



SIMPLY BETTER:

2022 KSPA State Contest First Place Entries Writing Contest W1 through W9

The entries below were the winners in the annual KSPA State Contest in nine different writing categories. The contest was divided into three different classifications based on school size: 1A/2A, 3A/4A, 5A/6A. The entries below earned first place out of the entries in their classification, although judges awarded up to 6 places in each category.

Please click on the hyperlinks below to jump to the entry listed.

You can find the prompts for this contest and many past KSPA contests [on the KSPA website](#).

[Contest W1: Copyediting](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Trudy Hein: Hillsboro High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Ava Belchez: Bishop Miege High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Megan Yates: Blue Valley Northwest High School](#)

[Contest W2: Sports Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Zachary Daily: Conway Springs High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Jayden Gensweider: Chanute High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Greyson Imm: Shawnee Mission East High School](#)

[Contest W3: Yearbook Copy Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Trudy Hein: Hillsboro High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Claire Wicker : Bishop Miege High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Kylie Hess: Blue Valley Northwest High School](#)

[Contest W4: Feature Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Emersyn Funk: Hillsboro High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Emersyn Funk: Hillsboro High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Arshiya Pant: Blue Valley North High School](#)

[Contest W5: News Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Emma Alderman: Wabaunsee High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Janessa Varndell: Chanute High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Cuyler Dunn: Lawrence High School](#)

[Contest W6: Outline Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Sophia Glanville: Chase County Jr.-Sr. High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Tucker Hudson: Girard High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Charley Thomas: Blue Valley High School](#)

[Contest W7: Editorial Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Mia Duerksen: Hillsboro High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Katherine Moores: Bishop Miege High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Fletcher Knowles: Shawnee Mission South High School](#)

[Contest W8: Yearbook Sports Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: Emersyn Funk: Hillsboro High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Rachel Womeldorff: Augusta High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Cooper Chadwick: Derby High School](#)

[Contest W9: Review Writing](#)

[1st Place in 1A/2A: AJ Grutsch: Wabaunsee High School](#)

[1st Place in 3A/4A: Minna Meyer: Louisburg High School](#)

[1st Place in 5A/6A: Lyda Cosgrove: Shawnee Mission East High School](#)

Contest W1: Copyediting

1st Place in 1A/2A: Trudy Hein: Hillsboro High School

Hello, I can tell you worked very hard on this story, and this is a great first draft!! You have some great content and I love how you included lots of information about the school lunches. However, I found myself stumbling upon it, and it was not super easy to read, so I will give you some pointers on how to make your story better.

One thing I noticed was how you spelled the names differently throughout the piece. You could work on researching the correct spellings of last names and make sure you consistently use them correctly throughout the story.

I love how you described the room in the first paragraph, but I wonder if you could rewrite it in 3rd person so it matches the rest of the story (try not to use the word "you"). Another consideration for this paragraph would be to eliminate it. I had a hard time finding how it added many benefits or contributions to your story.

Another thing that you can work on is in your transitions. Try to include some new information in interesting ways, so you're not just repeating the content of what the quote says. It will also make your story more readable to add in some general, non-biased facts in the transitions instead of using people's opinions in both transitions and quotes. This may require some more research. This will add in some of your own voice and tone, but without having the current biased-sounding story.

I believe the last paragraph contains some important information, which you should include in your lead, so people are more interested in reading on. Always put your most important information at the top.

Another thing I would recommend is re-ordering your quotes. It seems like they're just on the page, so try to be more mindful of where you're placing them, with the most important ones at the top, and ranked down from that. You also want to keep in mind that the quotes should flow together in the order you place them. This will make your story come to life.

Here's some additional basic structure corrections. In the 2nd paragraph, make sure you use proper versions of verbs (students are, not students is). Throughout the whole article, stay consistent in your tenses of verbs. You can also take a look at the AP style book to see when to use the ellipses, how to format numbers, and more style corrections. I suggest indenting each paragraph, so the start is clearly evident in each one.

Keep up the great work! Remember that consistency is key in journalism! This story has some great potential!

1st Place in 3A/4A: Ava Belchez: Bishop Miege High School

- -Lead should set the scene more clearly "Walking into the Sunflower High School cafeteria, you see cliques of students..."
- -Be consistent with "O'Brien" or "O'Brian" and "Patterson" or "Paterson"
- -Avoid opinionated adjectives such as "bravely" and "impassioned"
- -Fourth paragraph: "percent" should be "%"

- -Sixth paragraph: Remove "it" because it is replaced by the bracketed words
- -Seventh paragraph- Change "Kansas's" to "the state's"
- -"which is available every day but seldom served warm enough to enjoy" sounds opinionated
- -Twelfth paragraph: Remove "They"
- -Fifteenth paragraph: Spell out "seven", omit "of the Sunflower High School"
- -Be consistent with "Sunflower High School" or "SHS"
- -Remove the last sentence of the story
- -The story could be made more effective by adding a kicker quote at the end

Overall, the story seems slightly biased, which could be remedied by removing opinionated wording. Also, the opposing side states that there is a solution that will be explored as soon as more premium options are available, which weakens the reason for the petition, as even with it, there is not likely to be any change. Especially since there are very few signatures on the petition as of now. There are several inconsistencies with names of people and of the school and the Friends of the Earth club should be elaborated upon.

1st Place in 5A/6A: Megan Yates: Blue Valley Northwest High School

This news story has a strong foundation with a few areas to improve. For starters, the lede cannot include "you" pronouns. Also, it is irrelevant to mention other "cliques" at Sunflower High when the story solely focuses on the environmentalists. A stronger lede could be an instance involving a specific time the environmentalists felt alienated by the lunch menu, or the writer could mention the defining moment when this group of students knew they wanted to make a change. Next, the writer misspells the names "O'Brien" and "Patterson" throughout the story. Names should be one of the first things writers check when editing. Also, there are some moments in which the writer editorializes, such as when stating O'Brien "bravely stepped up" or calling Patterson "impassioned." Remove these words from the story. Let the quotes themselves speak to the environmentalists' bravery and passion. Speaking of quotes, be mindful of when you insert brackets. During Patterson's quote, the writer inserts [eating vegetarian] to explain what Patterson meant by "it." Since the writer has replaced "it," there is no need to include the word. Meaning the line should instead read, "...because [eating vegetarian] is a choice..." Some smaller errors are the inconsistent capitalization of "district" and the missing space between the tenth and eleventh paragraphs. The writer needs to capitalize "District" when it stands alone. Finally, the details surrounding the petition are not convincing. O'Brien is self-reporting the petition results and includes a margin of error. To enhance the story's credibility, I recommend the writer conduct their own survey through a more credible source (such as the school's grading system, announcements or Sunflower publication's social media accounts). In doing so, the writer will have a second source to either defend O'Brien's claims or contrast them. By revising the story based on the comments above, the writer can make this a great story!

