

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA**

NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOL PRESS
ASSOCIATION, INC., a Nebraska nonprofit
corporation; and MARCUS PENNELL,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

NORTHWEST PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, a
Political Subdivision; JEFFREY EDWARDS, in
his individual capacity,

Defendants.

Case No. 4:23-cv-3043

COMPLAINT AND JURY DEMAND

(42 U.S.C. § 1983)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Defendants, a Nebraska school district and Superintendent, unconstitutionally terminated the student Newspaper Production class (“newspaper class”) and award-winning print newspaper, the *Viking Saga*, because students published articles related to LGBTQ⁺¹ topics. Defendants engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination and retaliation by terminating the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* because of the viewpoint of Plaintiff student’s speech in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Defendants’ decision to terminate the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* also violates Plaintiffs’ right to receive information under the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

¹ LGBTQ+ is an acronym used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations and is used throughout this Complaint. The acronym LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spirit.

2. This is an action to vindicate Plaintiffs' rights under federal law and the United States Constitution.

II. PARTIES, JURISDICTION, AND VENUE

3. Plaintiff Nebraska High School Press Association ("NHSPA") sues on behalf of itself and on behalf of its members. NHSPA is an incorporated, registered nonprofit corporation in Nebraska. NHSPA is a nonprofit membership-based organization that supports and promotes high school journalism. NHSPA members consist of school journalism teachers and student publication advisors from across Nebraska high schools who have paid an annual membership fee, persons who are professionally engaged in journalism and promote high school journalism in Nebraska, as well as former high school journalism teachers and junior high school teachers with school publications. The purpose of the NHSPA is to encourage close relationships among high school publications in the state of Nebraska; furnish an opportunity for the discussion of problems and procedures involved in scholastic journalism and sanctioned inter school competitions; establish standards of excellence for high school journalism; co-sponsor an annual fall convention for high school journalism students in Nebraska; sponsor a critique service and rating competition in conjunction with the fall convention; and support the Nebraska School Activities Association ("NSAA") State Journalism Championships. Some of the NHSPA's activities with member high school journalists and newspapers, include but are not limited to:

- a. NHSPA co-sponsors an annual fall convention with the University of Nebraska College of Journalism and Mass Communications for high school journalism students. In conjunction with the annual convention, NHSPA sponsors a critique service and rating competition where members can enter

their publications to receive critique and rating from hired judges and win awards for excellence in student journalism.

- b. The NHSPA recognizes individual students for excellence in journalism for the Student Journalist of the Year award. The winner and runners-up are awarded scholarships by the NHSPA and the winner competes at the Journalism Education Association competition.
- c. At the annual fall convention, NHSPA provides a communal space for members to bring their publications to be read, discussed, and reviewed by other members outside of the competition setting to discuss development, promotion, and success of their publications.
- d. NHSPA members convene at the NSAA Journalism Championships advisor meeting where members bring in their publications to be discussed and reviewed by other members and journalism advisors.
- e. The NHSPA works with the NSAA to facilitate and encourage participation in the NSAA Journalism Championships and NHSPA often provides guidance on how to operate and promote the competition.

4. Plaintiff Marcus Pennell (“Marcus”) is a resident of the City of Omaha, Nebraska. At the time of the acts giving rise to the underlying causes of action, Marcus was eighteen years old and a student at Grand Island Northwest High School (“GINW”) of the Northwest Public School District in Grand Island, Nebraska. During the school year 2021-2022, Marcus was a high school senior and student reporter of the *Viking Saga*.

5. Defendant Northwest Public School District (“District”) is a political subdivision located in Grand Island, Nebraska, organized and operating under the laws of the State of

Nebraska. The District, through its agents, employees, and representatives provides educational programs and activities to enrolled children residing within its geographical boundaries and to enrolled children who may reside outside of the geographical boundaries in accordance with its option enrollment policies. The statements of District school board members and other individuals discussed in this Complaint are taken from public records disclosed by the District to Plaintiffs' counsel under the Nebraska Public Records statutes, or from other official records of the District or GINW.

6. Defendant Jeffrey Edwards ("Edwards") is a resident of Nebraska and is employed by Defendant District as the Superintendent of the District. Edwards possesses final authority to establish policy with respect to the actions taken by the District as alleged herein. Specifically, the District Employee Handbook Policies Numbered 6000 and 6300 delegate authority from the District's Board of Education to the Superintendent, the "responsibility of maintaining the program of instruction and extracurricular activities" and "is responsible for the development of educational and activities programs which meet the objectives of Northwest Public Schools." The relevant portion of the policies are attached hereto, marked Exhibit 1 and 2, respectively, and incorporated herein by reference. Additionally, the Policies delegate to the Superintendent the authority "to establish procedures and regulations for the selection of instructional and media staff, to establish procedures and regulations for the selection of instructional and media materials, reviewing their effectiveness, and dealing with complaints concerning instructional materials." (Ex. 2). At all relevant times herein, Defendant Edwards acted under color of law. Defendant Edwards is sued in his individual capacity.

7. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, and 1343, because this action arises under the United States Constitution: specifically, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1988, U.S. CONST. amend I; and U.S. CONST. amend XIV.

8. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) because the events that give rise to this action occurred within this district.

9. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendants, who reside in or have substantial, continuing, and systematic contact with the state of Nebraska.

III. STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Newspaper Class and the *Viking Saga*

10. Since 1968, Northwest High School (GINW) student writers and contributors published written articles and artwork in the print format of the *Viking Saga* to gain skills in writing, editing, and researching journalistic articles, expressing opinion, and interviewing and engaging their peers and community members at large, and to share information with the *Viking Saga* audience.

11. During the 2021-2022 school year, the *Viking Saga* was regularly and successfully managed by its advisor and newspaper class teacher, Ms. Kirsten Gilliland, a high school teacher employed by the District, and student writers of the newspaper class at GINW.

12. In an average year, the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* had an average of ten GINW student staff members with an increase in enrollment interest among the GINW student body in recent school years.

13. In an average school year, the *Viking Saga* published eight issues. The *Grand Island Independent* newspaper facilitated the print publication, and a typical print run for each of

the *Viking Saga* issues ran to approximately 800 copies. It was also published online on a website separate from the GINW or District website.

14. The designated *Viking Saga* faculty advisor has been a member of the NHSPA since at least the year 2012. The *Viking Saga* is also a member of the National Scholastic Press Association.

15. Until on or about March 31, 2022, the Defendants did not exercise any control over the student work published in the *Viking Saga*.

16. The *Viking Saga* would occasionally publish student pieces and editorial cartoons from students not enrolled in the newspaper class and intentionally and indiscriminately welcomed and encouraged outside submissions, suggestions, or letters to the editor in the side column of the print and online newspaper to the GINW student body and community readers at large.

17. *Viking Saga* student staff began the newspaper publication process by brainstorming topics for articles individually and then collectively deciding which topics to move forward with. The *Viking Saga* staff member who initially brainstormed the topic would generally become the lead reporter on that topic's article. The reporter would then proceed to research and draft the article in the format chosen—that be an editorial, opinion, news article, among others. The article would then go through three rounds of edits by student staff and the faculty advisor. The edits provided were only recommendations and were optional for the reporter to accept unless the edits helped the article become journalistically sound, including but not limited to, using cited facts and correct spelling and punctuation.

18. The newspaper class was the only curricular offering that allowed Marcus and students enrolled at GINW to develop experience teaching, writing, researching, editing, and

publishing long-form journalistic articles, opinions, and editorial pieces as newspaper student staff.

19. The newspaper class is part of the educational curriculum at GINW and students enrolled in the class received corresponding class credit and a grade for completion of the class.

20. The newspaper class curriculum did not require approval or control by the Defendants and was primarily designed by the *Viking Saga* advisor and newspaper class teacher. The relevant portion of the newspaper class curriculum is attached hereto and marked Exhibit 3.

21. The newspaper class curriculum for the 2021-20222 school year included lessons on the different types of editorials students could write, including the most common being argument, criticism, commendation, and explanation. (Ex. 3). As defined in the curriculum, an argument editorial “takes sides on a controversial topic and offer arguments for why that opinion is best.” (Ex. 3). It continues “[t]hey often argue for a certain solution to a problem, though they may criticize other ideas in the process.” (Ex. 3). The curriculum additionally covered how “newspapers can effectively pair editorials and news coverage.” (Ex. 3).

22. The newspaper class curriculum did not provide any control or guidance over the content or publications of the *Viking Saga*.

23. Through art, cartoons, graphics, and text, the *Viking Saga* staff published content related to school events such as staffing changes, interviews with students, and school sports and activities. The *Viking Saga* student staff also published content addressing issues of public concern, including but not limited to politics, gender, race, ableism, drug use, and pop culture.

24. The primary source of funds for the publishing of the *Viking Saga* were fundraised by the student newspaper staff by selling paid advertising and conducting other fundraising activities. The Defendants provided minimal financial support for the *Viking Saga*.

25. The *Viking Saga* had a standing relationship and contract with the *Grand Island Independent*, to print the physical copies of each *Viking Saga* issue.

26. The *Viking Saga* published a print newspaper because print is an important medium providing unique opportunities for expression and interaction and debate with and among members of GINW student body and community not available through digital publication.

27. Shortly after printing, the *Viking Saga* is distributed by hand for free on the GINW campus in classrooms on students' desks and GINW and District offices. GINW students picked up and took print copies of the *Viking Saga* home.

28. Through in-person distribution by hand on GINW campus, *Viking Saga* student staff, including Marcus, had greater opportunities to reach its intended audience of GINW students than they did through online publication, which was not distributed specifically toward students, only made available online, so it could not be made certain that any GINW students could access it.

29. Together, the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* were regularly recognized as an award-winning journalism program. Most recently, GINW placed third overall in the Class B 2022 State Journalism Championship. GINW newspaper students qualified for the State Journalism Championship with articles previously published in the *Viking Saga*.

30. The *Viking Saga* student staff were eligible to compete in the NSAA State Journalism Championship in any of the following categories: advertising, editorial cartooning, editorial writing, entertainment review writing, newspaper feature writing, newspaper news writing, newspaper sports feature, sports news writing, in-depth newspaper coverage, newspaper layout, photo artistic illustration, and photography.

B. Defendants' Written Policies and Mission

31. The Defendants have not adopted any written policy provisions directly governing the operation or publishing of the *Viking Saga* in the District Employee or Student Handbooks.

32. There are no written policy provisions directly governing the content of the *Viking Saga* in the District's Employee or Student Handbooks.

33. The Defendants have not adopted any written policy provisions directly governing the content of the *Viking Saga*.

34. The District's Employee Handbook contains Policy numbered 6390 and 6391 on "Controversial Issues" which the Defendants cited as the reason for the termination or pause of the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga*. The relevant portion of the policies are attached hereto, marked Exhibits 4 and 5, respectively, and incorporated herein by reference. Defendant District Policy 6390 provides that students "should be afforded opportunities within the classroom to deal with such issues to the extent appropriate for their level of maturity and the educational mission of the District." (Ex. 4). Defendant District Policy 6391 provides that teachers "not teach controversial issues, but rather provide opportunities for their study." (Ex. 5).

35. The District has adopted a "Mission" which includes, in part, that the District "will meet the needs of diverse learners in a safe, supportive environment" and "will engage, challenge and respect" diverse learners. The District's Mission is attached hereto, marked Exhibit 6 and is incorporated herein by reference.

36. Neither the District Board Policies nor District Mission regulate the content of the *Viking Saga*.

C. Defendants' Directive Prohibiting *Viking Saga* Student Staff from Using Chosen Names and Pronouns

37. Throughout Marcus' time enrolled in the newspaper class and the management of the *Viking Saga*, Marcus and other student staff initially used their chosen names such as their shortened names, their middle names, their nicknames, or the names they identify with in the byline of the articles and front page of the newspaper. Students also went by their chosen pronouns in newspaper class.

38. On or about March 31, 2022, Marcus and students of the newspaper class were told by Defendants and GINW administrator, Principal Mr. Tim Krupicka, they could no longer publish their work in the *Viking Saga* under their chosen names in their bylines and must refer to students in the newspaper with pronouns listed in the GINW grading system of PowerSchool, despite past practice and otherwise having no issues.

39. During newspaper class on or about March 31, 2022, *Viking Saga* advisor Ms. Gilliland asked Mr. Krupicka to explain the Defendants' decision prohibiting the *Viking Saga* student staff from using their chosen names and pronouns as they had previously done without issue. While speaking to the newspaper class, Mr. Krupicka stated that the Defendants made the decision interpreting and pursuant to District "policy" on "controversial" topics. (See Ex. 4 and 5). When questioned by Marcus and other students about how the *Viking Saga* staff's use of their chosen name and pronouns was controversial, Mr. Krupicka indicated it was because research was being done on both sides of the issue. No further action was taken by Defendants to modify or implement any written policy for the District regarding the *Viking Saga*.

40. Up until Mr. Krupicka's announcement of the Defendants' decision prohibiting students from using their chosen names and pronouns, neither the District nor Defendant

Edwards had attempted to exercise any control over the content of the *Viking Saga*. The student staff were the sole decisionmakers of the *Viking Saga* content and publications.

41. Following the Defendants' directive prohibiting the use of students' chosen name in publication and pronouns in class, Marcus and the *Viking Saga* student staff were forced to comply with the directive and address themselves and publish their written pieces using only their full "legal" names and pronouns as determined by the District.

42. Following the Defendants' directive prohibiting the use of students' chosen name and pronouns, Defendants did not provide Marcus or the *Viking Saga* student staff any other guidance regarding content or design of the *Viking Saga* before its termination on or about May 19, 2022.

43. The nonexistence of direct written policies or curriculum governing the content of the *Viking Saga*, the District's Mission to "meet the needs of diverse learners in a safe, supportive environment", the Defendants' past practice of allowing any student to contribute to the *Viking Saga*, and its' delegation of control of the content to the *Viking Saga* student staff with minor guidance from the faculty advisor, indicates the Defendants established a designated public forum designed to support student speech without regard to viewpoint.

D. Violation of Plaintiffs' First Amendment Rights

a. The *Viking Saga* June 2022 Edition

44. During the 2021-2022 school year and his senior year at GINW, Marcus was a reporter for the *Viking Saga*.

45. On or about April of 2022, Marcus decided to write an editorial for the *Viking Saga* on the Florida Parental Rights in Education Act, commonly known as the "Don't Say Gay" law, which was signed into law on March 28, 2022 and a topic of national interest.

46. As custom and past practice of the *Viking Saga* while Marcus was on staff, Marcus pitched the idea of the article to his fellow peers in the newspaper class, who approved the article.

47. Marcus proceeded to carefully research the final article of his high school career. Marcus spent several hours during subsequent class periods and after school researching the content and impact of the recently enacted legislation, including researching statistics of the psychological impact of the law.

48. Marcus' article was published in the June 2022 edition of the *Viking Saga* on May 16, 2022. A copy of the June 2022 edition of the *Saga* is attached hereto, marked Exhibit 7 and incorporated herein by reference. Like all other *Viking Saga* articles, Marcus' article went through three rounds of edits by student staff and the faculty advisor. Marcus' faculty advisor reviewed the article at every round. Marcus' article was thoroughly researched, well-written, and accurately reflected the content he researched. The article could not reasonably have been attributed to the District or interpreted to reflect the District's views.

49. On May 16, 2022, Marcus and the *Viking Saga* student staff published the June 2022 edition of the *Viking Saga*. The edition included fourteen articles written by GINW students. The topics of the articles included coverage of the school sports teams, an interview with a teacher, and new course offerings. (Ex. 7). The June 2022 edition also featured Marcus' piece on the Florida "Don't Say Gay" law, a student piece on gender identity, and a student article on the history of LGBTQ+ rights. (Ex. 7).

