



# ASPEN ENGLISH

English Sterling Scholar

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# INTRODUCTION

Hi! I'm Aspen English.

My name is Aspen English. I was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and now I live in Monticello, Utah. Since I was very young, I have always loved to read, write, and of course, talk. I learned early that language is not only how we communicate with each other, but also how we learn about each other and the world around us. Reading is like traveling for me, and writing allows me to express my most profound thoughts. In becoming a Sterling Scholar, I hope to share this knowledge, express my passions, and learn even more.

**Letters of Recommendation:** pages 3-4

**Category Expertise:** pages 5-10

I enjoy using my skill as an eloquent writer in many aspects of my everyday life, including service. My talent has also enabled me to win several awards. **Samples of my writing are available in this document and at this web address below (or [click here](http://www.buckarooonation.com/aspens-writing-samples.html)).**

<http://www.buckarooonation.com/aspens-writing-samples.html>

**Leadership:** pages 11-17

At my school and in my community, I serve as a leader and active participant of many groups. Whether it's extracurriculars or school groups, I love being involved!

**Community Service and Citizenship:** pages 18-23

My community has served me well, and I see it as my duty to return the favor. I give back to my school and town in any way I can, especially using my personal set of skills.

**Unique Qualities and Life Enrichment:** pages 24-25

**Zombie Poem:** page 26



# LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION



**Monticello High School**  
**HOME OF THE BUCKAROOS**

P.O. Box 69 | Monticello, Utah 84535  
Phone: 435.587.2465 | Fax: 435.678.1150

Lewis Whitaker, *Principal*  
lwhitaker@sjsd.org

William Clayson, *Assistant Principal*  
wclayson@sjsd.org

January 28, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter at the request of Aspen English. As an educator, students with Aspen's abilities, motivation, and insight are extremely rare. I would dare say that Aspen, and her experience here at MHS, is truly unique. Aspen has served in student government, drama, National Honor Society, as a student aide, and as editor of the school periodical *The Lariat*. However, this is just what can be quantified. It is the contributions that aren't recognized with a title that have made Aspen irreplaceable at MHS.

I have had the pleasure of working with Aspen in a classroom setting, in student leadership positions, and as a major contributor to MHS's journalism program. Aspen is brilliant, organized, determined, and motivated. Aspen engages difficult tasks with enthusiasm and intelligence with an unmatched level of organization. Aspen's natural abilities allow her to seize each situation with command and precision. Aspen's academic skill set exemplifies the very model of exactness and excellence.

Aspen is currently serving as the editor of *The Lariat* at MHS. She was hand selected by the staff to serve in this position. She also manages, maintains, and promotes *Buckaroonation.com*, Monticello High School's website, while navigating ideas and editing information ready to be published. Aspen also oversees a large staff of student writers, exhibiting leadership skills envied and respected by the faculty and administration at MHS.

Aspen's skill set as a writer is also worthy of note. Aspen mixes humor with substance to engage difficult ideas and promote necessary change. Aspen is clever, thoughtful, and engaging in her topics of choice. As an editor, Aspen has been responsible for several hard-hitting stories that have produced community and school reactions. Aspen is fearless in her approach and willing to step off the path of conformity to challenge old society stereotypes and norms. However, Aspen is relentless in her research and considers all viewpoints before declaring her opinions. Aspen's brilliance truly illuminates itself in a mixture of common sense, academic efficiency, keen organization skills, and proven leadership skills.

I am confident that Aspen will continue to amaze during the next steps of her life. Aspen will continue to flourish in leadership positions due to her willingness to engage any task with conviction. Accomplished, committed, determined, and bright are just a few terms I can use to describe Aspen English. I strongly recommend Aspen as student with an exceptional record, an impeccable work ethic, remarkable intelligence, and an extraordinary sense of accomplishment. It has truly been a pleasure to have worked with Aspen English. Please feel free to contact me if you would like any more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joshua Keyes".

Joshua Keyes  
English Instructor  
Monticello High School

# LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Home of the Buckaroos



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**Monticello High School**

P.O. Box 69 | 148 S. 200 W. Monticello, Utah 84535  
Phone: 435.587.2465 | Fax: 435.678.1150

Lewis Whitaker, *Principal*  
[lwhitaker@sjsd.org](mailto:lwhitaker@sjsd.org)

KC Olson, *Assistant Principal*  
[kolson@sjsd.org](mailto:kolson@sjsd.org)

June 15, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to recommend **Aspen English** for your consideration as a candidate for your organization. Aspen has always been committed to excellence in all that she does. This drive has led her to be the top student in this year's graduating class with a 4.0 GPA and a 33 composite score on the ACT. She has been able to accomplish these marks while taking higher level and college classes, and perhaps being the busiest student at MHS.

