

### The Making of Project III

If you remember watching the Nickelodeon show [\*Ned's Declassified: School Survival Guide\*](#), then you might be able to see the resemblance in my project. If you are not familiar with the show, the main character, Ned, captures his unfortunate experiences in middle school via video journal in order to use his mistakes to teach other students how to survive school. Now, I didn't have the time, skillset, or available middle school to make a video survival guide, so instead, I decided that I could make a similarly themed book. That is when "How to Survive Middle School... On Wheels" was born. Like Ned, I revert to humor in less than enjoyable circumstances, so I knew I wanted that to come through in my book.

The research was easy, I watched a few hours of the show, and it took me right back to my middle school days. Then, I read the journal that I kept in middle school in order to remind me of the specific incidents that occurred during my time at Kinawa Middle School. I also looked through old pictures, and revisited my middle school to really try to put myself in the mindset of my middle school self. This allowed me to really recall many specifics of the things that I wish I would have known prior to ever entering my middle school in a wheelchair on that first day of sixth grade.

The first thing I did was make a list of all the institutions within the middle school that were very difficult for me, e.g. the bathroom, the lunch line, the bus. I decided that these would be the titles of each of the pages. Next came the difficult part. Writing each page was what really caused the challenge, because I wanted to integrate personal experience with advice, but not exceed two sentences. I did not want to make the book about myself, because I really wanted it to be about the readers, but at the same time, I did not want the personal touch to be lost. This is where the humor came in. I used myself and all the mistakes I need as an example of what not to do, and then summed up with retrospectively would have been the better option. But, I still had to be cautious, because I did not want it to make the reader feel uncomfortable like they were laughing at disabled kids. This is where the introduction came in. I introduced myself, and invited the reader to laugh with me, to make them feel more comfortable.

Then, before I knew it, the book was nearly written. However, I still wasn't sure what I wanted the reader to get out of it besides a good laugh that I got stuck in a bathroom. After thinking about it for a while, I decided that I wanted the reader to gain two things. The first, I wanted them to know that as difficult as it is to survive middle school on wheels, that it is possible and it can be done. But, there was something bigger that I wanted them to gain from it too. I wanted the reader to feel a sense of frustration and a need to channel that frustration in the form of taking action. That there has to be some sort of legacy and that legacy is making other people realize that able-bodied privilege is real. This is also how I tied this project back to my last one. I wanted the audience to first read about about able-bodied privilege, and then to read this satire that it funny, yet frustrating that a ten-year-old had to experience such difficulties just to attend a public school. I wanted the audience to then want to do something about it.

Once the story was written out and the themes planned, the book still needed to be illustrated. Knowing that drawing is my weakness, I played around with computer generated images, but when I inserted them into the book, they looked out of place. That is when I knew I need to bite the bullet and start drawing. I quickly realized how much better the hand drawn images fit with the theme. There were also a lot of other small bumps in the road for this project, like finding out the book needed to be forty pages to be printed, but ultimately it came together.