



Writing Events

JUDGE'S BALLOT

___ CREATIVE WRITING

___ READY WRITING

___ EDITORIAL WRITING

INSTRUCTIONS

Each judge should use a copy of this form to rank each contestant's entry. Refer to the *Constitution and Contest Rules* or Evaluation Sheet for the criteria used to evaluate each contest.

SITE _____

DATE _____

GRADE 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

CONTESTANT		JUDGE	
NUMBER/CODE	TITLE OF COMPOSITION	RANK	PLACE WINNER*
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* PLACE WINNER indicates the final ranking (first through sixth place) of the contestants if several judges evaluate the papers.

Judge's signature _____



Editorial Writing Evaluation Sheet

contestant #

In order to make this a complete learning experience, judges are asked to complete the evaluation sheet for students.

	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
The situation or problem is explained in the first two or three paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer takes an obvious stance in the first few paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer supports the stance through specific examples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer presents a logical solution or conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What were the strong points of the editorial?

What were the weak points of the editorial?

What suggestions do you have for improvement?

Judge's Signature _____



Editorial Writing

A+ Invitational • 2015-2016

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, located in Texas, has 1000 students enrolled in grades 6-8. After attending the annual National Principal's Association meeting in New York last month, Principal Charles Wilson has introduced a new proposal that would allow students to bring and use their personal laptops in class. Due to recent budget allocating, the school only has 50 laptops total for student use that must be checked out through the library. Personal laptops have never been allowed in class before.

Wilson recommended the proposal last Monday citing information from the NPA meeting on the benefits of letting students use their laptops for educational purposes. The NPA unveiled data that showed how, for many students note-taking, keeping track of assignments and group projects are easier on a laptop. In fact, in a study done by the NPA, students who were allowed to take notes using their laptops did better on a comprehension-based test than students who took notes manually.

If enacted, the proposal would go into effect immediately. The school's firewall internet filter would automatically block students from all inappropriate websites.

Although many students are on board, many teachers and parents are apprehensive stating that laptops are a distraction to students. The school board will make a decision at their meeting later this month. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed before the meeting.

"As a school it is our obligation to prepare students for their future career," Wilson said. "In this day and age, technological competence is not a request; it is a demand. Unfortunately, at this point and time we don't have the funds to provide our students with these necessary tools. Students personally have access to these tools, why would we inhibit them?"

A poll taken by the Student Council showed that 95% of students have their own laptop or a family one they could use at school.

"If students are able to bring their laptops to school, performance will go down," Algebra teacher Anna Martinez said. "There are too many distractions that a laptop provides. It is hard enough getting students to stay off their phones. If enacted, I am going to have to monitor their laptop use too."

STANCES

Supporting the proposal

Laptops are shown to help students educationally and since the school can't provide them, students should be able to. Not doing so would put students at an educational and technological disadvantage. Plus, students will be blocked from sites that are not appropriate or are irrelevant.

Opposing

Laptops are too much of a distraction for not only the students using them but for students around them. Additionally, with new technology there are too many ways to get around the firewall. Manual note-taking has worked for many students in the past and can still work now.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Invitational • 2015-2016

(Distribute this sheet to judges prior to judging.)

JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

In each contestant's editorial, please look for clarity of thought, and if the writer came to a clear conclusion. Remember that many of these writers have not been trained in proper editorial writing. Therefore key considerations should be that they have made a statement of the situation and formed a stance. They should back that stance with examples. Those examples do not have to come from the data sheet. The contestant then should come to a specific solution or recommendation.

Remember that for purposes of the contest these students go to Leaguetown Middle School. Contestants should not have to specify Leaguetown Middle School, because everyone reading the school paper knows where they go to school. Also, when they refer to the school board they do not have to say "Leaguetown School Board." Again, they know in what city they live.

Judging criteria has been developed to help you score the papers. The criteria are intended to help you evaluate the writing, not as a control over your background in editorial writing or the writing process.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL

After attending the NPA conference, Principal Charles Wilson has announced a proposal that would allow students to use their personal laptops in class. Wilson came up with the proposal citing data that holds using laptops in class benefits students. The board will decide whether to enact the proposal at their next meeting later this month.