Aspen's quiet confidence has inspired her fellow students. A wonderful actress she has had leading roles in many school plays. She is involved in National Honor Society and a leader of the schools Hope Squad a comprehensive student suicide prevention group where she helped develop a suicide prevention program. She is also a student body vice president in charge of creating schools' assemblies and activities.

Around Monticello Aspen has taken a leadership role in charity and community improvement projects. She is active in leadership in church and community organizations and has been a part of several service projects. She was instrumental in creating a youth swim team and even teaches piano in her spare time. Once again it is my pleasure to recommend Aspen English to your organization.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jeffrey Hunt'.

Jeffrey Hunt  
Counselor



# CATEGORY EXPERTISE



*Left: MHS's Journalism and Editing staff.*

*Right: My first published Lariat featuring my article on the cover!*

## Editor-in-chief of Monticello High School's Lariat

**2018- Present**

Writing has always been one of my favorite ways to inform others about things I care about. That's one reason that I've always been so fond of my Journalism class- it inspires me to write about things that need to be heard in my community or even just in my school. Because of my passion for writing and informing others, I was chosen this year as the Editor-in-chief of my high school's newspaper, the Lariat. As the editor, I oversee a staff of dozens of students, select articles written in the Journalism class to be published, and manage the **school website**.

One of the most important things that I've learned as both a Journalism student and editor is how to write with conviction. Sure, it's easy enough to write book reports and informational essays with little to no interest in the topic, but the results will be insipid and tasteless. In my eyes, that's not really writing; it's busy work. If a person is truly motivated about his or her work, it will shine through in the very letters of the words used and paragraphs penned. A good writer presents a clear thesis for every argument

and backs up every point with evidence, logic, and poignancy. In my time as editor, I have learned to imbue those qualities in my own writing.

Another important lesson I have begun to master is how to tackle the issues with finesse. Anyone can state a personal opinion or argue a topic, but it takes skill to be able to do so with tact and clear evidence behind a claim. I feel strongly about several issues, such as social media, mental illness, and my school's dress code. Because of my ability to diplomatically articulate my arguments, I have been able to write and publish articles in a way that promote consideration and encourage change, even though those topics are controversial, to say the least.

Because of my position as Editor-in-chief, I have gained firsthand knowledge about the importance of the press, sharpened my writing skills, and learned to tackle difficult topics with boldness. I am so grateful for the proficiency that I have gained through this experience, and I have no doubt that I will continue to use my literary expertise for the rest of my life.

# CATEGORY EXPERTISE

## Utah State History Fair Winner/ National Qualifier 2017-2018

I have always had an interest in Women's Suffrage and the history of the Women's Rights Movement. Last year, I wrote an essay about a suffragist that would eventually become an award-winning, nationally-recognized script.



*Our script won several awards, including the Judy Barton Memorial Award and first place at the state competition. Our gold medal enabled us to qualify for Nationals!*



*We traveled to Washington D.C. for the National History Day to represent the state of Utah. We had several opportunities while we were there, such as meeting with our state legislature, touring the White House, and performing in front of a nationally-recognized panel.*

This year, I had the opportunity to return to the school and district contest as a judge!



# CATEGORY EXPERTISE

## Second Place in Fiction, Non-fiction, and Poetry categories of San Juan School District Writing Contest

2018



For over four years now, the San Juan School District has put on an annual writing contest at the end of each school year. It's open to all students ranging from 2nd to 12th grades from over eight schools, and also offers a cash prize. In the past four years, I've won several awards—most recently, I took second place in the Fiction, Non-fiction, and Poetry categories of the competition.

## 2019 SJSJSD Writing Contest Judge/ Organizer

2019

This year, the District Coordinator reached out to me about the contest I have so loved participating in. I readily agreed and will act as a judge for this year's contest. I have also helped with advertising and getting the word out to student via posters, announcements, and newspaper articles.



## ACT score of 36 on the English portion

2018

### View Your Scores

Test Date: February 2018  
 Test Location: State  
 Test Option: The ACT with writing

Score
<b>Composite Score: 33</b>

This is not an official ACT score report and is intended only for your informational use.

[More Information](#)

Does your score [Readiness](#)

English	36	Yes.

*I worked and studied hard to achieve a perfect score on the English portion of the ACT!*

# CATEGORY EXPERTISE

## Winner of the New Nations Project Essay Contest 2018

An educational initiative called the New Nations Project was an essay contest with an enviable prize: tickets to see the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*. Students were given the opportunity to write to their state representatives on a topic that intrigued or concerned them. A lucky few of those writers- me included!- were selected and given the opportunity to see the show (*with* the representatives they wrote to).



To earn the tickets, I wrote an essay about gun control. It was also published in the school newspaper. The topic is one that I feel strongly about; however, it is not a popular opinion to have in my town. The essay can be read on the next two pages.



