

**Who are  
education journalists?**

**And what do they want?**

**Kim Clark**  
**Assistant Director**



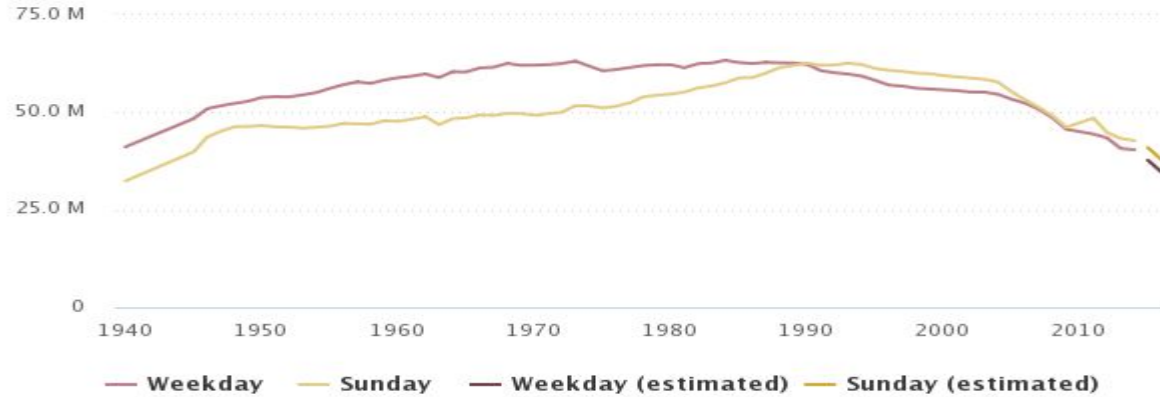
EDUCATION WRITERS ASSOCIATION



# We face similar funding issues

## Total estimated circulation for U.S. daily newspapers

*Total circulation for U.S. daily newspapers*



# **We have similar goals**

- Free the data!**
- Enable the public to use the data wisely to make better personal and policy decisions.**
- We wonder about the same questions: average v. marginal costs of education, outcomes, etc.**

# Overworked and underpaid

**76%**

**of education reporters report their beat  
consists of all education, not just higher ed.**

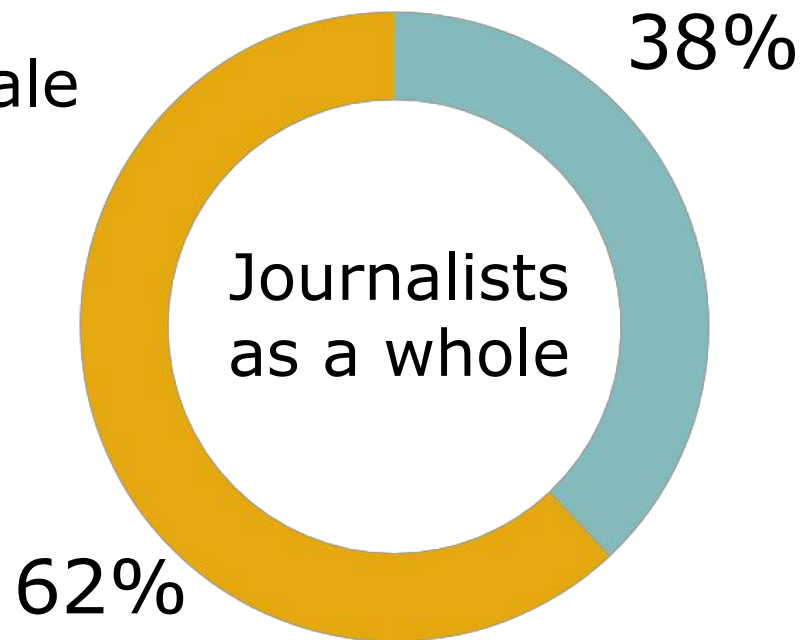
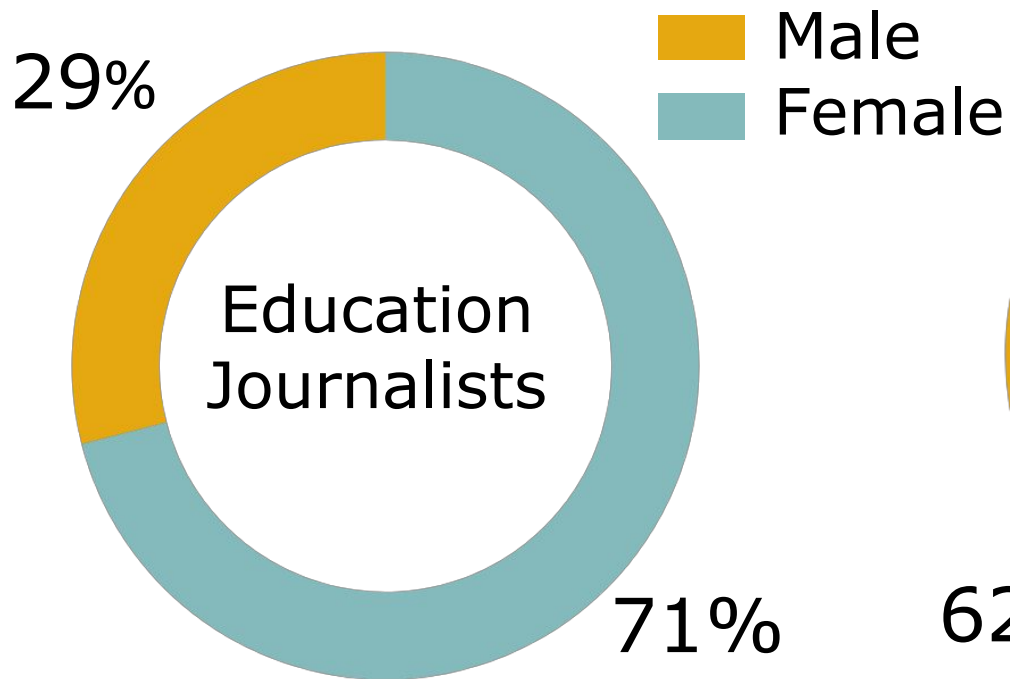
Median Salary: **\$55,000**

