Supporting Information about ITV's News Show Rubric

Guiding Philosophy

ITV's news show rubric has been a work in progress since its initial publication during the 1991-1992 school year. It has been revised annually after receiving input from ITV teachers, judging schools, TV stations, production companies, etc. ITV also worked with the University of South Florida educational research department on perfecting the format of and wording of the rubric. It has always meant to be a cross between media industry standards and practices and the realities of the educational environment.

Please remember that the following news show criteria represent the components of an ideal show. ITV does not expect schools to produce 180 shows meeting all of these standards, but hopes that students and teachers meet as many of the standards as possible. To that end, only five shows are collected the entire school year.

Also, please remember that the target of our efforts is the 70% threshold, which leaves substantial leeway for each school to shape its program around individual needs.

Motivational Elements (25 points possible)

This category should remind schools that no matter how hard students and teachers work in producing a quality news program, all if for naught if no one watches the show. Research about industry best practices combined with the experience of the ITV staff, and considering input from classroom teachers have identified several factors that motivate the general school population to watch their school news show.

Entertaining aspects like music, creative approaches to stories, the use of humor and a lively pace (5 points)

Those factors include the use of music and music videos, creative approaches to stories, the inclusion of humor, and a lively pace.

Large numbers of students featured on camera (5 points)

Students are also motivated to watch news shows when they or their friends are featured on the show or at least seen. Polls and music videos are great ways to include large numbers of students in a relatively short period of time. By using the term "featured" ITV would include students shown in these polls and music videos, students interviewed or profiled in reports, and students who are singled out during announcements for academic, athletic, or extracurricular achievements. If pictures or video clips are used in birthday

announcements, Valentine's Day shout-outs, etc., they too would qualify as featuring students on camera.

Using Anchors and reporters who display personality and charisma, as well as engage the audience (5 points)

The television and film industries have long believed that actors and/or reporters and anchors make or break news shows and movies, which is why they are the highest paid employees in both industries. Following the same logic, students are going to be much more motivated to watch their school news shows if the anchors and reporters they see display personality and charisma as well as an ability to engage the audience. Not everyone can do this so ITV strongly encourages ITV teachers to audition for the roles of anchors and reporters. There are many different tasks that can be rotated among students and students with marginal on-camera skills can certainly contribute reports or interviews to their school news shows. The students appearing on camera on a regular basis, however, should be the ones with the highest level of on-camera skills.

Going on location outside the studio (5 points)

Stations and networks have always gone outside their studios to produce segments, interviews and reports that are included in their news shows, primarily because viewers are more interested in watching information produced where it occurred, as opposed to a news desk in a studio. Sometimes stations and networks even produce their whole show on location and have almost always seen a spike in their ratings when doing so.

ITV is well aware of the time constraints on school personnel, especially at the elementary level. But, we encourage schools to follow this practice of *going on location* with their own school news shows as often as time permits but at least a few times a year. Scenes filmed in classrooms, auditoriums, playgrounds or athletic fields are much more interesting to watch than would be someone sitting at a news desk talking about that activity. Exotic locations like area theme parks, beaches, and even city parks can provide a more interesting backdrop to a school news show, especially if the location ties thematically to that day's major story.

Inclusion of segments that would be of high interest to students, including reports, interviews, and polls

Although charismatic anchors, a lively pace, the use of humor and music, and going on location can all increase viewer ratings, the choice of news show topics can have an even more significant impact on viewership. In addition to informing the school about news around campus, news show teams should ask themselves about the kinds of topics that would be of high interest to their viewers and try to cover those topics whenever time

permits. Such coverage can include simple announcements reports, interviews, and polls about virtually any topic known to be of high interest to students. Remember that the best way to edit polls is to state the question only once and simply cut to close ups of each respondent answering the question, preferably with the student's name superimposed on the bottom of the screen. Such respondents should never look right into the camera, a practice reserved exclusively in the television industry for anchors and reporters.

Technical Merit (25 points)

Sound Clarity and volume (5 points)

As you have probably already observed, people will complain about sound issues even quicker than they will if there are issues with the video. Research suggests that our nervous systems are actually more closely tied to sound than to vision, suggesting that humans once were more dependent on sounds for survival. Regardless of the reasons, spend even more time on your audio than you do on your video or you will suffer the consequences.

There are several keys to acquiring audio clearly and effectively:

1. Use hand-held microphones located just below the chin in noisy locations.

2. Use lapel microphones on each speaker if in a relatively quiet location, like your studio or someone's office.

3. Make sure that lapel mics are placed high up on shirts and blouses, never putting it inside someone's clothing or in a location where a mic may rub up against jewelry.

4. Have someone monitor sound at all times that it is being recorded. Don't trust meters because meters do not show distortion or background sound issues like background hum or air conditioning noise.

5. Put the audio recording function on cameras to a manual setting (as opposed to an automatic setting) and then watch those meters we just told you not to trust to make sure that they do not go into the red.

6. When editing in Final Cut Pro, keep its meters in the -6 to -12 range, the standard settings for digital video.

Tripod Steady but Creative Camera Work, including proper framing, lead room, nose room, and headroom. (5 points)

A tripod should always be used except in rare circumstances where the creativity of the shot requires that it be hand-held. Using a tripod is especially important in situations

where there is little or no movement in what is being filmed, like interviews and stand-up reports.

If you are unfamiliar with terms like framing, lead room, nose room and head room, please download Captain Video's Handbook from the Resources section of the ITV website.

