

# WHY CONVENTIONS MATTER



**ASPA allows my students to learn from and meet professionals in a format that mirrors professional conferences.** This also helps my students see what other schools are doing and use that information to challenge themselves and grow as well. We need to grow responsible journalists, and ASPA helps us do that.

- Barbara Bateman, converged newsroom adviser, Daphne High School

**I love coming to convention because it exposes my students to what we can do better.** They are able to hear from professionals that see what's happening nationally and they can take those ideas and put them into action. They are able to compete and challenge themselves at a higher level.

- Lindsay Koen, yearbook adviser, McGill-Toolen Catholic High School

**The annual ASPA state convention is a rite of passage for all Sparkman High School journalists.** We view the pilgrimage to Tuscaloosa each spring as a way to test our skills in competition as well as learn other ways to make us better as a staff. I urge all schools to use the convention as a bonding experience for your staffs. There is nothing like it.

-Erin Coggins, MJE, yearbook, newspaper and online adviser, Sparkman High School

**Expose students to admissions officers, recruiters, and experts in journalism:** Attending an ASPA convention or program exposes students not only to working professionals and nationally recognized media experts, but also to university professors, admissions reps and recruiters. I knew many of my top students before I ever taught them at UA because they and their schools participated in and benefitted from ASPA programs.

- Chip Brantley, Lecturer in Emerging Media, Department of Journalism, University of Alabama

**Improve student achievement, test knowledge and gain recognition:** I have no doubt that attending conventions is a motivating factor for students. My students always enjoyed the opportunity to meet students from other schools and regions at both state and national conventions. Over the years, I've watched well over 100 of my students win awards in on-site competitions. After returning to school, they were always excited to receive recognition through the school and in the news media. Attending the convention was truly a motivating factor for them. The convention experience not only motivated them back at school in their journalism or broadcast class, but it also inspired them in other classes as well. One student was so inspired by his first ever trip to New York for Columbia Scholastic Press Association's convention, he went on to graduate from New York University and has made a phenomenal living as an investor on Wall Street.

- Larry Haynes, principal, Oak Mountain Middle School

**Earn certification and highly-qualified status:** Teachers can learn about earning Certified Journalism Educator and Master Journalism Educator certification at ASPA workshops and conventions. Studying for and earning CJE and MJE certification lends credibility to a teacher's ability and desire to teach scholastic journalism, and teachers learn a lot about how and what to teach journalism students in the process. National certification provides evidence of a highly qualified journalism teacher.

- Susan Newell, MJE, NBCT, retired yearbook and newspaper adviser, Northridge High School, current JEA State Director for Alabama

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**Provide life-changing experiences for students with limited resources:** I have had students who were contemplating dropping out because they hated school. Then they took journalism and found a place where they excelled. They went to ASPA conventions which opened their eyes to opportunities they had never imagined and were inspired to pursue colleges with strong communication programs. Attending an ASPA convention is the "Gatorade" that every journalism student and advisor needs to discover unlimited possibilities in their program and in themselves.

– Jody Evans, CATS-TV adviser, Tuscaloosa County High School

**I attended the state convention with 3 of my Yearbook staff members last year for the first time. We had a wonderful experience.** My staff members competed in the on-site competitions and walked away with a win in the photography category. The sessions we attended were informative and spot on for what we needed, and upon our return to school, the staff was excited and ready to move forward with new ideas. We will absolutely be attending this year's state convention and have our sights on the National convention in Nashville.

- Kellie Moran, Yearbook Sponsor, New Hope High School