50. Three days after the June 2022 edition was published, on or about May 19, 2022, Defendants announced that publication of the *Viking Saga* would be terminated and no alternative newspaper class would be offered.

51. The decision to terminate the newspaper class and student newspaper was in direct reaction to the LGBTQ+ content of the June 2022 *Viking Saga* edition. By eliminating the *Viking Saga* and the newspaper class, Defendants violated Plaintiffs' First Amendments rights.

b. Defendants' Reaction to the *Viking Saga* June 2022 Edition

52. When Defendants became aware of the contents of the June 2022 edition of the *Viking Saga*, they reacted with hostility toward Marcus' piece and the other LGBTQ+ related articles, and as a result, immediately contemplated eliminating the school newspaper.

53. On May 17, 2022 at 10:09 a.m., District Board member, Paul Mader, e-mailed photos of the LGBTQ+ related articles of the *Viking Saga* June 2022 edition to District Board President Dan Leiser, District Board Vice President Zach Mader, and District Board members Robin Schutt, Artie Moeller, and Aaron Buhrman, stating, "Has anyone read our school paper this month?" A copy of the e-mail is attached hereto, marked Exhibit 8 and incorporated herein by reference.

54. That same day at 12:00 p.m., District Board President Dan Leiser e-mailed Defendant Edwards, GINW Vice Principal Paul Smith, and High School Activities Director Matt Fritsche, writing, "I'm sure this is a revenge tactic from the pronoun thing a month or so ago. But I'm going back and forth in the field and I just keep getting more and more upset." (Ex. 8). "I'm hot on this one, because it's not ok. The national media does the same crap and I've had enough of it. No more school paper, in my opinion. You give someone an inch, they take a mile." (Ex. 8).

55. The Defendants covertly decided to terminate the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* between the dates of May 17, 2022 and May 19, 2022.

56. On or about May 19, 2022, three days after the *Viking Saga* June 2022 edition went to print, Defendants issued a directive and notified GINW journalism advisor of the elimination of the newspaper class and the student newspaper, the *Viking Saga*. According to the *Grand Island Independent*, the District and Defendant Edwards had expressed to the faculty advisor that they “were unhappy with the last issue’s editorial content.” Jessica Votipka, ‘Nurseries of democracy’: Northwest student journalism elimination a ‘Saga’, GRAND ISLAND INDEP. (Aug. 24, 2022), https://theindependent.com/news/local/nurseries-of-democracy-northwest-student-journalism-elimination-a-saga/article_88ceba8a-1758-11ed-a179-c36008eeaed3.html. The newspaper article is attached hereto and marked Ex. 9.

57. Further comments made by Board members of the District to the *Grand Island Independent* establish that the reason for eliminating the student newspaper and newspaper class was due to and motivated by the discomfort with the three articles related to LGBTQ+ related issues in the June 2022 edition of the *Viking Saga*.

58. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and on that basis allege, that during discussions of terminating the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga*, and during the aftermath, Defendants expressed to various District staff members that the newspaper class and the *Saga* were being terminated because of the articles published in the *Viking Saga* related to LGBTQ+ issues.

59. On May 22, 2022, the school’s contract with the *Grand Island Independent* regarding printing of the *Viking Saga* was cancelled. (Ex. 9).

60. On August 24, 2022, the *Grand Island Independent*, published an article titled *Nurseries of Democracy: Northwest student journalism elimination a “Saga.”* In the article,

Zach Mader and Dan Leiser, the District Board Vice President and President, respectively, made clear their dislike of the content of the *Viking Saga*'s June 2022 edition. (Ex. 9).

61. In the same *Grand Island Independent* article, Board Vice President Zach Mader told the *Grand Island Independent*, "The very last issue that came out this year, there was...a little bit of hostility amongst some. There were editorials that were essentially, I guess what I would say, LGBTQ." (Ex. 9).

62. Defendant Edwards sent a letter to District parents or guardians dated August 31, 2022, stating that "the newspaper course is currently not included in [the District's] curriculum offerings [the 2022-2023 school year]" and that "course offering will be considered moving forward, the course may be added based on student requests." A part of the letter is attached hereto, marked Exhibit 10, and is incorporated herein by reference.

63. The letter from Edwards did not identify any alternative course offerings to the discontinued newspaper class. (Ex. 10). Defendants further rejected any alternate proposals to continue journalism courses.

64. As a result, Plaintiffs NHSPA and Marcus have no opportunity to gain experience, teach, mentor, participate as an interviewee, or learn writing, researching, or editing of journalistic articles and editorials. Members of Plaintiff NHSPA would no longer have an opportunity to promote, read, or discuss the *Viking Saga* and its content at the NHSPA convention or have the *Viking Saga* enter the NSAA Journalism Championship in the newspaper category, or at most with only a very limited selection of articles as opposed to prior years, decreasing their likelihood of winning awards.

65. The letter further describes the decision to “temporarily paus[e]” the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* was based on “many variables..., including staffing support, student interest, class scheduling, and so forth.” (Ex. 10).

66. While the letter attempts to mask the intent behind the Defendants’ decision to terminate the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga*, it is clear from the District’s own statements, the Defendants’ decision was based on the *Viking Saga*’s June 2022 edition and on the LGBTQ+ related content, including Marcus’ student piece on the Florida “Don’t Say Gay” law.

67. Prior to the Defendants’ issuance of the August 31, 2022 letter to parents or guardians, Plaintiffs were unaware the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* were “temporarily paus[ed].”

68. On November 11, 2022 the *Grand Island Independent* reported that the *Viking Saga* will return as a course offering the following semester in a digital format. However, Kirsten Gilliland, the advisor to the Saga, reported to the *Grand Island Independent* that she would not be returning to her position, as the advisor position “ha[d] been offered to another teacher.” Jessica Votipka, *Grand Island student newspaper returning digitally following controversial cancellation*, GRAND ISLAND INDEP. (Nov. 11, 2022), https://theindependent.com/news/grand-island-student-newspaper-returning-digitally-following-controversial-cancellation/article_32a537a0-6231-11ed-b1ac-d7c70ad46ffc.html. The newspaper article is attached hereto and marked Ex. 11.

c. Harm Caused to Marcus Pennell

69. The Defendants’ decision to terminate the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* served no purpose other than to punish and make Plaintiff Marcus feel ashamed or regretful of his speech regarding LGBTQ+ issues.

70. Plaintiff Marcus suffers from an enduring fear and trauma from speaking publicly about his identity or on LGBTQ+ topics through written mediums because of the retaliatory and harmful action of Defendants toward Marcus' speech in the *Viking Saga*.

71. Before graduating, Plaintiff Marcus had frequent contact and close relationships with former *Viking Saga* staff and planned to continue contact with them after graduation. Plaintiff Marcus was excited to provide guidance and mentorship for future *Viking Saga* staff and willing to serve as an interviewee for future articles. Further, Marcus intended on picking up his former student newspaper as an alumnus and receive and share the information with his peers and community

72. Since these events, Marcus no longer feels welcome in his alma mater of GINW or the community of Grand Island, Nebraska despite having attended GINW for four years. Marcus now rarely wants to visit his high school or hometown and if he does, will not go out publicly by himself.

73. Since these events, Marcus is hesitant and chilled from continuing contact with *Viking Saga* staff or its new faculty advisor, provide guidance or mentorship to the new student staff, or participate as an interviewee for future *Viking Saga* articles. Marcus no longer intends to visit his high school and pick up the newspaper to read for fear he is no longer welcome and unable to voice his opinions.

74. Plaintiff Marcus experiences excessive anxiety and emotional distress while in college for fear he will not be welcome as his whole self after the events that gave rise to this cause of action.

75. Defendants' actions caused injury and emotional distress to Marcus and was a violation of his personal dignity.

d. Harm Caused to NHSPA

76. By eliminating the *Viking Saga* and newspaper class, members of Plaintiff NHSPA could no longer promote or read the *Saga*, share its content, give or receive feedback on the publication, enter the publication into NHSPA competitions for critique and rating, or participate in the NSAA Journalism Championship in the newspaper category.

77. Defendants infringed on Plaintiff NHSPA's First Amendment right to engage in speech to educate, promote, and build a community of young, rising, and established journalists and to review and discuss student publications in accordance with its mission to promote excellence in high school journalism.

78. The Defendants' decision to terminate the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* prevented Plaintiff NHSPA from reaching GINW newspaper staff students interested in studying journalism or attending their conferences, competitions or discussions.

79. The Defendants' decision prevented Plaintiff NHSPA members from teaching GINW High School newspaper students journalism skills that are not otherwise taught in any other GINW class such as learning how to research political issues, write about pop culture topics, expressing opinion, interviewing stakeholders, and interacting with the public, among other skills because those skills are unique to journalistic skills in the newspaper context.

80. Defendants' hostile decision to eliminate the *Viking Saga* has caused some NHSPA members to be fearful of any similar backlash toward their own publications and restricted and chilled their ability to teach and promote journalistic values, opinion, and skills in their schools. Plaintiff NHSPA members have additionally become fearful of reassignment from teaching or advising in the school newspaper should a school district's administration not favor or support content published in the school newspaper.

IV. CLAIMS

FIRST CLAIM- 42 U.S.C. § 1983

First Amendment: Freedom of Speech— Viewpoint Discrimination in a Designated Public Forum (Plaintiff Marcus Pennell against all Defendants)

81. Plaintiffs incorporate each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs by reference.

82. Defendants established the *Viking Saga* as a designated public forum designed to support student speech without regard to viewpoint.

83. Defendants eliminated the *Viking Saga* because they disagreed with viewpoints expressed in the June 2022 edition by Plaintiff Marcus.

84. Defendants violated Plaintiffs' First Amendment rights by categorically terminating the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* and expelling them from a forum designated to support the speech of students based on anti-LGBTQ+ ideology and opinion against the viewpoint of speech published by Plaintiff Marcus.

85. By terminating the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga*, Defendants violated Plaintiff Marcus' right to speech secured by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution causing Plaintiff Marcus harm.

SECOND CLAIM- 42 U.S.C. § 1983

First Amendment: Freedom of Speech—Retaliation (Plaintiff Marcus Pennell against all Defendants)

86. Plaintiffs incorporate each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs by reference.

87. Plaintiff Marcus exercised his First Amendment right and engaged in protected First Amendment activity by writing, publishing, and distributing the *Viking Saga* as a print and online newspaper.

88. A substantial motivating factor for the adverse action of terminating or pausing the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* was an intent to chill or impair Plaintiff Marcus' speech.

89. Defendants terminated or paused the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* in response to the articles related to LGBTQ+ issues in its June 2022 edition, including Plaintiff Marcus' article.

90. The Defendants' termination or pause of the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* was substantially motivated by retaliation against Plaintiff Marcus because of their speech.

91. Defendants violated the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment by retaliating against Plaintiff Marcus in terminating or pausing the *Viking Saga* because of their speech causing Marcus harm.

THIRD CLAIM- 42 U.S.C. § 1983

**First Amendment: Freedom of Speech—Right to Receive Information
(All Plaintiffs against all Defendants)**

92. Plaintiffs incorporate each and every allegation in the preceding paragraphs by reference.

93. The First Amendment protects the right to receive information and ideas as well as the right to disseminate ideas. *Stanley v. Georgia*, 394 U.S. 557, 564 (1969).

94. The right to receive information is an inherent corollary to the right to free speech and it is a necessary predicate to the recipient's meaningful exercise of their own rights of speech, press, and freedom. *Bd. of Educ. Island Trees Union Free Sch. Dist. No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 867 (1982).

95. The speech published in the *Viking Saga* was constitutionally protected speech and Plaintiffs Marcus and NHSPA have a First Amendment right to receive the information and ideas of the publication.

96. Terminating the publication of the *Viking Saga* violated Plaintiff Marcus' right to receive the information of the *Viking Saga* and chilled his ability to continue reading the content of his former peers, mentor other young journalists of his alma mater, and engage with the ideas published in the student newspaper.

97. To further its mission and carry out its organizational goals, the NHSPA requires access to high school publications and their content through its members.

98. Terminating the publication of the *Viking Saga* violated Plaintiff NHSPA's right to receive information by infringing on NHSPA's organizational mission to grow and retain its members of high school newspaper teachers and advisors and promote excellence in high school journalism.

99. Terminating the *Viking Saga* foreclosed NHSPA from having a member who teachers and advises the GINW newspaper class, reaching GINW students in newspaper class who are interested in continuing to develop their skills and knowledge in newspaper writing and publication and reaching potential new students through its members who may be interested in high school newspaper for the first time at GINW.

100. Prior to the termination of the *Viking Saga*, members of the NHSPA could discuss, critique, and evaluate the *Viking Saga* through convenings and competitions as part of its organizational practice and mission to promote excellence in high school journalism and encourage close relationships among high school publications.

101. With the termination of the *Viking Saga*, members of the NHSPA could no longer read, discuss, critique, or evaluate the *Viking Saga* despite the interest of its members and the interest of the organization to continue supporting the *Viking Saga* and its faculty advisor.

102. Defendants did not have a substantial governmental interest in interfering with Plaintiffs' right to receive information. *Pratt v. Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 831, Forest Lake, Minn.*, 670 F.2d 771, 779 (8th Cir. 1982).

103. School officials cannot remove materials if the decisive factor for the removal was to deny students access to ideas. *Bd of Educ. Island Tress Union Free Sch. Dist. No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982).

104. The Defendants' decision to terminate or pause the newspaper class and the *Viking Saga* was substantially motivated by discrimination, anti-LGBTQ+ ideology and opinion against the viewpoint of the speech published by Plaintiffs.

105. Defendants' unlawful conduct violates Plaintiffs' First Amendment rights to speech because it impairs their ability to receive information.

V. RELIEF REQUESTED

106. Based on the foregoing, Plaintiffs pray for judgment against the Defendants as follows:

- a. General and specific damages as allowed by law;
- b. For attorney's fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988;
- c. For the costs of this action; and
- d. For such other relief as the Court deems equitable, just and proper.

VI. DEMAND FOR A JURY TRIAL

107. Pursuant to Rule 38(b) FED. R. CIV. P., Plaintiffs demand trial by jury of all the issues triable.

Dated this 31st day of March, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOL PRESS
ASSOCIATION, INC., a Nebraska
nonprofit corporation; and MARCUS
PENNELL, Plaintiffs.

By: s/ Rose Godinez
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Instruction

General Policy Statement

The Board of Education delegates to the Superintendent the responsibility of maintaining the program of instruction and extracurricular activities.

The instructional program and extracurricular activities shall meet the accredited school system standard of the State Board of Education through the Nebraska Department of Education, Federal regulations, Nebraska School Activities Association regulations and the policies of the Board of Education.

The professional staff is responsible for the development of educational and activities programs which meet the objectives of Northwest Public Schools.

Date of Adoption: August 27, 2007

InstructionSelection and Review of Instructional and Media MaterialsA) Assignment of Responsibility

The Board of Education reserves responsibility for the final acquisition of materials, but the responsibility for the selection of instructional materials is delegated to the Superintendent, with the assistance of the instructional and media staff, to establish procedures and regulations for the selection of instructional and media materials, reviewing their effectiveness, and dealing with complaints concerning instructional materials. The Superintendent may establish committees consisting of teachers and media staff to assist with these responsibilities.

B) Criteria for Instructional Materials

The selection of instructional materials shall be made in accordance with Board of Education policies, legal requirements, and reflect the following philosophy:

1. To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, practical skills, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
2. To provide a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily life.
3. To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interest, abilities, and maturity levels of the students served.
4. To provide materials on opposing sides on controversial issues so that young citizens may develop under guidance the practice of critical thinking and analysis.
5. To provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.
6. To place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudices in the selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the instructional materials.

