

Editorial Writing

Invitational B Meet • 2022



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the high 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 your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 1,000 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In the fall, the cross country team met at the school at 6 a.m. for their workouts. Three days a week, the team ran a 3-mile route around the school. During the runs, several of the male runners ran without shirts, and several of the female runners ran in their sports bras without a shirt. The team always wore shirts when lifting weights in the building or participating in a cross country meet. Cross country does not have a class period.

Due to the Texas temperatures, running shirtless has been a common practice for both the cross country team and the track team. In fact, it is not unusual for male athletes in basketball to practice shirtless from time to time.

In November after the cross country season ended, a parent of a student who is not on the cross country team complained on the district's Facebook account that the cross country athletes were breaking dress code and needed to wear shirts while running during practice. A heated debate on the Facebook page ensued. The parents demanded that the district end the practice of shirtless running and punish students who do not follow the rule.

Superintendent Diane Rossy asked the high school principal to address the issue and report back to her in early April. On Friday, Principal Gayle King said she organized a committee of coaches, parents, students and administrators to address the issue of athletes practicing without shirts. The committee will make a recommendation on March 25, the Friday after spring break. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Monday, March 21.

THOSE SUPPORTING SHIRTLESS RUNNING

The cross country team and track team practice outside in the Texas heat. If running shirtless helps keep them cool, then they should be allowed. The athletes, including basketball players, are not running through the halls shirtless flaunting the dress code. They are training for their sport to represent the school.

THOSE OPPOSING SHIRTLESS RUNNING

No runner or athlete has to take his or her shirt off to perform better. Dry-fit tank tops do not suffocate runners, and that's exactly what the cross country practice uniform tops are. These athletes should follow the dress code when practicing for the school, whether they are inside or outside.

■ **GAYLE KING, principal**

“Until the Facebook debate, I had not given this much attention. I saw the cross country team running when I came to work in the fall. Yes, I have seen the athletes without their shirts, but I didn’t think much of it. If we are following the letter of the law, then yes, the students are violating the dress code. They would not be the only student group to do so. Our cheerleaders also violate the dress code when they wear their uniforms to school.

“I created the committee so that all stakeholders are represented. The issue has become quite volatile and heated since finding its way onto Facebook. I will take the committee’s recommendation very seriously before making a decision on this.”

■ **GENEVIEVE SAUNDERS, cross country coach**

“I am having a hard time understanding why this is even an issue. My runners are simply trying to stay cool in the Texas heat. They are not trying to be provocative or anything like that. I know that the Facebook post caused quite the storm, but it seems a little silly to me. If Ms. King creates a policy that states that my runners must wear shirts, we will abide by it, but I don’t think the policy is necessary.”

■ **COLE GRAYSON, junior and captain of the cross country team**

“I run without my shirt during practice about 90% of the time. It helps me stay cool, and it means less laundry. It’s stupid that this ended up on Facebook and turned into some big debate. None of the runners think it’s a big deal. It’s just a few parents with too much time on their hands.”

■ **CATEY ARROYO, sophomore and cross country team member**

“It’s stupid that there is even a committee to discuss this. We are not hurting anyone by running without a shirt. The parent who started it and the ones who joined in on her side are trying to shame us about our bodies. If you look at the Facebook comments, most of the parents who oppose us running shirtless write about how it’s inappropriate for female athletes. They don’t mention the male athletes. This body shaming has to stop.”

■ **CECILIA MASTERS, parent**

“I did post a comment in the Facebook debate. All students should wear shirts when representing the school. Both male and female students should be clothed properly. Running shirtless is a clear violation of the dress code.”

■ **MIA WASHINGTON, freshman**

“I am not offended by the cross country or track runners who run shirtless, but I think they should wear shirts. If we have a dress code, everyone should follow it. Athletes already get special attention at this school. They don’t deserve a pass on the dress code. It is not fair for the rest of the students. This is a black and white issue. The school has a dress code, and all students should follow it.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The cross country team won second place team at the UIL State Meet last year. In fact, it is the most-winning sport at the school with 10 team state titles and 24 individual state medals.

DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST**EDITORIAL WRITING/INVITATIONAL B • 2022****CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE EDITORIALS**

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.

