Q. If a lack of trust dooms states, can it doom scholastic journalism in your school?

A lack of trust ultimately means the relationship between two entities begins to weaken. When there’s little to no foundation in journalism, sources and information begin to disappear. It’s imperative that journalists understand the importance of building trust within the news organization and its readers/viewers. Part of this can be completed with communication and transparency. But a major component is communication, which one could argue is the foundation of journalism. Trust is strengthened though communication.

How can we communicate effectively? Active and thoughtful discussions. This can be facilitated through community engagement activities between journalists and their audience. Are you listening? Are you responding? Are you encouraging open dialogue to push back against bias?

Community engagement activities can be as simple as a public forum, inviting community members to talk about subjects important to them – or to give them a space to talk about their own concerns. If someone questions our reporting, are we being transparent? Can we let our audience know *how* and *why* we report on the news? Simply reporting on the news is not enough. There should be open communication to alleviate and address concerns at the forefront. It begins with engaging with our surroundings and understanding what’s important to those around us.

ACTIVITY:

1. You are tasked with developing a community engagement session with your administrators. Develop a list of questions and subjects you believe should be addressed to build trust in the relationship.
2. After you have developed the list, speak to at least two people you would invite to the meeting and ask them to address their concerns/questions related to the student media.
3. After your meetings, write a summary of what you learned about the concerns or questions from the school’s administrators.
   1. Did anything stand out to you?
   2. How would you address each concern or question? Please explain.
   3. Do you think the communication would help to build trust? Please explain.

* Review your findings with your adviser and develop a full, revised list of questions, concerns and answers.
* Conduct a formal meeting to respond to the concerns from the administrators.
* Once completed, submit a document to your advisor on what you learned and whether you believe the community engagement activity could help build trust within a newsroom.