C) Criteria for Media Materials

The selection of media materials shall be made in accordance with Board of Education policies, legal requirements, and with the Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association, which Bill of Rights has been accepted by the American Association of School Librarians reflect the following philosophy:

To provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials selected in compliance with basic, written selection principles, and to provide maximum accessibility to these materials.

To provide materials that will support the curriculum, taking into consideration the individual's needs, and the varied interest, ability, socio-economic backgrounds, and maturity levels of the students served.

To provide materials for teachers and students that will encourage growth in knowledge, and that will develop literary, cultural and aesthetic appreciation, and ethical standards.

To provide materials which reflect the ideas and beliefs of religious, social, political, historical, and ethnic groups and their contribution to the American World Heritage and Culture, thereby enabling students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgments.

To provide a written statement, approved by the local Boards of Education of the procedures for meeting the challenge of censorship of materials in school library media centers.

To provide qualified professional personnel to serve teachers and students.

D) Procedures for Reconsideration of Materials

Occasional objections to some materials may be voiced despite the care taken in selection and qualification of the personnel selecting materials. The following procedures apply equally to all complaints whether they be from students, parents, school personnel or district patrons.


1. Complaints should be presented to the Principal of the school where the material is used. In the event the person with the concern does not wish to make a formal complaint, the concern may be expressed to the Principal at the school at which the material was received. The Principal shall submit informal concerns to the Superintendent for the Superintendent's consideration.
2. Formal complaints about instructional materials must be presented in writing on a form approved by the board of education. In the absence of such a form, the complainant shall be required to submit a written complaint setting forth: complainant's identity, material challenged, detailed statement of reason(s) for challenging the material, action the complainant is requesting, and such other information as the Principal may reasonably request.
3. When a formal written complaint is completed and returned to the principal, the principal will discuss the issue and the procedures to be followed in resolving the issues with the person filing the complaint. The principal with whom the complaint was filed shall notify the other school administrators and also advise those faculty members who may use the instructional material, or the media staff in the case of media material, that a complaint has been filed. The school administrators shall

decide whether to appoint a building-level review committee or a district-level review committee to study the complaint. The principals will convene building-level review committees. These building-level committees shall consist of five or more committee members composed of staff and community patrons. The superintendent of schools or his designee will convene district-level review committees. These district-level committees shall consist of five or more members composed of staff and community patrons.

4. The review committees shall consider district philosophy, the professional judgment of teachers, reviews of the material by other competent authorities, compatibility with the school district's adopted curriculum, the teacher's stated goals, as well as the views of the complainant. The review committee's recommendation and all accompanying rationale shall be forwarded to the board of education for its review and final decision. The school board's decision may be to remove the material in question from district use, to modify the material for continued uses, or to reject the complaint and continue to use the material.
5. Any materials identified in a complaint may remain in use pending its review and its disposition by the board of education. Principals may, upon written request of parent(s), excuse students from using the material, or may direct teachers to use suitable substitutes, and in the case of challenged media material the Principal may place the material on a reserve shelf where it may be checked out by students only with written parent permission. However, the school shall reserve the right to require students to use material or to engage in activities which are a part of regular and/or required curricular activities.
6. Where the same or essentially the same materials have been the subject of a challenge which has been decided by the board, and another complaint is made against the material by either the same or a different person, the complaint shall be considered by the Superintendent, who may deny the complaint without following the review procedure. In considering the complaint, the Superintendent shall consider whether the complaint raises any substantially different issue than that previously decided by the board.

Date of Adoption: August 27, 2007

Writing Opinion Pieces

 **Jee**

Types of Editorials

Opinion Writing

Four types of editorials

Most editorials fall under one of these types:

- argument
- criticism
- commendation
- explanation

Argument

These editorials take sides on a controversial topic and offer arguments for why that opinion is best.

Editorials of argument do not have to be negative. They often argue for a certain solution to a problem, though they may criticize other ideas in the process.

Criticism

An editorial of criticism shines light on a problem in the community (or the world.)

While an editorial of argument tends to focus on issues that already are controversial, an editorial of criticism focuses more on problems people may not know about or issues people may not see as problems, attempting to convince readers a problem exists.

Commendation

To commend means to praise, and an editorial of commendation praises something good going on in the community.

Like editorials of criticism, these editorials seek to shine light on a subject people may not think about or be aware of, but in this case, the attention goes to good that is happening.

Explanation

An editorial of explanation may take a stand, but the goal is to explain an in-depth issue rather than argue a point.

These editorials can be especially useful when complicated issues exist in the community as a way for the newspaper to explain or clarify to the audience.

Editorial: Support needed for students' rights

Directions: Read the following editorial (published in *The Omega*, a student newspaper in Downers Grove, IL). Textmark for the following: **problem**, **plan** and **addressing counter argument**. After you're done, discuss the editorial with your group members and answer the following questions.

March 24, 2016

Just as an entrepreneurship class teaches students the ins and outs of the business world and an art class equips artists with techniques that will help them create a career out of their talent, a high school journalism program educates students by teaching them the skills that are practiced by professionals. The fundamental principles of journalism aren't just meant to be taught, they're meant to be practiced, and practiced without the fear of interference from outside bodies.

This being said, *The Omega* will never be able to properly inform the school community, give a voice to students, or practice sound journalism with the increasing burden of prior review and censorship that has occurred in recent months.

The Supreme Court case that limits the rights of student press, *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, is confusing to say the least. The language of the decision leaves a lot of things open to interpretation and has been the heart of *The Omega's* recent problems. This confusion over what rights administrators have is what has most likely led to the dramatic increase of journalistic restraint from administrators across the nation.

Recently proposed Illinois House bill 5902, also known as the Speech Rights of Student Journalists Act, would improve this situation. Not only does this bill protect students' rights to exercise freedom of speech and press, it also secures for students the right to determine what is the content of the publication.

All that we have to say about this bill is this: it's about time.

Even under the *Hazelwood* standard, some administrators show more regard for students' expression rights than others. Just because administrators have the right to invoke prior review, doesn't mean they necessarily should.

Excessive administrative involvement in the editorial process creates both an adversarial relationship between the student press and administration and self-censorship by the student journalists. Our coverage of school policies and events this year, such as the proposed Master Facility Plan, the different aspects of Red Ribbon Week and more recently the gender-neutral spaces, has received an unprecedented amount of prior review and censorship.

Between the fall of 1999 and spring of 2011, The Omega received a total of three requests for prior review from administration. Last year, six articles were subject to prior review. So far this year, eight articles have been reviewed by administration before being published.

When administrators make changes to school policy articles before they are published, it is a conflict of interest. In the majority of cases, it is against professional journalistic ethics to allow a person or group to preview an article about themselves before it is published. If we aren't going to allow a sports team or any other person to make changes on an article about themselves, administrators should expect the same.

We have a responsibility to readers to practice sound journalism by writing truthfully about topics that are important to our audience: the student body.

Earlier this month, one of our editors-in-chief emailed a two-question survey asking about the student body's views regarding proposed gender-neutral spaces. Finding two minor errors in the survey (slightly misleading wording of one of the questions and a problem with how the survey was set up that allowed users to send multiple responses and skew results), the editor planned on re-sending an updated version but was told by administrators to refrain from doing so because of a pending investigation into whether or not the survey violated board policy 7.15.

Due to the fact that we did not receive an explanation for the restraint or a final decision on the investigation until more than a week later, (requiring us to push our publication back more than a week as well) the Omega considered this an act of unlawful censorship. According to administration, the survey was not considered appropriate for all students. However, the two questions on the survey only included information that was given to The Omega by the administration.

In December, during the review of an article regarding the proposed Master Facility Plan renovations, administrators requested for the reporter to change quotes said by a faculty member to ones that diluted the meaning of the original. The Omega contacted outside counsel and fought to publish the original quotes.

The best way for administration to confront problems they might have with a school publication's content is through letters to the editor and asking for corrections to be published in a later issue. This allows students to still report freely without administrative involvement but still gives the school the ability to voice any legitimate concerns they may have.

Despite all our criticism of administrative involvement, we get where they are coming from. There is an understandable anxiety that comes with the possibility of a student newspaper embarrassing a school or

administrator, but ultimately, there has got to be a little faith that student journalists will follow their own high ethical standards.

Having a relationship with administration where there is a constant fear of unnecessary involvement leads student journalists to self-censor themselves, unconsciously taking away some of their own freedom of speech because of the fear of administrative backlash. But if the student press doesn't say it, who else will?

According to a survey conducted by the Brookings Institute, a mere 1.4 percent of news media coverage is devoted to education. If student journalists do not cover decisions and policy changes throughout the district, these important topics risk going unreported, also risking the possibility that the sole information about said topics is uneducated online gossip.

There is a need in every school for a well-educated student press to set the record straight and be able to do legitimate reporting, have a reasoned opinion, and promote a more informed community. We have a crucial role in the marketplace of ideas and censoring does nobody any favors.

In light of this, the Omega has decided that it is our obligation as journalists to inform our readers when these acts of prior review occur. As of this issue, all articles that have gone through the prior review process will be printed with an editor's note, noting this fact.

The Speech Rights of Student Journalists Act isn't just something that we want, it is something that we need. In order for our rights to be secured and to do the best reporting possible, censorship cannot be a thing. As high school students negatively affected by acts of prior review and censorship, we know that our rights have been compromised.

We need them back.

Names:

News story	Main idea	Reasons for commenting on it in editorial	Stance to take	Cover? (yes/no)

News story	Main idea	Reasons for commenting on it in editorial	Stance to take	Cover? (yes/no)

JEA Curriculum Initiative



MARCH 5, 2014 by CADMIN

EDITORIALS AND NEWS

Description

This is a lesson on how editorials are often connected to news stories. Students will look at both news stories and editorials on the same topic in the same newspaper and discuss why there is a need to have both, and how the two complement each other. On the second day, students will examine newspapers to find stories they want the paper to address in an editorial, discuss stances and assign editorials to group members.

Objectives

- Students will be able to explain the different roles of news and opinion writing.
- Students will understand how editorials and news can complement each other.
- Students will form leadership teams to assign editorials.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a

Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1b

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

Length

50 minutes

Resources

Examples of news stories with editorials that go with them (there are pairs of editorials and news stories in Resources, or use recent examples in print papers

or online)

Editorials in the news (copies for the class)

Handout: Editorial brainstorming

Recent copies of school and local newspaper (or access to newspapers online)

Lesson step-by-step

Day 1

1. Building background – 10 minutes

Explain to students that editorials are most effective when they connect to topics the paper covers in its news section because readers can read an objective story that researches all points of view (or many) on that issue and is focused on just giving the facts. When connected to a news story, the newspaper staff can write an opinion story later that shows what staff members really think.

This balance helps everyone. The reporter covering a sports team isn't allowed to say "Congratulations on the state title!" at the end of a story; reporters must remain unbiased, but the opinion section can cheer the achievements of the school (as well as criticize its problems). The paper can be unbiased in its reporting but still take a leadership position on topics that matter to the audience.

Basing editorials on stories the newspaper is covering also allows the publication to take a leadership role on something that really matters. Plucking topics from the headlines of other media can make for editorials without teeth. For example, child marriage is a problem in many countries, but few high school papers in the United States cover it because it isn't a problem in their communities. An editorial on a topic like that takes a stand, but an audience of American teens

can't do very much to change things. (On the other hand, if a school group is working to raise money to help the problem, covering that in the news section, then writing an editorial commending them and encouraging students to donate makes sense.) When editors use their news section to get ideas for editorials, they focus their efforts on areas where they can truly make a difference.

Explain that today the class will examine how newspapers can effectively pair editorials and news coverage, and tomorrow students will form their own editorial leadership teams to look at what the newspaper is covering and assign their own editorials.

2. Reading editorials and news stories — 30 minutes

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Distribute copies of a news story to each group (later to be paired with its editorial), as well as the editorials and news worksheet. Assign each group to read the news story and complete the chart. Then provide copies of the editorials that go with the news stories for students to read, completing the rest of the worksheet afterward.

3. Discuss — 10 minutes

As groups finish, ask them to share their thoughts on having editorials connected to news stories. Which story would they prefer to read first? Do readers need to read the news story to understand the editorial? Did the news story stay unbiased? Did the editorial connect well with the news story?

Day 2

1. Review from yesterday — 10 minutes

Review why editorials are strongest when connected to stories the newspaper is already covering. Ask students to share what they learned yesterday. Briefly

review the different types of editorials. Remind students that editorials don't always have to argue a point or point out flaws (though that can be important); they also can explain topics more in depth or praise good things that are going on in school.

2. Looking for editorials ideas — 20 minutes

Have students get back into their groups from yesterday, and distribute out copies of newspapers to each group (if necessary, include two issues, a local paper, or even newspapers from other schools so students have a fair number of topics to choose from. The groups do not need to have the same publications.)

Distribute the editorial brainstorming handout. Assign students to look through the newspaper to find news stories (and maybe feature or sports stories) they can comment on.) Encourage them to check out the big stories first, front page, double-page spread, any multiple page stories or full-page stories. If a newspaper staff has nothing to say about its top stories, it may want to reconsider why those stories are top stories. Have the groups read these stories and record the main idea on the worksheet.

Next, invite students to look for other stories they want to comment on — these may be smaller stories, but editorials can also bring attention to a topic that doesn't get enough notice. Have them add this to their Editorial Brainstorming sheet. (If groups have more than six stories, they can add their own paper you can give them additional worksheets. If they have fewer than six stories, they need to keep going back until they get six.)

3. Deciding on a stance — 15 minutes

Assign each group to look over the topics and discuss each one as a group to decide what stance they would take if they were the editors of the student newspaper. Remind students that their stances do not have to be one extreme or

the other — they can acknowledge something is working but would work better with improvements, or that reports of bullying have gone down, but the school still needs to keep working on that issue. Also remind them these are issues the newspaper should be able to take a leadership position on — what specific group are they addressing, and what do they want those people to do? If the group cannot decide on a stance to take, have them discuss their views and see if there is a compromise stance they can take (and if that still doesn't work, have them vote.) Each group should have stances worked out for six topics.

4. Assigning editorials — 5 minutes

Have the groups decide which topics are most important to cover and assign one topic and stance to each group member. Consider which group members are most passionate about the group's stance on that topic, or who in the group has a writing style best suited to the topic.

Groups should turn in their list of the stances they are taking and who is writing which editorials.

◆ TAGS 45-60 minutes CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1b CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a direct instruction
some computer access

Name:
Editorial Rubric

	5	4	3	2	1
Main opinion	The editorial gives an opinion on a topic relevant to the newspaper's audience. It suggests a course of action or points out something that those reading can take some action on.	The editorial gives an opinion on a topic relevant to the audience, but it doesn't suggest a course of action or make a suggestion to the readers.	The editorial has an introduction, body and conclusion, but one of those parts is incomplete.	The editorial is missing an introduction, body or conclusion.	The editorial is not an opinion, or the topic is not something people reading the paper have any control over.
Organization	The editorial has an introduction that sets up the main opinion and reasons, body that give more in depth explanation of the reasons and a conclusion that restates the opinion and makes a suggestion for what needs to happen next.	The editorial includes facts to support most reasons, but not all.	The editorial has a few places where the tone is uneven or it uses "I" or "you" up to three times.	The editorial uses "I" or "you" more than three times or has an informal tone throughout.	The editorial has significant errors, affecting readability.
Facts/Evidence	The editorial has facts to support all aspects of the main opinion, either from the news story or from outside sources.	The editorial has enough errors to distract the reader and reduce the writer's credibility.			
Voice	The editorial uses "we" when needed to represent the newspaper, but avoids "I" and "you." It has a formal tone and avoids informal terms or unprofessional language.				
Mechanics	The editorial is free of errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.				

