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# Iowa High School Journalism Project

Julia Davis

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IOWA HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISM PROJECT

by

Julia Davis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in the Journalism and Mass Communication

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Daniel Lathrop  
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2017

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the  
Journalism and Mass Communication have been completed.

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Iowa High School Journalism Project

A University of Iowa Honors Project Submission  
By Julia Davis

May 10, 2017

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## **Abstract**

The Iowa High School Journalism Project is a collaboration between five different high schools across the state of Iowa, and lead by IowaWatch. The goal of the project is to make the voices of high school journalists heard across the state of Iowa, in amplify important issues within the high school sphere.

For this project, high school students reported on two issues: mental health resources available to high school students and the lack of diversity in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. My job as an honors student and manager of the project was to combine the original reporting that students provided into two in-depth, cohesive stories about the aforementioned topics.

This honors project breaks statewide news with both stories, which will be published later this month on the Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism website. The stories provide an honest look at both topics addressed, and provide and explanation for how these issues are being addressed at the local and state level.



Iowa Center for  
Public Affairs Journalism  
IowaWatch.org

A vision for a Public-Spirited Free

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## Welcome to the IowaWatch/High School Journalism Project

Dear student journalists,

Thank you once again for your interest in participating in the 2017 IowaWatch High School Journalism Project. This project, which you expressed interest in being a part of in fall 2016, will give you the chance to talk with people about an interesting topic, write or record an important news story and collaborate with high school student journalists across Iowa to present a news story of statewide importance to which people will pay attention.

**You have shown interest in one of two topics, so we will do a story on each:**

- 1. How prevalent are student mental health issues in schools?**
- 2. Does diversity lack in AP classes, and why?**

If you have not done so already, please let your adviser and me know which one you want to be part of and consider starting interviews now. If you do not want to participate please tell me. My feelings won't be hurt and I won't think anything bad about you. I simply need to know if you are not participating so that I do not expect anything at deadline.

Here is where the stories will end up:

- IowaWatch.org, a news website run by IowaWatch.
- The statewide IowaWatch Connection radio program, which IowaWatch produces and which airs 27 times on 20 radio stations – most of them AM stations – each weekend.
- Any IowaWatch media partner interested in the story. IowaWatch lets newspapers, web-based news organizations and television stations know when it publishes stories and those outlets sometimes publish or air those stories.
- Your local high school newspaper if you chose to do so.

Here is how it works:

- You interview people who are good sources for the story on which you are working.
- You record the interview if the interviewee is willing because we might use that audio in the radio report.
- Your adviser helps with you on this project and any story you want to do from it for your school's newspaper

- IowaWatch collects your written material, photos and audio at a Google Drive site that will be set up and edits a statewide multimedia report to publish.
- IowaWatch tells news media outlets in Iowa about your reporting, makes edited stories and photos available and urges them to publish it.

We'd like to publish these stories in May 2017 before you all leave for the summer.

When you interview people learn the following:

- What do they think the specific problem is, and what do they think about it?
- Why does the problem exist?
- What examples in your school show that the problem exists?
- What are people doing about the problem?
- Please ask for the person's birth date so that we get his or her age correct in the story. Also, let us know what grade the person is in.

Who can answer your questions about this project:

- About the statewide report and anything that isn't clear in this guide:  
Julia Davis, reporter, IowaWatch.org  
[julia-davis@uiowa.edu](mailto:julia-davis@uiowa.edu) 913-302-0154
- About your local paper and other journalistic matters at your school:  
Your adviser

Why do this:

- To learn the value of being critical thinkers who can dig deeper than the surface when understanding and explaining an issue.
- To drive discussion of a problem and arm citizens with information that can lead to solutions.
- To learn how to do multimedia storytelling in the digital age.
- To be recognized for being able to do this work at a high level.
- To work with professionals who serve as mentors.
- To gain skills you can take to college and eventually the workplace.
- To make a difference while having fun.

A schedule for getting things done is attached in another document.

I hope you enjoy this project. I look forward to talking with you more about it.