The board should reject the proposal. There are too many risks and distractions.

Laptops are simply too much of a diversion. Okay sure, the firewall will prevent students from viewing inappropriate sites, but that is only one feature. Students will still be able to access the Internet, play games and do other tasks that are not pertinent to class on their laptops. Students will not pay attention to the teacher, or the information being taught.

Taking notes by hand has worked in the past and there is no reason it can't work now. Writing and summarizing what is being said is an important skill students learn in school. Studies have also shown that writing things down helps solidify information. Plus, paper and pencil have no risk of being accidentally deleted or lost in cyberspace.

Although many students do have laptops that can be used, not all do. Some students will be at a disadvantage that is not their fault. It is unfair for the school to allow laptops when not all students will have the same opportunity.

The benefits for this proposal do not outweigh the cons. Laptops pose too much of a distraction and put some students at a disadvantage. The board should turn down the proposal at the meeting.



Editorial Writing

A+ Fall/Winter District • 2015-2016

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.

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School, located in Texas, has 455 students enrolled in grades 6-8. After attending a stress-free seminar hosted by the Department of Education, eighth grade science teacher Karmen Garland proposed a plan that would give students 15 minutes at the start of first period to practice meditation or sit silently at their desks. New research has shown that meditation before school can help students focus throughout the day and retain information. A survey by the American Psychological Association found that nearly half of all teens — 45 percent — said they were stressed by school pressures. Garland was trained and certified this summer on how to teach students to clear their minds and eliminate stress before the start of the day.

Principal Mitchell Tomson supports the plan and has proposed taking five minutes off of each class period in order to allot time for the meditation. Students would go to their first period as scheduled and practice the calming exercise when the bell rang. If approved, the plan will be enacted after spring break during which Garland will hold a seminar to train teachers on how to facilitate the exercise. The exercise consists of teaching students how to control their breathing and cognitive tactics to reduce stress.

The PTA supports the plan, but many teachers are worried about the loss of class time.

“Students are more stressed now than ever before,” Garland said. “Stress takes a huge toll on students, and meditation is an easy way to help. I have a daughter in seventh grade, and after trying this exercise for a week she says she feels much better already. Imagine if all students could have this benefit. I really hope the board passes this proposal for the well-being of our students.”

Tomson and Garland will present the plan at the board meeting later this month. The board will either pass or reject the proposal.

“I agree students are too stressed,” Algebra II teacher Ann Witz said. “But, five minutes is quite a bit of time. That is time I use to review material and answer any final questions students have. I already have to cram a large amount of information into a little amount of time, and eliminating five minutes from an already short 45-minute class period is going to have a big impact.”

STANCES

Supporting the proposal

The research is clear; meditation helps students focus throughout the day. Students are better able to retain the information they learn which results in better performance. It also eliminates stress. Learning how to cope with stress is a skill that will help students in their future careers and lives.

Opposing

Class periods are already short as is. If students don't have adequate time to learn material, the exercise is not going to have any benefit. This only puts more burden on teachers, especially the teachers that have to learn how to facilitate the exercise. And, more time is needed for teachers to adequately learn how to implement these exercises correctly.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Fall/Winter District • 2015-2016
(Distribute this sheet to judges prior to judging.)

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

After attending a stress-free seminar hosted by the Department of Education, eighth grade science teacher Karmen Garland proposed a plan that would give students 15 minutes at the start of first period to practice meditation or sit silently at their desks. Research has shown that meditation before the school day has positive effects on students' memory capacity and concentration. The board will vote whether to implement the proposal on next Tuesday.

The board should vote yes to the proposal.

According to recent research, almost half of teenage students suffer from school-related stress. Stress has negative impacts in all areas of a student's life. It affects grades, relationships and can even cause illness such as depression. This proposal will help alleviate some of that stress. It is a small act that can have a huge, beneficial impact.

