

# Editorial Writing



By Jeanne Acton, UIL and ILPC Journalism Director

# Editorial

An article that states the newspaper's stance on a particular issue. Basically, it is a persuasive essay that offers a solution to a problem.



# Editorial Writing

A+ Spring District • 2014-2015

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown Middle School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the middle school newspaper. Remember that as an editorial writer you should support or oppose **policy or action**; you should not sermonize.

You have **45 minutes**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or entry. **Put your number in the upper right corner of each page of your entry.**

## STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 1,200 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Leaguetown Independent School District includes three middle schools, two high schools and 11 elementary schools.

Currently all LISD schools begin each day at 8 a.m. and dismiss at 3:30 p.m. Superintendent Judith Owens has proposed a new schedule that would set later start times for the middle and high schools. Those campuses would begin at 9 a.m. and dismiss at 4:15 p.m. The schedule would also move elementary campus start times to 7:45 a.m. with a 3 p.m. dismissal to allow more flexibility in bus schedules.

Owens based her proposal on current medical research showing that teenagers are biologically geared to stay up later and sleep later. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently issued a statement calling on school districts to adopt later start times for older students, citing health benefits and improved academic performance.

“My husband is a pediatrician, and when he told me about this new report I was amazed,” Owens said. “When I taught middle school I often dealt with sleepy students in the mornings, but we didn’t know there was a scientific reason for it. The schedule change I’ve proposed will take some getting used to, but it’s the right thing to do for our kids.”

A group of Leaguetown Middle School parents has organized to oppose the proposal. Their concerns focus on how the proposed schedule would impact families with single parents or with two working parents who would have children attending campuses with different start and dismissal times.

“Dr. Owens’s heart is in the right place, but I don’t think she’s thought through what this change would mean for working parents,” said Thomas Brady, a parent with a 6th grader at Leaguetown Middle School and two children in elementary school. “My wife and I both have to be at work at 8 a.m. What is our (6th grade) daughter supposed to do for that extra hour in the morning? We also count on her to look after her younger brother and sister in the afternoon, but with this change she wouldn’t get home until well after they do.”

The school board will discuss and vote on the proposed schedule change at its regular meeting on Thursday. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

## STANCES

### Supporting the proposed schedule change

Students’ health must come first, period. Sleep is not only vital for good health, but current medical science also shows that teenagers need to be able to sleep later. In addition to the health benefits, students who are more awake and alert will perform better academically. Solutions can be found to help parents adjust to the staggered start times, but students’ health is more important than convenience.

### Opposing

School schedules need to work for families. They don’t need to be changed to fit the latest trend or to follow medical research reports that will probably change in a year anyway. Working parents already have to struggle with after school care. The school district shouldn’t be making that harder plus creating a juggling act in the mornings that many parents simply won’t be able to manage.

**Intro:  
Present the  
problem or  
situation.**

**Take a stand!**

**Opposing viewpoints are rebutted.**



**Reason #1 for position**

**Reason #2 for position**

**Reason #3 for position**

**Evidence for all 3 points.**



**Present  
a logical  
solution.**

**Recap  
the staff  
stance.**

# Our SITUATION ...

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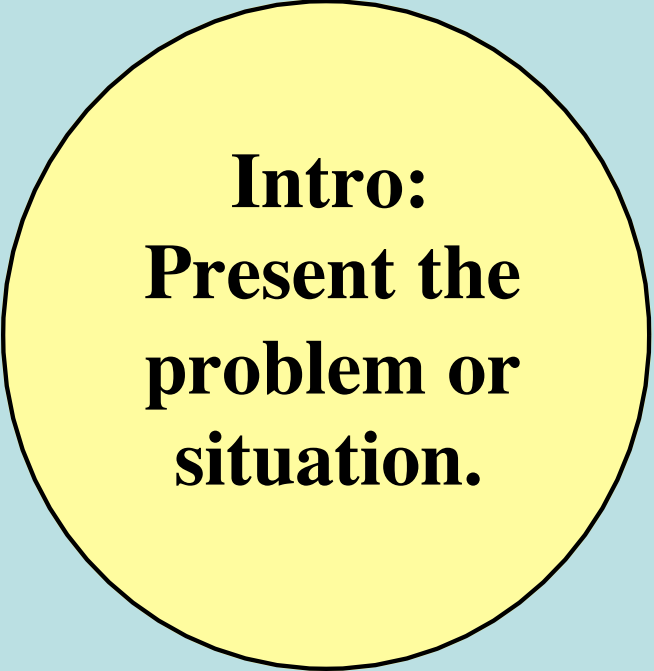
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# The HEAD of our Editorial

For example:

Citing medical research, Superintendent Judith Owens proposed moving the start of school 45 minutes later — to 9 a.m. for the middle and high school. The school board will vote on the proposal this Thursday.



