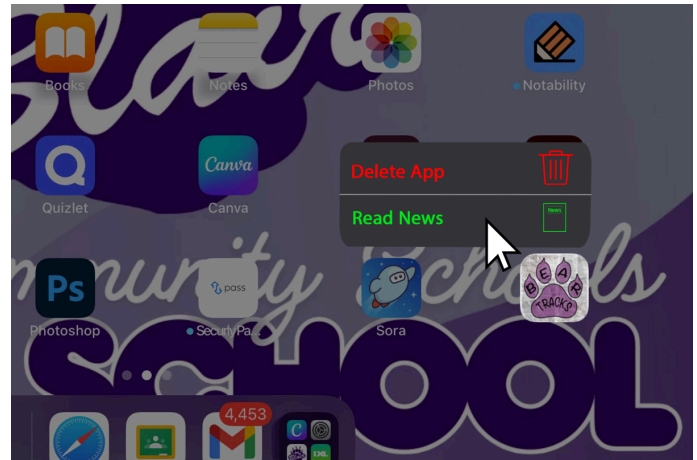
Student journalism is just that: journalism through the lens of an active student. So, the content within a student publication pertains to the students, staff and administration. But as of right now at Blair High School, this media is not being consumed. Reading and indulging student journalism is very important.

Within Bear Tracks, our school's newspaper, a wide variety of topics are covered. We write everything from reviews on popular music to news stories. If students are outraged over new policies, or homecoming themes, or anything- we are a voice for them. Student journalism gives students an outlet to ensure that their voices are heard and respected.

The Daily Northwestern, the student-led publication for Northwestern University in Illinois, uncovered a scandal within its football team in 2023. This exposition of character got one of the coaches, Pat Fitzgerald, fired.

Another student publication, *Manuel RedEye*, uncovered that local police in Kentucky were using a training presentation that quoted Hitler numerous times. This revelation led to the Commissioner at the time, Rodeny Brewer, resigning from his position. It also made multiple police force academies across Kentucky re-assess and change their curriculum.

Then again in *The Linfield Review*, Linfield University's journalism program, their platform was used to help their school. They used the paper to call out the countless sexual assault cases across Linfield's campus, and evoke change.



Graphic by Taytum Macholan

This is the kind of effect that student journalism can produce. Freedom of speech within journalism prompts student thought and question, however it can not be achieved if this media is not consumed. As of right now in Blair, it is not being utilized by its students.

At Blair, we have newspaper, yearbook, broadcast, and podcast branches that are filled to the brim with journalists that want to write for and about their peers. Within the newspaper, we do feature stories to highlight other students and special Blair residents. We also do news stories to inform BHS students and staff of what is happening around them, and opinion and entertainment stories to share important thoughts and new perspectives.

Student journalism peaks behind the veil of student life and allows outsiders to peer into the walls of Blair High. It can shape the way that staff and administration view their students. Student journalism shapes the next set of future journalists. But again, for any of these amazing outcomes to be achieved, this media must be read and respected.