Yours,

Julia Davis  
Project Lead, IowaWatch Reporter

## **The State of Mental Health in Iowa High School Students**

By Mina Takahashim, Fenna Sempken, Taylor Shelfo, Clare Rollinger, and Sophia Schillinger

Often, adults think back to their high school days with rose-colored glasses—Friday night football games, hanging out with friends every afternoon, having that dream prom date. But some high school students spend their high school days struggling to come to grips with how to live with mental health issues. Mental health problems like depression and anxiety affect one in five children, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

In this high school journalism project, IowaWatch worked with high school student reporters in three high schools around the state to assess the factors that influence high school students' mental health, and how those students deal approach treatment options within the high schools.

Here are the main findings:

- High school students often have too much scheduled into their day, which can lead to anxiety and depression
- Many high school students struggling with mental health problems feel misunderstood by their peers.
- Social media plays a large role in self esteem and overall mental health of high school students.
- Resources to address mental health issues vary by school, and most schools stretched too thin when it comes to providing adequate mental health resources for students.

### **OVERBOOKED AND OVERSTRESSED**

Academic pressures are a major cause for stress in high school students. These days, it is often expected that students take advanced classes and participate in multiple extracurricular activities in order to make themselves competitive for highly selective colleges. However, Tom Carey, a guidance counselor who has been working for 20 years at Iowa City High School, believes students must be careful that they don't overbook themselves.

"We want our students to have high expectations," he said. "We need a certain level of stress to do our best, and yet there's probably a tipping point, too."

Carey has seen a drastic increase in the number of students wanting to stop by his office to talk about stress or anxiety. And he's not alone. A 2014 survey by the American Psychological Association found that 30 percent of teens reported feeling sad or depressed because of stress and 31 percent felt overwhelmed.

An increased emphasis on high pressure school testing and discussion of future college or career paths as early as middle school could be to blame.

Colleen Davis, an English teacher at Iowa City High School, says that many kids feel overloaded with advanced classes.

“I see a lot of anxiety in a lot of my upper level kids because we’ve added so many AP and honors courses,” she said. “I think there’s a message that’s being sent that kids should take as many challenging courses as they can and perhaps that’s a bit of an unreasonable expectation.”

This theme of being “overbooked” is prevalent all across Iowa’s high schools. One Cedar Falls senior took it upon herself to do something about it.

Senior Ellie Hahn had been a runner on the track team all throughout high school, even going to the state championships as a junior. But she found that even though she excelled in the sport, she no longer enjoyed doing it. Each track meet and practice was filled with anxiety and stress. So she quit for her mental health.

“Track almost made me sick because of how nervous I was, and I didn’t like it as much as I used to, so I’m happy I quit because it’s been a big stress taken off of my shoulders,” Hahn said.

Cedar Falls High School golf coach Megan Youngkent said seeing a student taking initiative gave her a lot of pride.

“I love seeing students or athletes adapt and learn to take away things that stress them out. Adaptability is a life skill, and the fact that Ellie took it upon herself to quit track for her mental health is key to how adaptable she’ll be as an adult.”

#### FEELING ALONE AMONG MANY

One of the hardest parts about navigating mental health issues in high school is the lack of understanding from peers. Often, mental health issues are difficult to explain to someone who has never suffered from them.

Michelle Kim is a senior at Iowa City West High School who has suffered from depression. She describes going through depressive periods as “drowning” and says that sometimes healing is more complicated than just coming up for air.

“I just drown. It’s quick for people to pick me up and pull me out of the water, but it’s also quick for me to drown into the water and just stay there, and drown for a really, really long time,” she said. “And then it gets to that point where I don’t care anymore. I don’t care about my social life, I don’t care about my grades. It’s just a cycle of sadness.”

Depression and anxiety can manifest themselves differently depending on the person. Iowa City West High School junior Amanda Auburg says that this sometimes makes it hard for her friends to know how to approach her when she is struggling.

“It’s different for every single person,” she said. “Just because you may think you know about anxiety and depression, you really don’t. You can’t tell someone, ‘stop freaking out!’ that’s not how it works at all.”

When high school students don’t know how to talk to a friend who is experiencing mental health issues, experts say the best thing to do is be supportive and empathetic.

“Nothing can replace positive affirmation and supportive communication with parents, educators, and friends,” said Janice Lane, CEO of Children and Families of Iowa, an organization in Des Moines that offers services to families and children in crisis.

Kim says one of the hardest challenges about her depression has been the fear of letting down friends and family.

“It’s a cycle of trying not to let anyone down, but then you do let them down, but then you get sad about that. You gotta have everything happy and it’s got to be happyville and stuff, but that doesn’t work if you have depression,” she said.

