

Heated politics stifles discussions

By Garrett Pearlman

Durant students will not vote for their favorite presidential candidate in the Iowa Youth Straw Poll this year.

CNN 10, a daily news show for students over 13 years old, was also banned in Durant classrooms because it “may be perceived as biased,” according to a letter sent to staff last month from the district’s administration team.

The letter did provide a list of politically neutral news sources that teachers could use including lesson plans from PBS.

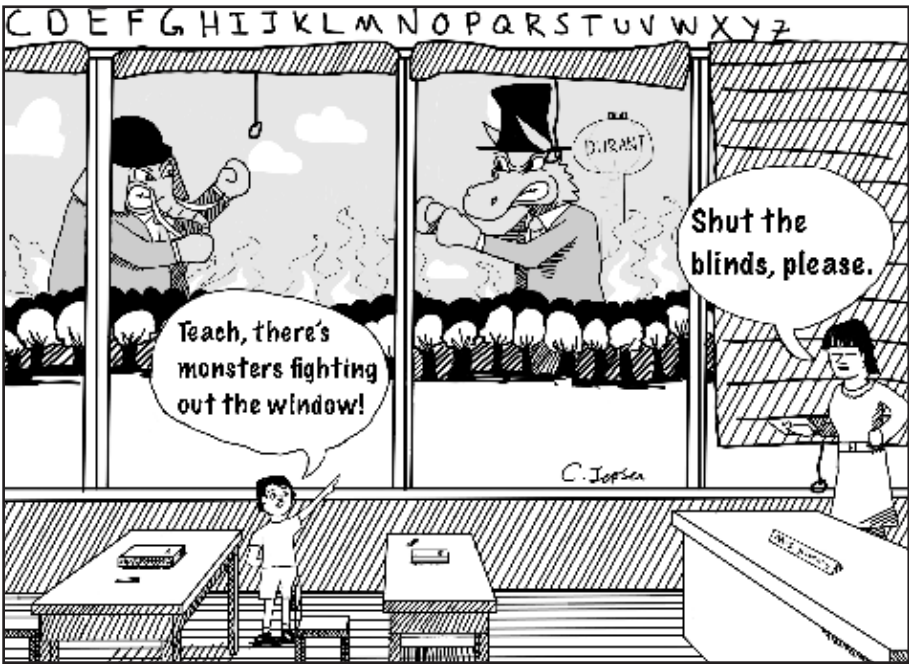
High school social studies teacher Mr. Daniel Knipfel, who used CNN 10 in his classroom, believes that the Durant school made both choices because of the current harsh political environment, which has gotten more intense compared to the 2020 election.

“Unfortunately, because of the political climate, I think that goes along with not showing some very valuable things in class sometimes,” said Mr. Knipfel. “You’re missing out on a lot of great conversation when you take away those opportunities.”

Mr. Knipfel used CNN 10 in the past to cover current topics and not so much for its political content. He added that CNN’s website could “sometimes be biased.”

Teachers received the letter on September 24, and it reminded all staff “of the importance of maintaining a neutral stance in the classroom.”

The letter added, “Our goal is to create an inclusive and respectful learning environment where all students feel comfortable, regardless of their personal or family



political beliefs.”

This topic was also mentioned in a professional development meeting, according to Mr. Knipfel, who is already used to being cautious around opinionated topics and the messages he sends to his students. He believes that teachers are here to educate and inform, not to influence a student either way.

“We’re supposed to be unbiased and then let you make the choice,” said Mr. Knipfel. “Unfortunately there’s other influences outside that really start to make having the conversation to talk about politics more aggressive.”

Another high school social studies teacher, Mr. Matt Straube, believes the intent of the administration’s letter is coming from a good place.

“The message just asked us to try to maintain a neutral stance in the classroom, which I think is a totally fair thing to do,” said Mr. Straube.

Discussions are an important part of Mr. Straube’s classes whether it is Gov-

ernment or even Social Problems, and students being able to discuss something like politics respectfully is a necessary skill.

Staying open minded during these discussions is an important part too.

“You’ve got to be able to share your opinions in ways that aren’t disrespectful to others, so I think it’s fair to try to teach kids that early on,” said Mr. Straube.

In the last eight to 10 years, Mr. Straube noticed it has been more of a struggle to have political discussions with students in class.

