

Joshua Benton

4004 Gilbert Ave., Number 3 • Dallas, Texas 75219 • cell 214-914-9998 • jbenton@toast.net

EDUCATION

Yale University, New Haven, Conn., 1993 to 1997.

Bachelor of arts degree in history, with a focus on the American South. Member of Yale Dean's Advisory Committee. As a high school senior, was named the top male student in Louisiana by U.S. Department of Education. Was one of 141 Presidential Scholars named by President Clinton in 1993.

Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 2003.

Attended the School for Advanced International Studies as a Pew Fellow in International Journalism.

Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 2007 to 2008.

As a Nieman Fellow. Study plans include the impact of school rating systems on classroom instruction and the fortification of international borders.

JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE

The Dallas Morning News, staff writer and columnist, 2000 to present.

Chief K-12 education reporter, covering local, regional and national issues. Also freelanced stories for the paper's religion and features sections. Made more than 50 appearances on television and radio news shows.

Overview:

- Since arriving at *The News*, I've written more 1A articles than any other metro reporter.
- I've received the highest possible rating in each of my annual job evaluations.
- *The News* has nominated me for the Pulitzer Prize three times — in beat reporting (2004 and 2005) and investigative reporting (2005).
- I led the concept-development team for *Quick*, a free *Morning News*-produced, youth-oriented daily newspaper.
- I am one of the newspaper's most popular bloggers.

Selected story projects:

Cheating (2004-07): Using statistical analysis and reporting, detected suspicious test-score patterns that suggest cheating on state exams in hundreds of Texas schools. Stories led to investigations in most major Texas urban school districts and reforms in how the state oversees testing. More than 30 educators in Dallas and Houston have faced discipline based on the stories' findings.

Wilmer-Hutchins (2004-06): Wrote a series of investigative stories on the Wilmer-Hutchins school district in south Dallas. Stories led directly to the removal of the school board by state officials, the firing of the district's attorney, the resignation of a school principal, and the disciplining of 22 teachers who helped students cheat on state exams.

Teacher Preparation Index (2003): Devised a rating system for Texas schools based on how well prepared their teachers are. Found the best prepared teachers were working in the schools that needed them least. Model was copied by other newspapers and led several superintendents to review their hiring methods.

Schools That Work (2002-03): Wrote a year-long series profiling high-achieving Texas schools teaching low-income students. Series was quoted by President Bush at a White House ceremony.

Winter Olympics (2002): Covered the Salt Lake City Games, writing daily feature stories and leading the newspaper's non-sports coverage.

Dropouts (2001): Wrote a series of articles on Texas' miscounting of dropouts that led the Texas Legislature to require auditing of school dropout data.

***The (Toledo, Oh.) Blade*, staff writer, 1997 to 2000; summer 1996 (intern).**

Projects reporter, 1999 to 2000. Previous positions held: city hall bureau chief, legislative correspondent, night police reporter, general assignments. Also served as the paper's rock critic, with reviews syndicated weekly on Scripps Howard News Service. Circulation: 145,000 daily, 201,000 Sunday.

***The Yale Herald*, editor-in-chief and other positions, 1994 to 1997.**

Led a staff of over 150 and an editorial board of 40. As a writer, wrote more front-page stories than anyone in the newspaper's history. As online editor, created a web site named one of the world's 10 best online college papers. Circulation: 5,500 weekly.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Pew Fellowship in International Journalism, 2003.

Spent six weeks in Zambia, reporting on the impact of HIV/AIDS. Primary focus: The high infection rate among teachers and the disease's drain on the nation's schools. Also created a companion weblog at zambiastories.com with more than 4,000 readers. Stories were a finalist for the Livingston Award for International Reporting.

Jefferson Fellowship, 2005.

Month-long study tour of Asia, focusing on the rising economic might of China and its impact on the region and the United States.

Foreign Press Center of Japan Fellow, 2001.

Two-week fellowship program in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. Wrote story for *The Dallas Morning News* about concerns over recent Japanese education reforms.

Other international assignments:

Nigeria (stories on the growth of Southern Christianity), 2005.

Pitcairn Island (story on island nation's dying days), 1999.

Northern Ireland (covering peace talks) and Ireland (for a profile), 1999.

Germany (covering 10-year anniversary of Berlin Wall's fall), 1999.

Canada (covering controversial Ontario pheasant hunt), 1997.