JEA Curriculum Initiative



MARCH 5, 2014 by CADMIN

ORGANIZING AN EDITORIAL

Description

In this lesson on editorial structure and how to order its parts, students will look at examples of editorials and examine how they are organized. Then they will use graphic organizers to plan their own editorials.

Objectives

- Students will break down examples of editorials into parts.
- Students will learn about the parts of an editorial.
- Students will organize their own editorials.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA.RI.11-12.5

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the struc-

CCSS.ELA.W.11-12.1	ture makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
CCSS.ELA.W.11-12.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Length

50 minutes

Materials

Copies of editorials

Handout: Idea diagram

Lesson step-by-step

1. Building background – 10 minutes

Distribute one type of idea diagram (Suggestion: Start with idea diagram 3 but keep in mind that students who like to write more as they plan may prefer the having other options later.) Explain that students will start with their claim (main opinion) at the top, then each subtopic will be reasons for their opinions, or smaller arguments that support their opinions, and then they will use facts to back up their reasons. The circles are for students to add numbers if they decide they want to rearrange the order of their reasons and facts after they start outlining. At the end, students will have a conclusion to restate the claim and then a call to action, what they want their readers to do after reading the editorial.

2. Identify parts of an editorial – 20 minutes

Provide students with copies of an editorial. Have them read the editorials, then create a reverse idea diagram – fill in the claim, reasons and evidence the writer uses in the editorial. After they finish, ask students to share their findings and check to make sure they came up with similar outlines.

3. Outline editorials – 20 minutes

Model how to use idea diagrams. Explain where they can start with their main idea, then break that down into smaller arguments, then list facts to back up those arguments. Although the first idea diagram has room for seven facts per argument, explain that most arguments may need two or three facts; students do

not have to fill out the entire idea diagram. The first idea diagram allows students a chance to jot down ideas, but some prefer the second, which allows them to write out their ideas in detail. Check student outlines as they work to make sure they are on track.

◆ TAGS 45-60 minutes CCSS.ELA.RI.11-12.5 CCSS.ELA.W.11-12.1
CCSS.ELA.W.11-12.5 practice/formative some computer access

Editorial Sources
Name:

Topic:

Claim (opinion):

Original source Information that supports the claim	
Information that weakens the claim or does not support	
Questions to answer before writing more	

Research Questions

Question	Information	Source

JEA Curriculum Initiative



MARCH 5, 2014 by CADMIN

TYPES OF EDITORIALS

Description

This is a lesson that outlines the difference between editorials and columns and types of editorial topics. After presenting on what editorials are and the kinds commonly found, the teacher will reinforce key concepts with guided notes. Students will take a quiz at the end of the lesson.

Objectives

- Students will understand why newspapers have editorials.
- Students will understand differences between columns and editorials.
- Students will be able to understand different types of editorials.
- Students will brainstorm topics they can write an editorial about.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are

appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Length

50 minutes

Materials

Examples of opinion sections (You can use opinion sections in resources, pass out copies of recent newspapers or direct students to opinion sections of newspapers online.)

Slideshow: Editorials and columns

Slideshow: Types of editorials

Guided notes (copies for each student)

Quiz: Editorials

Answer key: Editorials

Lesson step-by-step

1. Why editorials? – 20 minutes

Discuss the significance of having editorials in a publication and present a slideshow about differences between editorials and columns.

Distribute copies of opinion sections, and have students note not just the stylistic difference between editorials and columns, but also the topics covered. Explain that editorials are a chance for the newspaper to show leadership and take a stand — the newspaper’s opinion has more weight than one person’s. As students look through the examples of opinion sections, make sure to check that they know how to identify editorials and columns and can tell the difference.

2. Types of Editorials — 15 minutes

Distribute copies of the guided notes. Present types of editorials, encouraging students to follow along and get the answers needed for the quiz.

3. Quiz — 15 minutes

Deliver the quiz covering types of editorials.

◆ TAGS 45-60 minutes CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5
direct instruction no computers

Name:

Editorials Quiz - 15 points

Part 1: Using the blank provided, write E if the statement best fits an editorial, C if it best fits a column and B if it applies to both.

 B 1. Uses research to back up opinions.

 E 2. Often unsigned.

 E 3. Uses "we" because it is the newspaper's opinion.

 B 4. An opinion story.

 C 5. Has writer's name and often the writer's picture near it.

 C 6. Uses "I" because it is the writer's opinion.

 C 7. May use personal examples.

Part 2: Identify what type of editorial best fits the topic.

- A. Editorial of Argument
- B. Editorial of Criticism
- C. Editorial of Commendation
- D. Editorial of Explanation.

 A 1. Suggesting changes to the school's cell phone policy.

 B 2. Condemning vandalism during Homecoming week.

 C 3. Congratulating students who won a music competition.

 D 4. Explaining the Common Core.

 A 5. Backing a candidate in an election.

 C 6. Thanking a group that volunteered at the school.

 B 7. Pointing out how the school's attendance policy is ineffective.

 A 8. Analyzing how changes in state law could affect the school.

Name:

Editorials Quiz - 15 points

Part 1: Using the blank provided, write E if the statement best fits an editorial, C if it best fits a column and B if it applies to both.

- _____ 1. Uses research to back up opinions.
- _____ 2. Often unsigned.
- _____ 3. Uses "we" because it is the newspaper's opinion.
- _____ 4. An opinion story.
- _____ 5. Has writer's name and often the writer's picture near it.
- _____ 6. Uses "I" because it is the writer's opinion.
- _____ 7. May use personal examples.

Part 2: Identify what type of editorial best fits the topic.

- A. Editorial of Argument
- B. Editorial of Criticism
- C. Editorial of Commendation
- D. Editorial of Explanation.

- _____ 1. Suggesting changes to the school's cell phone policy.
- _____ 2. Condemning vandalism during Homecoming week.
- _____ 3. Congratulating students who won a music competition.
- _____ 4. Explaining the Common Core.
- _____ 5. Backing a candidate in an election.
- _____ 6. Thanking a group that volunteered at the school.
- _____ 7. Pointing out how the school's attendance policy is ineffective.
- _____ 8. Analyzing how changes in state law could affect the school.

JEA Curriculum Initiative



MARCH 5, 2014 by CADMIN

USING EVIDENCE IN EDITORIALS

Description

This is a lesson on researching information and using evidence in writing editorials. Students will gather evidence to help form their opinions for writing their own editorials.

Objectives

- Students will look at the original news story that inspired their editorial evidence.
- Students will ask questions based on that news story.
- Students will extend their research in order to answer those questions.

Common Core State Standards

CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when ap-

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8

appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1b

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

Length

50 minutes

Resources

Copies of news stories

Handout: Editorial sources

Slideshow: Fact and opinion

Access to other sources of information, especially about school (handbook, policies)

Internet access, if possible

Lesson step-by-step

1. Building background — 10 minutes

Ask students if they watch mystery or crime shows — how do the detectives determine who committed the crime? How do they gather evidence? Do they sometimes make guesses about who is the guilty party? What happens if they ignore evidence that points in different directions?

Explain that while they have opinions in mind, they need to gather evidence to make sure their hunches are right, and must be willing to change their minds based on evidence. If, as they research, they change their mind about their topic, they should discuss that with their editorial group and consider making adjustments.

Present the fact and opinion slideshow. Discuss how to make sure students are using facts to support their opinions.

2) Review news stories — 15 minutes

Have students get out the original news stories that inspired their editorials from the previous lessons. Distribute the editorial sources sheet and have them read through their news stories, looking for facts as evidence for their opinion, or facts that provide evidence against their opinion. Explain facts can sometimes be viewed many ways, so people may disagree on what side the facts belong on.

When students have looked at the facts in the news story, they need to think of questions they have that will help them make their opinions stronger.

3) Research questions – 20 minutes

Give students time to research the answers to their questions and gather more information about their topic. Encourage them to check out school resources and arrange interviews with people who may be affected.

4) Wrap up – 5 minutes

Ask students to share how their research has affected their opinions. One simple method is for students to hold up five fingers if their opinion is much stronger after researching, three if it hasn't changed, one finger if they are doubting their opinion now and two or four for something in between. Ask for a couple of examples of how the research is going. Remind students that if they have unanswered questions, it will help to talk to the people involved during the next few days.

📌 TAGS 45-60 minutes CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1b CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8
CSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 direct instruction some computer access

Editorial: Poll results disappoint

Directions: Read the following editorial (published in *The Omega*, a student newspaper in Downers Grove, IL). Mark the text for the following: **problem**, **plan** and **addressing counter argument**. After you finish, discuss the editorial with your group members and answer the following questions.

May 23, 2016

Every year, the majority of seniors, along with many underclassmen, are eager to find out the results of the infamous senior superlatives in the May issue of the Omega.

The senior issue is perennially the highest selling issue of the Omega, partly because people enjoy finding out whether their peers voted them into any of several categories, from best smile and best dressed to most likely to become president.

The only issue with senior superlatives is the opportunity to misuse the poll to make potentially harmful jokes.

Throughout the tallying of the superlative results this year, things were, in a word, ordinary. The validity of the results may have been debated by staff members occasionally, but at least the results were reasonable and appropriate. Then, we tallied the results for Best Celebrity Look-Alike.

As a staff, the Omega decided we could not include these results in the final senior superlatives due to the sheer number of offensive responses and the inappropriateness of said responses.

The category had 85 responses for female look-alike and 84 for male look-alike.

Of the 169 combined responses, 19 were comparisons to animals, 13 compared girls to boys or vice versa, five were comparisons to prominent dictators, both contemporary and old, three more were comparisons to adult film stars, and 14 comparisons were negatively based off of one characteristic, such as weight, hair color, or race. Those results added up to 31.9 % of the total results for celebrity look-alikes.

In addition to these hurtful answers, there were 15 submissions that either made no comparison or were completely irrelevant, bringing our grand total of unusable submissions to 69 (40% of the results) or in layman's terms, too many. If we were to tally the remaining results, the numbers would have been too insubstantial to make any top rankings.

At first, we weren't sure what to do with the results. After all, the superlatives are meant for the seniors to be able to shape them however they want, and this is the path they happened to choose.

Besides, it's not like the superlatives are a requirement and there's no rule that says you have to take them seriously. They're supposed to be a fun activity that allows the seniors to reflect on their class. It's just for fun, right?

Sure, for the people that are in on the joke. For people who don't understand the humor, or aren't on board with a mean comparison, there's no fun involved.

Because of these issues, we chose to exclude the best celeb look-alike category from the superlatives. We would prefer not to, so in the future, perhaps the results will focus more on lighthearted fun than cruel words.

Questions:

1. What is the problem described in this editorial?
2. Why is this problem urgent? (Why does it need to be addressed now?)
3. What plan is offered?
4. Who will be implementing this plan?
5. What is the purpose of publishing this editorial? Who is/are the expected audiences of this story and why would they need to know?
6. What is the strongest point made in this story?
7. What is the weakest point made? Explain. Or, are there holes in this argument? Explain.

InstructionControversial Issues

Controversial issues exist where there are sharp differences of opinion concerning an idea or a line of action. In order that students may develop intelligent attitudes and understandings concerning significant aspects of living, they should be afforded opportunities within the classroom to deal with such issues to the extent appropriate for their level of maturity and the educational mission of the District.

In considering such issues, it shall be the purpose of our schools to provide students the opportunity:

1. To study controversial issues about which the students, at their level of maturity, should have begun to form an opinion or to seek information about.
2. To have access to all relevant, educationally appropriate information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
3. To study under competent instruction in an atmosphere of freedom from bias and prejudice.
4. To form, and in an appropriate manner and in appropriate forum, to express the students' own judgments on controversial issues.
5. To recognize that reasonable compromise is often an important facet in decision making in our society.
6. To respect the opinions of others.

Date of Adoption: December 11, 2017

Instruction

Controversial Issues in the Classroom

The following administrative and teaching regulations are to be observed:

For Principals:

1. Remind teachers that we do not teach controversial issues, but rather, provide opportunities for their study.

For Teachers:

1. Deal with controversial topics as impartially and objectively as possible. Do not include your own biases.
2. Handle all such topics in a manner suited to the knowledge, maturity, and competence of your students.
3. Have teaching materials dealing with all possible aspects of the topics readily available.
4. Don't manufacture an issue. Take up only those that are current and real.
5. Do not expect or require that the class reach an agreement.
6. Whenever you are in doubt about the advisability of taking up a given "hot" topic, consult with your Principal and or/Superintendent.
7. Remember that the policy of the board is designed to protect you as well as your students from unfair or inconsiderate criticism whenever your students are studying a controversial subject.

Date of Adoption: December 11, 2017





NORTHWEST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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District Schools Parents Students

MISSION STATEMENT

Community Value Statements

NORTHWEST PUBLIC SCHOOL MISSION

Northwest Public Schools:

A Culture of Excellence

An exceptional community of learners committed to continuous

We will...

- Keep student growth as the priority focus of all school-based decision
- Meet the needs of diverse learners in a safe, supportive environment
- Hold our community of learners to high expectations

Wikings Saga

NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL

GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

JUNE 2022

VOL. 59 ISSUE 8

More than just a family

EMELIA RICHLING
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

For Dramse siblings Konner, Courtney and Katelynn, the foundation of their lives have been rocked by moving through different homes, but through it all, the hope they will be together one day inspired them until their recent adoption several weeks ago.

CONTINUED ON PG. 6-7

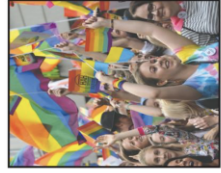
Photo courtesy of the Dramse family
Dana, Courtney, Katelynn, Konner and Michelle Dramse stand together with the judge after finalizing their adoption on March 29.



History of Pride

LGBTQIA+ activists pushed for their rights for years, giving the community a rich history.

PAGE 4



FBLA Goes National

After two years of virtual, FBLA members finally went to state, then nationals.

PAGE 4



Terrific Trap

Trapshooting athletes explain why trap is such a beloved sport.

PAGE 10



Golden Opportunity

Sophomore Ella Lorenz won a national gold key for her sculpture in the Scholastics competition.

PAGE 11



02 June Issue EDITORIAL

VIKING SAGA

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The Viking Saga is the official student publication of Northwest High School in Grand Island, Nebraska. It is printed by the Grand Island Independent eight times (monthly) throughout the school year. The paper is a member of the Nebraska Student Press Association and a National Scholastic Press Association.

Outside submissions, suggestions, or letters to the editor are welcome and encouraged. They may be brought to room 332 or emailed to Ms. Gilliland at editor@ginortheast.org. All articles must be submitted to the editor to be considered for publication, and the editor reserves the right to print any submissions.



The "Don't Say Gay" Bill: Making students existing controversial

MEGHAN PENNELL
STAFF WRITER



On March 28, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed CS/CS/HB 1557 or the "Parental Rights in Education Bill" into law prohibiting discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity at certain grade levels. What DeSantis fails to realize is a bill isn't going to prevent children from being gay, but instead leave children who happen to be gay with psychological damage that lasts a lifetime.

According to the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, lesbian, gay and bisexual students were 140% more likely to not go school because of safety concerns compared to heterosexual students. The same survey stated that nearly one third of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth have attempted suicide at least once in the prior year compared to the 6% of heterosexual youth. Thirty-four percent were bullied on school property, and 10% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.

By signing this bill DeSantis is setting a hostile example for all Florida students, gay and straight alike. During a press conference ahead of signing the bill, DeSantis said teaching kids that "they can be

whatever they want to be" was "inappropriate" for children in Florida and for children everywhere. Throughout the conference, DeSantis argues gender is inherently biological, but if that were true, why would he find it necessary to censor any book or piece of media claiming otherwise?