Kaitlin\*, a junior from Iowa City West High School, said that her social anxiety has been misinterpreted by her friends, who think that she doesn’t enjoy their company, when in reality she is going through an anxiety attack.

“Sometimes I get so anxious talking to people,” she said. “It’s like I’m not actually hanging out with my friends, I’m just stressing about what I’m saying. It’s so emotionally draining.”

Often, anxiety can affect school attendance too. In Kaitlin’s case, she would get anxious and sometimes skip class, which then created more anxiety about attending future classes, creating a vicious cycle.

“When I miss class and get more anxious asking the teacher about what I missed or why I left,” she said, “I missed spanish for a whole week because I didn’t want to face my teacher asking where I was.”

Calla Gabaldon, also a student at West High School, says that bigger class sizes play a role in how well she can succeed in school as a student with mental health problems.

“I have a hard time being in large classes, which is a problem because the Iowa City high schools are overflowing,” she commented. “It’s hard to get the grades I want...because I tend to miss classes because of my mental health.”

One technique that has helped Kaitlin with her mental health has been to talk with other students who are going through the same thing. In 2014, she started Behind the Mask, a

group at Iowa City West High School that meets regularly about struggling with mental illness.

“In Behind the Mask, we all talk about [mental health problems] like it’s no big deal. It’s nice to talk to people that understand what you’re going through and our stories can relate,” she said.

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Another factor separating today’s teens from previous generations is their access to social media. Their generation is one of the first to grow up completely surrounded by social media, and that level of interaction is having detrimental effects on their mental health.

Many students interviewed for this IowaWatch project said that social media played a large part in how they perceived themselves, and contributed to anxiety and depression.

“I don’t think there is any question that social media can impact one’s mental health. Social media offers unrealistic portrayals of body image, enables an environment of cyberbullying, and makes it difficult for adolescents to have any down time away from social networking,” said James Burkhalter, director of Dialectical Behavior Therapy at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. “There are certainly some positives of social media, but it can also be extremely detrimental to a teen’s mental health.”

Derek Ziesmer is a guidance counselor at Forest City High School. He says that he’s seen the effects of social media firsthand on the students that come in and see him every day.

“I think technology plays a huge piece in how this generation’s mental health issues are different from their parents’ generation. Many students are so involved in smart phones, video games, computers, tablets, and look for social media for validation and happiness,” he said. “Socially, students are immature as well due to texting, snapchat, and other technology mediums. Many students are not as responsible, accountable, hard working or confident as previous generations in my opinion.”

## ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

So what resources do high schools across Iowa have in place to assist students affected by mental health issues? The answer that IowaWatch high school reporters around the state have found is it depends on where you go to school.

Services that are provided vary from building to building, and district to district. Some schools have full-time therapists who are dedicated to those individual schools while other schools are served by therapists on an itinerant basis. Some schools educate teachers about how to recognize mental health issues in students, while others do not.

But a study on children’s mental health service use published in the journal Health Affairs, says that no matter what kinds of services they provide, schools play a vital role in treating

adolescents with mental health issues, even going so far as to say, “research suggests that schools may function as the de facto mental health system for children and adolescents.”

Michelle Kim goes to Iowa City West High School, which provides counseling services to students. But Kim believes that the system would function much better if teachers were trained on how to address mental illness in students.

“Some teachers don’t know how to deal with kids that think about suicide or depression or any other mental health issue,” she said. “Teachers should just get training to understand how students are feeling and what to do about it. “

Iowa City High School junior Calla Gabaldon believes that educating teachers would be beneficial in the long run because mental illness could be caught in students and addressed before it gets bad.

“If we teach adults something they may not know enough about, it will give them the ability to teach the children how to work through things that could devolve into something much worse if they don’t have the information and knowledge to know what’s wrong and how to work through it,” Gabaldon said.

Derek Ziesmer is a counselor at Forest City High School, where teachers do receive some form of training about adolescent mental health.

“We went through a Youth Mental Health First Aid training and have discussed different ways to help students, including the signs and symptoms of students dealing with mental health.” Ziesmer said.

But even with training teachers, Ziesmer is not satisfied with what is available.

“I don’t believe the current system is sufficient, as there is not enough accessible support for students in need,” he said.