Appropriate lighting, including the avoidance of silhouettes (5 points)

The use of a lighting kit or even a single light is always advisable because lighting literally brightens up any scene. Even more importantly, watch the background behind your shots carefully. Avoid bright skies, windows, doorways, and ceiling lights because all these backgrounds will silhouette your subject and make them look like drug informants whose identities are being disguised.

Audio and Video Editing Smoothness (5 points)

Smooth editing can make or break a news show, an interview, a report, documentary, etc. Digital editing programs like Final Cut Pro make it relatively easy to eliminate glitches and jump cuts in the video, and abrupt sound differences in the audio, but you will have to take the time necessary to do so.

Audio volume levels should be the same throughout any video project and the audio should almost always fade up or down at the beginning or end of a segment.

Jump cuts and glitches should be edited out or at least masked with cutaway or b-roll footage. Most likely you have already spent a long time planning and shooting for your production. Don't put all that effort to waste by sloppily piecing together the parts of your project.

Special Effects and News Sets, including the backgrounds chosen for stand-up segments (5 points)

Watch any professional news program and you will not see anchors filmed in front of a blank wall or even one painted green or blue. News sets have been an important element because they lend a production a professional appearance and heighten viewer interest.

In our ITV program, news sets can involve curtains, plants, props, and specially designed backdrops, or they can involve the use of chromakey. Even if you do use chromakey, themed props and costumes add a nice touch and will make your show more interesting.

Also, if you are using chromakey, make sure that your chromakeyed image is clean rather than frizzied. ITV provides a special program called DV Matte Pro that can be used to clean up a chromakeyed image in Final Cut Pro. Good, even lighting, especially lighting

that separates talent from the green or blue wall, is also essential. Avoid shadows on the blue or green wall because computers will interpret the shadows as a different shade of blue or green. Also avoid wearing clothing that matches the wall in hue.

When going on location, avoid filming subjects in front of walls, a practice that will give your scene a police lineup look. In a classroom, for instance, have the class itself in the background, not outside wall. In a hallway, film with the hall in the background, not up against lockers. In other locations, look for the most interesting background possible.

Graphics (25 points)

Number of Graphics Used (5 points)

Good news shows are all about the dissemination of information. Graphics can significantly reinforce the dissemination of news. Graphics include text, pictures, clip art, and animation. Many studies on the ways that people learn and assimilate new information point to the importance of conveying that information visually, not just aurally.

For that reason, ITV encourages news show teams to include graphics for all announcements except the very briefest ones. Graphics are especially important when sharing time/date information, names, and statistics.

All people appearing on camera, including the members of the ITV crew should be identified with what in the industry is called a lower third or a name bar. Lower thirds consist of two lines of text placed in the lower third of the screen and used to identify who is talking or who is being interviewed. The upper line of text includes the name and the lower line of text identifies the title, job, or role of the person.

Size, Font Style, & Legibility (5 points)

You can have all the graphics in the world, but if your audience cannot read them they're doing you no good. All text should be large enough to be read from the back of the classroom. Choose simple, not fancy, styles and use thick lettering. Also use only key words, not complete sentences. Your announcers can fill in the details.

Proper Use of Colors so that graphical elements contrast with the background (5 points)

Color combinations are just as important as size considerations. Light colored text or pictures dominated by light colors will be hard to read on a light colored background

(yellow on white, for instance). Always opt for the greatest color contrast difference possible.

The use of visual elements like clip art and pictures (5 points)

Most of us are visual learners and we live in a world of pictures, video images, and icons that fill up our computer screens, our television and theatre screens, and our mobile devices. Refrain from text-only graphics, instead using pictures to tell your story. Pictures taken by the ITV crew (as opposed to ones downloaded from the Internet) will draw even more attention.

Animated Graphics (5 points)

Watch the graphics of any news, sports, or weather programs and you will rarely see static graphics anymore. Make sure, however, that your animations do not distract viewers. All background movements should be slow. ITV advises schools to tune in to news, sports, and weather programs to see how they are able to walk the fine line between text animations that add pizzazz to graphical components and text animations that distract viewers. Also make sure to leave graphics up long enough to be read twice at a normal speaking rate.

Creative Styling (5 points)

ITV news crews can add an entertaining element to their graphics by using themes. For instance, graphics for a news show segment about the beach could include water images like surfboards, waves, or beach umbrellas. A lower third could include an image of the school mascot or TV channel logo.

Comprehensiveness (25 points)

Academics Covered (10 points)

The need to include academics in school news shows should be obvious. Such coverage could involve reports or announcements on various activities going on in classrooms, the details about academic success stories like testing results and awards garnered in academic competitions, Accelerated Reader information, problems of the day for content areas like math, science, and language arts, FCAT preparations of any kind, a look back in history. Single out student and class/school academic achievements if possible.

Extracurricular activities, sports, health, community, state, or national topics (5 points)

All kinds of things of this nature are going on in the typical school, especially our middle schools and high schools, which are chocked full of clubs and sports. Instead of team sports, elementary schools can promote health, nutrition, and fitness, and can profile students with interesting out-of-school hobbies. When time permits, include even brief segments about community, state, or national events, especially those that impact young people, and consider polling students about their opinions. Such coverage keeps our students informed about the world around them, an important concept in any democracy.

Reports (10 points)

Although most announcements can be handled adequately from a studio news desk, the studio should not be the center of attention in school news shows. Classrooms, athletic fields, playgrounds, and auditoriums are where the action is happening on any school campus. For that reason, school news shows should include reports and interviews shot on location, even if most of them are relatively short (90-to-120 seconds).