It is understandable for parents to be concerned about their children's safety and the quality of their education, but parents of LGBTQIA+ students have been facing the same worry for decades. Not to mention the countless teachers and staff this bill will alienate when most schools are already struggling to fill positions. Are educators going to be encouraged to blatantly lie to their students about their lives under this bill?

The answer remains unknown, as the bill features vague and underdescriptive wording. Specific details of sex education and anti-inclusion curriculums are not included, showing that this bill's signing is being motivated by hatred and not concern for America's youth. The description of limitations featured in the bill is so general they will most likely be interpreted differently by every team of administrators reading it, meaning the effects of this bill will ultimately be unknown to everyone, except the students suffering at the hands of DeSantis and his fear-mongering followers.

The creators of this bill

act like schools are indoctrinating children to be gay or transgender under some "unholly" agenda to "convert" everybody, when in all reality most LGBTQIA+ students are scared to even show up to class most days. If the concern was really the quality of education of our children, why not ban all discussions of sex and romance entirely? If we aren't saying "gay", why can we say "straight"?

Whether parents like it or not, some children will be gay, and some will be straight. Gender and sexuality is an undeniable part of life and the more resources students have available to put into words what they are feeling, the more ready they'll be for anything, or any person, that life throws at them. What are children in Florida, or any state supporting legislature like this, going to do when they leave and meet someone different from them? Diversity is what makes education beautiful, and that fact will not change under one bill.



Science Of Gender

HIPAPATIA MCINTOSH
STAFF WRITER



The definition of gender is a subcategory within a grammatical class of a language that is partly arbitrary (based on random choice or personal whim).

Gender is also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (such as shape, social rank, manner of existence or sex). Being transgender is not a choice or something that can be avoided. It is a psychological chemical difference. Humans only get one life to live, and everyone is only trying to live life to the fullest, which includes being happy, healthy and comfortable in their skin.

When babies are born, doctors declare said child male or female, depending on physical traits that are shown. Whichever sex the child is assigned dictates the gender the baby is assigned, girl or boy. However, in some cases, the brain doesn't agree with the gender assigned. Males and females have a specific brain structure. There's different hormones in each brain. When the hormones don't line up, it can cause gender dysphoria.

Gender dysphoria is when a person's assigned gender doesn't align with their gender identity. This causes feelings of discomfort while complying to the common expectations and gender roles of their assigned gender. Some other symptoms of gender dysphoria include a want to have an al-

ternate physical appearance, pronouns that comply to the person's gender identity and denial of any idioms related to the gender opposing to the preferred gender.

According to the Williams Research Institute, over 1.4 million adults identify as transgender just in America. In Nebraska, 0.28% of the adult population is reportedly transgender, which translates to over 5,400 people.

When a female begins the transition into a man, they may start taking a steroid called testosterone.

Testosterone comes in the form of an injection and will cause a deeper voice, an increase in muscle mass and body hair, and an absence of menstrual periods.

Another solution may also include pursuing a chest binder.

In order to transition from male to female, there are a number of surgeries to change the physical appearance and body anatomy. While there isn't a medicine to take to change the hormones in your body, there are physical anatomical surgeries, along with laser hair removal. Transitioning from male to female is not as accessible but it is definitely worth the ef-

June Issue OPINION 03

Do not feel ashamed or guilty for wishing to feel comfortable. Changing one's physical appearance doesn't negatively affect anyone. Being transgender does not equal being a bad human. Your mind will thank you.

Your mind will thank you.

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- Computer Technology
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EMMA SMITH
ASSISTANT MANAGER

Pride month is approaching, going from Jun 1 to the 30. In honor of this occasion, here's some information about LGBT+ history.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and asexual community, also known as LGBTQIA+, has not had the easiest past. Throughout history, there have been documented cases of violence and hate towards the community.

LGBT+ people have been around for hundreds to thousands of years with documented reports (according to Chinadaily, a site that focuses on Chinese history) of male homosexual relationships coming from major countries, such as China, Japan, Egypt and Greece. Homophobia and other such hatred for the community originally came from a western civilization (according to findfabian, a site that focuses on lesser-known Chinese stories) and was brought over to the eastern countries, influencing countries that were once accept-

Pride and prejudice: LGBTQIA+

the Supreme Court passed a law legalizing marriage between same-sex couples in all 50 states. Through it all, the community has stayed strong in their identity with famous activists, such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who made a safe home for transgender youth; Andre Lord, who made an organization to help female survivors of sexual abuse; and Phyl Opoku-Gyimah, who works to push LGBT+ writings by women of color. These four dedicated their lives to pushing LGBT+ acceptance and pride so the younger generation can feel safe in the community.

Currently, 30 countries allow same-sex marriage (according to Pewresearch a statistics based news source), and even fewer have laws protecting transgender people. Still, the LGBT+ community is worldwide and fighting for an accepting future where they can, one day, live without judgment.

Currently, 30 countries allow same-sex marriage (according to Pewresearch a statistics based news source), and even fewer have laws protecting transgender people. Still, the LGBT+ community is worldwide and fighting for an accepting future where they can, one day, live without judgment.

FBLA: From state to nationals

MELISSA KIKIC
CONTENT MANAGER

After two years of being virtual due to COVID-19, the State Leadership Conference (SLC) for Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) was held in person. Four of six FBLA students participating qualified for nationals.

Participants included seniors Isiah Balaam, Sydney Fisher, Emily Krupicka, Emma Richling and Kristian Rincol and junior Ava Buckner. Fisher qualified for nationals in Electronic Career Portfolio, Krupicka qualified in Impromptu Speaking, Job Interview and Social Media Strategy. Krupicka also qualified for nationals in Business Plan, together with Richling and Rincol. Richling received an honorable mention in Business Communication.

"It's beneficial for them because it's a leadership conference where they are dressing professionally for all their competitions and interacting with many different students as well as advisors and judges and other adults," said FBLA advisor Lori Cooper. "It's

Nifty new classes

JORDAN JENIK
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Next school year at Northcrest, there will be nine new classes available for students to take. These include Advanced Robotics, Agri Business, Cybersecurity, Concepts of Electronics, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Human Development and Cognition and Sports and Entertainment Marketing. There is also Reality 101, although this is a class that is being brought back and offered once more.

These new classes introduce a variety of new skills to students, which some students that have signed up for the courses say they will be helpful to them in their careers.

"I want to be a teacher, and having knowledge about things that interest you as a teacher always helps because you can go back and say, 'I learned this in high school in this class,' and give knowledge about it," said sophomore Dylan Coates.

Even if the skill doesn't directly relate to their career of choice, the classes can be helpful in other ways too. Introduction to

Instrumentation will teach students about the instrumentation field and give them a hands on experience in hopes it will prepare them for a career.

Human Development and Cognition teaches students about how the human mind develops and how to nurture it.

"[Human] Development and Cognition doesn't necessarily pertain to my career choice, but if I choose to further my wrestling in college knowing more about my body will definitely be a game changer for me," said junior Chloe Mader.

As for technology classes, there's several to choose from this year. With new inventions being put out nearly every day, there's a lot of ways to apply creativity and learn new information. Advanced Robotics teaches students how to plan, build, and program their own robots. Concept of Electronics deals more with the electrical field and will provide students with a hands on experiences with electrical circuits. Cybersecurity will teach students how to protect themselves online and identify threats.

"I'm very interested in anything [to do

with] technology so I thought it'd a great way to learn new aspects of that," said freshman Ashton Schwarz.

Agri Business and Sports and Entertainment Marketing will teach students about business and marketing, as well as planning and sales.

Holocaust and Genocide Studies will teach students about the extensive the effects of World War Two had on a whole community of people. It is a reading extensive course, so be prepared to learn!

"Knowing that there's so much more that I can learn that usually makes me want to take the class," Coates said.

There's plenty of new classes offered in the 2022-23 school year. Concepts of Electronics and Introduction to Instrumentation are also offered as dual credit courses, allowing students to get college credits through CCC. If you are interested in any of these classes, it is not too late to sign up for them!

"In the past, I don't remember getting these new opportunities so I hope to see more come up just for us kids to get more out of school," Mader said.

Registering for classes

EMMA SMITH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

January, students fill those out," Merritt said. "Once they filled those out ... we check them over. Then we go back, [and] we enter them into the computer."

Entering all the information into the system is a long and tedious process, but helps give the counselors a better understanding of how many students are interested in each class and how many sections will be needed per.

"Once we get the computer tallied," Merritt said, "You sit down with a team of people and decide how many sections of each class we need, who's going to teach the classes, plug it all into the computer, and the computer shoots out a schedule and gives us kind of a rough draft of what things will look like."

Overall, the process for registering students for classes is a simple, but a rather time-consuming task. It's not an overnight

career outlook, use skills that I've obtained throughout different classes and utilize information that I've received from my education class with Mrs. Cooper into my presentation," Fisher said.

The FBLA national leadership conference will be held in Chicago, Illinois, from June 29 to July 2.



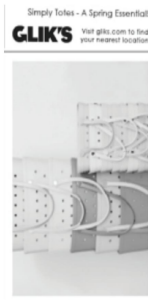
Photo courtesy of Lori Cooper
FBLA members pose for a picture at SLC.

a good way to do some networking as well meet new students across Nebraska that have similar interests in what they are doing, show some leadership skills and be responsible."

The event took place in Kearney, Apr 11-13. At the Youngs Conference Center, a brand-new facility, 1,759 members from 131 chapters across Nebraska competed in a variety of business activities. Some events were based on performance, such as public speaking, while others included talking tests.

"The event that I will be competing in at nationals is impromptu speaking where you get a topic 10 minutes before, and you have 10 minutes to prepare the speech and give a 2-minute presentation," Krupicka said. "Prior to attending SLC, I met with our advisor to look over tests and prepare for events. Some of mine involved writing, and others were more 'you do it as you go.'"

For Fisher, this was her second year participating in SLC. "I was able to look deep into my future



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06 June Issue
FEATURE

Finding hope beyond a home:

How the Dramse siblings' adoption provided them with more than just a family

EMELIA RICHLING
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CONTINUE FROM PAGE 1

The three Dramse siblings, along with their younger sister who is not yet in high school, held the last name of their biological father until the adoption on March 29. Following the split of their parents when the children were younger, they moved between foster homes, "Some are longer than others, depends," Courtney said.

"It was hard, not knowing what would happen," said senior for Ken Hastings to Scotts-bluff, the siblings experienced traveling through various names, a joyful success for do it separately. With sophomore Courtney living in a foster home in Grand Island for the Dramse family, she wanted her other siblings to share in the experience.

"I had hope that it would happen for us,"



TOP: After receiving the verdict concerning their adoption on March 29, the siblings lean in for a group hug with their new family in the county courtroom.



BOTTOM: From the third on the left to the right, sophomore Courtney, senior Katelynn, and freshman Kaitlyn, stand with their biological mother, Courtney, and her stepmother, Courtney, during their adoption case presiding over their adoption case.



TOP: The Dramse family, including both biological and adoptive parents, poses with her sister Shylee following a dance recital at last for Kira.



Photos courtesy of the Dramse family

June Issue
FEATURE

A timeline to unlocking forever

2009 - Following the separation of their parents, the four siblings spent the school year and summers with their father.

June 3, 2014 - Their father got full custody of the children, so they move full-time to Bayard, NE.

July 23, 2019 - The father is sent to jail, leaving the siblings with their step mother.

November 2019 - The siblings moved to Kearney.

February 10, 2020 - The Dramse family welcomed the four siblings with open arms to their house in Grand Island.

March 29, 2022 - After the lengthy and complicated two-year process, the siblings were finally adopted, discovering a key that would unlock their forever family.



08 June Issue
FEATURE

JAYLA BRADEN
BUSINESS MANAGER

As summer begins at the end of the school year comes excitement for the three months of freedom - summer break. A multitude of options for hanging out with friends and vacations. Students involved in the workforce may begin identifying things to do during their summer break. The long days of summer bring about summer jobs - everything from lifeguarding to moving lawns.

Most high school students end up in the fast food industry, which is the most common job. Despite the issues, with work comes money, and with money comes being able to fund a vacation.

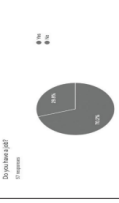
"I need to pay for my college," said junior Jaha Bashi, "there are things to be excited about when applying for work, such as how well an employer will work with schedules and the type of work environment."

The job market is a bit of safety concerns," said senior Zachary Beckman, who works at Hy-Vee and seasonally at Home Depot. "I don't know if I'll be able to find a job during the summer again because I hated that."

Whether already working or not, there are a lot of things to be excited about. Students and a staple of time in the summer to fill. CCCC offers a variety of classes, students are able to take Advanced Placement classes, courses through local community colleges, online courses, and more. CCCC offers a variety of international Community College (CCC) offer a variety of options when compared to those of four-year colleges. An average college student takes about 15 credit hours per semester. The average credit hour at a public university is 3-5, and at CCCC is 3-4.

Summer vacay is on the way

"I don't really like the summer," Beckman said. "It's just too hot, and you don't really get to do anything fun." Beckman's sentiment is shared by many. Nevertheless, sun-kissed weather is on its way.



This is from a poll sent to 67 students and 67 responded. It concerned the summer plans for students. The picture shows the difference between those with jobs and those without jobs. 70.2% having jobs and 29.8% not.



Photo courtesy, Lane Report



Want to Be a Linguist?

Want to be a linguist? CCCC offers a variety of classes, students are able to take Advanced Placement classes, courses through local community colleges, online courses, and more. CCCC offers a variety of international Community College (CCC) offer a variety of options when compared to those of four-year colleges. An average college student takes about 15 credit hours per semester. The average credit hour at a public university is 3-5, and at CCCC is 3-4.

A final farewell: Patrick Schiley

JAYLA BRADEN
BUSINESS MANAGER

As the school year draws to an end and summer closes in, there is one more teacher who will not be found in the halls at the beginning of August. Patrick Schiley is one of the six teachers leaving Northwest. Here's a few things to help see him off.

How long have you been at Northwest?
"One year."

What subjects have you taught?
"I teach both mechanical drafting with AutoCAD (drafting software) and Inventor Software. I teach architectural drafting using a software program called Revit. And consumer auto, construction systems, carpentry."

Activities overseen/sports coached?
"I'm the sponsor for SkillsUSA."

How has your NW experience been?
"It's been really good."

Favorite memory?
"No, no favorite memories. They're all good."

What are your plans for after you leave?
Going back to West Omaha. I'm going back to teach at Elkhorn, which is where I taught before. I came here. We left Elkhorn to move back to Grand Island to be closer to family and wanted to raise our kids here. My wife wanted to be back at her old job with Geotia Public Schools. A happy wife makes a happy life."

What do you miss about NW?
"I'll miss that it was so close to my house. Now I have a little bit of a drive. It's all been good."

What advice do you have?
"Life is short, don't blink. Work hard but remember to stop and enjoy life."



Photo courtesy Patrick Schiley
Patrick Schiley takes a picture with his wife and three children.

10 June Issue SPORTS

AUDRIANNA WISEMAN
EVENT COORDINATOR

The Northwest trapshooting team knows how to shoot down its competition, but not every student knows what it really is, or the merit required to succeed in it.

"Trapshooting is a sport where you [use] a shotgun to shoot a roughly five-inch clay target thrown from a machine that oscillates left and right," said coach Derek Karre. "We vary our yardages from shooting from 16 yards all the way back to 27." There is a lot more to the sport, though.

"There [are] two categories for ages," said junior Wyatt Gildersleeve. "High school is considered seniors, and then we have juniors, which is eighth through fifth grade."

Trap is not known for being a physically intense or demanding sport, but that

Trap team tears through targets

does not take away from its value.

"It still challenges you and pushes you as a competitor," said senior Olivia Sargent. "Just like any other sport, you grow and learn so many things that are more than just about the sport itself."

