

News Writing

2011 KSPA Regional Competition

Description

You are a member of Ad Astra High School's newspaper staff. Your editor has assigned you to write a news story using the information provided.

School Info

Name: Ad Astra High School
Location: Aspera, Kansas
Mascot: Box Turtles
Enrollment: 850 (grades 9-12)
School Colors: Green & Gold
Yearbook: The Honeybee
Newspaper: The Star

Contest Info

This is an **on-site** contest.

Please attach **your assigned contest number** in the upper right-hand corner of your entry.

Do not put your name on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students are not to request help or advice from anyone other than the KSPA Executive Director. All work must be that of the contestant.

Assignment

You are to write a 250-word news story based on the facts and quotes below.

The writer should determine which information is relevant and important to the story. Students may write in pen or pencil. Students may use dictionary, thesaurus and A.P. style manuals. The use of personal listening devices (i.e. iPods), recording devices, electric typewriters and personal computers during the contest is prohibited.

Background

- Ad Astra High School is the one of two high schools in the Ad Astra School District, USD 666. The other is John Brown High School.
- Aspera High School was founded in 1865, after the Civil War and four years after Kansas first was granted statehood. Aspera High was closed in 1960 when two new high schools (AAHS and JBHS) opened during a growth spurt in Eisenhower County and at a time when great numbers of Baby Boomers reached school age.
- Over the past two years, JBHS has seen minimal progress in the measurements required by the national No Child Left Behind law.
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires states to measure "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) for schools receiving Title I funds with the goal of all students reaching the proficient level on reading/language arts and mathematics tests by the 2013-2014 school year. JBHS has not shown AYP for the past two years.
- Kansas determines minimum levels of improvement through standardized tests. AYP targets must be set for overall achievement and for subgroups of students, including major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students and students with disabilities. If a school receiving Title I funding fails to meet its AYP target for two or more consecutive years, the school is designated "in need of improvement" and faces specific consequences as outlined below.
- Schools where at least 35 percent of the children in the school attendance area are from low-income families or at least 35 percent of the enrolled students are from low-income families are eligible to receive federal Title I funds. The proportion of low-income families is most frequently measured by the percent of students eligible to receive free and reduced-price lunch. JBHS has 40 percent of its students in the free and reduced-price lunch program. AAHS has only 20 percent of its students in the program, so it isn't required to meet the AYP standards.



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- A Title I school that fails to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by the state for two consecutive years is designated "in need of improvement, Year 1" and must allow its students to transfer to another school in the district.
- AAHS is the only other school in the district, and it has room for students who want to transfer from JBHS. In fact, since Baby Boomers finally left AAHS and JBHS in 1981, both schools have seen slight declines in their student population.
- AAHS and JBHS both have room for 1,500 students over four grades. In 2010-2011, AAHS has an enrollment of 1,152, while JBHS has an enrollment of 1,024.
- As many as 500 students from JBHS indicated in a survey taken by the school board last month that they plan to transfer to AAHS for the 2011-2012 school year. AAHS has estimated it will have closer to 1,200 students next year, just 300 short of capacity.
- In a press conference yesterday, AAHS Principal Etta James said the following:
 - The school can't accept all the transfers because Ad Astra doesn't have room.
 - She has asked Junior class President J. L. Hooker to lead a student government committee that will help her develop criteria to determine which students should be allowed to transfer to AAHS. Hooker also is active on the Debate team, has chaired a district-wide student task force on drug abuse (where he worked with students from JBHS), and was a starting linebacker on the football team last year.
 - Social studies teacher and head football coach George Halas will lead a faculty committee that will also help James develop selection criteria.

Quotes

- Sophomore Wanda Little from AAHS: "I don't want all those kids from JBHS comin' in here and stinkin' up our hallways. We have a great school here, and they'll just drag down the average scores."
- Junior Billy Bob (B.B.) King from AAHS: "I think we need to bring in some football players and other really good athletes. We haven't won the Aspera Cup in my three years in school, and it would be nice to do that just once." The Aspera Cup is awarded to the winner of the annual football game between AAHS and JBHS. In 2010, JBHS defeated AAHS 48-13.
- Principal Etta James: "We must be careful that any decisions on accepting transfer students be made with those students' interests in mind, and not necessarily what's best for AAHS. We should be about educating every student to his or her full potential, no matter who they are or where they come from. That's why I have designated coach Halas to lead the faculty committee on transfer students. Mr. Halas has been a leader in this community for the past 25 years, and his integrity is beyond doubt. In addition, the junior class president will help Mr. Halas by leading the student committee."
- AAHS football coach George Halas: "I look forward to helping the proper students from John Brown find a new home at Ad Astra. This isn't about me, it's about this community and its kids."
- Junior class President J.L. Hooker: "My experience on the drug task force will help me connect with my friends at JBHS and get their feedback. We need to come up with criteria that will make every student's education better."