# ARTICLE: BITE THE BULLET

On Wednesday, February 14th, a former student opened fire on a high school in Parkland, Florida. 17 people were left dead, with many more injured. The shooter, a teenager named Nikolas Cruz, was in possession of a semi-automatic rifle.

Gun-related deaths such as shootings like these are the third-leading cause of death for young Americans like me, and America is infamous for its numerous school shootings. Dozens of students, teachers, and other faculty members have paid for those shootings with their lives! Sandy Hook, Columbine, Marjory Stoneman Douglas- I could go on naming schools that have been affected. The point is, we Americans are not safe from gun violence, and we never will be unless something changes.

According to the National Rifle Association Laws for the state of Utah, no state permit is required to buy or possess a rifle. Now, many Utahns appreciate that law, as it allows them to purchase weapons to go hunting. However, not everyone's intentions are quite so pure. The fact of the matter is, it is way too easy for a citizen to get his or her hands on a gun, especially on a gun designed to kill other humans. For example, take Nikolas Cruz, the most recent school shooter. He was able to purchase the semi-automatic rifle he used to kill seventeen people- and he was able to do it legally. He was over the age of eighteen and had no criminal record, and that was all it took.

Something clearly needs to be done. The Second Amendment does protect our right to bear arms, but the State Constitutional Provision only protects that right "for security and defense of self, family, others, property, or the State as well as for other lawful purposes." School shootings are far from lawful. What is the government going to do about it? As Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader, says: "The real test of President Trump and the Republican Congress is not words and empathy, but action" (Mascaro). The time for thoughts and prayers is long passed.

So what can be done? A lot, actually. For starters, enforcing stricter background checks and raising the age for rifle ownership from 18 to 21. President Trump even addressed the possibility: "I think we're going to have a great bill put forward very soon having to do with background checks, having to do with getting rid of certain things and keeping other things, and perhaps we'll do something on age" (Mascaro).

A stricter background for Nikolas Cruz would have surely prevented the sale of the weapon he used to kill those seventeen people, and ultimately ended in the confiscation of all his weapons. Even a small background check, even just interviewing a neighbor or peer of his, even scrolling through his Instagram (filled with dead and mutilated animals, guns, and knives)- anything more than what they did could have prevented this whole

catastrophe. He also wouldn't have been able to purchase the rifle if the age limit was higher, considering he's only 19 years old.

Even small measures can prevent huge catastrophes. What people fail to understand is that the measures that need to be taken are not as drastic as they seem. We are not banning guns! You have the right to drink alcohol, you just can't until you're twenty-one. You have the right to drive a car, you just need to go through the proper channels of registration and qualification checks. These standards need to be the same for guns, and they need to be enforced.

Unfortunately, the government is showing extreme reluctance when it comes to making any strict changes to gun control. "The National Rifle Association donates millions to congressional campaigns and spends millions more on national political advertising" (Gomez). This makes it extremely difficult for the government to sever ties with the association. But it's time they started caring about their citizens more than money.

After the Parkland shooting, people are speaking up. This shooting is different- the students affected are old enough- and educated enough- to fight back. Students are putting on protests, creating the #NeverAgain movement, and utilizing their First Amendment rights. To the country's astonishment, some schools are suspending the students who choose to participate in peaceful protest.

Take a minute to let that sink in. There are schools suspending students for using the Constitution to legally and peacefully stand up for change. A Florida school district threatened suspension, saying that "the district 'will not allow a student demonstration during school hours for any type of protest or awareness!!'" (Darrah). Here's the thing: doing so is completely illegal.

Schools can punish students for missing class- they've always been able to do so. But they can't punish students more harshly for protesting than if they were absent for any other reason. The Supreme Court has made it exceedingly clear: punishing students for exercising their free speech is unconstitutional. If you still don't believe it after taking a look at the Bill of Rights, consider the following 1965 case. *Tinker v. Des Moines* was a Supreme Court Ruling protecting the students' right of expression. It ruled 7-2 that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

So what should we, as students do? It's simple: stand up and speak out! Refuse to sit down and close your mouth. Know your rights, and exercise them! Sorry, Mom and Dad, but your generation has done a terrible job of keeping this problem in check. It's our turn to speak up- that means it's your turn to listen.



# LEADERSHIP

## President of National Honor Society

*Sophomore Rep: 2016-2017, President Elect: 2017-2018, President: 2018- Present*

National Honor Society is an organization that promotes and recognizes high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have excelled academically and in their communities. It also encourages service and good character. I have had the opportunity to be a member of my school's chapter of NHS for three years now. What's more, I have been able to serve in leadership positions all three of those years.