**Intro:  
Present the  
problem or  
situation.**

# The NECK of our Editorial

For example:

The school board should  
approve this proposal.

**Take a stand!**

**What is your opinion???**

# The BODY of our Editorial

**Give three reasons why you are taking your stand.**

1. Teens are biologically geared to stay up later and sleep later.
2. A staggered start time makes it easier for parents to get students to school.
3. Students would perform better with more sleep.

**Reason #1 for position**

**Reason #2 for position**

**Reason #3 for position**

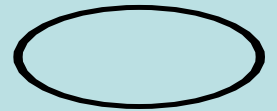


# An ARM of our Editorial

**Support your arguments with evidence and examples. Your English teachers call this elaboration.**

Teens are biologically geared to stay up later and sleep later. Research backs up this statement. Even the American Academy of Pediatrics recently called on school districts to adopt later start times for older students. These are the experts in the field, and the district should follow the advice.

Evidence for all 3 points

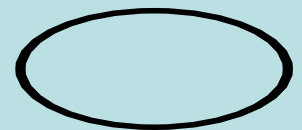


# The other ARM of our editorial

**Opposing viewpoints are rebutted. You shut down the opposition.**

Opponents of the proposal say the superintendent is moving too fast and needs to study the plan longer to know the implications. But that has already been done — by the medical field, and the evidence is conclusive — later is better for teens.

Opposing viewpoints are rebutted



# The LEGs of our editorial

**If you are going to complain  
about something, you must  
have a better way of doing it.**

This proposal is a good  
one. Superintendent Owens  
has done her research, and the  
board should support her.

**Recap  
the staff  
stance.**

**Present  
a logical  
solution.**

# What went wrong?

- You didn't take a stand.
- The argument was trite and generalized. Be specific to the situation.
- You asked too many rhetorical questions without stating an opinion.
- You used quotes. One (maybe) quote is enough for an editorial. You don't need any.



# What went wrong?

- The wording was pompous or pretentious.
- You turned into a preacher.
- You got off topic.
- Your argument lacked credibility.
- You used stereotypes or made personal attacks.



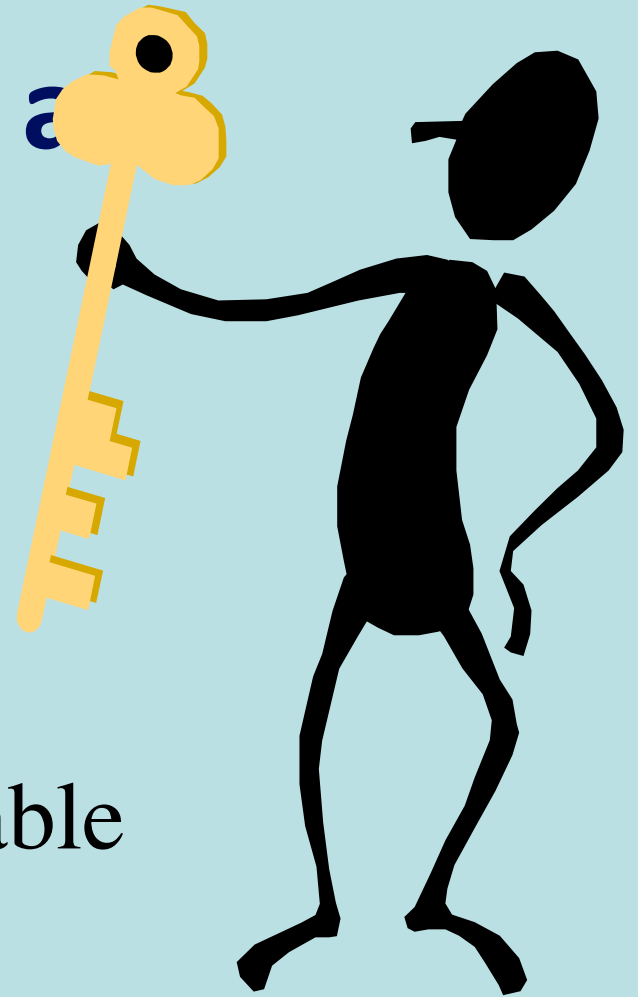
# Remember the key to a successful Editorial ...

