

Munster High School Publications Department

Paragon
Yearbook

Crier
Newspaper

8808 Columbia
Munster, IN 46321

(219) 836-3200
ext. 3443

Adviser,
Ms. Sarah-Anne
Lanman
slanman@munster.us

Dear Selection Committee for the David Adams Hall of Fame:

I am honored to submit the Munster High School Publications Department for consideration for the inaugural class of the Dave Adams Hall of Fame. I have advised the yearbook and newspaper at MHS for the past ten years, inheriting the program after Nancy Hastings was at the helm for 38 years.

In this application, I have included the many ways that MHS supports the First Amendment. First, I describe how the school has set up supports for a free press. Then I have insight into my philosophy of being an adviser, teacher and coach while students make their own content decisions.

The students are at the core of all of this, so I have then included student voices from my staffs this year. I had my students center their thoughts around the core tenants of IHSPA as they spoke about their First Amendment rights. I have also included information about how they've really enjoyed being a part of publications: in knowing what I do about Dave Adams, it does seem that he'd want us to have some fun while speaking truth to power.

Additionally, I have compiled list of links to select coverage that students have published in the past few years. Finally, I have a letter of support from Mrs. Hastings, the previous adviser, who taught me all about the First Amendment and how to keep its protections.

Here's the way the school supports the First Amendment:

The structure and trust given to the publications department from the administration has been key to it's success. Here's how—

- The school's administration does not have exercise prior review. I am trusted as adviser, and I trust my students. While at times we've had some disagreements about what's been published, there has never been an instance of censorship.
- Students make final content decisions on what to publish.
- Editors of both publications maintain a good relationship with the principal, other administration, our central office and the school. The newspaper editor meets regularly with the principal, a practice that has been ongoing for years.
- The newspaper is an open forum. The government teacher insists we are the only student newspaper in Indiana that has never been censored.
- Journalism is part of the art and English curriculum. I teach yearbook and newspaper as co-curricular classes. I also teach photography and Journalism 1, which are pre-requisites for joining staff.
- The guidance department supports us in getting students to sign up for classes so that the program can keep going.
- Crier publishes a print edition about once a month, which is given out at lunch. They also maintain a website at <http://mhsnews.net>. Paragon is 196-pages, releasing in May, and we are given a field trip day to distribute the book during school hours.
- We have a dedicated classroom and computer lab (the only Mac lab in a Dell district). Students have access to professional level software and photography gear.
- I'm given autonomy in controlling the yearbook and newspaper budget.
- We are supported in going on field trips to state and national conventions. I do not have to fight to get a sub or professional development hours for journalism.
- The school celebrated our state and national awards. In the past ten years, we've won Hoosier Stars, NSPA Pacemakers and CSPA Crowns. I have also won awards for teaching and advising from JEA and CSPA.

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Here is my philosophy as an adviser:

My guiding principle is that my students have final content decisions. My knowledge of student press law is essential in my role as a newspaper adviser as well as to the yearbook. What matters is that both my staffs practice solid, well-researched, professional-level journalism. Both staffs start with a blank page and are trusted to build from there without anyone breathing down their neck.

That being said, I make sure that I read every word of what's going to press, sometimes multiple times. I don't decide what students will publish, but I will often caution them to think through the whole process of publishing something (or deciding against it). With Crier, I'm always trying to walk the tightrope of looking back on our strong journalistic tradition but also not telling them they should publish something because Crier has "always covered that topic." I often advise Crier to call the Student Press Law Center to get a lawyer's advice before publishing. With Paragon, there are certain things that we must cover from year to year, like sports, clubs, portraits and events. However, students are always encouraged to come up with different ways to publish about these things. I depend on my students to mentally yank me out of mindsets that I've developed from doing this for a while. In the past, I've had students change my mind on things like making the newspaper free (I was very stuck in my ways of charging 50 cents for it), having the yearbook be a spring delivery (I love the completeness of a fall delivery book) or deciding what photography gear that we should purchase (I'd maybe still be in the darkroom if I could be).

I do not micromanage, but I do watch carefully everything that students plan to report on in the newspaper and yearbook. If there is something that could be potentially explosive or go into unethical areas, we have a discussion about it. Sometimes discussions with small groups lead to larger lessons that I directly teach to the staff. I remind them that, even when press rights aren't on the line, that it's their publication and they **MUST** take ownership of all aspects. Our editorial policy helps guide certain decisions so we don't have to think of them at the moment.

