

YOU'RE THE ASSIGNING EDITOR

Instructions: Imagine that you the metropolitan editor for the News & Observer newspaper in Raleigh, North Carolina. As with every editor in America, part of your job is to assign stories that you deem worthy for publication to a reporter on staff. On the following pages, you will find a staff list of your seven reporters with a little bit of background on who they are. You will also find a page that contains 10 stories that could be done for the day. Your job is to assign the stories, keeping in mind that three stories will not be covered. You have the authority to determine which three stories do not get covered.

INTRODUCING YOUR STAFF

MARIO HESS

Mr. Hess is the politics and local government reporter. Prior to coming to North Carolina, Hess covered the city of El Paso, Texas for the El Paso Times. Originally from Louisiana, Hess has been a reporter for six years. His work stories primarily focus on wasteful government spending, new laws affecting Raleigh residents, and goings-on with the mayor. Hess is a college football fan who loves cooking BBQ and watching horror movies. His schedule is Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

MARTHA MCFARLAND

Mrs. McFarland is one of two feature writers on staff. McFarland moved to Raleigh as a teenager in 1979 when her parents came to North Carolina from south Florida. McFarland has been a reporter for 19 years and she has covered the environment, transportation, and breaking news. McFarland enjoys writing human interest pieces, but is versatile enough as a journalist to write movie reviews, columns, profiles, and Q&As. In 2011, she won first place in feature writing from the North Carolina Press Association for a piece she wrote about therapeutic horseback riding. She lives in Raleigh with her husband Dennis.

JOYCE WALKER

Mrs. Walker is your second feature writer on staff. Walker is originally from Macon, Ga., but moved to the Raleigh area so her son Albert could receive specialty medical care from a local hospital. Walker writes general feature stories - like parades, festivals, and other events - but in her personal life, she is obsessed with everything entertainment/celebrity news. She has selfies posted on her social media with people like Jennifer Aniston, Bradley Cooper, Ellen DeGeneres and Jim Carrey. Walker earned her bachelor's degree in journalism from Georgia Tech and lives just outside of Raleigh in Durham, N.C.

JIMMIE BOONE

Mr. Boone is one of two breaking news reporters on staff. Boone just started working for the paper six months ago and, prior to this, he had been a crime reporter for the Charlotte News & Observer. Boone's work shift is Wednesday through Sunday 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Boone has covered crime and breaking news before, but because he is new to this newsroom and area, he is still learning which agencies and sources generate breaking news for the paper. Boone has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Texas. He lives in Raleigh.

DREW WHITEHEAD

Mr. Whitehead covers state and federal courts for the News & Observer, a beat that he has held for 12 years. Whitehead graduated from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, worked as an intern for the News & Observer, and then was hired to cover courts, meaning this is the only newspaper he has ever worked for. Whitehead has won 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place awards in state press association contests in his years on staff. Over the years, he has built up a long list of sources in state and federal courtrooms, including judges, bailiffs, clerks, lawyers, and staff members in the District Attorney's Office

GRADY RYDER

Ms. Ryder is one of two general assignment reporters on staff. Ryder writes about a little bit of everything - the environment, energy, business, healthcare, Girls Scout troops, Raleigh history and more. Ryder spent four years as a reporter for the Huffington Post in New York before coming to Raleigh. She started at the News & Observer as a breaking news reporter but moved to general assignment six years ago. Ryder is a self-proclaimed animal lover. She has two dogs and a ferret, and she volunteers at the local animal shelter. She also loves eating at news restaurants, traveling, and DIY projects.

MONIQUE WILKINSON

Ms. Wilkinson covers K-12 and higher education for the News & Observer. She joined the newspaper two years ago after covering education issues for the Roanoke Times in Virginia. In Roanoke, she produced several front-page stories where she used school district data to shed light on why some schools in the inner city were struggling. Wilkinson has expressed her interest in doing data-driven reporting on issues outside of education, like city government, politics, transportation or business. Later this year, Wilkinson will be attending her first Investigative Reporters & Editors conference in Missouri. Originally from Mississippi, Wilkinson started her career as an intern for the Associated Press in Sioux Falls, S.D.

JAZMYN COOMBES

Mrs. Coombes is the second general assignment reporter on staff. Coombes joined the News & Observer after working seven years for INDY Week, the alternative weekly newspaper that covers Raleigh. At INDY Week, Coombes wrote investigative pieces and longform magazine stories. Coombes has been on maternity leave for four months and returned to work last week. Coombes was born in Washington D.C., where she met her husband Lawrence. Lawrence is a teacher for the school district that the News & Observer covers. When she isn't working, Coombes loves to sing, cook, and watch movies.

AUSTIN TILLMAN

Mr. Tillman covers state government for the News & Observer. Tillman has been on the state government beat for 10 years but has been on the News & Observer staff for 26 years. In the past, Tillman has covered education, city government, and general assignment. Tillman is considered one of the top political reporters in North Carolina. He has appeared on CNN, MSNBC and NPR to talk about his exclusive political stories from the state capitol. Tillman was born in Columbia, South Carolina. He has won state and national awards for his political reporting. His wife, Cynthia, is a manager at a Whole Foods in Durham.