1. Lead with a statement of the situation and then take a clear, definite staff stance. The situation is whether athletes should wear shirts while training at the school.
2. As a general rule, use third person. If you must use a pronoun, use first person plural (we, meaning "we, the newspaper staff"). Do not use first person singular (I, me, mine) or second person (you). Avoid unnecessary use of pronouns. Rather than "We believe the athletes should...", write instead, "The athletes should."
3. Don't waddle into the editorial. Get right to the point and, as a general rule, don't ask a lot of questions. An editorial should answer questions, not ask them. Above all, remember that your purpose is to make thoughtful, logical arguments in support of your position, not to engage in a tirade. The editorial should not be long — 450 words at the most. Although it's not recommended all the time, sometimes a writer could use a feature opening to grab the reader's attention and get them into the story.
4. Look for the future angle. Your paper comes out before the principal makes a decision.
5. Once you've stated your position/stance, the body of the story should support your stance and refute the opposition.
6. After the body of your editorial, complete the editorial with a specific solution.
7. Avoid direct quotes unless the quote adds substantially to the editorial. You can pull information from these quotes, as has been done here, but it's not necessary to attribute that information unless the person has a lot of credibility toward the story itself.
8. Watch for factual errors. Pay attention to minor details. Also, stay focused.
9. Don't clutter up the editorial with cliches or trite phrases such as "the issue is stupid" or any variation thereof. Also, edit out the name of the school unless it is necessary for clarity. It isn't necessary to say "Leaguetown Independent School District" or "Leaguetown High School." Students know the name of the school. They don't need to be reminded.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING

A committee of coaches, parents, students and administrators will meet Friday to discuss and make a recommendation on whether or not athletes should be allowed to practice without shirts. This comes following a heated debate on Facebook when a parent complained that cross country students were violating dress code during their practice runs.

The committee should recommend that the school prohibits athletes from practicing shirtless.

The dress code policy is very clear. Students must wear shirts. All students should follow school rules when practicing for school events. It's unfair to allow the cross country team or any athlete to violate the dress code when other students are expected to follow it. If any other student took off his or her shirt at school, they would be punished. There's no reason that the cross country team should get a pass.

Student athletes represent the school. They are supposed to be role models. Allowing them to violate school policy sets a poor example for students and creates a poor image of the school for everyone else.

The athletes do not compete shirtless. They shouldn't practice shirtless. Practicing under different conditions does not prepare the athletes. Swimmers don't practice without their swimcaps, and baseball players don't practice without their pants. A shirt is part of the uniform, and athletes should perform with the same conditions in practice as in meets.

Those who favor shirtless running say that it helps the athletes stay cool. However, the school already issues dry-fit tank tops as part of the cross country uniform. Those shirts are designed to help keep athletes cool.

This issue shouldn't be time-consuming for the committee at all. In fact, a committee isn't even necessary. School rules say students must wear shirts. The committee simply needs to remind the administration of that.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/SUPPORTING

A committee of coaches, parents, students and administrators will meet Friday to discuss and make a recommendation on whether or not athletes should be allowed to practice without shirts. This comes following a heated debate on Facebook after a parent complained that cross country students were violating dress code during their practice runs.

The committee should recommend that the school allow students to run shirtless.

Running shirtless helps the students stay cool. These athletes are running outside during the summer and fall in the Texas heat. If being shirtless allows them to be more comfortable and perform better, that should be allowed.

Students aren't running through the halls shirtless. They wear shirts when exercising indoors, and their outdoor runs take place at 6 a.m., before most students arrive at school. In fact, the workouts are before most students are even awake.

Following the letter of the law without regard to special circumstances hurts students and helps nobody. The dress code was designed for the needs of students sitting in an air-conditioned classroom. That's not the same as running outside in the Texas heat, so the expectations around their clothes shouldn't be the same, either.

Some say that it's unfair to allow athletes to break the rules. However, cheerleaders do just that every time they wear their school-approved uniforms to school. It is within the school's rights to have exceptions to policies — especially when it's in the best interest of the students and school.

This issue isn't bothering students. It isn't bothering teachers. And it certainly isn't interfering with classroom instruction. This issue started because a parent started a debate on Facebook.

The committee should spend little time on this issue, other than recommending that athletes continue to practice in a way that is most comfortable for them. After all, the cross country team's method seems to be working with 10 state titles and 24 individual state medals.