

• Staff Editorial

Journalism program must be maintained

With the recent teacher change in the journalism department we reported on Feb. 12, we as a staff have some concerns for the future of journalism at Sterling High School.

While the teacher who is taking over the new program has yet to be set in stone, no teacher will have a passion for journalism like Todd Vogts does.

Anything in relation to journalism, Vogts is all over and ready to jump in and provide help.

Not to mention he is more than qualified to teach journalism — majoring in journalism and communication during completion of his undergraduate degree, earning two master's degrees in education and journalism respectively, teaching 10 years of journalism at the high school level, and preparing for his third year as a journalism professor at Sterling College.

The yearbook and newspaper are the only two things that Vogts advises here.

To further explain, that means that most, if not all, of his focus is on the overall well-being of our finished products. Having a teacher who is fully dedicated to a newspaper and yearbook is a privilege not all schools have, which leads to the fear that the reputation Vogts has worked so hard to build will be torn down.

Our publications are student led, something that Vogts strives to maintain in this program.

In the Kansas Student Publications Act of 1992, it is stated that, “the liberty of the press in student publications shall be protected.”

This gives student editors the freedom and responsibility to determine what goes into their publications.

This law, while useful to all aspects of journalism, can be found especially helpful to publications that have a monthly publication. For us on newspaper staff, Vogts does not determine what goes into our publication and what stays left out.

Instead, he offers support and helps us express what we desire to publish.

Another issue we want to address is that teachers will be stretched too thin with the budget cuts.

Some teachers already have a multitude of classes and run extracurricular activities.

With a small staff, more work is required from each individual.

To make sure that we are able to complete everything that needs to be done, many of us spend multiple hours after school working. Work nights have become a common event for the staff.

The fact is, most people are not aware of the amount of out of class involvement that is required with this class.

Teachers in charge of multiple activities that require time outside of school will simply not be able to make journalism the priority that it needs to be.

In addition to working outside of class, work is also done during the summer to finish the yearbook, train new additions and sell ads.

Teachers alone are busy planning for next year, but teachers who are coaches will also be planning for practices and games and even family vacations during the summer months.

For Vogts, journalism is what he's passionate about, so he is able to stay after school to work and is willing to put time in over the summer to help the journalism program be the best it can be.

Replacing the monthly publications next year, we've been told, will be a new class called “news journalism.”

For this class, no teacher has been chosen, but there have been a few teachers who have been taken into consideration.

With this class, the concerns we have are still the same.

Newspaper is more of a writing class, so if a staff member needs help on punctuation, AP style, or grammar, that is when it would be most helpful to have a teacher who understands journalism.

Even an English teacher would be more helpful in this instance than a teacher who knows a lot about graphic design.

Another change the school may implement is allowing students to be in journalism for only one year.

One year of journalism is not enough to be able to fully experience everything there is to know.

If students want to be in journalism, they should be allowed to be in it for however long they desire.

The whole point of high school is to allow students to find their career paths. This is why classes that focus on business, agriculture and the medical field are available.

In fact, not only is one class available for these career paths, but many of these careers have more than five options for students to choose from to enroll in. As of Feb. 26, only two classes are available for students to enroll in for journalism.

Giving students limited options engrains the idea into young minds that journalism is not a real career option.

As we're sure this is not the intention of the school, as they wish for all students to succeed, many students who wish to go into journalism will be stunted in their knowledge because of limits placed by the school.

With the success of our journalism program — four students winning journalist of the year in the past eight years, for example — we have proven that journalism is a viable career option.

— For the Editorial Board

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308 E. Washington, Sterling, KS 67579
Phone: 620-278-4122 • journalism@usd376.com

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EDITORS-IN-CHIEF
Riley Richter & Megan Roelfs

STAFF
Madison Lackey & Ashlyn Spangenberg

ADVISER
Todd Vogts

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