

Editorial Writing

District Meet • 2025



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 1,430 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Last year, voters in the district rejected a proposed tax increase to resolve a \$1.5 million budget deficit. To attempt to resolve the budget shortfall, Superintendent Mike Timms proposed a new open enrollment policy. If approved, the policy would allow students from outside the district to transfer from their schools to the Leaguetown ISD school of their choice. The district could collect an additional \$750,000 from the state for every 100 students who transfer in. Because school funding is based on attendance, transfer students would be removed from the district after three unexcused absences.

The average class size at the high school is 22 students. The district has consistently received an “A” rating from the state. It offers extracurricular programs that some districts don’t, including JROTC, a radio station and culinary arts. Teacher turnover is relatively low. For these reasons, the district could be a desirable place for students to transfer who do not live within district boundaries.

A group of 36 parents concerned about the potential increase in class size have plans to speak against the proposal at the school board meeting on Friday, March 28. The board will hear the parents, discuss the policy and then vote on the proposal. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed March 27.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

Without finding a major source of additional funding, the district could be forced to cut programs that have become essential to the culture of the district, which is what makes it so desirable. Open enrollment is a solution that increases funding without significant changes to daily school life. Students will still have the same school experience, but with open enrollment, they’ll expose students outside the community to those same opportunities.

THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

A significant increase in class size could have a negative impact on student success. Teachers could be forced to stretch their attention to help additional students in every class period and grade additional assignments after hours, adding stress to their jobs. If a student transfers into the district, then leaves, the district will lose that student’s funding, making it difficult to plan for future attendance. Current class ranks could be affected, as well.

■ MIKE TIMMS, superintendent

“Leaguetown is a special place. The teachers are top notch. The programs are spectacular. You can graduate from this district with an industry certification in HVAC or cosmetology. You can go on incredible trips to conventions with the newspaper, yearbook and broadcast staffs. You can have your poems published in the school’s literary magazine. There is something for everyone here, and opening those opportunities up to outside students could benefit them and us. If we don’t try open enrollment now, other districts could open up for transfers first, and we could lose some of our students to other surrounding districts. Losing that opportunity could be devastating for our budget and for our community. We need to keep the district viable by maintaining the programs that attract people to move here and come to school here. Open enrollment is the way to do that.

“If we don’t make a drastic change, our district will become unrecognizable to parents, students and staff. We will have to look at cutting programs. I wish this wasn’t something we were having to deal with, but it is our reality. We can try open enrollment, evaluate it, and if we decide it doesn’t benefit our community, we can always discontinue open enrollment the following year.”

■ CHESTER LUCAS, parent of a sophomore

“I moved my family to Leaguetown because of the wonderful schools and the wonderful community. I have some major concerns about an open enrollment policy. While the high school does have some wonderful programs that could be a draw to some students, my worry is that other students could transfer to our home high school because of discipline problems or academic problems at their schools. Class size is a huge indicator of student performance. If we have increased class sizes, at least it would be good to be sure we are filling those seats with responsible students who perform well academically and improve the overall school culture. Unfortunately, there is no way to be sure of that.”

■ BRITT DANIEL, junior

“I think it would be cool if my friend from Northside got to transfer here. That being said, I’m worried about how adding a certain number of students to the school could affect my class rank. I’m in the top 5% right now. If some smarter students with higher GPAs transfer in, I could drop, and then it would be difficult to get into the University of Texas at Austin. That’s my dream school, and I’ve worked so hard to stay in the top 5% to get automatic admission.”

■ SAAD EL HINDI, chemistry teacher

“The last school I taught at had open enrollment. It was rather difficult because we would have new students come in for chemistry, but we didn’t know what their backgrounds were in science. We could look at their transcript, but that didn’t tell us anything about how the student learned. I see why the school is looking for extra funding, but education is not a money-making business. The district should make decisions based on what’s best for the students who are currently here. If a student transfers here, that’s good. We make that money, but what happens if they leave? Do we still end up with that money? Where do we draw the line to stop extra enrollment? How big are we going to let our classes get? There are still too many questions that need to be answered before this plan is approved.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The tax ratification election that failed last year would have generated \$2 million, enough to resolve the budget deficit. In that election, 58% of residents voted to reject the 3-cent tax increase, while 42% voted to approve it.

DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST

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Editorial Writing Contest Tips and Sample Stories

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critiquing/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, definitive staff stance. The situation is whether or not the school will open up the district to outside enrollment.
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 district should..." write instead, "The district should..."
3. Don't waddle into the editorial. Get right to the point and, as a general rule, don't ask 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 draw them into the story.
4. Look for the future angle. Your paper comes out before the school board meeting.
5. Once you've stated your position/stance, the body of the editorial 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. 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 substantial credibility.
8. Watch for factual errors. Pay attention to minor details. Also, stay focused.
9. Don't clutter up the editorial with clichés or trite phrases such as "adults don't understand teens" 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/SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

To combat a \$1.5 million budget deficit, Superintendent Mike Timms has proposed an open enrollment policy for the district. The shift would allow the district to collect \$750,000 from the state for every 100 students who transfer from outside the district. A group of concerned parents will speak against the proposal before the board votes on it at tomorrow's meeting.

The school board should support open enrollment to bridge the funding gap and maintain the high quality education that students are accustomed to.

If the budget problem isn't resolved, the opportunities available for current students could decline. Limited funding may lead to cuts in programs that enhance student learning such as JROTC, the radio station, cosmetology and culinary arts. These programs are not available at every school and are part of what make this campus unique. This could be a potential draw for outside students, who would bring in more funding.

The district consistently receives an "A" rating from the state. Teacher turnover is low. Open enrollment would give prospective students access to these benefits while providing the additional resources the district needs, helping it maintain its high educational standards.

With a strict attendance policy allowing only three unexcused absences before removal, the district will ensure that transfer students join the school community without causing additional problems for teachers and administrators.

Though class sizes will go up if this proposal is implemented, that is a relatively small price to pay when faced with the possibility of cutting programs.

The community had the opportunity to avoid this outcome when the district held its tax ratification election that failed last year. That election would have generated an additional \$2 million for the district. If voters want to complain about growing class sizes, they should have considered this when they voted. Now students are depending on the board to pass the proposal to open up the district to outside enrollment.

The district can't go back in time and change the results of that election. The school board should take the necessary steps to avoid cutting programs and vote in favor of the open enrollment proposal.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

After facing a \$1.5 million budget deficit, Superintendent Mike Timms proposed an open enrollment policy that could potentially collect \$750,000 from the state for every 100 students that transfer from outside the district. A group of concerned parents will speak against the proposal before the board votes on it at tomorrow's meeting.

The school board should listen to those parents and vote against opening up enrollment to students who live outside the district.

Aside from financial woes, the district looks great on paper. It's consistently graded an "A" school district by the state. It has special programs like JROTC, a radio station and cosmetology. And teacher turnover is low. This isn't the kind of boat we want to rock by bringing in students from outside the community.

Class sizes are one of the biggest indicators of student success. When class sizes increase, teachers are not able to give as much attention to individual students. Parents who plan to protest at the board meeting are aware of this and their concerns should be taken seriously.

Opening up the district to outsiders could have other unintended consequences as well. It could affect class ranks and athletic teams over time. The district should be concerned with providing a quality education to students who live in this district.

It's true that the budget deficit is a concern. But making such drastic changes to such a successful school district is not the answer. Rather than opening the district up to outside students, district officials should slow down a bit and make adjustments within the existing budget to meet their needs. Budgeting is something that families have to do all the time. This is no different.

The school board should reject Timms' proposal to open up district enrollment to outside students and find the extra funding someplace else.