AWARDS &
HONORS

For education coverage:

Fred M. Hechinger Grand Prize for Distinguished Education Reporting, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2005. (*Finalist, 2006 and 2007.*)

The Hechinger honors the best of all first-place winners in all media and all categories of the national competition. Judges' comments: *"This is great and sophisticated journalism. They caught the cheaters, exposed them and got the system to change as a result of their stories. It's some of the best investigative work I've ever seen in this contest, and very worthy of [the Education Writers Association]'s highest annual honor."*

Best Beat Reporting, 1st place, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2005.

Judges' comments: *"Far and away, this entry is the best of the bunch in the beat reporting category. Joshua Benton gives us a powerful portrait of how AIDS is taking a toll in Zambian schools. We liked his hard-hitting pieces on the worst school district in Texas and his statistical analysis of state test scores, which uncovered widespread cheating."*

Best Investigative Reporting, 1st place, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2005.

Judges' comments: *"...exposed what many may have suspected by few wanted to acknowledge: cheating by teachers to boost test scores. Their exhaustive research and clear, compelling writing has forced state officials to confront a troubling trend...Throat-grabbing work!"*

Best Opinion Writing, 1st place, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2007.

Judges' comments: *"Bravo to The Dallas Morning News for giving the opportunity to Joshua Benton to voice his opinions about education issues. Should be must-reading for parents of school children."*

Best Opinion Writing, 1st place, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2006.

Best Beat Reporting, 3rd place, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2007.

Best Special Section, 1st place, National Awards for Education Reporting, 2003.

(Note: I have won six prizes in the N.A.E.R. since 2005. No other reporter has won more than two over that span.)

For international work:

Livingston Award for International Reporting, finalist, 2006.

Finalist for series on the growing impact of African Christianity on the global faith.

Livingston Award for International Reporting, finalist, 2005.

Finalist for story on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the school system of Zambia, where teachers have proved to be at higher risk of infection than the general population.

Livingston Award for International Reporting, finalist, 2000.

Finalist for story on the failing fortunes of Pitcairn Island, South Pacific home to the descendents of Fletcher Christian and the other mutineers on the HMS *Bounty*. Became the first American reporter permitted to visit Pitcairn in more than a decade.

Other awards:

Best Investigative Reporting, 1st place, Katie Awards, 2005.

Won for series on Texas schools cheating on standardized tests. Top journalism contest in the southwest (Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Colorado, New Mexico, Arkansas).

Best Explanatory Journalism, 1st place, Texas Headliner Awards, 2002.

Won for five-part examination of how Texas underestimates its dropout problem.

Story of the Year Award, Toledo Press Club, 2000.

Best Explanatory Journalism, 2nd place, Ohio Soc. of Professional Journalists, 2000.

Best Science Reporting, 1st place (team), Ohio Soc. of Professional Journalists, 1999.

Best Breaking News Reporting, 3rd place, Associated Press Soc. of Ohio, 1998.

Four-time nominee for the Pulitzer Prize, 2000 to present:

2005: Beat reporting, *The Dallas Morning News*, for education coverage.

2005: Investigative reporting, *The Dallas Morning News*, for series on teachers helping students cheat on state exams.

2004: Beat reporting, *The Dallas Morning News*, for education coverage.

2000: Feature writing, *The (Toledo) Blade*, for Pitcairn Island story.

Other professional recognition:

Publications: Wrote pieces for *IRE Journal*, *Education Reporter*, *Hechinger News*.

Conferences: Presented at multiple Education Writers Association national and regional conferences; South by Southwest Interactive conference; National State Teachers of the Year assemblies; Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media.

Education: Lectured at New York University and Southern Methodist University.

Judging: International Reporting Program fellowship selection, 2005; Association of Alternative Weeklies Awards, 2005.

Coursework: Selected from over 100 applicants for a 12-student senior honors writing seminar taught by William F. Buckley, Jr., 1996.

Grant: Received Mellon Research Grant from Yale to study newspaper coverage of the 1990 Louisiana Senate race, 1995.

OTHER SKILLS

Languages: Some Spanish, some French. Four weeks of Spanish language training in Morelia, Mexico, 2005.

Computer skills: Very comfortable with data analysis; some experience in SPSS, much in Excel and Access. Built first web site in 1993; first went online in 1989.

Other interests: History of the American South, online life and blogging, indie rock, computer programming, Cajun culture, the 1960s in the developing world, microcultures, travel.