*One of this year's service projects included a trip to the elementary school to help the PTA and lower grades with their holiday parties. We also read them winter stories!*

Currently, I am the President of the National Honor Society of Monticello High School. The position is actually determined the year previous: whoever is chosen as the President-Elect his or her eleventh-grade year is automatically President the following school year. This has proven to be extremely beneficial for

the leadership and structure of the group, as it allows future leaders to learn what is expected and how to further improve. It also encourages teamwork and cooperation between different grades and students.



*NHS helped with the Monticello Harvest Festival, an annual event that kicks off the fall season. Our club provided over a dozen volunteers to run booths, take tickets, and sell concessions.*

Through the brilliant extracurricular that is NHS, I have been able to organize and participate in some amazing leadership and service opportunities. For years, we have sponsored annual blood drives and personally reached out to find participants. To encourage literacy among children in our town, we visit younger elementary students and read with them. We've worked with the Elementary School PTA to put on a harvest festival as a worthwhile and engaging fundraiser. This year, I suggested a Valentine's day student

# LEADERSHIP

## President of National Honor Society (continued)

*Sophomore Rep: 2016-2017, President Elect: 2017-2018, President: 2018- Present*

encouragement project, where we wrote personalized notes to every student in the school to uplift them and show that we care.



*Above, I am pictured manning the infamous cupcake walk, a Halloween activity at the Harvest Festival. We also baked several pans of cupcakes for the event.*

I've learned a lot from my involvement in NHS, especially concerning leadership. As President, I am responsible for organizing meetings and contacting members, as well as finding projects for us to do. One very helpful thing that I've learned is that in order to get people involved in something that may not be easy or entertaining, you must involve them from the very beginning. That way, they are active parts of any project we take part in and not just passive participants. That's why we come up with service ideas as a group, and why each grade elects a

representative. It allows us to act as a cohesive club and band together to support a cause we all care about.

Although NHS isn't the only group in which I hold a position of leadership, it is definitely one of the most engaging and rewarding. Because of it, I have been able to surround myself with a multitude of other like-minded individuals who uphold respectable characters and a passion for involvement. Within that environment, I have been able to thrive and truly become a better person and leader. I am incredibly grateful for the experiences I have had and will surely cherish them for a long time.



*One of the most exciting parts of each year for the National Honor Society is the Induction Ceremony. Each year, incoming Sophomores are selected and recruited based on grade point average.*



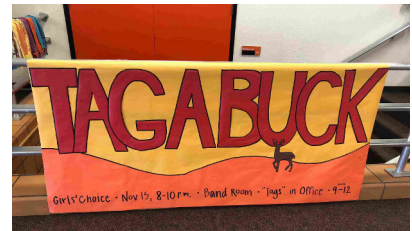
# LEADERSHIP

## Vice President of Activities at Monticello High School

*MHS Student Council: 2013- 2018, Prom Chairman: 2017-2018, MHS Executive Council: 2018- Present*

Since I first entered the hallways of Monticello High School as a seventh grader, I have been involved in Student Council. It's one of my favorite ways to be involved, and one of the best ways to make the high school experience worthwhile. My senior year, I have had the privilege of serving on Executive Council as Vice President. As VP, I have worked with the other members of the council to plan and execute school activities, assemblies, dances, and homecomings!

Our 2019 Student Council has five senior Officers and a Jr. High representative.



Above: A scene from the annual Buckaroo Games, a student council sponsored Homecoming event. The highlight of the evening is a larger-than-life obstacle course on the football field.

Right: I was named Prom Chairman in 2018 and was responsible for organizing the Junior Prom. Our theme was 'Once Upon A Time'.

Part of executing successful activities is advertisement- so I make colorful banners and posters to get the word out!

# LEADERSHIP

## President of MHS Hope Squad

2017- Present



## What is Hope Squad?

Hope Squad is a peer-based organization focused on preventing teen suicide by implementing healthy coping skills, good friends, and a network of counselors and professional help. Monticello High School started a chapter of Hope Squad in 2017, and I've been the President ever since!

## Activities

One of Hope Squad's most successful activities so far has been the **Hope Walk**. We invited the entire community to walk or run a 5k in support of suicide prevention measures. Along the course, important facts and information was displayed on posters. Over a hundred people participated, and we got regional news coverage! We hope to make this an annual event.