Members of trapshooting cite plenty of reasons to enjoy it other than the ones mentioned above.

"I think it's fun, especially for people who go to Northwest," Gildersleeve said. "A lot of people are [outdoorsy] people and they like to hunt and just [do] outdoor activities in general and stuff with guns."

The coach has a slightly different reason for liking the sport.

"Watching the kids start when they're young and don't really know what they're doing and watching them progress through, get real good and achieve their goals, it's pretty rewarding," Karre said.

Another motivator for students to join and remain part of trapshooting is the



Photo courtesy of Sarah Ramos
Junior Cesar Ramos, sophomore Levi Bruns and senior Olivia Sargent pose with trapshooting awards.

Swinging all the way to state

MEGHAN PENNELL
STAFF WRITER

Each year, Islander baseball begins their training early, working hard to start the season off swinging. Northwest co-ops with Grand Island Senior High to provide better opportunities for players, a practice that has paid off for both schools.

"At this point, you know everybody from GISH if you've played before," said freshman Owen Payne. "We've all played on travel teams with each other before, too, so it doesn't affect that much."

Despite what one may assume, the boys unite under one common goal. Together the two schools bring their best to the diamond each time they play.

"Northwest players bring a hard-nosed mentality and compete Kirby Wells. I single day," said head coach Kirby Wells. "I love coaching kids from each school and

A negative that was spotted was "[It] could stress some people out when there's no need for it," said Gutierrez. However, there are also positives that can be said about the Northwest grading system.

"We try harder, and we expect more out of ourselves," said Wissing.

High school provides students with enough obstacles to last a lifetime, but the grading system particularly provides people in extracurricular activities with more of a challenge, or does it?

"I don't think it really does because it's all based on grades," Burman said. "I think it would help for the people that need it, but personally, no."

All in all, the grading system has a lot of positives and negatives to it, but does it make it easier or harder to succeed?

"For people who it's hard for, I feel like it's because they're not trying or they just have no time to but for people who it's easy for, they're just trying."

that the current grading scale is fairly easy.

"I think it [the NW grading system] would actually make it [succeeding] easier because then the expectations are higher. Then, you just expect yourself to do more than others," sophomore Whitney Wissing said.

In high school, motivation is key. Without the drive to complete necessary tasks, high school will be nearly impossible. How motivating is the NW grading system, if it's a motivating factor at all?

"Probably because then you have to try harder," said Wissing.

Several hundreds of students all over the world struggle with motivation, as well as adults. With that being said every aspect of school should try to be as motivating for students as possible.

"For some, yeah, for some they want to try and get that good grade but some don't because they think it's too much," Freshman Cali Gutierrez said.

Even with motivation being a positive thing about NW grading system, there are still tons of other positives and negatives hidden within the system.

Gaps in Grading

CASEY MAYNE
STAFF WRITER

When high school is thought of, how many struggles come to mind? One? Ten? A hundred? According to emersonhospital.org, 62% of high school students report levels of high stress. Stress is only one of the many problems students face.

There are tons of problems many can think of off the top of their head, but today the focus will be on the Northwest grading system. The grading system at NW is on a seven point scale, while most other public schools are on a 10-point grading scale.

"Compared to my last school, I would say that the NW grading system is a whole lot more difficult. We were on the 10 point scale grading system, which was a lot more lenient than the 7 point because it gave you more room to work with your grades," sophomore Andrew Burman said.

The three points between the seven-point grading scale and the 10 point system make the 10 system a lot harder. However, on the other side of the spectrum, some report

high school team.

"It has its ups and downs, just like anything, but I like where I am," Payne said.

After losing one district game and winning the other, the team finished their season off

against Columbus with games to be rescheduled. On May 6 the team won against Bryan Omaha, winning the conference tournament.



Photo courtesy of Kirby Wells
Senior Sam Hartman runs back towards the team after a completed play.

11 June Issue FEATURE

AUDRIANNA WISEMAN
EVENT COORDINATOR

From March 18 to May 22, the online Scholastic Art and Writing Competition received entries from several schools across the U.S. one of those being Northwest, an active participant for the last decade. Many students entered the competition, but one stood out above the rest.

Sophomore Ella Lorenz, under the guidance of art teacher Beau Studley, won a gold key at the state-level event.

"All gold keys at the state level then go on to nationals," Studley said.

The piece entered was a sculpture made for an art class assignment.

"It was a sculpture of a hedgehog that I made out of paper and styrofoam," Lorenz said.

"I kind of just came up with it on the spot because I love hedgehogs, and they're my favorite animals."

Lorenz received the national results on a special day.

"I got an email telling me to go to the

Worst Roommate Ever review

CASEY PAYNE
STAFF WRITER

There are several popular murder movies and mini series on the topic of true crime. However, this mini-series has already caught a lot of attention and is worth watching. "Worst Roommate Ever" aired on Netflix in Mar, and it's the perfect mini-series for a weekend binge.

"Worst Roommate Ever" is one season long, with five episodes, each about 45 minutes, and once you start watching it, there's no stopping. Not only is "Worst Roommate Ever" a documentary, but it's also a thriller, and it is addicting and impossible to look away from. The show uses a well-balanced combination of real footage and animated drawings to tell horrific stories strictly about roommates who have not been such kind living partners, and uses the victims to tell the story.

This mini-series tells the gruesome stories of four different people who none would want to be stuck with as roommates. Each person gets

Ella Lorenz comes up gold

website on my birthday, actually," Lorenz said. Lorenz celebrated the special occasion with family and later with friends when she shared the news.

"She told me (about her award), and she was very excited about it," said sophomore Alyx Beck, Lorenz's friend and fellow artist of two years. "We were all sitting there, and she was like, 'I just got a national gold key!' and we were all super excited for her."

According to Lorenz's teacher and friends, it was no mystery why she won the award.

"I definitely think Ella is a great artist, very much so superior to my own," Beck said. "I know that she's really good at her sculptures. She always thinks outside of the box and makes sure it's something unique and something true to herself."

Studley seems to agree with this sentiment, citing her performance in class.

"She comes in and she's always working, using time wisely, always thinking outside the box," challenging herself. She's great to have in class,"

also learning opportunities. You get educated about the process of working as a detective or someone in law-force, and you learn a bit more about how killers and violent people may tend to act.

"Worst Roommate Ever" is one of the best true crime mini-series out there. The show is a cure for boredom and a killer time passer.



Photo Courtesy of Beau Studley
Lorenz made her hedgehog sculpture mostly out of paper and styrofoam.



12 June Issue
ADS

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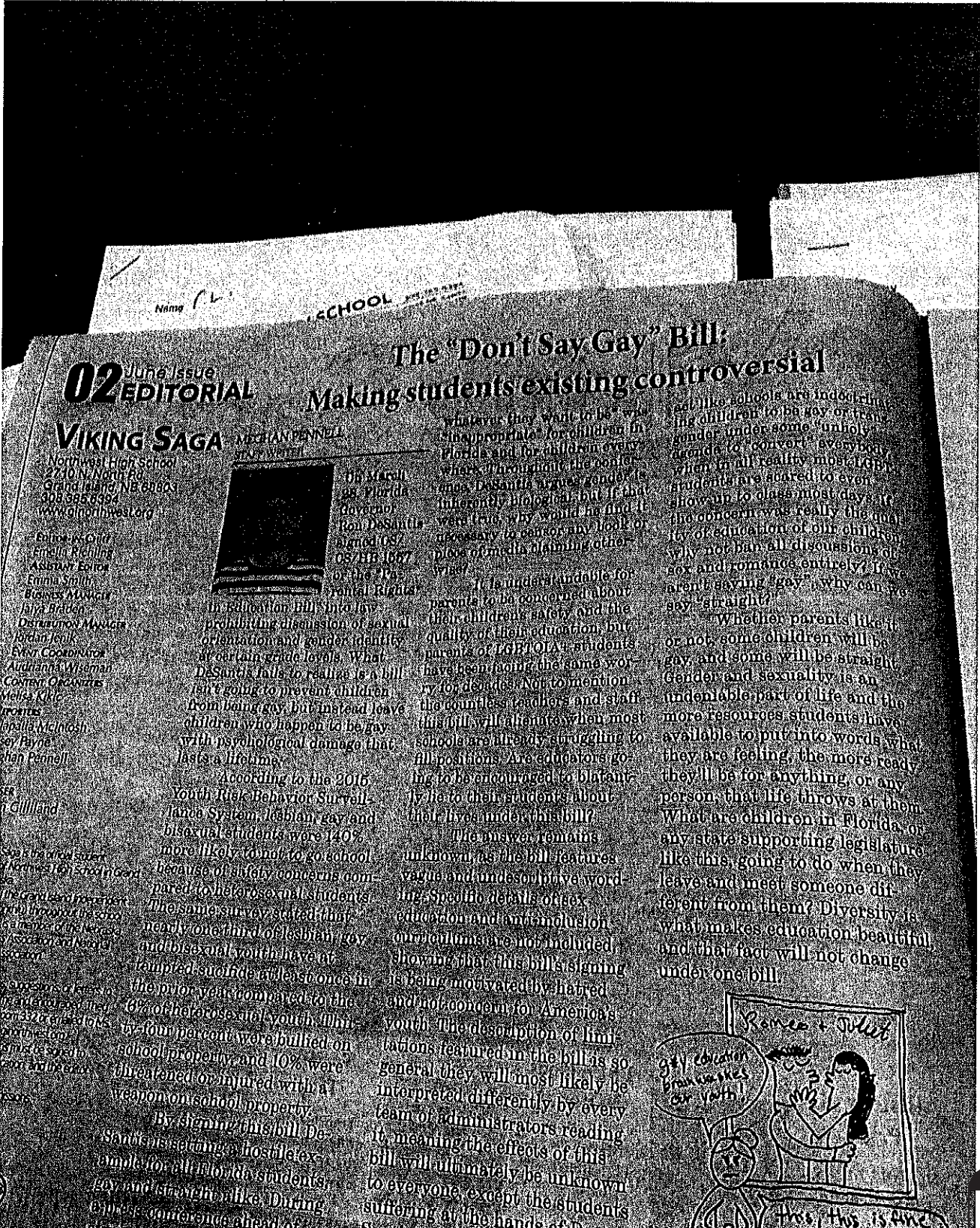
Subject: School paper

Date: May 17, 2022 at 10:09 AM

To: Dan Leiser dan.leiser@ginorthwest.org, Zach Mader zach.mader@ginorthwest.org, Robin Schutt robin.schutt@ginorthwest.org, Artie Moeller artie.moeller@ginorthwest.org, Aaron Buhrman aaron.buhrman@ginorthwest.org



Has anyone read our school paper this month?



02 June Issue EDITORIAL

VIKING SAGA

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- Editor: Richling
- ASST. Editor: Emma Smith
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The "Don't Say Gay" Bill: Making students existing controversial

MEGHAN PENNELL



On March 15, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed HB 1557, the "Parental Rights in Education" bill into law. This bill prohibits the discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in certain grade levels. What DeSantis fails to realize is a bill isn't going to prevent children from being gay, but instead leave children who happen to be gay with psychological damage that lasts a lifetime.

According to the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, lesbian, gay, and bisexual students were 140% more likely to not go to school because of safety concerns compared to heterosexual students. The same survey stated that nearly one third of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth have attempted suicide at least once in the prior year compared to the 6% of heterosexual youth. Additionally, four percent were bullied on school property, and 10% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.

By signing this bill, DeSantis is creating a hostile environment for all Florida students, gay and straight alike. During the coming year ahead of

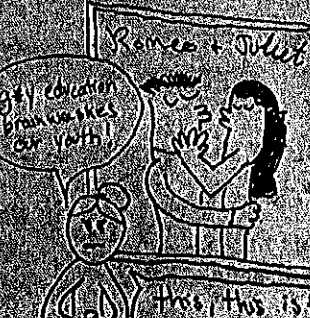
whatever they want to be, it is inappropriate for children in Florida and for children every where. The signing of the controversial DeSantis law goes beyond inherently biological, but if that was true, why would he find it necessary to censor any book or piece of media claiming otherwise?

It is understandable for parents to be concerned about their children's safety and the quality of their education, but parents of LGBTQIA+ students have been doing the same worry for decades. Not mentioning the countless teachers and staff this bill will affect when most schools are already struggling to fill positions. Are educators going to be encouraged to blatantly lie to their students about their lives under this bill?

The answer remains unknown as the bill features vague and undesirable wording. Specific details on sex education and inclusion curriculum are not included, showing that this bill's signing is being motivated by hatred and not concern for America's youth. The description of limitations featured in the bill is so general they will most likely be interpreted differently by every team of administrators reading it, meaning the effects of this bill will ultimately be unknown to everyone, except the students suffering at the hands of the

school. Like schools are indoctrinating children to be gay or trans, gender under some "family" decides to "convert" everybody when in all reality most of the students are asked to even show up to class most days. If the concern was really the quality of education of our children, why not ban all discussions of sex and romance entirely? If we aren't saying "gay", why can we say "straight"?

Whether parents like it or not, some children will be gay, and some will be straight. Gender and sexuality is an undeniable part of life and the more resources students have available to put into words what they are feeling, the more ready they'll be for anything, or any person that life throws at them. What are children in Florida, or any state supporting legislature like this, going to do when they leave and meet someone different from them? Diversity is what makes education beautiful and that fact will not change under one bill.



EXHIBIT

...the bill, Deshaun said... (followers) ...his fear-mongering... The creators of this bill... though, essential content for original

Science Of Gender

BLADIA MURPHY
and others



The definition of gender is a category within a grammatical class of a language that is partly arbitrary (based on random choice or personal whim).

Gender is also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (such as shape, social rank, manner of existence or sex). Being transgender is not a choice or something that can be avoided. It is a psychological chemical difference. Humans only get one life to live, and everyone is only trying to live life to the fullest, which includes being happy, healthy and comfortable in their skin.

When babies are born, doctors declare said child male or female, depending on physical traits that are shown. Whichever sex the child is assigned dictates the gender the baby is assigned, girl or boy.

However, in some cases, the brain doesn't agree with the gender assigned. Males and females have a specific brain structure. There's different hormones in each brain. When the hormones don't line up, it can cause gender dysphoria.

Gender dysphoria is when a person's assigned gender doesn't align with their gender identity. This causes feelings of discomfort while complying to the common expectations and gender roles of their assigned gender.

Some other symptoms of gender dysphoria include a want to have an al-

ternate physical appearance, personality that doesn't fit the person's gender identity and denial of the biological sex of the person according to the preferred gender.

According to the Williams Research Institute, over 14 million adults identify as transgender just in America. In Nebraska, 11.2% of the adult population is reportedly transgender, which translates to over 5,400 people.

When a female begins the transition into a man, they may start taking a steroid called testosterone. Testosterone comes in the form of an injection and will cause a deeper voice, an increase in muscle mass and body hair and an absence of menstrual periods.

Another solution may also include purchasing a chest binder.

In order to transition from male to female, there are a number of surgeries to change the physical appearance and body anatomy.

While there isn't a medicine to take to change the hormones in your body, there are physical anatomy surgeries, along with laser hair removal.

Transitioning from male to female is not as accessible but it is definitely worth the ef-

June Issue OPINION

Do not feel ashamed or guilty for not feeling comfortable. Change physical appearance doesn't affect anyone. Being transgender equal behind a bad human would will thank you. Your mind will thank



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04 June Issue NEWS

MARIA SUZUKI
CORRESPONDENT

As the world is approaching a new normal, the LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years. The LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years. The LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years.

Pride and prejudice: LGBTQIA+

It is the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the LGBTQIA+ community. The LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years. The LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years.