Even high schools that have resources such as counselors dedicated solely to mental health are struggling to keep up with the demand. Kaitlin says that she’s had positive experiences visiting the counselors, but often has to wait hours before one becomes available.

“[The counselors] are always so busy. Just because they’re in the building doesn’t mean they’re available,” she said, “I would skip class and cry in the bathroom because I had to wait for a counselor to be available for me.”

Gabaldon has seen this first hand at her school.

“A lot of high schoolers have depression and anxiety, but only a select few get the resources they need. I am one of the lucky ones who has gotten the resources and help, and have worked with a lot of people who know what they’re dealing with and can truly help me get through high school.” she said. “High school is hard on even the most perfect and happy

kids, and mental illness added to high school can be a very rough time when you can't get what you need."

\*name changed

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*Reporters that contributed to this project are Mina Takahashi (Iowa City High School), Fenna Sempken (Iowa City West High School), Taylor Shelfo (Iowa City West High School), Clare Rollinger (Cedar Falls High School), and Sophia Schillinger (Cedar Falls High School)*

## Iowa's Advanced Placement Classes Lack Diversity

By Becca Turnis, Mariam Keita, Katelyn Kempes, Angela Cai

Washington High School in Cedar Rapids prides itself on its racial diversity. 32 percent of students at the high school are African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American. It also prides itself on setting the standard for Advanced Placement (AP) classes in the state of Iowa, placing at the top of the Iowa AP Index for the past eight years and having just over 50 percent of their students enrolled in at least one AP class.

Unfortunately, there is little overlap between AP students and students that call themselves non-white. Despite making up only 68 percent of the general population, white students make up 80 percent of Washington's AP enrollment.

"Generally, in my AP classes, the majority of the faces I see are white. I think on average there's one to at most seven people who are not white in a class of about 25 people," said Miriam Ochs, a junior at Washington.

This trend is seen in AP classrooms across the U.S. Reports from the Department of Education show that AP classes around the country are experiencing diversity problems in terms of ethnicity and gender. According to College Board, 55.9 percent of students taking A.P. classes are white.

In a 2012 report from the U.S. Department of Education, the percentage of African-American and Latino students in advanced classes was nearly half the number of African-American and Latino students enrolled in schools that offered such classes.

In this high school journalism project, IowaWatch worked with three high schools around Iowa to investigate how diversity plays out in their AP classrooms. From this reporting, we've found that many classrooms still struggle to attract students of color, and gender disparities exist amongst certain AP subjects being taught. However, there have been programs put in place to try and remedy this situation. IowaWatch looked at one such program as a model for successful integration in the AP classroom.

### STUDENTS OF COLOR STILL STRUGGLING

A more diverse student body brings together students that come from many different backgrounds and have lots of different life experiences. But some students say that AP classes do not reflect all these different backgrounds of students at their high schools, and have material geared towards mainly white students.

"It seems to me that AP classes are directed towards upper middle class white kids... most of these classes are from the white perspective and aimed at the white students," said Ochs, the junior from Washington High School in Cedar Rapids. "It's hard for people of different ethnicities to hack into that."

This issue affects teachers as well, who say that one of their concerns when teaching more diverse classes is relating to students who may come from different backgrounds.

“I’m an old white man who cannot pretend to understand what it means to be black in a school like Johnston,” said Mark Schillerstrom, a teacher at Johnston High School who teaches AP Language and Composition.

Because of these systematic problems, many students of color look at AP classes and don’t see where they could fit into the narrative. They feel a sense of exclusion based on the material and how it is taught.

“I think part of the issue is the culture, the [AP] culture is so inherently white... these kids are looking at these classes and asking, ‘What does this have for me? I’m not a white kid from the suburbs.’ They don’t think it can apply to their lives,” said Ochs.

Many students also feel pressure from their families and communities that sway their decision to take AP classes. Culture often plays a huge role in how students view education.

“Your cultural values, the things you grow up with and that are embedded in you, shape us in ways that we really don’t or can’t imagine,” Schillerstrom said.

For example, in Johnston High School, the percentage of Asian students in AP classes is much higher than the overall percentage of Asian students in the high school.

“Since many of the Asians at our school are the children of immigrants, usually immigrant Asian parents will want to push their child to work hard, and push themselves academically,” said Anna Xiang, a junior at Johnston High School.

Obsee Abbajabal, a sophomore at Johnston High School, says that he has encountered the opposite effect when it comes to views on education. He has had to wrestle how to be a black student who wants to take challenging coursework.