Contest W2: Sports Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Zachary Daily: Conway Springs High School

With footwork, teamwork, and pregame tacos, the Buffalos brought the Narwhals to their knees, ending the Narwhals 28 game winning streak at the Oct. 14 Game. Sophomore Bennett Genson thinks the win could help the Buffalos hold momentum through the season.

“You have to think that a game like this will give us energy for the rest of the season. How could it not?” Genson said. While energy was high after the match, the story wasn’t so similar before the game. There was doubt about the team’s upcoming performance from younger players.

“I don’t want to say that we doubted ourselves coming into the game but it was pretty hard to convince some of the younger players that we had any chance in the world.” said sophomore Nate Menfee. “I mean, they had 14 games – just this season — in a row before us.” Menfee continued. While the team’s outlook might have been somewhat somber, a special pregame ritual might have helped to boost morale.

“Our pregame ritual these days has been to go get as many tacos as possible from someone’s house. Usually Otto’s. And then we eat half of them before the game and then pig out on the second half of them after the game.” said Genson. After their meal, the Buffalos lined up for the match, taking the field at 7:30 in front of a crowd of 300 plus.

In the first half, the Narwhals scored three points, and held defense, keeping the Buffalos from scoring any. In the second half, the Buffalos made a comeback, scoring 5 points while preventing any score from the Narwhals. Senior Mauricio Pounder describes the celebration of the fourth goal.

“When we scored that fourth goal I sprinted all the way from my goalie position all the way to where the guys were celebrating. I have never done that before in all the years that I’ve played soccer,” said Pounder. “It’s not that I haven’t seen impressive goals or won big games but we have never come back from three goals down like that before” he continued.

When everything was said and done, the Buffalos emerged victorious, winning five-to-three setting the Buffalos season at Seven-to-Eight. At the end of the night, a tradition was remembered, and Pounder summed it up, saying “I’m ready for some post-game tacos y’all! Let’s go!”

1st Place in 3A/4A: Jayden Gensweider: Chanute High School

The Sunflower Mighty Buffalo soccer team met up with the North Clinton Narwhals in Clinton on Thursday. Sunflower took the win 5-3 behind a hat trick from sophomore Bennett Genson.

“It's nearly impossible to predict what these boys are going to do on a nightly basis. You think the season is going to go one way and then it just veers off and goes a completely different direction during a game like this,” Sunflower head coach Tyronne Patrick said, “We have been working really really hard at pressing on offense... This game was the first time that we really put that tactic into full use. And I think I like the result!”

North Clinton started the game in dominant fashion. Nico Henrigo scored the first Narwhal goal in just the third minute. Then Henrigo assisted Maxwell Thonson on a goal in the 15th minute. In the 21st minute, North Clinton would extend their lead to three courtesy of a goal by Jake Ott. The first half would end with North Clinton up 3-0.

“That first half was grueling for me. They were counterattacking like crazy and I just couldn't get in front of their shots,” Sunflower’s senior goalkeeper Mauricio Pounder said.

The second half would be a whole different ball game. Sunflower came out of the break hot, with Genson scoring two goals in the first ten minutes of the half; both assisted by sophomore Nate Menfee. Then in the 52nd minute, Sunflower freshman Isaac Hernandez scored the tying goal.

Both teams would go 23 minutes without scoring until Genson scored his third goal, once again assisted by Menfee. That goal gave Sunflower the 4-3 lead. The Mighty Buffalo would tack on one more goal for good measure off the foot of sophomore Chris Swanson three minutes later. Sunflower wins 5-3.

“Near the end of that game I couldn't sub players in and out fast enough. My boys were just so winded with the way that they were pressing us. And I think my players were a little bit emotionally wrecked by having given up that big lead,” North Clinton’s head coach Isabella Nystrom said, “I will admit that my heart rate was going bonkers as well because I just couldn't find any solution for their formation.”

1st Place in 5A/6A: Greyson Imm: Shawnee Mission East High School

With a five-point comeback in the second half, the Sunflower High Mighty Buffalo defeated the North Clinton County Narwals 5-3 during October 14’s boys varsity soccer game.

At the end of the first half, SHS was down 3-0 and the players’ spirits were fading as fatigue and a sense of premature defeat set in. Taking a few minutes to regroup as a team before second half’s kickoff, they planned to press heavily on offense to offset the opponent’s defensive strategy of counter-attacking and then sitting back.

“Going down three goals in the first half was just a gut punch for us,” SHS coach Tyronne Patrick said. “We have had a hard time coming from behind in games like this because the other team can sit back and not be urgently trying to score.”

This strategy, which drew a majority of the offensive players midfield, allowed sophomore striker Bennett Genson to get open and score two goals in the 45th and 49th minutes respectively, both assisted by sophomore midfielder Nate Menfee.

“I am so grateful to have [Menfee] serving those passes to me on the attack,” Genson said. “Nate is just such a skilled player when it comes to breaking people down one-on-one. And once he beats that person it means that another defender has to go help to contain him. That always seems to leave me open.”

Soon after Genson’s two goals, freshman Isaac Hernandez — assisted by sophomore Otto Randolph — tied NCCHS 3-3 in the 52nd minute.

Though the team was excited after Hernandez’s goal, the real celebration didn’t come until the team’s fourth in minute 75 by Genson assisted by Menfee. Three minutes later, sophomore Chris Swanson, assisted by freshman Kendrick Thomas, scored the fifth and final goal.