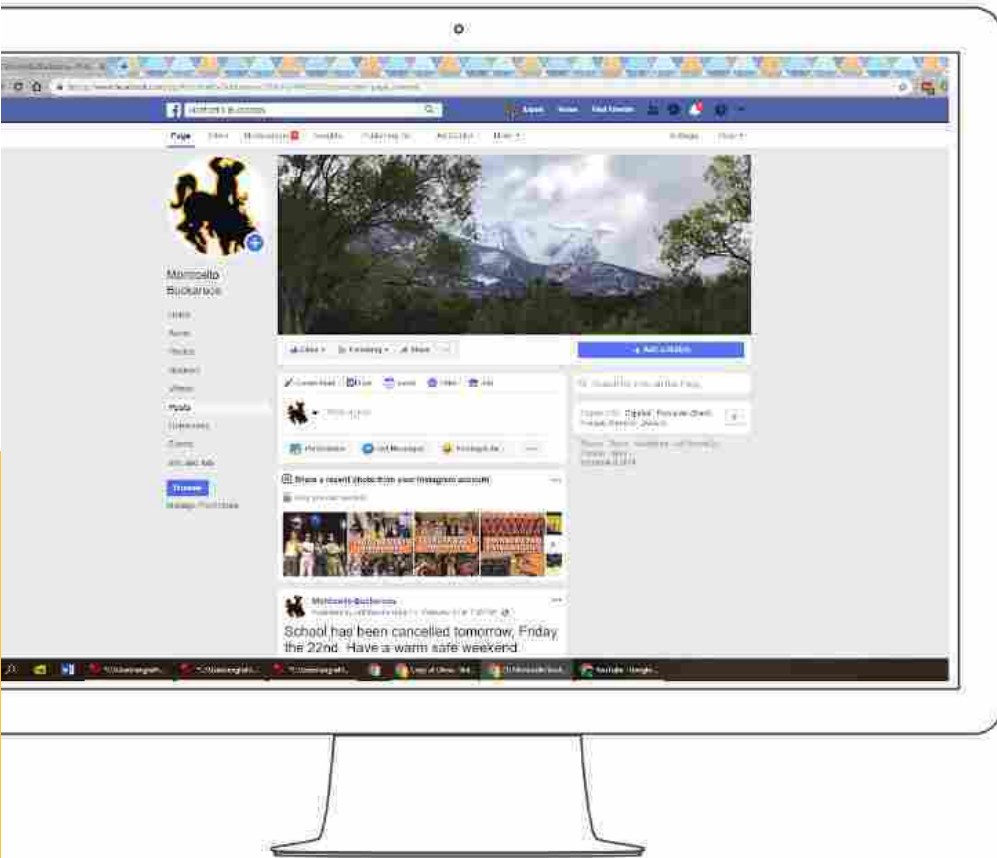


# LEADERSHIP

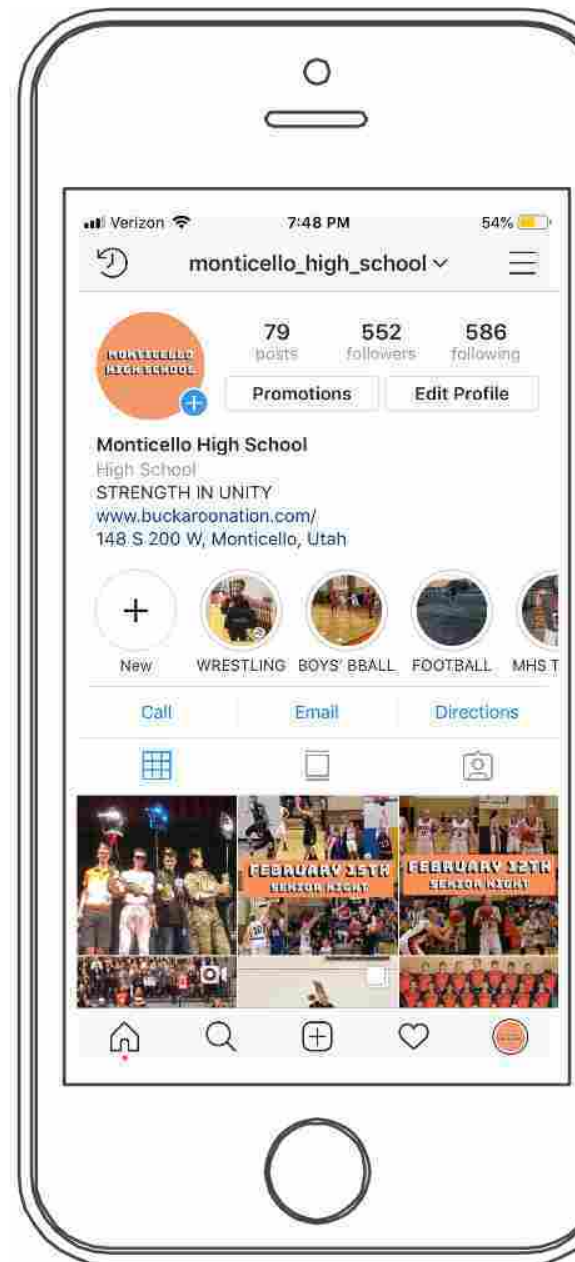
## Social Media Manager for Monticello High School

2018- Present

*One of the best ways to communicate with students and parents is through social media. Nearly every student and their parents has an Instagram, or Facebook, or both!*



At the beginning of the school year, I realized that the high school had both an **Instagram** and **Facebook** account that weren't being updated very often. In fact, the Instagram page had been largely inactive for two full years. So, with the permission of our school counselor and Student Council advisor, I started regularly updating the page with sports announcements, news, and events! It's been a massive success, and it has taught me how important communication and social presence.