“There’s a stereotype among black students that if you try in education you’re trying to act white,” he said. “Because people label me as smart, I feel like they don’t think I’m black or I’m not black enough.”

David Duer is an AP Language and Composition teacher at Washington High School in Cedar Rapids. He believes that social class also plays a role in who ends up signing up for AP classes.

“Those students who had greater opportunities in their life leading up to this point are often better prepared for AP classes, and they’re more willing to take them,” he said.

## GENDER DISPARITIES

Many people hear lack of diversity and immediately think of race, but there is also a disparity in diversity when it comes to gender makeup of AP courses. Humanities AP

courses tend to have a much higher ratio of females to males, while to opposite is seen in math courses.

In AP humanities courses, females represent the majority at 66 percent. In AP mathematics courses, males represent the majority at 62 percent. A 2012 Department of Education report cited that for years boys have consistently outnumbered girls in AP Calculus and Statistics by up to 10,000 students.

Nika Silkin is a sophomore at Johnston High School who is currently the only girl in her AP Physics class. She says that she's gotten used to being in this situation, since it has happened throughout her time in public education.

"Since sixth grade, I've come to the realization that in those advanced math and science classes I'm always going to be like one of five girls."

But when it comes to humanities AP courses, it's a different story. Females have always taken humanities AP courses at a higher ratio, according to Jessica Dowell, an AP U.S. Government teacher at Johnston High School. But Dowell is concerned that men are starting to fall even further behind than usual in some of the advanced classes.

"I have no problem with women having more of a role in these classes," he said. "I just kind of wonder, 'Why are guys falling behind? Is there something we need to do as schools to try to fix that?'"

Dowell said one thing he's noticed is that school seems to lend itself more to females, who have an easier time staying focused for extended periods.

"Some guys struggle more sitting in one place for long periods of time," he said. "They want to be up and moving around, and that affects their academics."

## A CASE STUDY OF SUCCESS

Iowa City High School has seen the national trend of non-diverse AP classes play out at their school. 40 percent of the school's students are minority students, a huge jump up from the state average of just 22 percent. But teachers were struggling to see this diversity represented. So in 2014, they decided something needed to change.

Some of the faculty members at the school banded together to begin the "Achieve" program, a program aimed at encouraging students from all different backgrounds to pursue advanced courses.

"The principal and the faculty wanted to find a way to focus on supporting students from ethnically diverse backgrounds so they were well-prepared for a college experience after high school," said Linda Hoel, guidance counselor at Iowa City High School and co-head of the Achieve Program.

Achieve meets periodically throughout the year to visit college campuses, create academic plans, and come up with new ideas for students to reach their full academic potential by taking advantage of opportunities at a higher education level.

Hoel says that since the program started, she has seen a “significant increase in the number of diverse students who have successfully taken AP and honors classes.”

“More and more students from ethnically diverse backgrounds are setting academic goals and career goals at the postsecondary level that require higher levels of academic achievement,” she said.

John Burkle, an AP government teacher at Iowa City High School, assisted in the planning stages of the Achieve program, and helped formulate a strategy to increase minority enrollment in advanced classes.

“We began looking at the test scores and Iowa Assessment scores of those students, targeted minority students who we felt would be a good fit for AP and honors courses, and then encouraged [those students] to take those courses,” Burkle said.

One of the barriers that minority students face is that some may come from backgrounds where their family members may not be familiar with the steps required to be ready for college, which includes advanced classes.

“Sometimes students don’t have a support system outside of school, where there is a familiarity with the college system and preparation for college,” said Hoel. “We want to be that support system here. [We want to] identify students that have the potential to set high academic goals and succeed.”

Cecile Bendera is a freshman at Iowa City High School, and says that she is looking forward to participating in the Achieve program during her time at Iowa City High.

“I think it will help me to continue pushing myself harder, because you have people who want you to succeed,” she said.

Jason Schumann teaches AP World History at Iowa City High School. He’s seen the effects of the Achieve program firsthand in his classes, and says more diverse classes create a better learning environment.

“Diversity is a critical component to teaching world history. We’re going to have discussions that cross lines of race, gender, religion, and all those areas,” said Schumann. “The more diverse my classes are, the better.”