“The fourth goal that we scored was just incredible,” Genson said. “I was super surprised that we came back from a deficit like that but then to take the lead was a crazy celebration moment. I jumped into Nate’s arms and he fell over onto like three other players and we were just screaming, laying on the turf there.”

NCCHS coach Isabella Nystrom says she’s grateful to learn from playing a team with so much young talent and creativity in her run to win the state championship for the second consecutive year — a task proving difficult as long as they keep facing talented and bold teams like SHS.

Contest W3: Yearbook Copy Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Trudy Hein: Hillsboro High School

Striving to make the school a better place, Slam Dunk the Junk fights to eliminate littered garbage around Sunflower High School campus. The school’s clean up crew, made of basketball players, impacts the environment, community, and their basketball teams.

Ken Aoife, SHS vice principal, addresses how the school elevated its trash amount this year. Some students and teachers credit this garbage increase to the new common lunch hour caused by the COVID pandemic.

“Unfortunately, we have a bit of a negative reputation with littering,” Aoife said. “I mean, it’s seriously gotten out of control this past school year.”

Basketball players Haja Odeh, senior, and Sebastian Torres, junior, recognized their school’s problem, gathered their basketball teams to meet once a week and now pick up trash around the school.

“Slam Dunk The Junk came out of the idea that we need to clean up our campus,” Odeh said. “It’s really gross to have to walk past trash when coming to school, especially for one of our basketball games, and it’s even grosser for someone to have to clean, especially considering most of the trash is food.”

The clean up crew developed into 37 members and filled around 40 trash bags a month this school year. According to Aoife, Slam Dunk the Junk is truly helping the environment.

“Ever since the basketball players rolled up their sleeves, our school and the surrounding environment has greatly improved,” Aoife said. “It even smells cleaner when you’re walking in from the parking lot or the bus circle.”

In addition, this is not just a project that benefits the environment: the cleaner uppers claim they also enjoy the process. Mollie Popov, sophomore basketball player, points out how this activity brings her joy.

“It’s been cool to help the school get cleaner and it’s really fun to hang out with all my friends while I volunteer,” Popov said.

The group only has one issue currently, according to Odeh: the groups fight over who gets to clean up outside because they desire to find weird junk. In solution, they decided to switch off which group cleans where.

“Seriously, a lot of people look forward to club meetings, myself included,” Odeh said. “On the outside, it looks like picking up garbage. But it’s been really enlightening for everyone to get to know each other. We support each other a lot more now.”

1st Place in 3A/4A: Claire Wicker : Bishop Miege High School

Co-founders of Slam Dunk the Junk, senior Haja Odeh and junior Sebastian Torres, combat the school’s growing litter issue as they collect trash from around the school and foster a community within their club.

The club was founded three years ago as a way for basketball players to come together and create a cleaner school environment. There are currently 37 members and the club meets every Wednesday after school to pick up trash on campus.

“I talked to my friend Sebastian and we came with the idea for a club that meets once a week to pick up trash,” Odeh said. “I never imagined how much joy it would bring people.”

According to varsity girls basketball coach Sean Mullan, the club has given the basketball teams something to bond over.

“Before the club, girls basketball players and boys basketball players didn’t have space to come together and spend time with each other,” Mullan said. “Now, they show up to each other’s games and are the loudest ones in the stands.”

With the new common-hour lunch policy, all students eat lunch at once to avoid the cafeteria becoming overcrowded due to COVID-19. This has caused the amount of trash left on school grounds at a time to increase.

“In the past, there might have been trash more often but not as much at one time because not everyone was eating at the same time,” vice principal Ken Aoife said.

Oden said that the group’s only problem is figuring out who gets to clean outside and find the “weirder” trash.

“We find some crazy stuff out there sometimes,” Torres said. “It feels like a weird treasure hunt and you could really find anything.”

Slam Dunk the Junk has collected an average of 39 garbage bags a month this school year.

“Ever since the basketball players rolled up their sleeves, our school and the surrounding environment has greatly improved,” Aoife said. “It even smells cleaner when you are walking in from the parking lot or bus circle.”

1st Place in 5A/6A: Kylie Hess: Blue Valley Northwest High School

Junk Dunk

Basketball players clean up the school

Trash is not something that usually brings people together, but in the case of the group Slam Dunk the Junk, trash did just that. Vice Principal Ken Aoife said that due to the increase in littering throughout the campus and on the side road leading up to the school, the school had developed a negative reputation. The increase in trash was credited to a change in policy which led to all students eating together during a common lunch hour.

Senior varsity girls basketball player Haja Odeh and junior varsity boys basketball player Sebastian Torres created the group Slam Dunk the Junk in order to combat a culture of littering on campus. They met once a week to pick up garbage in and around the school.

“Ever since the basketball players rolled up their sleeves, our school and the surrounding environment has greatly improved,” Aoife said. “It even smells cleaner when you’re walking in from the parking lot or the bus circle.”

At first Slam Dunk the Junk was made up of only a few basketball players, but it grew to contain practically everyone from every basketball team, Torres said.

Contest W4: Feature Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Emersyn Funk: Hillsboro High School

In March of 2021, junior Tammy Meyer began writing what would become an eight-minute short film that delves into the emotional impact of domestic abuse.

Sophomores Mergan Doban, Eric Russel and Garrett Wills as well as freshman Phoebe Ito assisted her with different aspects of the film. Doban was director of photography, Russel was the producer and Wills and Ito played lead roles in the film, which follows the experience of a victim of domestic abuse.

“I think I really just wanted to give a voice to victims of domestic abuse,” Meyer said. “One of my closest friends and I had a discussion about how this sort of situation impacted her; that’s when we started writing the script. She asked not to be named or associated with the project for safety reasons, but she really gave me the heart at the center of this short film.”

Domestic abuse is a serious and heavy topic to cover, but the group of young filmmakers was aware of that as they started, and enlisted the help of a professional.

“There is some violence, but we spent a long time researching to make sure we weren’t exploiting a really sensitive topic,” Meyer said. “We talked to a local filmmaker about how we could achieve some of the things we wanted to do while still being careful with the topic.”