# LEADERSHIP

## Rotary Youth Leadership Award

2017



*A year ago, I had the unique opportunity to attend a leadership program specifically for students in leadership or service positions at their schools. Over the course of four days, we learned valuable skills, heard many amazing speakers, and participated in small activities and classes that developed our leadership and team-building skills.*

*The Rotary Youth Leadership Award is sponsored by the Rotary Club of America. I was sent by the Interact Club at my school, another Rotary-sponsored program. I have also served as the Secretary for the club since 2016.*

# LEADERSHIP

## Secretary of Model United Nations Club

*Member: 2015- Present, Secretary: 2017- Present*



Model United Nations is a club that encourages diplomacy, debate, and collaboration by coming together to write faux resolutions to real world problems. I have been a member since my freshman year, and I have learned so much at the seven conferences I've been to so far!



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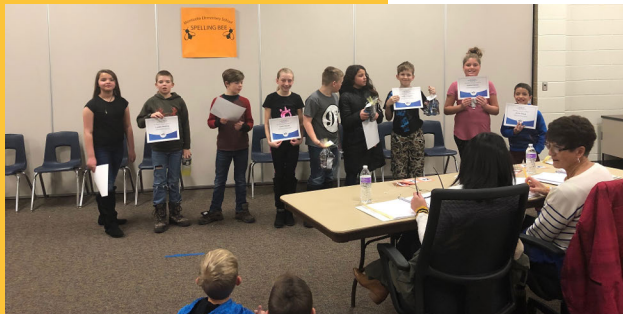


# COMMUNITY

## Coordinator and Judge of San Juan Spelling Bees

2019

When I was a junior high student, my favorite school activity was the spelling bee. I would never admit it out loud, but I loved going onstage and spelling words I had memorized into the microphone, staring the pronouncer confidently in the eye. I was never the most athletic of students, but I was an All-Star speller. I even finished as the Region Runner-Up in eighth grade: second in line for the coveted Washington D.C. Bee.



***The school and grades winners of the Monticello Elementary School Bee show off their certificates.***

Unfortunately, any student older than fifteen is barred from participating in the spelling bee. A little sad, I found other ways to be involved- I quizzed my younger siblings when it was their chance to compete. As an

elementary teacher's aide, I taught simple tips and tricks to the class winners. I tried to be useful in any way I could so that more students could get the opportunities I had.



***The MHS Champion spells the championship word correctly.***

Then, after my junior year of high school, both the elementary and high schools in my town had several changes in administration. Monticello Elementary got a new principal, and Monticello High hired a new vice principal. I knew it could be difficult for the schools to organize the annual spelling bee without much prior experience. With that in mind, I reached out to both schools and the district coordinator to offer my help in any way they could use it. To my surprise,





everyone I contacted was grateful, and the local schools asked me to coordinate their school competitions.

Enthusiastic and perhaps embarrassingly excited, I got to work immediately. I scheduled a date for the contest to be held on with no conflicts. I put together binders for the judges and pronouncers to keep track of the word lists, given spellings, and other necessary information. I also acted as a judge at both bees. At the district level, the Regional Coordinator contacted me and asked me to both be a judge and briefly explain the procedure to the audience. After that, I was invited to do the same at the Region level for the state of Utah.



***The San Juan District Spelling Bee contestants pose for a picture for the local newspaper.***



***I got the opportunity to judge the district bee with three other qualified individuals.***

I'm so incredibly thankful for the opportunity I had to be so closely involved in my community's spelling bees. It was so rewarding for me to watch students study and prepare for the spelling bee as I did so many years ago. When I shook the winner's hand at each competition and congratulated them, I could see myself in the sparkle of pride in their eyes. It felt like I was giving back; paying back some debt I didn't know I owed. Finding a way that my skills and I specifically could help people in my area was beyond gratifying.



# COMMUNITY

## San Juan County Royalty

2018

This past summer, I entered into the Miss San Juan Contest. I was chosen to be a finalist, and eventually won the title of First Attendant. However, the title came with quite a bit of responsibility. Myself and the other queens were responsible for helping the County Fair run smoothly. We ran the children's activities, timed rodeo events, and ran the talent show. I had a blast, and was grateful for the opportunity to help with a community event!