*But* full-time male education journalists make about **\$3,000 a year more** than their female counterparts.

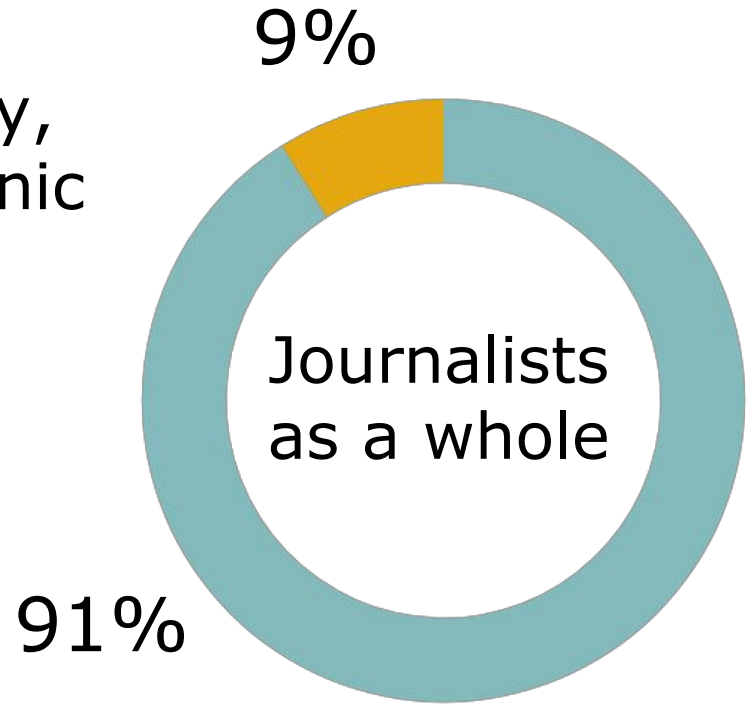
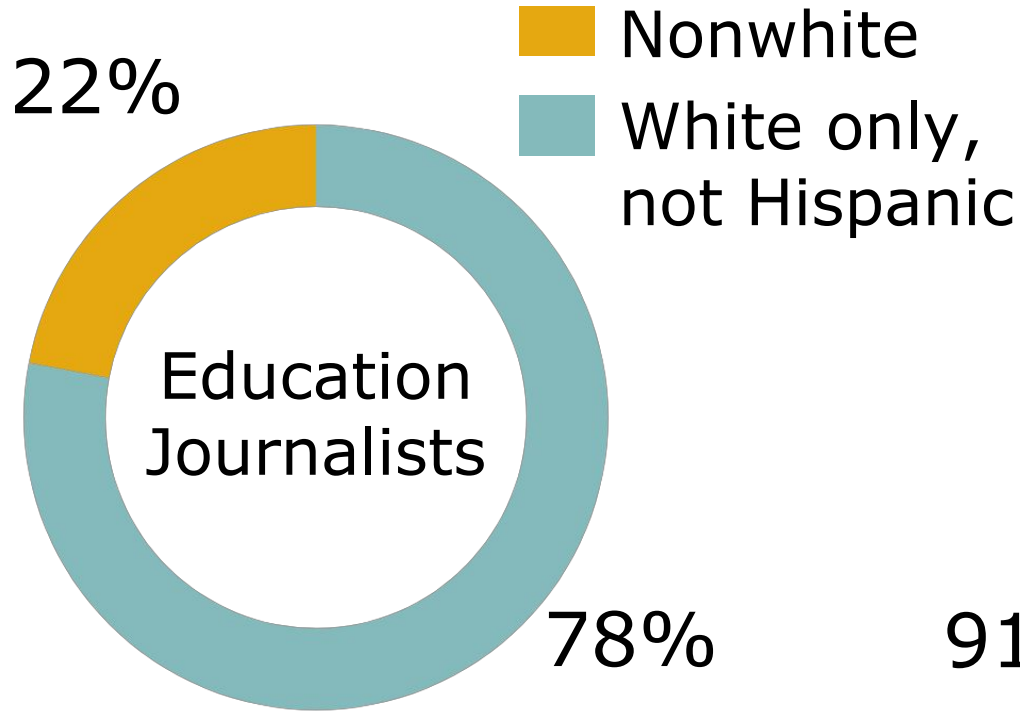