- Provide strong evidence to support your stance
- Write in third person (some first person plural)



# Remember the key to a successful Editorial ...

- Use active voice
- Be mature, fair and reasonable
- Offer a solution



# On contest day ...

- Read the entire prompt
- Decide on a stance
- Using the prompt, write three supportive statements
- Highlight elaboration for your statements in the prompt
- Write



# **How to build a successful journalism program in middle school**



For the UIL Contest ...

# Where does a new coach start?

- ✎ Recruit students who enjoy writing



# Where does a new coach start?

- ✎ Read the Journalism Contest Manual and have the students read the manual



You are a staff reporter for the Leaguetown Press. For the Journalism Contest, write a news story as you would for your high school newspaper. You have 45 minutes to finish. Good luck.



## More tips ...

- ✎ Get Practice tests. Practice. Practice themselves.
- ✎ Make it fun for the students.
- ✎ Start traditions or rituals.
- ✎ Focus on students who don't have eligibility issues.
- ✎ Teach the students how to win and how to lose
- ✎ Bribe them.
- ✎ Get parents involved.

# ILPC

Interscholastic League Press Conference:  
Taking journalism to the next level



# Why Join ILPC?

- 1.** ILPC's mission is to help improve scholastic journalism in Texas by setting the highest standards of maturity, ethics and professionalism for student newspapers, yearbooks and broadcasts. We want to help you maintain or secure its rightful place in curriculum at your school.
- 2.** ILPC provides an evaluation service for newspaper (both print and online), yearbook, broadcast and photography. ILPC also piloted a documentary contest this year.
- 3.** ILPC's spring convention is among the largest and best in the nation, and the summer workshop is nationally respected. Each year, ILPC brings in the finest journalism specialists available to teach its convention and summer workshop.
- 4.** ILPC sponsors the Edith Fox King Award for advisers who have devoted their careers to the cause of the school press. ILPC also presents the Max R. Haddick Teacher of the Year Award to a special Texas publications adviser. ILPC also recognizes staffs and individual staff members for outstanding work on publications through its Star awards, rating services and Certificates of Superiority.
- 5.** ILPC also makes available helpful booklets and pamphlets at nominal costs.
- 6.** You'll be part of a network of other publication staff members and advisers who understand the challenges and rewards of publications work.
- 7.** You'll receive ILPC's Tops in Texas Individual Achievement Awards publication, which showcases the state's finest entries for newspaper and yearbook.
- 8.** You'll receive all the mailings from the ILPC office, including notification about state and national conferences and workshops, as well mass emails about upcoming events and opportunities..
- 9.** Your students will be eligible for the ILPC college scholarship.
- 10.** Most importantly, you'll be part of a network of other publications advisers who are working to keep journalism in the Texas school curriculum and Lone Star publications among the finest in the nation.

**TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN BY VISITING:**

**<http://www.uiltexas.org/machform/view.php?id=71>**

**If you have questions, call the ILPC office at 512/471-5883  
or FAX us at 512/232-7311. e-mail: [jacton@uiltexas.org](mailto:jacton@uiltexas.org).**

# Contests

- Newspaper critiques (print and online)
- Newspaper Individual Achievement Awards (print and online)
- Yearbook critiques
- Yearbook Individual Achievement Awards
- Yearbook Current Year IAAs
- Broadcast critiques
- Broadcast Individual Achievement Awards
- (Yearbook contests due Dec. 1)
- (NP and broadcast due Feb. 15)



# Staff development

- ILPC Spring Convention (April/May)
- ILPC Summer Workshop (June)

# Any Questions?

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