# COMMUNITY

## Piano Teacher

*2017-Present*

I have taken piano lessons since I was seven years old. Since then, I've become a very proficient player. Two years ago, I decided to start teaching piano lessons. I started with just four students, but my business has grown and I now have double that amount!



*My students work through a curriculum of leveled lessons and theory assignments. Twice a year, they get to show off their skills and perform a piece of their choice at a piano recital!*



***To the left, several of my students are pictured at their first ever recital and then a year later at their third!***

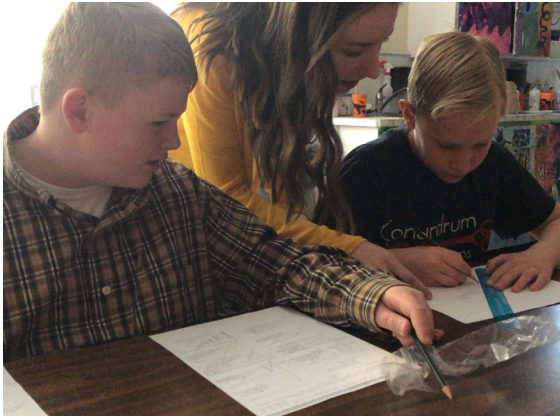




# COMMUNITY

## Tutor

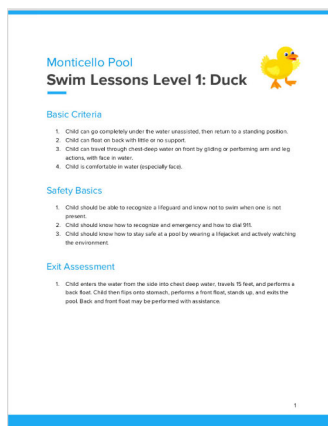
2015- Present



Since I was in seventh grade, I have been tutoring students in grades 7-11 in areas they struggle with, such as Math or English. It has been incredibly rewarding for me to be able to watch them improve!

## Swimming Lesson Instructor

2017-2018



I'm a lifeguard at the local pool, and I also teach swimming lessons. Recently, we discontinued the Red Cross curriculum, so my manager put me in charge of writing a new set of lesson plans that we can use without paying a fee!

# COMMUNITY

## Member of the San Juan Youth Coalition

2018- Present

The San Juan Youth Coalition is a county-based suicide prevention program. Although Monticello High School already has a Hope Squad, the SJYC works with that program but emphasizes community events and cooperation with other schools in the county school districts.



### Monticello High School hosts suicide prevention discussion on Dec. 13

For the first time this year, Monticello High School Counselor Jeff Hunt led an after-school group centered around suicide prevention. The discussion was on Dec. 13 in the Monticello High School Library.

It's something the school did last year several times in order to provide students and any interested community members with a forum to talk about the sensitive and important issue.

Hunt was aided in the discussion by student volunteer Aspen English. The two explained early on during the group discussion that Hunt is ranked number four in the nation for suicides.

It's one of the reasons HOPE Squad formed in Utah. HOPE Squad members, like English, are trained student peers who have been asked to by the student body or trained peer counselors.

Through evidence-based training modules, members are empowered through training to help save lives. One of the main preventative measures of suicide is recognizing risk factors.

"The risk factors are all of those things that in-

community generally look at the exposure amongst students and what they were thinking and doing and try to provide all the support we could," Hunt said. "And that look at signs in lethal means."

"Are there signs that are overlooked? Are there people that are unaccounted for? Some of those kinds of things and how we go about protecting ourselves from them."

Monticello High School student volunteer Aspen English went over some of the protective factors involved in prevention after Hunt finished reviewing the risk factors.

"We really talk about making connections with other students, especially ones who don't have many friends or aren't really as involved, or even if they seem happy and funny," English said in reference to previous Hope Squad discussions about preventative measures she has been involved in.

"We have meetings and we talk about all the things that we can do as peers to help recognize those risk factors in others."

Attendance for the group discussion was low, but Hunt is hoping that by bringing community awareness to the discussion, they can grow in the future for anyone who is interested.

For more information about the group, feel free to contact Hunt at the Monticello High School.



Recently, the San Juan Youth Coalition worked with the Hope Squad to host a citywide suicide prevention discussion. I spoke on prevention measures, and we were able to address many issues in our community and school.

We also hand out t-shirts, foam brains, and frisbees and basketball and football games to promote the prevention of underage drug and alcohol abuse. Drug and alcohol abuse are what are called risk factors for teen suicide.



# UNIQUE QUALITIES

## *Challenges Overcome and Skills Utilized*

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When I was twelve years old, I moved to Utah from across the country. Before, I lived in a moderately-sized city in East Tennessee and attended a school with a graduating class of several hundred people. I was used to blending into the background and sticking to activities that I was comfortable in. I was smart, but I didn't challenge myself. I had my little group of friends, and that was all I needed...right?