The typical American education journalist is a **36-year-old** white woman with **11 years** in journalism.

# GENDER



## RACE/ETHNICITY



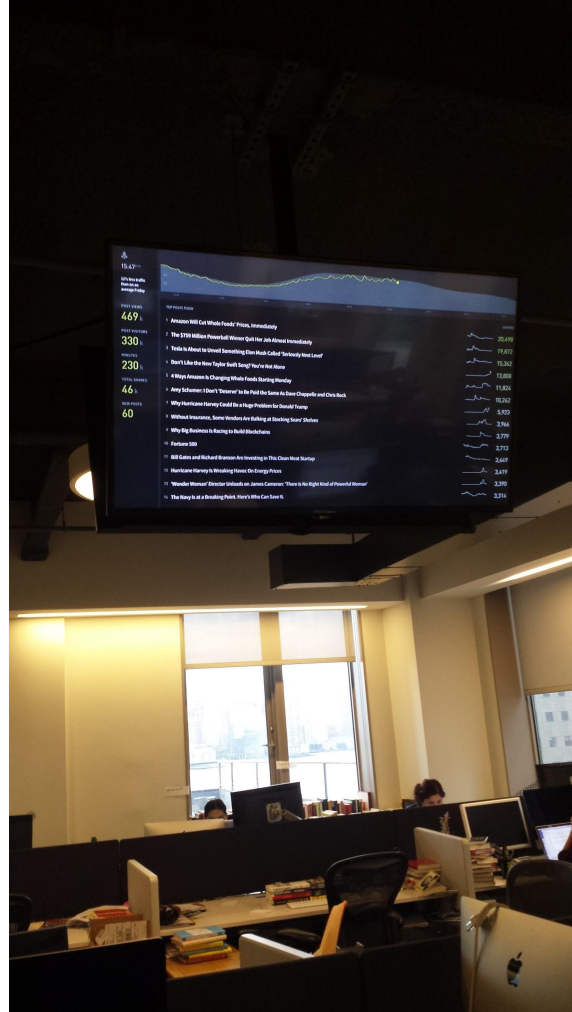
# THE EDUCATION BEAT FACES CHALLENGES

**65%** Too many education-related responsibilities leaves me little time for in-depth reporting

**46%** Coworker/supervisors lack expertise to guide my education journalism

**38%** Audience analytics create pressure for me to ignore important education stories

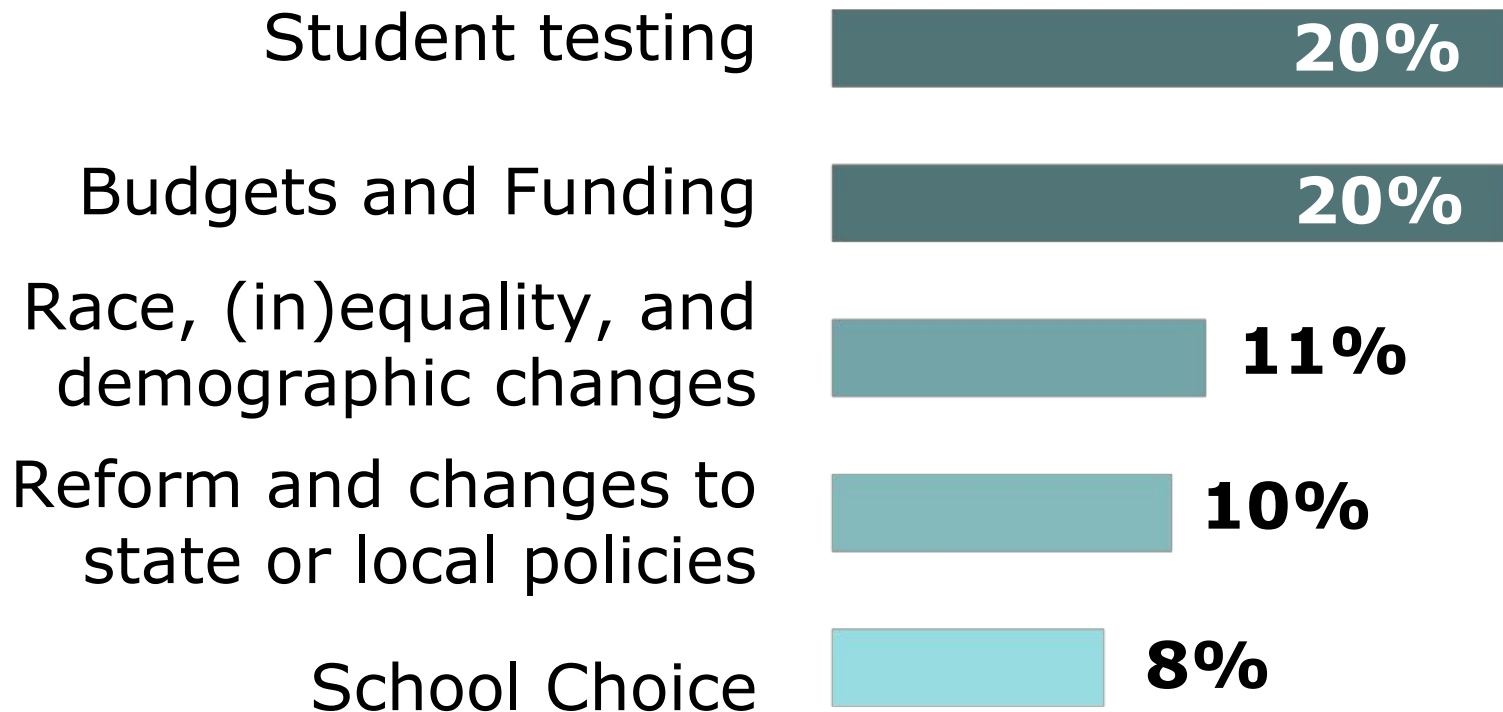
**35%** Responsibility for working on topics other than education leaves me little time for in-depth educational journalism



# THE EDUCATION BEAT FACES CHALLENGES

- 33%** I find it difficult to get in-person access to schools and campuses
- 23%** Educational leaders are uncooperative or hostile to me
- 20%** I find myself covering or supervising coverage of education-related topics I don't fully understand
- 15%** The news organization with which I am most closely associated does not value education journalism

## TOP STORIES FOR 2016-17



# How journalists decide what to write

See William Blundell's "The Art & Craft of Feature Writing": Reporters take news event or trend and...

- Extrapolate – look for larger implications/effects.
- Synthesize – combine the news with other related news.
- Project – look for reactions/countermoves.
- Localize – find the impact in their local community.



# Trends

- Rising importance of higher education to success in life.
- Rising costs of college.
- Rising anxiety of parents and students for achieving/maintaining middle class.
- Rising risk of the college investment. Necessary but no longer sufficient to provide financial stability
- Rising demands for accountability for investments in/costs of education.
- Declining demographics – Fewer 18-year-olds for the next several years.

## Expect journalists to pursue:

- Extrapolations: Stories about declining socioeconomic mobility for youth, financial & retirement insecurity of parents who raid retirement accounts to pay for kids' college, etc.
