

# Editorial Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2019



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 3,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In November, two football players were suspended for three days for posting an inappropriate photo from the boys' locker room to Instagram. The two students said it was a joke. The photo showed a freshman athlete in his underwear. The freshman athlete did not know the photo was being taken. The two football players also were suspended from one game.

Other athletes also have complained to coaches about students taking photos in the locker rooms, but no other inappropriate photos have been discovered on social media.

After this Instagram incident, the coaches posted signs in every locker room prohibiting any photography. Coaches also spoke to all of their teams and classes about the change in policy.

The superintendent, though, does not believe this is enough. She proposed a cell phone ban in all locker rooms and dressing rooms (in the theater auditorium). Her proposal would require coaches or teachers to collect cell phones from students before they entered the locker or dressing rooms and then coaches and teachers would return the cell phones at the end of class. The school board will vote on this proposal Thursday, Feb. 7. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, Feb. 5.

## THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

Students do not need cell phones in the locker rooms. Taking the phones away will end the possibility of more inappropriate photos from that area. A sign and an announcement are not enough to prevent this from happening again. Students have voiced concerns about this in the past.

## THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

Asking coaches and teachers to take away cell phones puts a heavy burden on them. What if a phone goes missing? Plus, students could take inappropriate photos in a number of other places on campus — like the bathrooms. Teachers certainly can't be expected to stand in front of every bathroom in the school and hold on to cell phones for students.

### ■ LINDA MEZA, superintendent

"No student needs a cell phone in a locker room or dressing room. This district is asking for trouble if we don't act in a stronger way. We were lucky that we've had only one incident and that the incident was not as bad as it could have been.

"It's not that I don't trust students. I do. But I also know that sometimes teenagers do stupid things without thinking. This ban will take away the opportunity to make a bad choice.

### ■ LINDA MEZA (cont.)

“In a small town in East Texas, a female athlete took a selfie of herself and a friend in the locker room. She didn’t realize that another athlete was changing in the background of the photo when she posted it on Instagram. That young athlete who took the photo was almost charged with distributing child pornography. Her life would have been changed forever if that had happened. I am trying to protect our students from that.

“Yes, this proposal will be a slight burden on the coaches and teachers, but the district will help them. We can purchase boxes or crates or some type of holding devices for the phones. I’m even willing to buy locks if necessary.”

### ■ DENNIS BROWN, athletic director

“None of the coaches are thrilled about the superintendent’s proposal. It will be a headache for us, but that doesn’t mean we don’t support it. Dr. Meza is right that sometimes teens do stupid stuff. I don’t want one of our athletes charged with some horrible crime because he or she posted a selfie with an inappropriate image in the background. Our kids are not mean, but they don’t always make the smartest choices. This ban would solve that problem for them.”

### ■ BEN AMOURI, junior

“I don’t think you could find a single student who would like to give their phone to a teacher or coach to hold. I have never taken a photo in the locker room and never plan to do so. The coaches have posted signs. They have talked to us — a lot. We know the rule. We will follow the rule. If someone is stupid enough to break the rule, we will tell the coach, and the coach and school can punish that student. We all don’t need to be punished over one stupid prank. I mean, that photo wasn’t even a big deal. The freshman wasn’t naked or anything. He was in his underwear, which are bigger than some girls’ shorts. The superintendent is blowing this way out of proportion.”

### ■ LUIS MUÑOZ, theater teacher

“Frankly, I don’t want to be responsible for 20-plus phones during one of our productions. I have too many other things to worry about. Plus, the time commitment to pick up phones and hand out phone would take away from our practice time. Instead of collecting phones, we should ban the students from bringing them into our areas. Students can put the phones in their lockers or lock them up in their cars. We need to put the burden on the students, not the teachers and coaches.”

### ■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In a yearbook survey last year of 1,100 students, every student but one had a cell phone.

**DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST****EDITORIAL WRITING/INVITATIONAL A • 2019****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 the school board should approve a proposal on a cell phone ban in locker rooms and dressing rooms.
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 superintendent should...", write instead, "The superintendent 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 board meeting.
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 superintendent is mean" 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**

After an Instagram incident with an inappropriate photograph from the boys' locker room, Superintendent Lisa Meza proposed a no cell phone policy in school locker rooms and dressing rooms. This policy would require coaches or teachers to collect cell phones from students before entering the locker or dressing rooms.

When the school board votes on this proposal Thursday, it should vote no.

The incident that sparked this proposal involved two football players posting a photo of a freshman athlete in his underwear to Instagram without his knowledge. The football players were suspended from school for three days and from one game.

Immediately after the incident, the coaches banned photos in the locker rooms. And they made the rule clear. Coaches put up signs and spoke with their teams. Students know to not take photos in the locker room.

Meza says she trusts teenagers but believes teens can sometimes make bad or stupid decisions. However, policy clearly shows she doesn't trust students. She can't have it both ways — either she trusts students and they keep their cell phones or she doesn't. Her policy has coaches and teacher taking up electronic devices much like a parent would to a child who is grounded.