The group felt that domestic abuse and the effects of it needed to be brought to light, and they were willing to make the film slightly uncomfortable to meet that goal

“We don’t go into heavy detail about the actual violent act,” Meyer said. “We tried to depict the impact and trauma that victims have to deal with. I don’t want people to walk away from the movie saying, ‘Everything gets better.’ I want them to be really upset and charged enough to talk about it.”

Still, some of the group members struggled with how serious the film would be, especially being aware of the impact it could have on their audience.

“I was really nervous to be a part of this project because I didn’t want it to reflect negatively on me because of the topic of domestic abuse. I was worried the point of the film wouldn’t really translate. After I watched it, after Tammy threw all of the videos we made together, I wasn’t nervous anymore. It is about so much more than just Tammy or even me.”

As the film progressed, the group realized the weight of what they created.

“Now that I’ve done it and watched all the pieces come together, I realized the film is revealing something about the way our society runs,” Dogan said.

The short film will premiere Friday, February 25th in the Sunflower High School auditorium. Student admission is free, non-student admission is five dollars.

1st Place in 3A/4A: Emma Goulding: Bishop Miego High School

By documenting the violence experienced by domestic abuse victims, junior Tammy Meyer aimed to give them a voice. With the help of some of her fellow students at Sunflower High School, Meyer was able to create an eight-minute film showing the emotional trauma of domestic abuse.

Meyer was influenced to create this project by collaborating closely with her friend. She spent a lot of time researching the topic to ensure that the film would be sensitive to victims of this type of abuse.

“One of my closest friends and I had a discussion about how this sort of situation impacted her, that’s when we started writing the script,” Meyer said. “She asked not to be named or associated with the project for safety reasons, but she really gave me the heart at the center of this short film.”

Sophomore Merba Dogan worked as the director of photography. Her love of photography developed when she first got a phone with a camera and used that to document her life.

“I didn’t really come up with the idea, Tammy just knew me from class and asked me to help,” Dogan said. “Honestly, I was surprised that she asked me to help work on something so profound. Now that I’ve done it and watched all the pieces come together, I realized the film is revealing something about the way our society runs.”

Sophomore Eric Russell was brought on at the beginning of the project to work as the producer. During his freshman year, Russell joined the video productions class and really enjoyed it.

“I was surprised by how long it took to actually shoot everything,” Russell said. “It’s not like we got to the location and just started taking videos; we had to set up a ton of equipment and make sure everything was charged.”

The leads were played by freshman Phoebe Ito and sophomore Garrett Wills, who are both a part of the school theater department.

“I was worried the point of the film wouldn’t really translate,” Ito said. “After I watched it, after Tammy threw all of the videos we made together, I wasn’t nervous anymore. It is about so much more than just Tammy or even me.”

The students talked to local filmmaker Katie Wakefield about how to correctly address the subject of the film.

“In all my years of commercial work, I have never had the guts to tackle something as sensitive as domestic abuse,” Wakefield said. “[Tammy’s] courage is incredible. I was honestly very glad to pass down some of my knowledge to a young filmmaker.”

The film will premiere at the school on Friday, Feb. 25 in the school auditorium. There is no fee to watch for students, but non-students are required to pay a five dollar entrance fee.

"I don't want people to walk away from the movie saying, 'Everything gets better,'" Meyer said. "I want them to be really upset and changed enough to talk about it."

1st Place in 5A/6A: Arshiya Pant: Blue Valley North High School

One day during the production of their short film, freshman Phoebe Ito and junior Tammy Meyer embraced each other, sobbing from the intensity and emotional impact of the scene they had just shot. Now, a year later, a group of students are premiering the film at the Sunflower High School auditorium on Feb. 25, hoping to spread its powerful message. The film explores the effects and emotional trauma of domestic abuse.

According to Meyer, a conversation with a close friend inspired her to begin writing the script in March 2021 to give victims of domestic abuse a voice.

"One of my closest friends and I had a discussion about how this sort of situation impacted her; that's when we started writing the script," Meyer said. "... she really gave me the heart at the center of this short film."

Meyer said her and the production team she formed were aware of the subject's sensitivity, and wanted to ensure they articulated their message appropriately. They contacted local independent filmmaker Katie Wakefield for advice on how to approach the issue carefully.

"We had several discussions about how to correctly film something this sensitive ... [Meyer's] courage is incredible. I was honestly very glad to pass down some of my knowledge to a young filmmaker," Wakefield said.

These discussions aided the team during production, which involved filming at multiple locations, organizing materials digitally and managing equipment. According to sophomore and producer Eric Russell, these tasks were challenging, but did not detract from a polished result.

"It's not like we got to the location and just started taking videos; we had to set up a ton of equipment and make sure everything was charged," Russell said. "It was my first experience on a set and even though it didn't look super expensive, we were all super professional."

The team also learned valuable lessons outside of filmmaking. Director of photography, sophomore Merba Dogan, said shooting the film taught her more about the social issues that were depicted.

"I was surprised that [Meyer] asked me to help work on something so profound. Now that I've done it and watched all the pieces come together, I realized the film is revealing something about the way our society runs," Dogan said.

Like Dogan, Ito gained a deeper social understanding through participating in the film, despite the actress's initial concern about its portrayal of social issues.

“I was really nervous to be a part of this project ... I was worried the point of the film wouldn’t really translate,” Ito said. “After I watched it ... I wasn’t nervous anymore. It is about so much more than just Tammy or even me.”

Wakefield helped the students decide to hold the premiere to celebrate and optimize the film’s social impact on their community.

“The most important aspect of any screening event ... is the opportunity for artists to be celebrated and supported ... and for the emotional, aesthetic or social impact of their art to be felt by an audience,” Wakefield said.