In the United States, LGBTQIA+ people have been making significant progress in the past few years. The LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years. The LGBTQIA+ community has been making significant progress in the past few years.

the Supreme Court passed a law legalizing same-sex marriage in all 50 states.

Through it all, the community has stayed strong in their identity with leaders like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who made a safe home for homeless youth. And it's people like PFLAG founder Anne Pate, who made an organization to help female survivors of sexual assault, and Phillipe Gyimah, who works to help LGBTQIA+ women of color. These leaders have been pushing LGBTQIA+ acceptance and pride to the younger generation.

Currently, 30 countries allow same-sex marriage (according to Pew Research), and even fewer have laws protecting transgender people. Still, the LGBTQIA+ community is worldwide and fighting for an accepting future where they can, one day, live without judgment.

FBLA: From state to nationals

MELISSA KOGIC
CONTENT MANAGER

After two years of being virtual due to COVID-19, the State Leadership Conference (SLC) for Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) was held in person. Four of six FBLA chapters participated in the event.

Participants included seniors Isiah Brown, Sydney Fisher, Emily Krupicka, and Kristin Khalil, and juniors Arya Buckner. Fisher qualified for nationals in Business Plan, Krupicka qualified in Leadership Speaking, Job Interview and Business Plan, and Khalil qualified in Business Plan.

Krupicka also qualified in Business Plan, together with Khalil and Brown. Khalil received an honorarium for them because it's a conference where they are dressed in business attire. All their competitors were from different schools and they had to face and other challenges.

a good way to do some networking as well as meet new students across Nebraska that have similar interests in what they are doing, show some leadership skills and be responsible.

The event took place in Kearney, April 19-20. At the Youngs Conference Center, a brand new facility, 1,700 members from 131 chapters across Nebraska competed in a variety of business activities. Some events were based on performance, such as public speaking, while others included taking tests.

"The event that I will be competing in is nationals is (impromptu) speaking where you get a topic 10 minutes before, and you have 10 minutes to prepare the speech and memorize it," Krupicka said. "Prior to attending SLC, I met with our advisor to look over tests and prepare for events. Some of mine involved writing, and others were more 'you do it your way'."

career outlook, use skills that I've obtained throughout different classes and utilize information that I've received from my education with Mrs. Cooper into my presentation," Fisher said.

The FBLA national leadership conference will be held in Chicago, Illinois, from June 29 to July 2.



From: Leiser, Dan dan.leiser@ginorthwest.org

Subject: School Paper

Date: May 17, 2022 at 12:00 PM

To: Jeffrey Edwards jedwards@ginorthwest.org, PJ Smith psmith@ginorthwest.org, Matthew Fritsche mfritsche@ginorthwest.org



I've read the publications in the Viking Saga. I'm sure this is a revenge tactic from the pronoun thing a month or so ago. But I'm going back and forth in the field and I just keep getting more and more upset. Let me be clear, I am NOT upset with you guys.

I have no clue what exactly the district spends on publishing the Viking Saga and that doesn't even matter. And I will need to review the policy on publications when I get home. But it is 2022, we have Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, you name its available and FREE to anyone.

We should not be allowing students to write opinion articles in a publication paid for by taxes. If kids want to express their thoughts they have MANY other options to do so. They are at school to learn grammar, proper English and writing skills. Not use the school as a platform for expressing their opinions, no matter the content of such opinions, especially when the district is funding it.

I'm hot on this one, because it's not ok. The national media does the same crap and I've had enough of it. No more school paper, in my opinion. You give someone an inch, they take a mile.

I know you guys will address this however you see fit in the short term. But I know some other board members are going to want to address policy on this. So I'll go cool off now, but this topic of school publications will have to be talked about with administration and school board.

Thanks

Dan



From: Leiser, Dan dan.leiser@ginorthwest.org
Subject: Fwd: School Paper
Date: May 18, 2022 at 5:20 PM
To: Robin Schutt robin.schutt@ginorthwest.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Leiser, Dan <dan.leiser@ginorthwest.org>
Date: Tue, May 17, 2022, 12:00 PM
Subject: School Paper
To: Jeffrey Edwards <jedwards@ginorthwest.org>, PJ Smith <psmith@ginorthwest.org>, Matthew Fritsche <mfritsche@ginorthwest.org>

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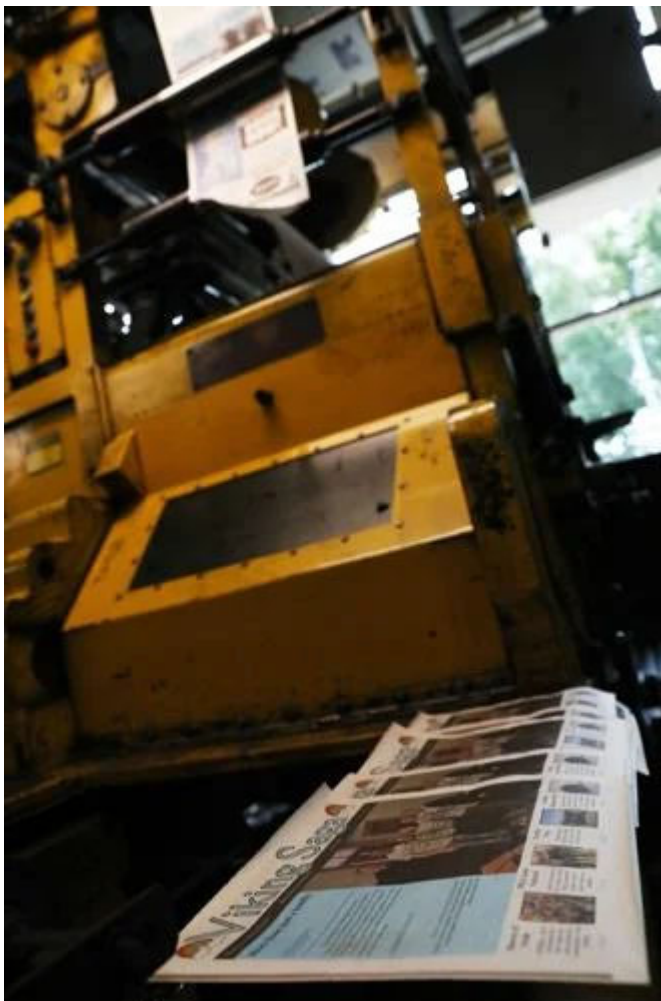
https://theindependent.com/news/local/nurseries-of-democracy-northwest-student-journalism-elimination-a-saga/article_88ceba8a-1758-11ed-a179-c36008eeaed3.html

FEATURED TOP STORY

‘Nurseries of democracy’: Northwest student journalism elimination a ‘Saga’

Jessica Votipka

Aug 24, 2022



Northwest High School’s newspaper, ‘Viking Saga,’ was shut down after 54 years of publication. MCKENNA LAMOREE, THE INDEPENDENT

Jessica Votipka



Northwest Public Schools administrators eliminated its journalism program in June in what some former students and press freedom advocates call an act of censorship.

While working on the school year-ending issue of the Saga newspaper, staffers had little idea its student-written content would mark a 54-year-old publication's abrupt end. The edition included student editorials on LGBTQ topics, along with a news article titled, "Pride and prejudice: LGBTQIA+" on the origins of Pride Month (June) and the history of homophobia. Other articles explained registering for classes, highlighted achievements by the Future Business Leaders of America chapter and told the story of a group of siblings' adoption.

Northwest is located in Grand Island.

Northwest Public Schools board Vice President Zach Mader said that in the past, "I do think there have been talks of doing away with our newspaper if we were not going to be able to control content that we saw (as) inappropriate."

People are also reading...

- 1 **xxxx xxxxx**
- 2 **Grand Island woman is a jewel of a detective**
- 3 **A new look for an old Grand Island building**
- 4 **Fonner race meet will again be extended**

He cautiously explained the apparent reason for the Saga's demise.

"The very last issue that came out this year, there was... a little bit of hostility amongst some," the school board member said. "There were editorials that were essentially, I guess what I would say, LGBTQ."

On Sunday, May 22, a Northwest School District employee emailed the Grand Island Independent press and advertising teams to cancel the company's Northwest Viking Saga printing services. Notification of staff and students of the program's elimination came May 19, according to the employee. The June issue was printed on May 16.

The Northwest employee said in the email they were informed “the (journalism and newspaper) program was cut because the school board and superintendent are unhappy with the last issue's editorial content.”

The Saga staff was also reprimanded in April 2022 after publishing preferred pronouns and names in bylines and articles, according to students. District officials told students to use only birth names going forward.

The Saga had been published since 1968, thriving in its final year. Northwest student media, including Saga staffers, earned third place at the 2022 Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) State Journalism Championship. Individual winners included Emelia Richling, Emily Krupicka, Audrianna Wiseman, Kiera Avila and Treasure Mason.

District officials have declined to give an exact date when the decision to eliminate the program was made — and why. Northwest’s 2021-2022 journalism teacher declined interview requests for this story.

“It sounds like a ham-fisted attempt to censor students and discriminate based on disagreement with perspectives and articles that were featured in the student newspaper,” surmised Sara Rips, legal counsel for ACLU of Nebraska.

Mader said of the student newspaper’s final issue: “There (were) some things that were...”

The school board member paused, thinking.

He continued: “If (taxpayers) read that (issue), they would have been like, ‘Holy cow. What is going on at our school?’”

Dan Leiser, president of the Northwest Public Schools Board of Education, said of the stories in question, “most people were upset they were written,” though he didn’t specify who “most people” consisted of.

Leiser questioned whether eliminating the paper based on editorial content — in this case, the June 2022 issue — mattered.

“If 90% of people say the (stories) shouldn’t have been written in the first place, they weren’t happy with reading it in the newspaper — I’m not talking me, I’m talking high school students — why do you think this is newsworthy?”

The freedom for print media to determine its own editorial content is constitutionally protected, a result of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on *Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Tornillo* (1974).

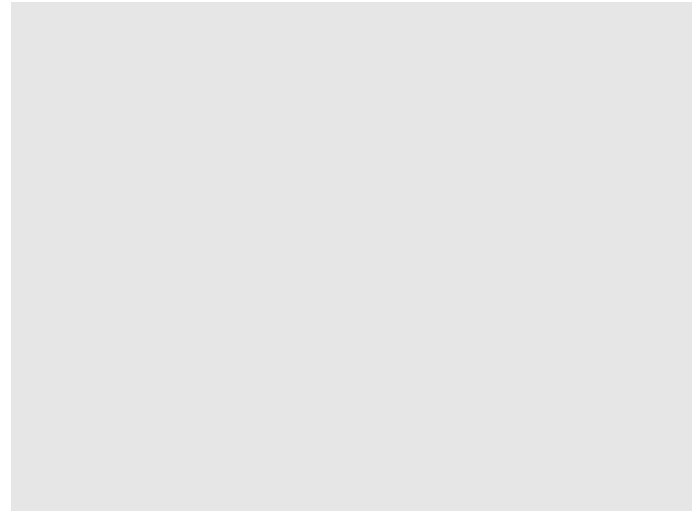
“The decision by the administration to eliminate the student newspaper violates students’ right to free speech, unless the school can show a legitimate educational reason for removing the option to participate in a class ... that publishes award-winning material,” said Nebraska Press Association attorney Max Kautsch.

Kautsch specializes in media law in Nebraska and Kansas.

“It is hard to imagine what that legitimate reason could be,” he added.

Emma Smith, Saga’s assistant editor in 2022, said the staffers tried to have their fingers on the pulse of what Northwest students were talking about.

Rips said, “Student journalism teaches students how to discern and investigate, build effective work based on verifiable facts, and policies.”



Former Viking Saga newspaper staff members Marcus Pennell (left) and Emma Smith (right) display a pride flag outside of Northwest High School.

MCKENNA LAMOREE, THE INDEPENDENT

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression is a nonpartisan, nonprofit civil liberties group advocating for student free speech. Lindsie Rank, a FIRE student press counsel, said even if legal, censoring student expression will “almost always run counter to democratic values.”

“As (Supreme Court) Justice (Stephen) Breyer pointed out, ‘America’s public schools are the nurseries of democracy,’” Rank said.

Initially, Northwest Superintendent Jeff Edwards said the district was “looking at some different curriculum.” Edwards said principals, the director of teaching and learning and he are the primary decision makers in axing or adding classes.

Jeanette Ramsey, Northwest Public Schools director of teaching and learning, confirmed Edwards’s referral, saying that yes, she was the primary curriculum decision maker, assisted by a “team of people.”

However, when the Saga’s elimination was brought up, Ramsey said, firmly, “I was not involved in that decision at all. I was zero involved in that decision.”

Ramsey said the decision to end the Saga and related journalism class was made “between PJ Smith, the principal, and Dr. (Jeff) Edwards, our superintendent.”

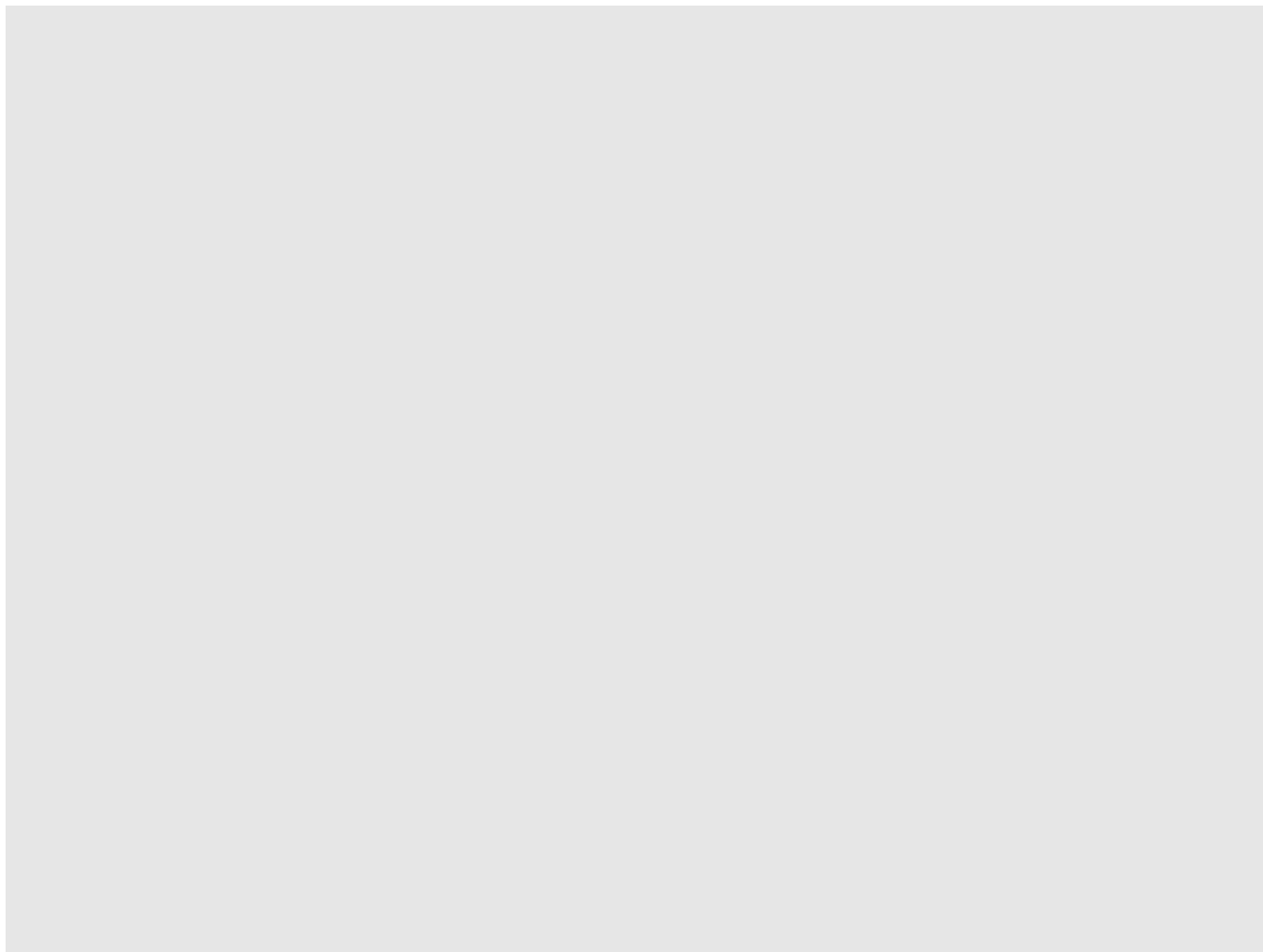
Smith directed questions about the journalism program’s elimination to Edwards.

