

WRITING & Reporting

Interview Assignment - 50 points Mrs. Long - Intro to Journalism

Overview: You will be interviewing another student in class and she will interview you. Next, you will determine the most interesting/newsworthy story to tell and do a more in-depth investigation of that angle so that you can write a short story.

Directions: You have 15 minutes to conduct your interview. Because you have not had a chance to do any background research, you will need to explore a wide variety of topics to try to find out some interesting story angle. For example, you may find out: Year in School/Age/Job, Hobby, etc./Favorites/Family information/Worst/Best Habit/Unusual trip/experience/ Where does he or she hope to be in 10 years?/journalism experience/Why did he or she take this class?/Something unique or unusual people don't know about him or her? ***In your final story, you must also include at least two direct quotes from that person so take careful notes.**

If you just took that information and wrote a story, it would read something like this:

In her 18th year at Lafayette High School, Mrs. Nancy Smith hopes to be a positive influence on her students in Writing and Reporting. She is always looking for talented students to join the publications staffs. Before LHS, she was a teacher at Belleville West for seven years.

Smith doesn't have much time for hobbies. She prepares for and grades work from her classes and advises the Image, Legend, lhsimage.com and DVD Yearbook. When she's not working on school-related projects, Mrs. Smith is very busy with her 14-year-old son, Jordan, her 10-year-old twins, Austin and Blake and her two-year-old Chocolate Lab named Cocoa.

She said, "Being home all summer with all my boys really made me appreciate coming to work each day!"

A major accomplishment of hers this summer has been maintaining her sanity while keeping up her busy home life and summer work schedule.

She travels over the summer to various newspaper/yearbook workshops and teachers a grad class at K-State. When she is home, she spends most of her time in the car driving her sons to their various practices, games and social events.

She also spend a lot of time getting her new classroom ready. "After 17 years in one room, it took a major effort to sort out and move everything"

She said she works hard favorite things to do is work to make her classroom a great place to work and learn. She collects magnets, which she keeps displayed near her desk. She also keeps scented candles, plants and lots of family photos close to her to relieve stress. In addition, she keeps her classroom decorated with posters and other knickknacks.

"I spend so much time at school, that I like the room to be a fun, comfortable place," she explained.

She has been married for 23 years to a Fenton Fire Protection District firefighter. In 10 years she looks forward to a much quieter house with all her boys living on their own somewhere else. Smith said the most exciting travel she does is to and from school, but she does take students to a national journalism conference each fall. This year that conference will be in Kansas City. She also gets to attend the spring conference each year as she is the Journalism Education Association's National Write-off Co-Chair for the spring conferences. This year that will take her to Anaheim in April, but she said she doesn't get much free time.

"Running the contest involved working in a little room with no windows from Wednesday through Saturday. I didn't read the fine print when I signed up for that job!" she said.

Smith's journalism experience began in 8th grade and continued throughout college at Eastern Illinois University where she was the news editor for the daily newspaper and the yearbook's editor-in-chief.

Not Very Exciting! This is just a very basic news story (BRIEF). You have a lot of facts strung together, but it doesn't really tell a story that is interesting. What you need now is a more developed angle. Surely there is at least one thing about the person that stood out as unusual or interesting. Could that be the focus of the story? Is there a way to combine some of the details that seem to go together naturally? So, now come up with a more specific angle that tells a unique story (BRITE) about your source. If you need to, ask some additional questions to get more specific details and descriptions.

So, write a story that focuses on one interesting angle and goes more depth about a single aspect of your source's life. It should be 150-250 words. Example:

In 24 years, a teacher can accumulate a lot of stuff. Nancy Smith discovered just how much she collected when she moved from Room 213 to 137A. The hard part was not moving all of it, but deciding what to keep and what to pitch.

Some items were easy to get rid of. Smith said she isn't exactly a hoarder, but said she was a bit of a "pack rat." She got rid of decorations that were falling apart and lots of files from classes she no longer teaches. She had no problem filling trash can after trash can with ancient yearbook photos and CDs with old newspaper files.

The hard part was getting rid of things that had strong memories attached to them.

"It sounds stupid, but I can remember when I got different posters or other room decorations and it was sad to part with some of it," she said. "I have had some of these posters longer than I have had my children," she said.

The odd thing is her new room is larger and has a lot of storage, but she still had to purge a bit. She said she wanted to start fresh and not clutter things up too much.

"Some of my colleagues used to tease me and say my room looked like the playground of an insane kid because of all the stuff on the walls and hanging from the ceiling," she said.

In her new classroom, Smith said she is going for a more clean, sophisticated look.

"We'll see how long that lasts," she laughed.