

# Dancing With The Stars: The Hidden Treasures of Talent in Your School

By Linda Bartrom

**T**he departments in your school are your new best friends. They are your topics, your stars, and ultimately your fans. *In a symbiotic dance of interdependency, the disciplines of education are the stuff of dreams for a media class!* From the sweat of athletic practice to the striking results of art; from the glory of academic decathlon to the organized chaos of student government meetings; from the passion of debate in political science to the focused exuberance of field trips, *your campus is an overflowing font of show topics...and ultimately show watchers!*

In the first few weeks of school when topics for shows are being laid out for the school year, put out a general call on your school bulletin offering the opportunity for their class, special project, team or club to be the featured topic of one of your television show. You will get a few responses plus *you* reach out to a couple of friends on staff. When those shows are lined up, plus the ones the kids come up with (usually sports, plays and dances), and your class has sequenced them into a quarter or semester of shows, publish that list of shows in the same school bulletin. The effect is amazing.

Once faculty members see others getting their class or favorite project, debate day, or classroom lab experiment featured, the rest of the faculty

will be on board. I promise. There is something about being the first one out there that holds people back. Once they see that list, with limited room left, others will emerge. You may have to do a little digging the first year. The second year you will get a bigger response and will pretty much have your year of topics set by the end of the first month.

Now truthfully, left to your students, you could easily fill a year of shows (at one per month, your starting goal), with dances, sports and plays. So why reach out to your faculty and their respective departments? Because you NEED these people. They will form the base for your endeavor to have firm footing in your curriculum. Cultivate them, schmooze them, coddle them; they will enjoy seeing their work on television, they will love the feedback from parents watching their students' on TV with grandma and grandpa, and collegially they will find your class important enough to recommend it to their best students.

Beyond that, perhaps most importantly, their learners, club members, and teams become your class's audience, their fans. Make a few extra DVD's of each show beyond the one you distribute to your local cablevision channel and rotate it through the faculty to show to the class/team/club

featured on that week's show. Publish the show's viewing times in the faculty and student bulletins. You will have an audience of students, parents, faculty, and administration (who incidentally should have one show devoted to them with the tone being "meet your administration," or "new policies made simple"). Everyone loves seeing themselves, and you are The Source.

Few are the opportunities to do what you do and get others so enthusiastically behind your endeavor. So do not succumb to in-group reinforcement. Your students must learn the great lesson of the news media...*it is not about them*. It's about the larger social group of which they are a part. Let them become the carriers of the message to their classes, combing for worthy topics everyday as they attend school. Scooping up others outside your class to become topics of shows empowers your students because they make the decisions about show topics; they are stars in their own right. As the tempo of the days and weeks of the school year roll by, the cadence, the ongoing dance of the school year's events will be recorded and archived by your media learners. Your students will learn what Media-World already knows: There are dancers and there are those who hold the dance. Some say the latter is the best of all worlds!