Then came along the spring of 2012. Within a matter of a few months, my family had picked up and completely relocated to a tiny town in rural Utah. Unlike my former school, the miniscule Monticello High School had a total of just over 250 students, seventh through twelfth grade. The town itself was similarly small. Worse, everyone seemed to know who I was and where I lived...and I was sure they could sense my gut-wrenching fear.

I could have easily retreated to the shadows and allowed my fear of a new place and new people to get the best of me. Luckily, there was something inside me that told me to try something new and be involved for a change, and to record my experience. That year, I ran for student council and Homecoming Parade committee, and I wrote about all of it in my journal. I made new friends and took advantage of the opportunities that came with living in a small town, and I noted the best and the worst of it and how it made me feel. Writing made me feel secure and helped me understand what I was feeling. Most importantly, it helped me overcome my fear of participating and putting myself out there! There is no doubt in my mind that it was that experience, with a little help from my journal, that made me who I am today.

However, my own personal character development doesn't stop there. Another unique thing about who I am is the fact that I am a teacher, both by profession and by nature. I've been teaching piano lessons for over two years, instructing swimming lessons for two summers, and tutoring since I was in 8th grade. Both my parents have been teachers, and helping others understand and learn has always come naturally for me. It has also been a profound experience for me to watch my knowledge and skills transfer to my students because of things I've done or said .

For me, teaching has shown me how to use words and ideas to help others, and I'm a better teacher because of my English skills. Teaching someone a concept is just like informing an audience about a topic. Justifying an answer is just like a supporting argument to a thesis. English, simply put, is the art of transporting and sharing ideas. With fine-tuned skills, I can paint a picture of any idea clear enough to show someone else. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had to teach others.



# LIFE ENRICHMENT

## *How Sterling Scholar will help my future!*

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It's easy for me to recognize that English and Language Arts are a few of my greatest strengths. Writing persuasively and speaking eloquently seems to run in my blood (and my last name). The more I am involved in activities and challenges pertaining to the English category, including Sterling Scholar, the more I learn about how our language and communication skills act as the glue that keeps our world together.

My personal philosophy on English is quite simple: literature and language form the cornerstone for the progression of humanity. Without written and spoken communication, we can't develop ideas or progress as a society. Knowing how to address the problems that exist with diplomatic and tactful language leads to learning how to solve or improve those problems. English skills are what enable us to process and analyze our own thoughts and opinions and explain them to others. What's more, those aren't skills only needed for writing essays or giving speeches- they are life skills that almost everyone- in almost every field- uses on a daily basis. They allow us to create our own genuinely meaningful existence for ourselves and those around us.

English skills are also of the utmost importance when it comes to government and our political opinions. Aristotle said: "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." We live in a world of vastly differing stances and opinions surrounding incredibly controversial topics, and disagreements can quickly turn nasty. It is my personal belief that with carefully articulated, reasonable arguments, we can develop better diplomatic conversation skills which can allow us to solve problems more efficiently. Instead of letting our beliefs divide us, we can discuss them and be better off for it.

Clearly, English skills are a major part of our lives. We use them at school and at work. We use them at home. We even use them when we're ordering a 4 For \$4 at Wendy's! Whether it's explaining and justifying the results of a scientific study or creating an advertisement to attract customers, this category is the one that keeps the others running. There is no business executive that doesn't write important emails or conduct important calls. There is no lawyer that doesn't use language skills to convince the jury of a case. When I graduate and the time comes for me to choose a career, I can say with confidence that I will use my English skills in any professional path I choose to follow.

# ZOMBIES!

## *a poem*

The room is quiet, the lights are low  
The clock is ticking, long and slow  
For the students inside are trying their best  
To ace Mr. Keyes's English test

When all of a sudden, out of the blue,  
The door slams open- we've been broken into  
The dust settles, the students lift their heads-  
Standing in the doorway are the living dead!

I waste no time getting up from my desk  
As the zombies swarm (it's quite grotesque)  
I look for a weapon, or something like that  
A Chromebook, for starters- it's hard and flat

Looking around, I scoop up more items  
A pencil to stab with, a stapler to bite 'em  
A yardstick acts as a very nice spear,  
And with the scent of Expos, they can't come near

Now I'm fully equipped, I need somewhere to hide  
There's a closet in the corner, I'll go inside  
No time to spare, the monsters are close  
And their moaning and groaning is getting quite gross

I shut myself in and hide by the cabinets  
It's dark and it's scary, this is absolute madness  
I wait in suspense for the zombies to find me  
This room isn't *that* big- how haven't they spied me?

Summoning courage, I peek out the crack  
The invaders are leaving- they're turning their backs!  
Realization hits, and I know why they're done-  
Zombies like brains, and in this room, there are none.