“I feel like it’s been harder to have discussions with people and be able to have everyone keeping an open mind,” said Mr. Straube. “I think people are really set in their ways and don’t necessarily want to hear other people’s views.”

Mr. Knipfel has some hope for the future of politics in school, though.

“Depending on the [political] climate, I could definitely see how some schools are going to try and censor that [political discussions] a little bit,” said Mr. Knipfel. “I can also see where it could get better, and I’m hopeful it gets better because there’s a lot of questions young adults have about it, and I would like to think schools are the best venue for getting that information.”

On the surface, this letter may seem like a small adjustment to a heated political environment, but as the editor of the student newspaper, I believe that this could be the first step to censoring students on political discussions. Ridding students of the ability to do mock elections and possibly miss out on important political discussions will only harm students from learning about current events and valuable communication skills.

Even in one of my Muscatine Community College classes, we used politics as a means of learning. When students miss out on important political events in high school, they are more likely to struggle as adults to communicate their views respectfully and maintain an open mindset.

Cohen Jepsen

Halloween: one last time to be a kid

During my golden years of trick-or-treating, me and my posse had our whole Halloween system refined to a point.

The most important resource to us was time because the more time we had on the streets equaled more candy in our pillowcases.

The way we would acquire this massive amount of candy was by way of our expert route plotting skills, questioning and analyzing which path could yield the most candy while also prioritizing the healthiness of our feet. Home base was my



grandparents’ house, and it was so centrally located that our system worked at the maximum possible efficiency. We would return with heavy bags, and commence The Holy Trading, essentially a business meeting. We all had different tastes in candy, and so profitable deals were bountiful.

It was such a simple yet efficient strategy that one would think we could all have the capacity to become reputable businessmen in the future.

It’s crazy to me that there is a stigma around Halloween when it comes to the acceptable age of trick-or-treaters.

I asked some folks in school, including study hall supervisor Mrs. Jill Randolph and fellow senior Emma Meincke, about what age they think kids should stop trick-or-treating, and they told me I should have stopped much earlier, between grades 6 and 8. Even my own journalism advisor agrees with this.

That’s preposterous, I say! People of all ages used to celebrate this modern rendition of an ancient Celtic festival—the original purpose of which has been almost completely forgotten.

But nowadays, Halloween is solely a kids’ holiday, the only time for youngins to dress up as their favorite superhero or spooky character and venture out into a night of darkness, flanked by jack-o-lanterns and followed by falling maple leaves, seeking the most treasured and bountiful currency grown-ups can offer: candy!

As my last year here at Durant High School moves slowly yet inexorably onward, I know we seniors are constantly thinking about what our next grand adventure into adulthood will be.

At the same time, we face a lot of unknowns that might make us a little overwhelmed, so we sometimes look back to the past to simpler times, full of boundless imagination and carefree freedom.

That’s why I’m trick-or-treating for the very last time this year, but I may sadly be the only Durant senior doing it. My posse has all but disbanded, leaving me alone to venture into the night.

When I think of my childhood, I often think of Halloween because of its special and unique holiday atmosphere, compared to all the others.

Unfortunately, trick-or-treating represents one of those lines that separates childhood from adulthood.

However, all is not lost! Far off in my future, I may become a parent, and I can experience Halloween night again with my own little gremlins!

Barks & Bubbles Dog of the Month

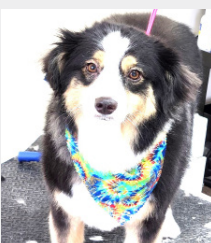


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The Wildcat Chronicles staff believes a school newspaper is uniquely qualified to inform, entertain, and represent our peers. We strive to present accurate stories and thought-provoking commentary, and we are responsible for the content of each issue.



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Today's Dentistry coach of the month

Doug Darland is coaching the Durant High School volleyball team. He has been coaching the sport of volleyball for 22 years. What he enjoys most about coaching is watching the players improve and also seeing them enjoy their high school career. Some of Coach Darland’s goals this season for the team are to improve throughout the season and to go far in the postseason.



Darland



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Liberty Trust & Savings Bank's club member of the month



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Junior Kylee Hahn is the Wildcat Chronicles website manager. She picks out photos that Chronicles staff members take at sporting events and creates captioned carousels using those pictures. “I wanted to be a part of something where people recognize your hard work,” she said.



Hahn