The community and the administration are largely supportive of Crier's right to free speech. Last year saw an explosion of social media accounts of pictures taken around the school without the subjects knowing. These accounts, with handles like @mhscouples, @mhs.slump or @mhsconfessions would publish pictures of students in the school without their consent or knowledge. Crier did a front page story discussing student's First Amendment right— what it means for a newspaper student to take a picture in a hallway compared to someone who is randomly posting it online, what it means to lose control of your image on social media and what it means to be an American citizen. This story opened up conversations about what things belong on social media, even if it was just for the day the paper came out. Students also find themselves having to educate their peers on the role of a newspaper and how it's different from some anonymous social media account.

I was proud of their exploration of the First Amendment, but I'm maybe letting it overshadow their investigative piece about sexual assault. For this article, students reported for over a month, communicating with experts. They also worked through using an anonymous source ethically and keeping the administration informed without handing over their work. Earlier I said that Crier doesn't do things just because they've done them before, but there is a really strong tradition of running right to the beating heart of social issues.

Being able to delve deeply into thorny issues is the norm. We are lucky that the administration supports us and that the school community values reading about real things. But we also work very hard to make our own luck.

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Here's what the students had to say:

The following lists are quotes from Crier and Paragon students, centered around the core tenants of the IHSPA and how they fit with their press rights in action.

Their thoughts on how pub always aims to get the truth:

- We actually feature what students say and don't control it.
- On the newspaper, we use anonymous sources when deemed appropriate. We have good discussions, too, about what it means and why we're doing it.
- We published the covid issue with an anonymous source talking about being abused during quarantine— this was something that the school needed to show solidarity in the time of struggle.
- In sports stories, we acknowledge success and failures and don't lie about the reality of the season.
- We never make up sources or quote.
- Collaboration with pages and stories always requires a lot of truth. Being able to check up on one another and honestly update where we're at gives us a chance to help each other.
- We cover the school from the views of students, not the staff.
- We say what actually happened and are honest with our sources.
- We really dig through documents like professional journalists.
- We always aim to ask the right questions and listen closely.
- We were able to tell the truth about covid.

Their thoughts on how staffs show their freedom:

- During editorial board meetings, students really do get final say about what is published.
- We don't write about what the admin wants, but what students care about and want to say.
- The staff is allowed to totally make their own design choices— sometimes changing their pages entirely from what the editor wants.
- We have editorials and columns that allow us to freely express ourselves.
- We have the ability to go out in the halls, to non-academic classes, to interview people. We're allowed to use phones in a no-cell phone school.
- Crier always has freedom to publish the stories they want without school administrators needing to give permission. I would say that freedom is one of the most important values of Crier.
- We report on what we wanted. We have the ability to interview and include who we wanted— no one tells us what to include.
- Student decide the content for the yearbook.
- We can go to other schools to get sports photos.
- We have the freedom to email/talk to admin and ask questions about things we want to know that students aren't aware of.
- We get to decide what events we want to cover and how.
- We've had the freedom to speak out on what's right and what we think is wrong.
- In a number of stories, such as our mental health story, we've been able to criticize admin without fearing repercussions.

The times when they had to have courage in what they published:

- I've stepped out of my comfort zone to talk to the school board about difficult subjects. I've also attended faculty meetings to explore teacher PD and what it means for students. That was intimidating to do at first.
- During the writing process, especially about difficult topics like sexual assault, from the reporter, I really did stand up for what I thought should be published.
- We are always courageous when we decide the theme and the pictures for the cover of the yearbook.

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- We have to have courage to talk to teachers and staff to get information.
- Sometimes we take risks while taking pictures, like standing behind home plate or dodging golf balls.
- We get to talk to admin, which is intimidating.
- We had the courage to publish work on mental health and survey students about it without any backlash.
- Publishing our work will always take courage as we're sharing our hard work or events where we need to maintain control over ourselves and other people (like how we organize club photo day ourselves)

Their thoughts on how they had to have integrity as journalists:

- We make sure we have a written code of ethics and policies, like for website takedowns for the Crier website.
- Our Indiana house bill stories always try to show both sides to the story even if we don't agree.
- I hold myself accountable on whatever I publish, which is really important.
- We have to deal with difficult teachers and students.
- We are allowed to demonstrate integrity when speaking with Ms. Lanman about our opinions on the book. Ms. Lanman allows us to use freedom of speech to tell her what we want and what we don't want to publish.
- We never cut corners in writing stories.
- Whenever a source wants to be interviewed off the record, we uphold our promise to keep them anonymous.
- We spoke out against Andrew Tate.
- I'm able to honestly express whenever I need help without feeling stupid.