- Syntheses: Roundup stories about, for example, various accountability measures.
- Projections: News stories about countermoves such as new “free college,” options, certifications & alternative pathways.
- Localizations: local reporters will seek examples of trends in their home communities.

# What do reporters want?

- What their readers want! Accurate, useful and relevant information about their investments in education.

## Standardization of data:

- Make it possible/easier to compare your state data against other states' data.

## Better cost data

- How much does it cost to provide higher education to your state's citizens at each college? How much more does it cost to educate an engineer than, say, a poet? How much are taxpayers paying for higher education?
- Faculty – How much are faculty actually getting paid? How many are tenured or adjunct? How many classes are faculty actually teaching?

## Better accountability data

- Pathway tracking: What happens to high school students? By high school? Where do students go? How do they do?
- Data for all types of students, not just “traditional” freshmen. Especially community college students: What happens to students who start at community colleges and transfer to four-year colleges, for example?

# Data that sheds light on current controversies

- Affirmative action claims: Is it possible to see anonymized data by race and gender on who is applying, and whether different types of students are in fact facing different admissions standards?

# How to deal with the press

- Talk to us! Build a relationship! Otherwise you'll only hear from us under deadline pressure.
- Keep the long-term goal of accurate news and information for the public in mind.
  - For example: it's better to have reporters interview people who actually work with the data. Having to funnel questions through a non-expert press person is inefficient and a recipe for errors.
  - Why do we have to FOIA so much? Why isn't much of this data, which you have already compiled, just made public?



## The journalist's credo:

“If your mother tells you she loves you, check it out.”