Contest W5: News Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Emma Alderman: Wabaunsee High School

This is a good start to the story and this topic is definitely one that needs to be covered. My first comment is that the story seems a little opinionated at the beginning. When you first mention O'Brien in the story it is stated that she "stepped up bravely" to start the petition. That is unnecessary to include unless you are writing an opinion piece. Then again with Ismerelda Patterson you stated she is an "impassioned" student. I think you should include that she is involved in the petition but the extra adjective is unnecessary. I do think this story could work as an opinion piece if wanted and then it could include these extra bits but as it as written as a news story I don't think they should be included. I also think you should delete or revise the first paragraph. While the imagery is cool I don't think it quite fits into the story. I think starting with the second paragraph would be strong. There are a couple of grammatical errors in the story too. There should a be a space between the tenth and eleventh paragraphs and the spelling of O'Brien's last name needs fact checked as it is spelled in different ways throughout the story. I would also see if there is anymore information on the petition you could get, maybe a quote from someone who signed it but wasn't originally involved with it. The data included at the end is a little confusing too and if you could elaborate on it that would be helpful. Keep working on it and I think this story will be a great one.

1st Place in 3A/4A: Janessa Varndell: Chanute High School

A teacher from Sunflower High School was caught allegedly shoplifting and charged with theft. The teacher is now awaiting a trial date for any further sentencing.

Drama teacher Angela Botto was caught allegedly shoplifting makeup from an Ulta cosmetics store located in Clinton, Kansas. Botto was then arrested by the Clinton Police Department on Dec. December 17, 2021.

Botto was personally questioned about the misdemeanor.

“This was a big personal mistake on my part. I did things — and said things to the police — that I now regret. However, I don’t have any further comment at this time,” said Botto.

Bottos claims that the product she attempted to steal was for her class.

“There was no larger organization influencing the actions of Angela. She said that the items were going to be used for a class project in her drama class. She said that she was teaching the students how to apply makeup for an upcoming school play. We have not investigated that statement more extensively to determine its veracity. The crime was isolated, but it’s not like we don’t see this kind of thing a lot,” said Catherine Scott, arresting police officer from the Clinton Police Department.

This brought up some controversy on whether the school supplies the teachers with all their needs. The superintendent of Clinton School District, Michael Magaña, spoke out about the accusations.

“We strive to buy our teachers all of the supplies that they need. We never want them to feel under pressure to purchase items with their personal money. And we certainly don’t want them to feel under pressure to steal anything,” said Magaña.

Other fellow employees defended Botto and her motives.

“I’m not going to say that she was a scapegoat, but I will say that teachers are in an impossible position these days. Seeing your students not have the supplies they need is ridiculous, especially during a pandemic. I believe everything she told the police,” said Paulo Hutfles, teacher at Sunflower High.

Many individuals were shocked by the events and claimed it was very out of character for Botto. They described her as caring and many believed her to be harmless in her actions.

“Ms. Botto is a great teacher, I know she cares a lot about her students. I mean, the circumstances and how she was willing to steal for the makes that clear,” said Hutfles.

1st Place in 5A/6A: Cuyler Dunn: Lawrence High School

It turns out the most drama in the Sunflower High School drama program is not found on the stage as students prepare for their upcoming production of “The Crucible.” It’s found at an Ulta beauty shop in Clinton, Kansas.

That’s where SHS drama teacher Angela Botto was arrested for shoplifting cosmetic products on Friday Dec. 17.

She was seen on security cameras putting items into her bag without paying for them. When she tried to leave, security tags on the products set off store alarms and she was quickly detained by store personnel and later arrested by police.

The motive for the theft is still unknown, but Botto claimed that the products were necessary for an upcoming project in one of her drama classes.

“She said that she was teaching the students how to apply make up for an upcoming school play,” police officer Catherine Scott said. “We have not investigated that statement more extensively to determine its veracity.”

SHS physical education teacher, and Botto’s coworker, Paulo Hutfles was sympathetic to Botto’s reasoning.

“I’m not going to say that she was a scapegoat, but I will say that teachers are in an impossible position these days,” Hutfles said. “Seeing your students not have the supplies they need is ridiculous, especially during a pandemic.”

Clinton School District superintendent Michael Magaña said the district strives to make sure teachers have everything they need to adequately teach their classes.

“We never want them to feel under pressure to purchase items with their personal money,” he said. “And we certainly don’t want them to feel under pressure to steal anything.”

The district has yet to act on the still ongoing incident. Previously, staff have been fired for similar offenses.

“I stress that we don’t know the full story here, and we would not take any employment action until we have a better understanding of all of the legal facts,” Magaña said.

Botto expressed regret for the actions but didn’t comment further on the motives for the theft. She had a previous incident with shoplifting in May of 2021 when she was arrested for stealing bracelets.

The district continues to maintain that student safety is its top priority in all decisions.

“As superintendent, I oversee everything, including hiring and there was nothing on Ms. Botto’s file that would have predicted this incident,” Magaña said. “Clinton Schools are committed to protecting our students.”

Contest W6: Outline Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Sophia Glanville: Chase County Jr.-Sr. High School

CAPTION #1

During the kickoff of the Sunflower High School homecoming game, students Ashlyn Jones, Samuel Rener, Bradley Blankenship, Luca Mara, Russel Tyskyo, Brady Reed, Issac Moore, RJ Annand cheer on the Bison. The game was against the Bison’s rival school the Moonflower High School Astronauts. “When I was in middle school and would come to football games with my parents, I couldn’t wait to be old enough to join Sunflower’s student section,” said Blankenship. “They were always loud and rowdy, cheering on the Bisons. They all looked like they were having so much fun and I couldn’t wait to be a part of it.”

CAPTION #2

Riding together during the homecoming parade in downtown Clinton, seniors Simone Williams and Anderson Wright greet the crowd. Williams and Wright were both nominated to the homecoming court by their classmate and won King and Queen before the game on Sept. 23. “Can’t wait to be the best homecoming king Sunflower High School has ever seen. But seriously, it is an honor to be nominated and recognized by my peers in this way, and I just want to say thank you to those who voted for me. It really is an honor, and I can’t wait to win this football game,” said Wright.

CAPTION #3

Walking in the Sunflower High School homecoming parade, students from the Lawndale Elementary School and Tupelo Middle School help support their local high school. Students from these schools have been a part of the parade for the past five years. “The students really love participating in the parade,” said Lawndale third grade teacher Rachel Feeney. “They talk about it all week.”

CAPTION #4

While marching in the homecoming parade, students from the Sunflower High School marching band and the Tupelo Middle School marching band join forces to perform for the crowds. High School band director Lydia MacDonald has been conducting the band for the past 16 years. “A few years back I asked Mr. Roach [the middle school band director] if his middle school marching band would like to play with my high school marching band during the homecoming parade,” said MacDonald. “Since then it has been a big hit. I love seeing the talent that comes from the middle school.”