The times when they are really happy and having a great time with publications:

- I really enjoy talking with teachers and students about stuff on newspaper day— especially when sources have feedback on our stories.
- We get to have a pinata, a banquet, and we're always celebrating each other — but sometimes I'm just glad that I'm able to interview cause I like it.
- We color the ladder for every deadline and take funny, weird pictures to celebrate each other's accomplishments.
- It's so nice to share our hard work with the whole school.
- There is such satisfaction in finishing the yearbook. When we were finally finished, it really felt like we did a good job.
- Being able to look back on pictures, like for Homecoming this year, made it feel like it was before covid— that we can capture when people were joyous.
- I was able to talk to a student and her mom about a story I wrote. It was sweet knowing how proud the parents were and how the student felt represented.
- Getting to cover stuff like student jobs— to show how hard-working student are outside of school walls.
- I found it so satisfying to see something that took multiple days to create published in the newspaper.
- There is always a nice balance between joking around /having fun and getting work done.

Here are some select examples of coverage from both Crier and Paragon:

I have not gone through to include all the examples of potential controversial reporting in my ten years of advising, but I've tried to give a good cross-section. The newspaper has always been harder hitting in coverage, so many examples are from Crier. That doesn't mean the yearbook has shied away from difficult coverage. Paragon has published spreads on the issue of [race](#), [climate change](#), the difficulty of [being a young woman](#), [mental health](#) and issues with [sleep deprivation](#).

Crier gone right to the heart of the First Amendment by making it and the freedoms it provides [front page news](#). Note the jumps to page 4, along with information to

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educate their student readers about [how to read newspaper](#). As print newspapers become somewhat foreign to our readership due the decline in parents subscribing to papers at home, the newspaper staff has, at times, struggled with accusations of fake news-- which they've [dealt with head on](#).

The newspaper has covered difficult to discuss topics like [students facing poverty](#), [sexual assault](#), [gun violence](#), [domestic abuse](#), [underage driving](#) and [vaping](#). They were able to cover the pandemic in-depth, through [an entire special issue](#), how difficult it was to [live through a pandemic](#) and discussing [covid's impact on student learning](#).

Crier has reported on what's happening in Indiana law, like [the possible impact of House Bill 1608](#) this year, the surge of anti-LGBTQIA+ laws like [House Bill 1041](#) and how Indiana is buffeted by the culture wars as seen in [House Bill 1134](#) and the discus about critical race theory in schools. Crier will also always cover elections, both [presidential](#) and [midterm](#).

Crier has covered [race in America after George Floyd](#) along with writing an [editorial](#) in support of Black Lives Matter with no backlash. Before 2020, staff did a [series](#) about the changing racial makeup of MHS called [Breaking the Silence](#). Exploring [issues of race](#) has been a long running topic to discuss in the paper.

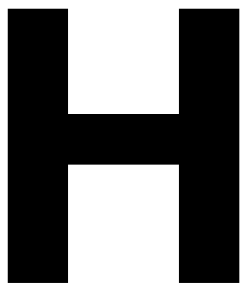
Finally, newspaper did extensive reporting on the financial crisis in our school town, with [extensive coverage](#) about the [debt](#), reporting on [50 staff members](#) abruptly losing their jobs, and the resulting [referendums](#) and [staff changes](#).

Again, thank you so much for your consideration of MHS pub for the Dave Adams Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,



Sarah-Anne Lanman, MJE
Munster High School | Publications Director



Nancy Hastings

9234 Prairie Ave
Highland, IN 46322

April 13, 2023

Dear Hall of Fame Selection Committee,

It is with great pride that I recommend Munster High School as a David Adams Hall of Fame inductee. Munster student media have always believed and practiced the rights and core principals of press freedom and the First Amendment... truth, integrity and courage, based on sound research, journalism law and ethical behavior.

Crier has never been afraid to tackle issues that matter to its readers. The staff understands the importance of credibility when reporting and getting it right. They realize that accuracy and truthfulness are key to reporting all sides of an issue. Crier believes in its role as an outlet for student, faculty and community opinion. From editorials educating readers to offering solutions to problems, Crier exercises its voice. It also solicits letters to the editor so readers can share their opinions and solutions. The staff understands their role in lighting the way for better understanding and knowledge on key subjects and issues. Crier's reputation depends on the identity the staff has created through its actions and application of journalism law, ethics and principals in coverage and leadership. And this identity has been rewarded with countless honors on the state and national level. And more importantly, this identity has been recognized by a supportive administration at both the high school and district level.

On top of all this, I knew Dave Adams personally and his strong beliefs in First Amendment rights and responsibilities of student journalists. It would truly honor his memory to name Munster High School media a David Adams Hall of Fame inductee.

Sincerely,
Nancy Hastings