

As a kid, I'd write a narrative on every idea I found. I would review any book I'd read. I'd spend hours constructing the plot to my novel. Words drew me in — writing drew me in.

When I entered high school, journalism drew me in.

Throughout my three years on The Booster Redux staff, I've covered many high-caliber stories like the ones featured in this portfolio. But I've learned more than just how to write a proper lede or nut graf — my writing has taught me about life.

News was the first style of writing I ever pursued. Featured in this portfolio is one of my most impactful news stories, covering the dangerous roads around my high school after a student accident at a crosswalk. The story brought to light the miscommunication among my city and school district. A few months after the story printed, the city announced it would implement a four-way stop sign, a school speed zone and a rerouted bus system — all of which I wrote about. I learned that writing the truth is one of the most powerful ways of instigating change. Most importantly, I learned how to set aside controversy and stand up for my work.

I covered controversy again in the months after my math dept. implemented a new teaching system that raised concerns among parents and students. A staffer covered it a few months ago, but I knew the controversy's status had more to be told. I spent time talking to teachers, students and parents and researching the Kansas State Department of Education's standards. I learned the importance of balanced journalism and covering a sensitive topic factually.

I've always believed that covering students is my most important job. This year, I wrote the story of students who participate in a community service club as a way of following in the footsteps of Dylan Meier, a former PHS football standout who died in a hiking accident eight years ago. My next story covered a freshman who fell in love with American Sign Language (ASL) and taught it to students. I built relationships with my sources and payed pristine attention to details they shared to write narrative stories featuring their passions and personalities. I've learned students have powerful stories to share, and journalism's true power lies in the ability of finding them.

My newspaper has also given me an outlet to share my opinions. I write editorials about politics on a monthly basis. This year, I wrote an editorial on my frustrations regarding America's normalization of ad-hominem. Writing opinion pieces has taught me to embrace my voice and the power of my words. My opinions are representative of many of my fellow students', and sharing them has given them power, too.

Journalism has taught me the power of the truth. It's taught me how to tell unique people's stories. As a kid, I never recognized the impact that my pen could have. But now, I couldn't be more confident that this is what I was born to do.