CAPTION #5

Many little girls dream of becoming a high school cheerleader and this is especially true for Emma Keller. Keller, who is a kindergartener at Lawndale Elementary School, went to the homecoming parade with her mom to see the Sunflower High School cheerleaders. “When I am older, I will be at the front of the parade with my totally awesome cheerleaders. We will be the best,” said Keller

1st Place in 3A/4A: Tucker Hudson: Girard High School

CAPTION #1

SHS students Ashlyn Jones, Samuel Rener, Bradley Blankenship, Luca Mara, Russel Tyskyo, Brady Reed, Issac Moore and RJ Annand celebrate following the kickoff of the homecoming football game against Moonflower Highschool Sept. 23. Blankenship, a senior, stated, “When I was in middle school and would come to football games with my parents, I couldn’t wait to be old enough to join Sunflower’s student section. They were always loud and rowdy, cheering on the Bisons.”

CAPTION #2

2021 homecoming Queen and King nominees Simone Williams and Anderson Wright ride down Main Street Sept. 22 during the homecoming parade. Williams is a cheerleader, plays flute for the band and is a member of the SHS student council. Wright competes in football and baseball at SHS.

CAPTION #3

Lawndale Elementary Students, alongside their teachers, walk in the 43rd annual Clinton homecoming parade Sept. 22. Students and teachers from Lawndale have been participating in the parade for five years.

CAPTION #4

Tupelo Middle School marching band members march alongside SHS band members during the homecoming parade Sept. 22. Tupelo drummer Ezra Baio expressed his enjoyment of the activity, explaining, “Playing with the high school drumline is my favorite part of the school year. I really like it. It is fun.”

CAPTION #5

Rita Keller and her five year-old daughter Emma Keller enjoy the 2021 Clinton homecoming parade Sept. 22. “When I am older, I will be at the front of the parade with my totally awesome cheerleaders. We will be the best,” Emma told Sunflower News.

1st Place in 5A/6A: Charley Thomas: Blue Valley High School

CAPTION #1

Bolstering the Bison. Senior Bradley Blankenship throws his fist forward in excitement during the kickoff of Sunflower High’s homecoming football game against the Moonflower Astronauts. The students at the event,

which took place on Sept. 23, were provided decorations for the stands by the school's homecoming committee. "When I was in middle school and would come to football games with my parents, I couldn't wait to be old enough to join Sunflower's student section," Blankenship said. "They were always loud and rowdy, cheering on the Bisons. They all looked like they were having so much fun and I couldn't wait to be a part of it."

CAPTION #2

Cruising to victory. Seniors Anderson Wright and Simone Williams ride down Mainstreet in downtown Clinton on Sept. 22, just one day before they were announced homecoming king and queen. Both expressed gratitude for their supporting classmates for affording them the opportunity to become royalty and participate in the homecoming car parade, a time-honored tradition at Sunflower High. "Can't wait to be the best homecoming king Sunflower High School has ever seen," Wright said. "But seriously, it is an honor to be nominated and recognized by my peers in this way, and I just want to say thank you to those who voted for me."

CAPTION #3

Future 'Flowers. Rachel Feeney hoists balloons in the air as she marches through downtown Clinton accompanied by fellow teachers and students of Lawndale Elementary. Feeney's students, along with those of Tupelo Middle School, will someday attend Sunflower High, and both schools joined the lineup of the annual homecoming tradition 5 years ago. "The students really love participating in the parade," Feeney said. "They talk about it all week."

CAPTION #4

Drumming up a show. Tupelo Middle School student Ezra Baio taps his drumsticks melodically as he plays in the homecoming parade with his fellow classmates in addition to marching band members from Sunflower High. Sunflower High's band director, Lydia MacDonald, greatly enjoys joining forces with the younger musicians in a union she made possible by extending an invitation to Tupelo Middle School band director Douglas Roach. "A few years back I asked Mr. Roach if his middle school marching band would like to play with my high school marching band during the homecoming parade," MacDonald said. "Since then it has been a big hit. I love seeing the talent that comes from the middle school."

CAPTION #5

Creating Community. Lawndale Elementary Teacher Rita Keller hugs her daughter Emma Keller as the two watch the Sunflower High cheerleaders pass by in the homecoming parade. Rita is a Sunflower High Alumni, and Emma hopes to one day be standing alongside the cheerleaders she watched perform from the sideline for

the first time this year. "The homecoming parade is exciting for everyone," Rita said. "Pretty much the whole town comes together to cheer on the Mighty Buffalo."

Contest W7: Editorial Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Mia Duerksen: Hillsboro High School

I would consider a different beginning to this story, such as pointing out immediately how many students have to bring their own lunch because the school does not have enough plant-based dietary options (rather than naming different social and political groups, which gives the beginning an ambiguous feel). Please note the spelling discrepancies of Marci O'Brien's surname and Ismerelda Pattinson's surname throughout the story. Good job including the poll results in O'Brien's quote; it adds credibility and relatability to her statement. In quotes, you were correct to clarify statements by adding bracketed terms, however, because brackets are used in place of vague wording, the words that the bracketed terms are replacing should be deleted. Also note that all words in the term "Sunflower School District", as well as other organizations' names, are proper nouns and should always be capitalized. Your decision to interview the Student Nutritional Director as an opposing opinion was a great one, because it's a credible source that can represent the school's reasoning on the matter. The paragraph currently at the end of the story would be better suited at the introduction of the petition in the second paragraph -- it gives important background for exactly how much of school is in favor of such a huge change and elaborates on the subject of the petition. Changing this order would also make room for the part about expanding to other schools in the district to be the conclusion, giving the story a more hopeful, change-oriented ending. Overall, this story needs some parts shuffled around and grammatical corrections, but it's a very informative and interesting story worthy of being reported.