Meditation helps students cognitively. It clears the mind and prepares students to learn throughout the day. It also helps students retain information which helps with tasks that utilize previous skills to execute the novel task. Calming exercises also help students focus on the job at hand and use all the mental tools they have to work through concepts.

Stress also isn't just a teenage thing that disappears as you get older. Managing stress is a key skill students need to learn in order to be successful in the future. High school, jobs and college all require the ability to balance stress. Learning tactics now at this age will be beneficial to students throughout the course of their life.

A little class time may be lost, but if students are too stressed out to adequately learn information there is no point. The board should take a stand for students and pass the proposal.



Editorial Writing

A+ Spring District • 2015-2016

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, located in Texas, has 321 students enrolled in grades 6-8. Since January, 106 students have been diagnosed with influenza, commonly known as the flu. Beginning in late December before Christmas break, a small number of students stayed home from school due to the highly contagious virus, however by early February, 50 students had already been diagnosed--and with the same strain of virus.

The school nurse, Jason Sloss, has called this the “largest outbreak of flu the county has ever seen” and has presented multiple speeches on how to protect and prevent the flu. Yet despite all efforts, the virus has continued to spread. Sloss and hospital administration believe the virus is being spread at school. The flu is spread through close confinement with infected persons and is transmitted through physical contact or through droplets in the air that contain the virus.

Sloss has proposed a policy that would check students before they entered school to see if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms. The most common symptoms of the flu are a high fever and a sore throat. Sloss, in collaboration with the local hospital, have proposed checking student’s temperature with disposable temperature strips, and if the student’s temperature is above 99.5 degrees, the student will be sent home and advised to see a health professional. The principal and school board are on board with the idea. However, teachers fear lost class time and parents feel the test is a breach of privacy.

If implemented, hospital personnel would assist with checking temperatures in the morning before school.

The board will have a meeting open to the public on April 15 to hear opinions. The board will make a decision at the conclusion of the meeting.

“In all of the school’s history, there has never been such a severe outbreak of influenza,” Sloss said. “Around 20 of the 106 students diagnosed have had to be hospitalized. The health of our students needs to be the number one priority. It is our job to do whatever we feasibly can to protect our students. This policy is a way to do that. The flu is an extremely contagious virus, and by checking symptoms we can slow the spread of the virus drastically.”

STANCES

Supporting the proposal

The outbreak needs to be stopped and this is a way to do it. Administering a thermometer strip is not invasive. It is cheap, and it is an easy way to tell if students are sick. Students need to be healthy before anything else- before they can learn information.

Opposing

Parents are the caregivers of their children--not the school. The school doesn’t have the authority to decide if a child is sick or not. Besides, how reliable are the thermometer strips? The process is going to take considerable time in the morning, which takes away from student’s class time and learning. State tests are coming up. Students need to be prepared.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Spring District • 2015-2016
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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

After a severe outbreak of influenza, the school nurse has proposed a policy that would require students to have their temperature checked before entering school each morning. Temperatures would be checked with disposable temperature strips, and if the student's temperature is above 99.5 degrees, the student would be sent home and advised to see a medical professional. The board will hear opinions and make a decision next Friday on April 15.

The board should reject the proposal.

It is not the school's job to decide if a child is sick or not-- that responsibility lies with the parents. Parents should be the ones to decide if their child is sick and needs to stay home. The school will be overstepping their boundaries if this policy is implemented.

The process is going to take a large amount of time in the morning even with the additional hospital personnel. With over 300 students enrolled, individually checking each student's temperature is going to take awhile. This will take away valuable class time. It will also put first period teachers at a disadvantage because their time is going to be reduced.

Temperature strips are not as reliable as a thermometer. A small misreading, or malfunction in the strip can cause a huge discrepancy. Students also can have a slight fever and not have the flu. A common cold or allergies can cause fever. This proposal is too unreliable and rushed to be enforced.

Although the school has good intentions, the proposal is not the answer to this issue. The policy breaches privacy, is too time consuming and is too impulsive. The school board should turn down the proposal at its next meeting.