Until now, the school has had no issues with inappropriate photos posted to social media. This is by no means a widespread problem. Coaches and teachers have more important things to do than wait outside locker or dressing rooms to collect phones.

Meza says the policy protects students. But it doesn't. Students will still have cell phones in bathrooms and other areas of the school. Inappropriate photos can be taken anywhere.

The board and Meza need to trust students. The rules have been communicated. Punish those who break them. One misstep shouldn't be enough to create a restrictive school-wide policy.

**SAMPLE EDITORIAL/SUPPORTING**

After two football players posted a photo of a freshman athlete in his underwear on Instagram, Superintendent Lisa Meza proposed banning all cell phones in locker rooms and dressing rooms.

When the school board votes on this proposal Thursday, it should give it a thumbs-up. This proposal is necessary for student safety and privacy.

Students shouldn't have to worry about someone snapping a photo of them getting dressed. They also shouldn't have to worry about that photo ending up on Instagram. Both of those things have happened, and this policy is to prevent it from happening again.

Since the incident the coaches have posted signs that say photography is prohibited in the locker rooms, and they have talked to their athletes. The reality is, it's common sense to know that posting an inappropriate photo of someone online is wrong. But it's also true that students don't always use common sense. Signs and talks won't prevent students from doing something stupid — not having access to their phones will.

In the past, students have voiced concerns about this issue. It's not a one-time problem. This policy is not unreasonable. In fact, it probably will keep students' phones safer. The district is lucky that this has been the only incident so far.

There is no need for phones to be in locker or dressing rooms at all. Snapchat and Twitter will still be there after that. Student privacy is more important than text messages.

Those opposing the ban say that asking teachers and coaches to look after phones is a heavy burden. Child pornography is also a heavy burden. A criminal charge on a student's record for taking photos in a locker room is much more catastrophic than asking adults to hold a few cell phones.

Students can and should learn how to unplug while they undress — especially if they are around other students. The school board should approve Meza's proposal and keep everyone safe.



**Yippee!! You're the director of the journalism contests. To make your life a little easier...**

**WE HAVE ENCLOSED:**

- The contests
- Judging criteria
- A statement to the judges
- A statement to the contestants
- Contest Tips. (Provides examples of how stories/heads should have been written and a sample story. Clip a copy to each entry to provide immediate feedback.)

**NOW, YOU NEED TO:**

- Make certain you have read the journalism section of the *UIL Journalism Handbook*. You can download it free from the UIL website at: [http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/Journalism\\_Handbook\\_2018-19.pdf](http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/Journalism_Handbook_2018-19.pdf).
- Inventory the contest packet. Hopefully, there won't be any problems. If you find one, please call it to my attention. Call me at work at 512/232-4924, home at 512/740-3463 or e-mail me at [jacton@uiltexas.org](mailto:jacton@uiltexas.org).
- **READ THE ENCLOSED STATEMENT TO YOUR JUDGES.**  
Discuss the judging criteria and clarifications with the judges.
- **Do not give the tips to students.**
- Share the "Tips" with the judges (**BEFORE** they judge) and clip one copy to each contestant's entry **AFTER JUDGING**. Judges should write directly on EVERY student's entry and then attach one copy of the Contest Tips to each entry.
- Thanks and good luck!

# Statement to Judges

## JOURNALISM CONTEST DIRECTOR

***Please copy and distribute the following statement to the judges***

1. Divide papers among the judges.
2. Every paper **MUST** be read and edited by at least one judge. *No paper should EVER be returned without written comments.*
3. Every judge does not have to read every paper. Strive for two readings for each paper. A third reading may be necessary for papers that contend for placing in the top six.
4. Avoid sarcasm or unduly harsh criticism. Remember: these are high school students, not professionals.
5. Please review the “Tips” for each contest. This sheet is consistent with the contest manual and what has been taught at conferences.
6. Realize that the UIL style may differ slightly from what you have been taught, what you practice or your newspaper’s style. If you have serious disagreement, please take them up with the UIL office, not the contestants or the meet director. For example, in the news, feature and editorial writing contests, it is not necessary to identify the school, Leaguetown High School. We create this contest as if students attend Leaguetown High School. Therefore, we assume high school students know the name of their school. Also, since AP style constantly changes, watch simply for writers to follow a consistent style. Some students (and newspapers) prefer addressing people with Mr./Mrs./Ms. title on second and subsequent uses.
7. In the Feature Writing contest, students have the freedom to develop scenes as they feel the scenes *may* have existed. The scenes must be a natural extension of the story. Please read “Contest tips” before judging.
8. In the editorial writing contest, students have the freedom to propose solutions or suggest answers they feel might resolve the problem. They do not have to be those proposed on the fact sheet. Also, they are urged to write in third person, but they may use first person plural on occasion.
9. In the headline writing contest: the main deck of a main/secondary headline combination may contain but does not need a verb. For example:

## Out of Air

# Statement to the Contestants

## JOURNALISM CONTEST DIRECTOR

*Please read the following statement to contestants*

1. Place your number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your entry. Do not put your name or your school's name on any part of the contest entry. If you do, you may be disqualified.
2. Write on one side of the paper only. Write legibly. This is a request, not a requirement.
3. It is suggested that you double space so judges may edit and write comments more extensively on your entry. This is a request, not a requirement.
4. You may use a dictionary and/or a thesaurus (bound or electronic) during News, Editorial, Feature and Headline contest. You may also use an AP stylebook. You may not use a journalism text or other textbook. No resources are allowed during the Copy Editing contest.
5. You may not talk during the contest. If you have a question, raise your hand and the contest monitor will come to you.
6. If you use a computer, you are responsible should it malfunction. You will have the remaining time to complete the contest in longhand, but you will not be given extra time. You must complete the print command before the monitor asks everyone to quit writing. If the computer malfunctions do not make noise trying to fix it. The monitor will ask you to leave if you are causing too much commotion. You may not use a computer in the Headline Writing contest or the Copy Editing contest.
7. Make sure all of your electronic devices (cell phones, ipods, etc.) are turned off. You may be disqualified for disrupting the contest if your devices go off.
8. When you are finished, please turn in your paper and quietly exit.

Good luck.





## **JUDGING CRITERIA**

### **SPRING MEET JOURNALISM CONTESTS**

In an effort to standardize judging procedures statewide, the League office has compiled a list of journalism contest judging guidelines. This list of guidelines will be included in each district and regional contest packet and will be available to State Meet contest judges. It is the responsibility of each journalism contest director to see that all contest judges are familiar with and adhere to these guidelines.

#### **■ HEADLINE WRITING (30 minutes) NEW TIME FOR 2019!**

1. Within count. **Note:** All letters, digits, punctuation marks, spaces, grammatical marks count as one (1).
2. Wording specific, accurate; unnecessary wording omitted.
3. Verb needed in main, secondary or both decks. At times, though, a verb is not necessary in both the main and secondary head.
4. Emphasis on active verbs.
5. Past tense avoided.
6. Split phrases (modifiers, verbs) avoided.
7. Redundancy in wording avoided.
8. Does not sacrifice accuracy for creativity or cuteness.
9. Main headlines not dependent on secondary headlines.
10. Secondary headlines emphasize significant aspect of news.
11. Grammar, spelling, punctuation correct.
  - A. It is permissible to use upstyle (ALL CAPS) or downstyle headlines.
  - B. Students need not complete all six headlines to win. It is possible that five good headlines will win over six mediocre ones, or four excellent heads will win over six poor headlines. The final decision rests with the judges, but no contestants shall be disqualified solely on the basis of not completing all six headlines.

#### **■ EDITORIAL WRITING (45 minutes)**

1. Introduction presents problem, provides staff stance.
2. Lead grabs reader's attention.
3. Evidence provided to support stance taken.
4. Direct quotes avoided unless absolutely necessary.
5. Writing tight. Wording active, precise.
6. Other viewpoints presented and evidence is shown to refute those viewpoints.
7. Conclusion recaps staff position and contains call to action and/or solution.
8. Third person emphasized, although first person plural may be used occasionally.
9. Editorial tone fair, mature.
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

## ■ FEATURE WRITING (60 minutes)

1. Lead grabs reader's attention and fits mood of story. It is permissible for students to set a scene for the feature prompt. The scene may include details that are not in the prompt.
2. Writing tight. Wording active, precise.
3. Slang, clichés, jargon avoided.
4. Facts presented in logical sequence.
5. Smooth transitions.
6. Quotes, paraphrasing used effectively.
7. Persons identified fully, accurately.
8. Feature theme fully developed.
9. Utilizes time peg (if necessary)
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

## ■ NEWS WRITING (45 minutes)

1. Sound news judgment in lead selection.
2. Facts presented in descending order of importance.
3. Information flows. Smooth transitions.
4. People identified fully, accurately.
5. Quotes, paraphrasing used effectively.
6. Extraneous information omitted; writing tight.
7. Wording active.
8. All news questions answered. Newspaper style incorporated.
9. Editorialization avoided.
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

## ■ STYLE/TITLES

- ✓ Newspaper style includes the option of using titles of Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. with names of adults. Students should be identified fully at first mention and by last name thereafter (1st use - senior Jeanne Acton; second and subsequent uses - Acton or Ms. Acton). It is permissible to use first names only on the second reference in feature stories. AP style calls for adults to be identified by full name at first mention, and then with appropriate title and last name thereafter. Be aware of deviations from AP style. If a contestant is consistent in the use of their style, it is not recommended you penalize the contestant for not following strict AP style. We ask that you look for consistency and understandability in the use of a contestant's style.

## ■ SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Journalistic proficiency shall be the standard by which entries are judged. In papers of similar journalistic quality, secondary considerations of grammar, spelling and neatness may be used to determine contest results. The contest does not intend, however, to test grammar or spelling skills, and each entry should be judged on its journalistic merit before other considerations come into play.

## ■ COPY EDITING (15 minutes) NEW CONTEST FOR 2019

- ✓ A key to the Copy Editing Contest will be included with your material. Part III is graded only to break ties.