1st Place in 3A/4A: Katherine Moores: Bishop Miege High School

The efforts of many different individuals go into ensuring that any school can run properly while offering the highest quality of education possible. It is teachers that are on the front lines of this battle. While an administrator may have to decide budgeting or policies, educators themselves must navigate guidelines in direct relation to every student, even if it may affect learning. When revisions were made to Sunflower High School Unified School District's homework policies without any notice to teachers, the superintendents involved did not consider what those who are actually in the classroom may think.

"Eleven days before the start of the second semester, we, as teachers, got a significant a change on a number of homework policies from the administration without any consultation," Hector Milton said, who teaches Advanced Placement United States History. Concern arose among him and his colleagues after seeing limits on the amount of homework teachers could assign each week, as well as summer work.

"Limits on hours of homework per class seems unmoored with the realities of the classroom," Milton said. The teachers of Sunflower High, especially those who teach advanced placement classes, now face a completely

AP students also struggle with mental health, eliminating homework could lead to even more stress about being unprepared.

The best way of attempting to improve mental health is by consulting with the previously disregarded teachers. By trying to keep the issue of mental health at the front of teachers' minds they will be more likely to reduce homework times by eliminating the unnecessary assignments. This method of working with teachers will be vastly more effective. Able to help the student body both academically and psychologically.

Contest W8: Yearbook Sports Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: Emersyn Funk: Hillsboro High School

In March of 2021, junior Tammy Meyer began writing what would become an eight-minute short film that delves into the emotional impact of domestic abuse.

Sophomores Mergan Doban, Eric Russel and Garrett Wills as well as freshman Phoebe Ito assisted her with different aspects of the film. Doban was director of photography, Russel was the producer and Wills and Ito played lead roles in the film, which follows the experience of a victim of domestic abuse.

“I think I really just wanted to give a voice to victims of domestic abuse,” Meyer said. “One of my closest friends and I had a discussion about how this sort of situation impacted her; that’s when we started writing the script. She asked not to be named or associated with the project for safety reasons, but she really gave me the heart at the center of this short film.”

Domestic abuse is a serious and heavy topic to cover, but the group of young filmmakers was aware of that as they started, and enlisted the help of a professional.

“There is some violence, but we spent a long time researching to make sure we weren’t exploiting a really sensitive topic,” Meyer said. “We talked to a local filmmaker about how we could achieve some of the things we wanted to do while still being careful with the topic.”

The group felt that domestic abuse and the effects of it needed to be brought to light, and they were willing to make the film slightly uncomfortable to meet that goal

“We don’t go into heavy detail about the actual violent act,” Meyer said. “We tried to depict the impact and trauma that victims have to deal with. I don’t want people to walk away from the movie saying, ‘Everything gets better.’ I want them to be really upset and charged enough to talk about it.”

Still, some of the group members struggled with how serious the film would be, especially being aware of the impact it could have on their audience.

“I was really nervous to be a part of this project because I didn’t want it to reflect negatively on me because of the topic of domestic abuse. I was worried the point of the film wouldn’t really translate. After I watched it, after Tammy threw all of the videos we made together, I wasn’t nervous anymore. It is about so much more than just Tammy or even me.”

As the film progressed, the group realized the weight of what they created.

“Now that I’ve done it and watched all the pieces come together, I realized the film is revealing something about the way our society runs,” Dogan said.

The short film will premiere Friday, February 25th in the Sunflower High School auditorium. Student admission is free, non-student admission is five dollars.

1st Place in 3A/4A: Rachel Womeldorff: Augusta High School

The Sunflower High School girls tennis team is eager to work hard to improve even more to excel in their 2022 season next school year.

“Overall this year was just exciting, especially seeing improvements from last year,” senior Brooklyn Sheets said. “I 100% think this team will place in state next year.”

Although the team did not qualify for state as a team, they are satisfied and proud of how their 2021 season finished.

“I’ll remember this team as a close group of girls who only want the best for each other and only want to see improvement,” senior Sydney Hunter said.

Coach Greta Ronan began offering tennis lessons over the summer to help, train, and prepare students who could not take lessons out of the playing season.

“All of my players are very motivated and want to practice, and summer break is a perfect opportunity to do that,” Ronan said.

However, one player did significantly well in her 2021 season. Sheets took the state champion title in singles once again after earning it in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

“Sheets is a rockstar. She has been playing since she could practically walk and we are lucky to have her on the team,” Ronan said. “She’s a great team player and likes to help out where she can.”

She is very strategic throughout her singles matches, often trying to wear her opponents out before using her best shots.

“When she is playing in practice, she isn’t truly competing,” Hunter said. “She holds back her best shots for the day of matches.”

Sheets began playing doubles this year with Hunter as her partner to broaden her experience and improve skill in more areas of the sport.

“I’m looking to play tennis in college and thought it was a good idea to be a more well-rounded tennis player,” Sheets said.

Although they did not place in the state tournament, Sheets and Hunter enjoyed playing as partners and learned from each other in the process.

“Sydney was a great partner, and taught me a thing or two about playing a doubles match,” Sheets said.

Overall, the Sunflower High School girls tennis team demonstrates and promises a future full of growth and improvement.

“Check back in on us in a year or two and I guarantee you will see a much more improved team,” Ronan said.

1st Place in 5A/6A: Cooper Chadwick: Derby High School

Senior Brooklyn Sheets, a three-time singles state champion, had tremendous pressure on her this year to win her fourth championship.

But she did it.

“I definitely put some pressure on myself to win state this year,” Sheets said. “Three wins at state were more than enough, but how nice would it be to win each year of high school.”

It was not an easy road for Sheets, though.

“In the championship match I got lined up against Becca (Durrón). She is such a challenge for me because she is so athletic. I like to wear my opponents down by really slugging tough ground strokes at them from the baseline... Becca was so strong and fast that I couldn’t seem to exhaust her. I think I exhausted myself instead,” Sheets said.

Even with the athleticism and strength of Durrón, from Eagle River High School, Sheets hung on to win and secured her fourth single state championship.

Along with winning her fourth singles championship she was named Most Valuable Player on the team given to her by coach Greta Ronan, who played collegiate tennis at Syracuse before moving to coaching in 2017.

“Sheets is very dedicated to the sport. It’s no surprise she won state for the fourth time. She puts in the work and that’s why you see her winning year after year. I’m excited to see where tennis takes her after high school,” Ronan said.