The process to change programs and curriculum is not necessarily governed by administrators, said David Jespersen, communications administrator for the Nebraska Department of Education. School boards have the autonomy to exercise different procedures, Jespersen said.

“Some districts are heavily involved and would need to grant approval; many districts let the superintendent handle it. As far as the state is concerned both are fine — it is a local decision.”

The Northwest Public Schools Board of Education had little — if anything — to do with the Saga’s elimination, Leiser indicated.

“From my standpoint, (from) a board standpoint, Dr. Edwards filled me in on the situation a little bit. He didn't tell me everything. I guess I'm trusting the way he's handling it. He's got it under control.”



The front page of the June 2022 issue of the Viking Saga.

After Northwest Public Schools’ regular-session school board meeting on July 7, The Independent again asked Edwards why the Saga and its class had been cut. He was also for the first time presented with the alleged basis for the program’s elimination: the Pride Month issue.

He repeatedly responded only that it was an “administrative” decision, but did not address the reason.

Mike Hiestand, senior legal counsel for Student Press Law Center, said ending student newspaper programs is becoming a more common form of censorship. The center is a nonpartisan group that advocates for student journalism press freedom.

“You can't censor a student newspaper you no longer have.”

The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit has been working directly with the Saga's most recent staff on potential recourse.

“By far, the number one thing that will get student media censored is a story that criticizes the school or that administrators somehow think makes them look bad,” Hiestand said.

First Amendment rights in public high schools were affirmed in the Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* in 1969. The school argued a 13-year-old student could not wear a black armband in protest of the Vietnam War.

“In the *Tinker* case, the Supreme Court said that students and teachers don't lose their First Amendment and freedom of expression rights at the schoolhouse gates,” said Hadar Harris, executive director of the Student Press Law Center. “We believe that that should apply to student journalists as well.”

In the Supreme Court case *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* (1988) journalism students at Hazelwood East High School in St. Louis, Missouri, wrote stories about teen pregnancy and the impact of divorce on their peers. The principal deleted pages containing those stories prior to publication without notifying students.

Because the student newspaper was sponsored by the school, the Supreme Court ruled the principal was not violating the First Amendment.

Referring to the Hazelwood case, Harris said, “The Supreme Court created a carve out of First Amendment rights, specifically applying to student journalists, which allows school administrators to censor students work for any quote-unquote, ‘legitimate pedagogical reason.’”

Censorship in the name of Hazelwood is a “vague standard, but it allows for... a large amount of discretion by administrators who apply it rather broadly,” Harris said.

But, she added, “When student journalists are censored, we are teaching them that facts and truth — even when they are uncomfortable — are not acceptable.

On his birth certificate, former Saga staff member Marcus Pennell’s first name is “Meghan.” Marcus is a transgender man. In the June 2022 Saga, Pennell had his name reverted to “Meghan” in his byline.

“The (name) thing was the first big blow,” he said.

Pennell said he has been subject to adversity because of being transgender, but hearing directly from the school administrators was different.

“It was the first time that the school had officially been, like, ‘We don't really want you here,’” Pennell said of his regulated byline. “You know, that was a big deal for me.”

Alison Gash, an associate professor at the University of Oregon, said “deadnaming” — calling someone by their birth name as opposed to their preferred name — is a form of “erasure.”

Gash is an academic expert in United States courts, gender, race, sexuality, same-sex marriage, constitutional rights and public policy.

“The pointed targeting of erasing somebody's pronoun, of erasing somebody's gender is erasing somebody's identity in such a hostile way,” she said. “It can't be read as anything but ‘I don't value you.’”

Hiestand said that until recently, few controversies over using preferred names in student media have been reported to the Student Press Law Center.

The concept of banning preferred names was new to Michelle Hassler, an assistant journalism professor at UNL.

“I think we're getting into some additional rights here,” Hassler said, noting institutions like the Associated Press recognize the practice. Hassler is also the executive director of the Nebraska High School Press Association.

Hiestand said he was unaware of any formal U.S. Department of Education opinions concerning preferred names.

“I can say with certainty there is no law that would require the use of a legal name instead of a preferred name,” he added.

Emma Smith graduated in 2022. She said her class was informed the decision to ban preferred names was made by the Northwest Public Schools Board of Education.

Students, including Emma Smith, said district Policy 6391 was referenced when an administrator handed down the district's preferred name decree.

The policy advises teachers to teach only age-appropriate controversial topics, present them with objectivity (“do not include your own biases”) and not expect students to reach an agreement, according to documents on the district website. The documents do not define “controversial.”

The policy also states, “Remember that the policy of the board is designed to protect you as well as your students from unfair or inconsiderate criticism whenever your students are studying a controversial subject.”

The school board last reviewed and revised the policy in December of 2017. In an email, Edwards said “no public records exist” when asked for documentation concerning 6391’s development.

The Independent submitted a series of public records requests to Northwest Public Schools in July, asking for information relating to the elimination of the journalism program and the possible reasons for its end.

In response, the district said the majority of those requests couldn’t be fulfilled until Sept. 1, with costs ranging from just shy of \$3,000 for an initial request and \$1,140 for a narrowed-down request.

Harris seemed dubious. “(SPLC is) very troubled by what's been going on in the school district, and the lack of transparency and the censorship that's taking place.”

“Someone in administration needs to be really clear about the reason (the Saga was eliminated)... they are getting really close to violating some First Amendment rights,” Hassler said, though she said she hasn’t heard an official reason for the elimination of the Saga and its related class.

Arguably, no one has.

Hassler said, “That's even more problematic: the reasoning isn't out there.”

In the realm of higher education, the same scenario would violate the First Amendment, Rank said. “For high school journalists the answer isn't as clear-cut.”

The FIRE attorney added that the Hazelwood ruling calls for a legitimate instructional reason for regulation.

“I struggle to think of a legitimate educational reason for punishing student journalists for discussing Pride Month, but the bar can unfortunately be low,” Rank said.

“At this moment in our democracy,” Harris said, “we need people asking hard questions and reporting facts.”

Rips, ACLU of Nebraska’s LGBTQIA+ counsel, said simply having an environment like the Saga’s newsroom can have a big impact.

“Kids need to feel safe... when kids are bullied... knowing that the school has their back, knowing that their parents have their back can make things like that more tolerant,” Rips said.

Gash said, “There’s a compounding effect, being a young, queer person, having to confront adults who are supposed to be on your side, in your corner, helping you to grow and develop to be a valued member of our society.”

Emma Smith is firmly planted in her classmates’ corner.

“Seeing them go through that, especially after... being able to go by (preferred names)... having it taken away from them was really upsetting.”

In an editorial, “The ‘Don’t Say Gay’ bill: Making students existing controversial,” Pennell wrote:

“...most LGBT students are scared to even show up to class most days. If the concern was really for the quality of education for our children, why not ban all discussion (concerning sexuality)... if we aren’t saying ‘gay’, why can we say ‘straight?’”

It was printed in the final issue of the Saga.

The Nebraska student journalism censorship saga

Jessica Votipka is the education reporter at the Grand Island Independent. She can be reached at 308-381-5420.



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Diabetes Secret



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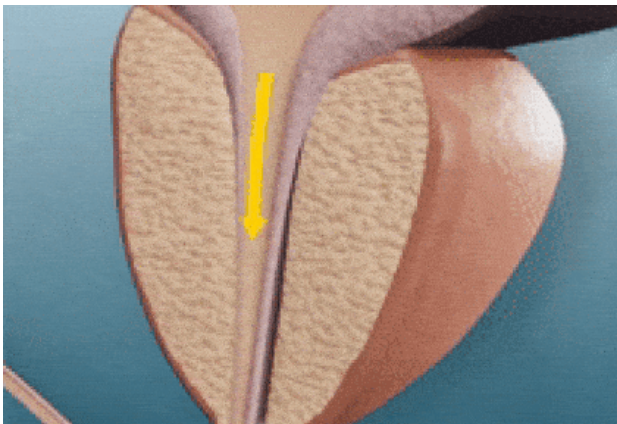
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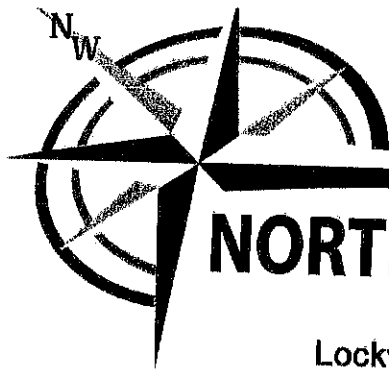
15 Women from the 80's Everyone Had a Crush on

Healthdish

By Jessica Votipka

Reporter

Jessica Votipka is the education reporter at the Grand Island Independent. She can be reached at 308-381-5420



NORTHWEST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1R Cedar Hollow St. Libory
Lockwood Preschool Northwest High School

August 31, 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians,

There has been a lot of questions and speculations on what has happened with the school newspaper, The Saga. I want to clear up as much as I can within the confines of legal confidentiality. The article that was published in The Independent was both correct and incorrect. Correct in that the newspaper course is currently not included in our curriculum offerings this year, incorrect on why that decision was made. As course offerings will be considered moving forward, the course may be added based on student requests.

Another incorrect statement that is out there is that our journalism program is being shut down. This past year, our students placed very well at the State level for journalism. Our students will still have that opportunity this year, with other courses being offered such as digital media, yearbook, etc. The assumption that all journalism would be canceled is not only incorrect but blatantly misleading.

When decisions, such as temporarily pausing, not cancelling, a school newspaper is made, there are many variables that go into this decision as a district, including staffing support, student interest, class scheduling, and so forth. This decision wasn't made lightly, it wasn't made hastily, and I assure you, it wasn't made because of one specific reason as it has been incorrectly reported. The reporter that wrote the article was fully informed of these variables and how the district arrived at its decision but chose to write their interpretation of the situation and disregard the information provided to them.

There has been a very focused point on the canceling of the Saga allegedly due to the articles that were printed in the last issue of the 2021-2022 school year. Several articles focused on topics centered on the LGBTQIA+ community. There were also many other articles about events and activities at Northwest. In addition, there were many activities and articles that were not included in the paper, as well as other articles that needed proofreading to meet the levels of quality we expect at Northwest. None of these decisions had anything to do with the articles

District Office: 308-385-6398 - Fax: 308-385-6393 - 2710 N. North Road, Grand Island, NE 68803
Dr. Jeffrey E. Edwards, Superintendent - www.ginorthwest.org

EXHIBIT

10

https://theindependent.com/news/grand-island-student-newspaper-returning-digitally-following-controversial-cancellation/article_32a537a0-6231-11ed-b1ac-d7c70ad46ffc.html

FEATURED TOP STORY

Grand Island student newspaper returning digitally following controversial cancellation

Jessica Votipka
Nov 11, 2022



Northwest High School's newspaper, Viking Saga, was shut down after 54 years of publication in the spring. It is now returning in a digital-only format.
MCKENNA LAMOREE, THE INDEPENDENT

Jessica Votipka



The Northwest Viking Saga, the student-run high school newspaper halted in May, is returning during spring semester in a different format.

Kirsten Gilliland, adviser and teacher for the newspaper program, confirmed to the Independent Friday night the Saga is returning to Grand Island Northwest High School's class offerings next semester, but in a digital incarnation.

A district employee told The Independent earlier this year the paper was discontinued because of editorial content. That content concerned preferred names and the newspaper's June issue, which included student-written articles about LGBTQ issues.

Soon after the Saga's story was brought to light, ACLU of Nebraska was one of the organizations that pushed back against the Northwest Public Schools' decision to axe the paper, which had been published for 54 years.

People are also reading...

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-



Former Viking Saga newspaper staff members Marcus Pennell (left) and Emma Smith (right) display a pride flag outside of Northwest High after the school’s decision to disband the 54 year old journalism program because of written topics regarding the LGBTQ community.

MCKENNA LAMOREE, THE INDEPENDENT

According to Rose Godinez, an ACLU attorney leading their Saga legal team, renewing the paper isn’t good enough.

“In addition to the reinstatement of the school paper and its program, we asked for the development and implementation of policies to protect LGBTQ students for policies that would be both reasonable and viewpoint neutral to ensure this doesn’t happen again.”



‘Nurseries of democracy’: Northwest student journalism elimination a ‘Saga’

Godinez said ACLU of Nebraska has elaborated little about the publication’s print-and-ink presence.

“We haven’t really commented on the format, how this newspaper would be reinstated, nor who would be the teacher to lead it.”

Gilliland said, “They are going to start with an online format,” but added that she did not know of any other plans for the student publication.

Except for who will be advising and teaching material for the award-winning student newspaper.

“I know that it has been offered to another teacher.”

Mike Hiestand, senior legal counsel with the Student Press Law Center, has been standing with the Saga since early summer when news of the publication’s sudden demise broke.

He said there seems to be ulterior motives in Northwest Public Schools' decision to bring the newspaper back without Gilliland.

In an email, Hiestand said, "I know why they are doing what they are doing. You know why they are doing what they're doing. And it has absolutely nothing to do with making sure Grand Island's students are provided the best education possible."

Gilliland's rumored successor was contacted by the Independent via phone and email for comment but did not respond in time for publication.

Northwest Public Schools Superintendent Jeff Edwards and Northwest High School Principal PJ Smith were contacted via phone, text and email to confirm the Saga's return and provide comments. The Independent has not yet received a response to those requests.

Godinez said ACLU of Nebraska's Saga legal team hasn't received word from the district, either.

"We ... haven't been able to confirm or discuss the reinstatement and the other demands with the district's attorney or the district."

Marcus Pennell, one of the staff members of last school year's Saga, said he was glad to hear the Saga would be returning — in any format.

But is it enough?

"I'm not really sure," he said. "It's sad that they haven't said anything else about the names and pronouns."

The Nebraska student journalism censorship saga

Indications are Pennell's preferred name and pronouns played a part in the Saga's cancellation, which came at the end of his senior year.

Pennell said, matter-of-factly, “It’s AP Style to use people’s (preferred) names and pronouns.”

Godinez indicated the “viewpoint discrimination” directed towards Pennell and other LGBTQ Saga staff members is the crux of ACLU of Nebraska’s problem with the situation.

“The truth is, there was harm done here. We will not rest until we ensure that students’ First Amendment rights — and the right to express themselves and essentially be who they are.”

She said of the ACLU of Nebraska’s demands, which were submitted to Northwest Public Schools by the affiliate’s legal team late August:



'Viewpoint discrimination': ACLU Nebraska addresses Grand Island Northwest newspaper elimination

“I want to reiterate that not only includes the reinstatement of the school paper and the newspaper class, it also includes the implementation of policies and then an acknowledgement of the missteps that have taken place.

“We’ll continue to push for all of the demands that we included in our initial letter.”



Grand Island Northwest breaks silence on Saga

Jessica Votipka is the education reporter at the Grand Island Independent. She can be reached at 308-381-5420.



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By Jessica Votipka

Reporter

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