

***Giving Voice* Student Contributors**

Welcome to *Giving Voice*! We are so glad that you are working with us.

The vision of *Giving Voice* is Connecting people through their stories to foster empathy, equity, and community collaboration. When considering what to submit for consideration, please strive to fulfill the vision.

Articles, podcasts, poems, illustrations, and video blogs published in *Giving Voice* should reflect Big Picture Initiative's commitment to the vision. Kindness, love, and respect create understanding that helps our community raise up all members. Published works will not denigrate any race, religion, gender orientation, or political party. As the publisher, Big Picture Initiative reserves the right to edit or reject any material.

How To Submit Work to be considered for publication

- We will consider all writing styles, so don't feel that you need to submit a term paper. We publish a maximum of 500 words per article. Articles should be submitted as a Word or Google document. Please use your last name in the file name and email to givingvoice@bigpicturepeoria.org. In your email to us, please include the name of your school. One article per author per issue. Accepted articles may be edited and returned to the writer for revision. Edits will be indicated either as edits on a Microsoft Word document or as a Google Documents file. Payment is 10 cents a word upon publication, with a maximum of \$50 (500 words). For poetry, it should be 6-7 stanzas.

See writing tips below.

- Podcast. Submit a brief paragraph overview of the podcast along with a digital file. We publish podcasts no longer than 5 minutes. Submit digital files in an editable, uncompressed audio format such as MP4 or WAV to givingvoice@bigpicturepeoria.org. Please use your last name and a brief title as the file name. When you email us, please include the name of your school. Accepted podcasts may require additional editing by the podcaster based on input from our editorial team. One podcast per author per issue. *Giving Voice* pays \$50 for a published podcast. If the podcast submission is part of a longer podcast, we can publish a link to the full piece.

- Video blogs and stories. Submit a brief paragraph overview of the video blog/story along with a digital file. We publish vlogs no longer than 3 minutes. Submit digital files in an editable, uncompressed format: AVI, MOV, or MP4. Please use your last name in the file name and email to givingvoice@bigpicturepeoria.org. In your email to us, please include the name of your school. Accepted vlogs may require additional editing by the editorial team. *Giving Voice* pays \$50 for a published vlog or video story. One vlog/story per author per issue. If the vlog/video story submission is part of a longer work, we can publish a link to the full piece.

Writing Guidelines

Each article should be as close to **500 words** as possible. If you feel it is absolutely necessary to go over that limit significantly, please discuss it with the *Giving Voice* team. It is possible that we could split your article into a two-part series. However, professional publications will require that you stick to this limit—

see it as a challenge! Could you say the same thing but with fewer words? This is a challenge that all professional writers face.

We ask that you always include at least two of the following writing elements. If you feel that you still have a great concept for an article but are unable to include at least two, contact our *Giving Voice* team to discuss options:

- An action item. What can the reader do to solve the problem? Examples include but are not limited to: Provide the reader with a link to a website, refer them to an organization, and suggest ways they can make changes in their personal habits.
- Research concepts and cite your sources. Please include at least two. If you are writing about a personal experience, find a way to back it up with solid and reputable sources. Examples of reputable sources would be major newspapers, university or U.S. government websites, relevant literature (in general, aim for information publishing in the past two decades), and nonprofit organizations. Examples of information you might want to avoid would be personal blogs, television shows, and partisan groups/organizations. Wikipedia can be reputable, but check to see if the information you have found is cited in the entry. If so, just cite the actual source. If not, do some more research. If you are reading something that is filled with grammatical or spelling errors, it is likely not reputable.
- If you are writing about a polarizing concept, I do not expect you to write from a “both sides” standpoint, as the other side might be very harmful (for example, I do not expect you to try to understand someone who actively works against marginalized people). Rather, I want you to write as if you are trying to convince and/or explain to that person why they should consider your view. How would you want someone to talk to you if they were explaining a difficult concept? Use that as a guide for your tone and approach.

Additional Guidelines:

- All work should be original. They must be your own words. Any plagiarized work will be rejected by the editorial team.
- I will always edit using Calibri font, 11-point size. You do not have to use that font but know that it will be returned to you in this format.
- Do not use multiple spacing between lines.
- Only one space between sentences.
- Avoid using “etc.,” but instead try to come up with a few examples and either leave it at that—or end with, “and more.”
- Avoid too many contractions in your articles. They sometimes work, but oftentimes “haven’t” just looks better as “have not” in a formal article.
- Always use spell check—but be aware that it will not catch certain mistakes. “Dew” and “due” are both spelled correctly but have very different meanings.
- We use the Oxford/serial comma. Correct: “Apples, oranges, and grapes” as opposed to “Apples, oranges and grapes.”
- On that note, when using quotes, punctuation marks belong inside of quotes. Correct: “This is our style.” Avoid: “This is our style”.
- Publications should be italicized (*The New York Times*).
- Double-check that you are using the correct names for publications, businesses, etc. For example, it is *The Washington Post*, not *Washington Post*.
- Do not use ableist language. ([Click here for more information.](#))

Tips we have learned over the years:

- When the editor returns the article, follow all suggestions. If you feel there is a miscommunication or the suggested edit does not represent your original intention, please just email to clarify.
- Read and re-read your work... and then read it again! I suggest that after you finish writing it, you put it aside for a day or two and then read it with fresh eyes. You can also ask a family member or friend to read it. If something is unclear, they might pick up on it.
- Writer's block? It's not really a block—I promise your brain is still trying to figure out the concepts. Sometimes I have to put an article aside for hours, days, or even weeks before it comes together. Trust yourself.
- If you are going to interview someone for an article, *record them*. Do not just try to take notes. It is very easy to misrepresent someone this way. You can use your phone to record them, and then create a transcript based off of that conversation.
- Write about topics that you care about *or* that you want to learn more about. I often write about things that I have wanted to learn more about, but just had not been able to pursue.
- If the editor keeps asking you to make the same changes each time, maybe reach out to talk more about it. For example, if you get a lot of notes about run-on sentences, it might be good to talk through tactics and approaches to avoid them.
- Ask for guidance if you feel stuck. The *Giving Voice* team is here to help, so make use of this resource while you can!