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*Reporters that contributed to this project are: Becca Turnis (Cedar Rapids Washington High School, Mariam Keita (Iowa City High School), Katelyn Kempes (Johnston High School), and Angela Cai (Johnston High School)*

## **Personal Reflection: Managing the IowaWatch High School Journalism Project**

Over the past two months, my IowaWatch experience has extended beyond the realm of reporting, and into what it's like to be an editor. But I was not an editor for fellow college students. Instead, I have been working with high school students around Iowa to produce stories that look into their experiences while still in high school, and hopefully prove that high schoolers should not be marginalized, and what they have to say is relevant and important.

First, a little background on the project, which is officially called the IowaWatch High School Journalism Project. The goal of this project is to allow high school students from high schools around the state to collaborate in reporting a news story of statewide importance. There are two topics that students could choose to report on for this project: mental health resources available to high school students or the lack of diversity in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The students that worked on this project came from five different high schools around Iowa: Iowa City West High School, Iowa City High School, Cedar Rapids Washington High School, Johnston High School, and Cedar Falls High School. Throughout the past few months, I have visited four of the five schools to introduce the project, as well as work with students in person as they ventured through the reporting process.

The role of being an editor to high school students has been a learning experience as much as a teaching one. I believe there are three key skills that I've really gotten better at during this project: effectively managing a group of reporters, organizing large amounts of content from many different reporters, and realizing that I have to trust my reporters and step back sometimes.

One of the first major hurdles during this project came when first drafts were due from the high schoolers. I sent out a reminder email a few days prior to let students know that their deadline for reporting was coming up, but when the deadline came, I only received two drafts, when there were around 15 reporters. The next week I sent out an email asking if people could get drafts to me, and was met with not much response. This experience was very frustrating to me, and when I talked to Lyle about it he gave me some great advice. When working with students, especially high school students, you have to have many, repeated reminders and asks to get stuff in, because it is not uncommon for students to lose interest in the project and forget about it, especially if it is not for their high school newspaper. So that was my first mistake. And my second mistake was not sticking to hard deadlines. The language I used in my emails was very lenient, things like "if you could get your drafts to me when you're done, that would be great." This language did not establish a hard deadline, and as a result, students that were working on the project didn't make a big effort to finish their reporting, because they thought that it would be fine to just turn it in a few weeks late. I think that part of this stems from me being such a people pleaser. My emails were overly nice, and because of this I think it was hard for the high schoolers to take me seriously at first. After a few weeks though, I was much better at asking for specific tasks to be done, and establishing deadlines for each phase of the project, which made things go much smoother.

The second thing that I had to address during this project was how I was going to organize all of the information once I got it. I ended up getting reporting work from ten different students, and from that I was left with pages of information and interviews. At

first, this was very overwhelming and I had no idea how I was going to organize it all into a cohesive story. But the approach that I decided to go with was to break up each story into categories based on the material I received. To do this, I read through all the work that was submitted, and established three or four common themes that the story could have. Once I had these themes, I went through each student's work and sorted out the good parts, and then put them under whatever theme best fit them. This allowed me to have a manageable amount of reporting to work with, and made it much easier to have a clear focus for each section of the story.

The last hurdle that I had when working on this project did not have to do with the process or collecting and organizing work, but more with my own ability to trust the reporters I was working with and step back as they did their work. I was so used to working as a reporter, that I had my own standards of what I considered good reporting. So it was difficult working with high school students, who obviously don't have as much journalism experience as I do. I learned that I had to let go of the notion that everything has to be perfect. I think eventually I realized that if I judged everything through the lens of what I would write, then nothing would ever meet my standards, so instead I had to learn to work with what I got, and work with the students to teach them what they did well in their reporting and what they could do better. I think this also ties into the idea that there was no way I could micromanage this project, just simply because there was so much material that I couldn't chase down each reporting detail and do all the grunt work on my own. I had to rely on the students I was working with to get follow-up information and flesh out their stories on their own.

Overall, I believe this experience has been extremely helpful in showing me how to effectively work with a group of reporters. The management, organizational, and leadership skills I've gained are skills that I think would be helpful in any professional setting. I'm looking forward to closing out the project in the coming weeks, and seeing the reactions from the high school reporters as their work is published in newspapers around the state, as well as on IowaWatch.com. I think that they've worked very hard in this project, and I hope that my mentorship has inspired them to keep pursuing journalism in the future.