



2025 IHSA JOURNALISM STATE FINALS: EDITORIAL WRITING

DIRECTIONS & RULES

You are a staff member of the Abraham High School's The Standard (Middleland, Ill.). Your editor has assigned you to write an editorial appropriate for the topic covered in the background material. Review the background information and quotes below to help develop a clear editorial statement relative to the material. The word limit will be 350 words. You are permitted to use an AP Stylebook and dictionaries. Type the final word count at the bottom of the story before turning it in. Entries will be judged on the quality of the arguments and writing, organization, and proper style and mechanics. At the top of your document, type "School Code: ####" with your individualized code numbers.

Start Time: 11:30 AM

Work must be submitted by: 1:00 PM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are varying opinions being voiced among AHS high school students and parents, as well as citizens in Middleland after AHS released the list of school clubs that are up for consideration to be added as official school clubs for the 2025-26 school year. There were two clubs on the list, "esports" and "Fellowship of Christian Athletes", the latter of which has not only caused controversy locally, but also led some national advocates to get involved in the conversation.

Proponents for adding the club believe it is protected by the religious freedoms granted by the First Amendment, while opponents believe that the philosophical concept born out of the same Amendment, "the separation of church and state", should preclude the group from being sanctioned at a public school.

FCA Organizational Overview from its website:

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is touching millions of lives...one heart at a time. Since 1954, FCA has been challenging coaches and athletes on the



2025 IHSA JOURNALISM STATE FINALS: EDITORIAL WRITING

professional, college, high school, junior high and youth levels to use the powerful platform of sport to reach every coach and every athlete with the transforming power of Jesus Christ. FCA focuses on serving local communities around the globe by engaging, equipping and empowering coaches and athletes to unite, inspire and change the world through the gospel. FCA's national headquarters is located in Kansas City, Missouri.

FCA Mission Statement from its website:

To lead every coach and athlete into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.

Additional Quotes:

AHS Superintendent Sonia Johnson: "We recognize that FCA exists in other high schools in our state and around the country. We are making sure that we do our due diligence as an administration to make decisions that are inclusive to AHS students of all faiths, while also maintaining governance within our state and national laws. I am in the process of working with AHS legal counsel to gain more information. That information will be presented to our Board of Education (BOE), as we will follow our normal policies and protocols for consideration of adding new clubs.

BOE President Steve Steidinger: "The Board has not made a decision yet on school clubs for the 2025-26 school year. We are currently gathering more information, as well as listening to the opinions of all invested constituents. As a Board, it is our mission to provide the best educational, social, and emotional environment possible for AHS students. A big part of that experience is the official school clubs, sports, and activities, all of which we view as an important extension of the classroom. Fiscal responsibility for our taxpayers is also at our forefront, so it is vital that we do not make any decisions that leave AHS in a legally tenable position."

FCA Illinois Huddle Coordinator Isaac Eller: "FCA enjoys longstanding relationships with teachers and students at schools all over the state, country, and world. AHS students should be treated fairly, just as they are at countless



2025 IHSA JOURNALISM STATE FINALS: EDITORIAL WRITING

other schools.”

Brian McFarland, Director of the Christian Legal Society’s Center for Law & Religious Freedom: “Public schools should respect every student’s religious belief and treat every student with dignity. Denying FCA at AHS would deny the foundational right of every student.”

High School Parent William Blair: “We have students at AHS who are Muslim and Jewish and atheist. What message does this send to them? The First Amendment says that our country does not have an official religion. Therefore, we should not be endorsing clubs with religious affiliations.”

High School Parent Jeanna Costanza: “They have FCA at a lot of other high schools. I don’t understand why it’s such a big deal here. I don’t think my kids would be interested, but it would be their choice whether to join or not. No one is forcing them to join it.”

High School Parent Tasha Rodriguez: “I don’t know that a public school should be endorsing or offering a religious club. It seems to me that FCA should be offered through local churches and hosted there.”

AHS Student Keaton Meyers: “If a Fellowship of Muslim Athletes club existed, would AHS allow it? As long as both would be allowed, or neither would be allowed, I am cool with it. It sort of begs the question, is FCA is being punished because the Fellowship of Muslim Athletes doesn’t exist yet?”

AHS Student Shari Goddard: “Their rules essentially say that you have to believe in Jesus in order to take part. That is a violation of student rights and it is crazy to allow them to meet in a public school.”

AHS Student Shawn Dunston: “I think the ‘Athletes’ part is more discriminatory than the ‘Christian’ part. If we add FCA, shouldn’t the administration then be required to offer a Fellowship of Christian Chess Players and a Fellowship of Christian esportsers, and so on?”



2025 IHSA JOURNALISM STATE FINALS: EDITORIAL WRITING

AHS Student Donny McBride: “There is a growing segment of society in this country that is trying to make the United States a Christian nation. The First Amendment literally exists to prevent this. Allowing FCA at AHS seems like a minor thing on its own, but when set against the greater movement in this country, it is scary.”

AHS Student Bobby Rutledge: “If I ask to start a school club next year affiliated with satan, would they allow it? We know they wouldn’t. How and why is this different?”

AHS Student Braden McClintock: “I don’t think its discriminatory. I know kids at other schools who aren’t religious or Christian, but they lie and still attend FCA because they get something out of it.”

SUBMITTING YOUR WORK

1. Upon completing your work, be sure your four-digit school code is at the top of the document and your word count at the bottom of the story. Be sure your name or school name do not appear in the document or file name.

2. Turn your work into a PDF (File > Save as > Save as Type) and name the file as follows:

Four Digit School Code – Event Name

So your file name should look like this...

1234 – Editorial Writing.pdf

3. Go to www.ihsa.org/Journalism-State-Series

4. Find your event and click the “Submit Work” link that applies to it.

5. Select the PDF of your work to upload. In the First Name box, type your four-digit school code. In the Last Name box, re-type your four-digit school to confirm.

6. Once you are prompted that your document was uploaded successfully, please log out if you are using a Heartland Computer.