Sheets also decided to expand her game by playing doubles for the first time.

Sheets played doubles alongside fellow senior Sydney Hunter.

Hunter plays strictly doubles matches and with her doubles partner graduating last year, Ronan decided to match her up with Sheets.

“I was definitely intimidated by Brooklyn at first,” Hunter said. “Not by her personally, but by her skills. It’s really hard to keep up with her... I am glad that she is on my side of the net. Otherwise, I would be terrified.”

Sheets also has no intention of ending her tennis career.

“I’ve been playing since I could practically walk. I haven’t gotten bored of it yet and hope one day I can play it professionally,” Sheets said.

These dreams are not far out of reach as she plans to play at Sunflower State in West Clinton.

“Sheets is by far the best high school player I’ve seen,” Hunter said.

Contest W9: Review Writing

1st Place in 1A/2A: AJ Grutsch: Wabaunsee High School

If you're the kind of person to find a deeper meaning into everything you see and read then the video “Bad Seeds” is for you.

Filled to the brim with symbolism, “Bad Seeds” takes you on a wild ride with shapeshifter plants, dancing elephants, and guest appearances from famous dictators such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. Unfortunately, there is no appearance from your favorite Mighty Buffalo.

This film was released on May 20, 2021 from Canadian film illustrator, Claude Cloutier. He spent much time as a comic book illustrator before moving to animation in 1988. “In my films, I like to have a universe that’s open to all possibilities. I find mechanisms of transformation; everything is allowed in my films,” Cloutier said.

To find more information about the deeper meaning behind the film “Bad Seeds” you should look to the creator himself for more explanation. “Bad seed” is used to imply someone is “dishonest, evil and unprincipled by nature,” Cloutier said.

The literal bad seeds in this film are the shapeshifting plants that are hell-bent on eliminating the other through various ways so they can be the only one eating all the flies that circle their stem. Their greed consumes them as they fight one another as hippos, lions, and even dinosaurs. All the while the plants make sure to keep their cute little top hats upon their heads.

Now we have spoilers ahead so for those who would like to say blind and view the ending for yourself, you have been warned.

So after a hard fought battle, one of the shapeshifters eventually lays victor. The squabble is finished when the other shapeshifter is cut at the stem. But as the camera zooms out you realize the plants were born of the same roots and the entire shapeshifter system dies.

Now there are many ways to interpret the ending but it's all in the eye of the beholder. Personally I see a visual interpretation of the golden rule. "Treat others as you wish to be treated."

No matter what you see you can always find some meaning in these two bad seeds. If you can't find a take away after seeing this film then I'll leave you with one of my own. Make sure not to follow these characters footsteps and instead be the good seed to blossom into the best sunflower.

1st Place in 3A/4A: Minna Meyer: Louisburg High School

Bad Seeds is a short animation story written, directed, and animated by Canadian film instructor Claude Cloutier. The interesting plot of the animation involves a sprout which evolves into the head of a bird in its efforts to capture a fly. However, it is upscaled by a new sprout that transforms into the head of a frog. The two quickly realize that they cannot get along since they both have a common goal that only one can achieve, and get lost in their efforts to intimidate one another by becoming something they're not.

The story, which can be found on YouTube, was recently made as the twelfth short film Cloutier created for the National Film Board of Canada (NFBC), but is styled to have the appearance of a much older cartoon. It uses semi-intricate pencil drawings that are simply animated to tell its story. It uses no spoken words, but tells a story worth listening to through music and visual effects. However, it does not use the opportunities that music brings to its fullest potential.

Cloutier explains, "In my films, I like to have a universe that's open to all possibilities." Bad Seeds explores those possibilities, the creator using his emotions and views to construct a story entirely out of the ordinary. It dives into the questioning of one's self and others around them, and includes allusions to the Cold War, board games, and other aspects of the creator's life.

The film was constructed for the NFBC, whose purpose is to "provide new perspectives on Canada and the world from Canadian points of view." Cloutier perhaps used his short film to demonstrate his experiences during the Cold War and to represent thoughts he was having. A 'bad seed' is used to describe someone who is "dishonest, evil, and unprincipled by nature", literally meaning the seed that grew tall and then began to fight itself over nothing. Its deeper meaning may be something along the lines of this: we are all people, and if we cut one another down, we are only really hurting ourselves.

1st Place in 5A/6A: Lyda Cosgrove: Shawnee Mission East High School

As a fiddle-like diddy akin to that of a children's TV show strums while trees of baseballs, acorns and turkeys instead of leaves fly across the screen, the opening of the 2021 Canadian short film "Bad Seeds" sets a child-like, nostalgic tone.

According to the film's Quebec-based director Claud Cloutier, he likes to have a universe that's open to all possibilities, where everything is allowed. And "Bad Seeds" certainly displays this limitless approach to film-making.

In its 6-minute entirety, "Bad Seeds" illustrates two carnivorous, shape-shifting plants in a ruthless competition over a prized meal — a juicy fly. Transforming from crow and frog, to pelican and alligator, to rhinoceros and lion, to t-rexes into a chaotic whirlwind of familiar historical figures then back to crow and frog again, the film is successful in subtly alluding to both past and present icons.

Though the elements may seem vague on the surface, with sketched animations, a neutral color palette of beige, brown and black and an absence of dialogue, it's the simplicity of the film that makes it so enthralling.

Specific shifts in the storyline are highlighted by a slight contrast from the background's light beige to darker brown. The comical yet intriguing use of sound, and lack thereof, signals changes in the characters' emotions, or regain attention of the viewer for an important moment, like when the upbeat folk music comes to a halt as the squeaks and "plops" of plants take the sensory stage.

The film comes to a close with a literal game of rock, paper, scissors, where the plant-turned-frog is chopped down by its loss to scissors, and his rival finally has the fly all for himself. The buzzing fly disrupts the silent scene as the crow makes a melancholy reflection and no longer wants the fly at all, leaving viewers with an impactful message: the strongest connections spark from rivalries and grow through competition. Eventually, you realize that the original goal and reason for conflict wasn't ever that important compared to the connections, and even friendships, made while on the journey.
