

Nomination Letter

The 2019-2020 school year has been particularly trying for the Sterling High School journalism staff. Upon the hiring of new principal Phil Bressler, the atmosphere within the school changed. This wasn't obvious at first, but it came into clear focus in December when Bressler made the decision to eliminate our journalism adviser's position, casting doubt over what the future of Sterling journalism would be. The Unified School District 376 Board of Education did not officially vote on the elimination until the February 2020 meeting.

Despite this, as a staff, the yearbook and newspaper students have persevered. We know we have to finish the year on a strong note. However, the shadow of the unknown has weighed heavily upon us.

We have faced a problematic, and at times hostile, administration. When principal Bressler first came in to meet the newspaper staff, he made comments suggesting journalism and print are dead. It reached its current climax when the program was essentially cut. After all, though we have been assured a journalism program will continue to exist, there has been no explanation or description of how it will continue. There doesn't seem to be a plan.

Based upon all of this, we covered the situation by reporting on the elimination of the journalism adviser's position and an English teacher's position. Both were part-time positions. This story appeared in the Feb. 12 issue of the Cub Reporter.

After this article was published, Bressler met with the journalism students to discuss the future. He did not reference the article we printed, but he did meet with us while our adviser was gone.

For our March 11 issue of the Cub Reporter, we have written a staff editorial addressing the fact we believe our journalism program should survive. With our publication being monthly, this is the earliest we felt we could directly address the issue. We do not know how it will be received, but we feel it is important to stand up for ourselves and exercise our First Amendment rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

Furthermore, the Kansas Student Publications Act supports what we are doing. Our current adviser understands all of this and fully supports student journalism. Without a qualified and knowledgeable journalism adviser, we can't be certain this will continue to be the case next year.

And that is the plan as it has been explained to us this far. There will not be a certified journalism adviser next year. Instead, the art or business teacher seems likely to take on the role of teaching the journalism classes.

Without a dedicated journalism adviser, we worry our rights will not be as fully supported or protected as they are now.

We don't know what the future holds, but we are determined to fight through this adversity and difficulty. We are determined to continue to do our work as student journalists and keep fighting to keep our journalism program alive.

We are showing courage in journalism.