

Editorial Writing

Regional Meet • 2024



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 2,872 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In 2023, the community voted to reject a \$30 million bond proposal that would have added 25,000 square feet of classroom space to the high school to relieve overcrowding. To accommodate the growing school population, the district added four additional portable buildings in a district-owned lot adjacent to the school parking lot. Despite the addition, the school continues to experience overcrowding in hallways, the cafeteria and in classrooms. This year, classes were scheduled to meet in the gym, the front office conference room and in the cafeteria.

Last week, Superintendent Craig Morales announced that the school's library would permanently close and be converted into eight classrooms to increase the amount of classroom space in the building. The construction project will cost approximately \$300,000, which will come from the maintenance and operations budget, and will be completed over the summer to be ready for the 2024-2025 school year. Currently, the library has 20,000 books and a suite of technology available for check-out including podcasting kits, video cameras and iPads. The two computer labs adjacent to the library will also be converted. Instead of having these technology spaces available for student use, the school will have two laptop carts that teachers will check out in the front office.

A group of teachers and library media resource specialist Katie Burden will make a presentation at the school board meeting Monday, April 29, to ask the board to intervene and keep the library open.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, April 26.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

There are no more places for students to go. Every inch of classroom space is in use. Every chair and desk is in use. A library filled with fancy equipment is a luxury when the school building doesn't have room for students to learn basics like English and math. Converting the library into classrooms is a sensible way to relieve some of the pressure on student facilities by giving classes a reasonable place to go.

THOSE OPPOSING THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Students should be exposed to as many books as possible, but a library is much more than a place to check out books. Students go there to study, learn about new things, produce video and audio projects and be creative. Teachers bring their classes to the library to do research. Students who don't have access to computers at home can use equipment in the library. Not having a real library will negatively impact student learning.

■ CRAIG MORALES, superintendent

“Believe me, we do not want to close our library. I welcome ideas as to where we should put the hundreds of students who have spent all year having class in the hall, the cafeteria or maybe the broom closet. In the spring of 2023, the bond committee laid out plans for a full-building renovation and update, but ultimately that’s not what the taxpayers voted to do. We can’t change what happened, but now we are beginning to see the consequences of that bond election.

“If our demographics keep going as they are, this problem isn’t going to get better anytime soon. Look around in this community and you see rooftop, after rooftop, after rooftop being built. Leaguetown isn’t the little 3A school it used to be. The high school is in a building designed for no more than 2,000 students. Right now, we’re well exceeding that number, and the population only continues to grow.

“We will continue to experience these types of growing pains until our community can pass a bond for us. In the meantime, we will use all resources available to us to meet one goal: student learning. And unfortunately, right now, that means we may not have a library until this situation can be corrected.”

■ KATIE BURDEN, media resource specialist

“I was told if they close the library I will still have a job. That’s something, I guess. They will move me out of that area and give me a desk near the administrative offices. I’m not sure what I’ll be doing all day, except checking out laptop carts, but I’ll do whatever I can to bring our teachers the resources they need to teach students effectively.

“What I do not think our administrators realize is the impact library access can have on student achievement. Research has shown us time and time again that students who visit libraries learn more, get better grades and are more likely to love reading. Libraries make our students into better human beings. There has to be another place on campus where we can find extra classrooms. Do we need a special room for dance or wrestling? Each of those could be a couple of classrooms. I have spent my career working in partnership with our teachers to help students learn. I hope the board reverses their decision and allows that to continue.”

■ SARA HEXT, junior

“Our English teacher brought us down to the library once last year to use a computer lab to do research for a project. We haven’t used it that much in any of my classes this year. That being said, I actually go there during lunch sometimes to check out books or just sit and read or do homework. My parents aren’t big readers, so we don’t have a lot of books at home. I’ve checked out several books this year that have become some of my favorite books I’ve ever read. I’ll definitely be sad if the library goes away.”

■ JACKSON CANTRELL, senior

“The fact that my social studies classes have been in the gym for the past two years is a joke. There has to be some kind of other place where we can have class. Last year, my mom even bought me a clipboard so I could do my AP U.S. History assignments on my lap. By all means, tear out the library or any other place. Just please, put us in a classroom.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In a bond election, citizens within school district boundaries can vote to approve the sale of bonds to provide cash flow for major projects. The bonds accrue interest over time, and the district pays for that expense with its budget. It is generally not feasible for a district to build or significantly renovate facilities using budget funds alone.

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 district should convert the library into classrooms.
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 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 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 CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

The superintendent announced last week that the school's library would permanently close as the district plans to convert the space into eight classrooms. The announcement follows a failed bond proposal that would have funded 25,000 square feet of new classrooms to accommodate the growing population. A group of teachers and administrators will speak in opposition of the library's closing at Monday's school board meeting.

The school board should support the superintendent's decision, as the expansion will facilitate learning within the parameters of the school's limited budget.

As the population continues to grow, students have become displaced from their classrooms. A social studies class has been meeting in the gym for the past two years. Others have class in the halls, cafeteria and storage areas.

With a lack of classroom resources in such facilities, students have resorted to completing assignments in their laps or on clipboards. There is no available classroom space for the hundreds of students experiencing this displacement, and every desk and chair is in use.

The library has become a luxury that the school can no longer afford until every student has an appropriate classroom space. Not every student uses the library every day, but every student does need a safe classroom space to learn every day.

Those in opposition of the library's closing fail to understand that this decision has risen out of necessity. In 2023, the district proposed a \$30 million bond to expand classroom space, but the community failed to pass it. In response, the district has added four portable buildings and still the school has continued to face overcrowding. The district has exhausted its limited funds, relying on \$300,000 from the maintenance and operations budget to provide a solution.

The library's closing is a response to this resource crisis. If the school board values student learning, the classroom construction should move forward to offer students basic necessities required for a successful school — classrooms.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

The superintendent announced last week that the school's library would permanently close as the district plans to convert the space into eight classrooms. A group of teachers and the library media specialist will ask for the library to remain open at Monday's school board meeting.

The school board should halt the construction. The benefits the library provides to the school community are too important to lose.

Teachers utilize the library as a research space for their students and to provide technological resources. The equipment currently available in the library will be compressed into two laptop carts. The two adjacent computer labs face closure as well, leaving inadequate technology access for students.

The library is a communal space for students to study, learn, produce video and audio projects and express their creativity through various outlets. They go there to do homework during lunch or check out books. The school community needs access to spaces like the library that make students more successful at school.

The media resource specialist, who manages the library, said research has correlated library use to student achievement showing that students who utilize library resources perform better academically and in measures of literacy. The library is not a luxury but an educational tool that encourages learning and growth in students.

Those who support the closure fail to consider the breadth of options available to the district. The library could be used as classroom space without disrupting its function as a library by arranging the space to accommodate classes and students. Alternatively, spaces such as the dance hall or wrestling gym could be converted instead. If the district's priority is learning, there are other solutions that would not sacrifice one of the most treasured communal spaces on campus.

The library's closure is a response by the district to a growing student body. Yet, eliminating a resource that benefits this growing population is counterproductive in its very nature. The closure will create further problems while providing only a temporary solution. If the school board values education first, they should reverse this decision.