ARNOLD GODDARD

Mr. Goddard is the second crime and breaking news reporter. Goddard was the newspaper's state government reporter before Austin was given the beat. Goddard has been with the News & Observer for 13 years and has built up a long list of sources in all corners of the city - from local businesses, city council members, school teachers, clergymen, etc. Goddard has the biggest and most vocal personality in the newsroom. He is friends with everyone in the newsroom and other departments within the company. He loves talking about science stuff, like outer space, infectious diseases, technology and microorganisms. Goddard earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of California Irvine.

It's **9:30 a.m.** on a Tuesday morning and you and the other News & Observer editors have just finished the news meeting and decided which stories to pursue for Wednesday and into the week. Below is a list of stories you need to assign. From your staff list, please select one reporter to assign one story to (and one story only) and then explain your reasoning behind assigning this particular story to this particular reporter. Keep in mind that below are 13 stories and you only have 10 reporters, meaning you will also have to decide which three stories will not be covered at all.

Story 1

The State of North Carolina has set aside \$100 million that lawmakers plan to spread across to school districts so they can fund creative and unique pre-k programs. The state's governor says the money is the first time the state has given money specifically for pre-k. Raleigh's school district is one of 13 in the state that can compete for these funds. It is unclear what the district would do with their share of the \$100 million, if they win some.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

REASONING BEHIND ASSIGNING:

Story 2

The Westside Civic Association is holding a neighborhood clean up event this afternoon at Mill Pond Creek. The event is in its 41st year and the turnout is always at least 100 people. Residents in the Westside area say they are astonished at how much trash is left near the creek.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

REASONING BEHIND ASSIGNING:

Story 3

Comedian Steve Martin is in Raleigh today and will be signing autographs for his newly released book, *My Career on SNL*. Martin will be at the North Carolina Convention Center from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Martin's press person said she would make Martin available to the media at 2 p.m. for exclusive interviews, but she needs to be notified before 10 a.m. It's unclear if other news media have signed up for interviews.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

REASONING BEHIND ASSIGNING:

Story 4

Hundreds of protesters are scheduled to circle a local business on Maple Street after it has been allowed to remain open even though the local health department said it failed its latest health inspection. The brunch restaurant's owner is believed to have paid off a county health official, which has enabled him to keep the doors open. That is not confirmed information and the owner denied media interviews yesterday.

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Story 5

On Monday night into Tuesday morning, a house fire destroyed a single-family home inside a residential neighborhood near downtown. During the fire, the husband of the home - Randall Humphries - was pronounced dead. The Humphries family has agreed to give an interview to us, but we need to track them down first because obviously they're not at their home this Tuesday morning.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

REASONING BEHIND ASSIGNING:

Story 6

Lawyers for singer Clay Aiken will appear in court on his behalf later this morning in a case that Aiken has already pleaded not guilty. Aiken was arrested last month for being involved in a bar fight at Wild Rose Pub. Aiken, a Raleigh native, was placed in a holding cell for three hours, then posted bond. Judge Anthony Matthews will decide at 11 a.m. if Aiken will have to appear himself in further court proceedings.

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Story 7

The Raleigh Police Department will hold a press conference today at 4 p.m. and officers plan to release details about four men who were arrested Monday night. The four men are believed to be the ring leaders behind a large and complex human trafficking ring that involved cross-state sales of female minors. It is unclear if these minors are American or were imported from another country.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

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Story 8

The Raleigh City Council is scheduled to pass a law Tuesday night that will completely ban hookah bars and vape shops in the city. The law stems from recent reports from the CDC that outline how harmful the hookah smoke is to one's health. Raleigh lawmakers say they want the bill passed to prevent teenagers from picking up the habit. There's talk at the state legislature that the governor may follow suit with a state-wide ban.

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Story 9

The media relations office for the Raleigh City Mayor has scheduled a 1 p.m. sit-down interview with the mayor to discuss her proposed 2018-19 city budget. The mayor plans to publicly announce the budget later in the day, but wants to give the News & Observer a deeper look and answer questions beforehand. The reporter assigned this story will have to return to the newsroom quickly and write a story about the budget and have it ready to post online as the mayor announces the budget.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

REASONING BEHIND ASSIGNING:

Story 10

On Monday, North Carolina Republicans announced who they're selecting as their candidate to run for U.S. Senate. Sterling Tannerhill, from Roanoke Rapids, impressed the GOP caucus in recent weeks. We need a deeper story into who Tannerhill is and why Republicans think he will be elected and sent to Washington. We have not heard from Republicans on whether they'll make him available for interviews.

ASSIGNED REPORTER:

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Story 11

Students have been evacuated from a residence hall at North Carolina State University. It has not been confirmed, but early reports say that there was a carbon monoxide leak in one of the hallways. A News & Observer reader drove by the campus and called into the newsroom to say almost 100 students are standing outside their residence hall.

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Story 12

A federal judge in New York has announced he will resign from the bench after reports have surfaced that he slept with a minor in his summer home in Raleigh. Adam McElroy said he denies the sexual allegation but believes leaving his bench will preserve the sanctity of the criminal justice system. McElroy is a Texas native who became a federal judge in Manhattan in 2010. No charges have been filed against him.

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Story 13

The North Carolina State Lottery will hold a media availability at noon today for the two winners of the state's \$330 million Powerball jackpot. One of the winners is from Wilmington, NC and the other is from Raleigh. At the media availability, it will be revealed if the winners took a lump sum payment or installments. Lottery officials will be on hand to answer questions about other large payouts in North Carolina lottery history.

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