

Editorial Writing

Regional 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 2,780 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In January, counselors sent seniors a small sheet of paper notifying them of their updated GPAs and class ranks going into their last semester of high school. As of Jan. 15, Krisinia Hill had overtaken Kevin Jordan for valedictorian by .01 GPA point. Jordan had been No. 1 since his freshman year and had received all A's in mostly weighted AP classes. After seeing the change, Jordan's parents demanded a meeting with Principal Jay Westbrook and a recalculation of class ranks, which confirmed Hill as the rightful valedictorian.

In addition, a group of eight parents whose students had fallen out of the top 10% of the senior class showed up to the school that afternoon to ask for an immediate recalculation. Several others wrote emails to Westbrook to complain. Counselors spent the next week meeting with students and parents who were upset or disappointed with their updated class ranks.

After the backlash from the recent update, Westbrook proposed discontinuing the practice of calculating and publishing class ranks for students beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. In Texas, schools are not required to publish a student's class rank. If the proposal passes, counselors would notify students who would receive automatic admission to public Texas universities because of their class rank. At graduation, instead of traditional salutatory and valedictory addresses, teachers would nominate and vote on two students to give speeches during the ceremony.

The school board will vote on Westbrook's proposal at its May 1 meeting. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed April 28.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

Seniors and their parents have become obsessed with class rank. For the vast majority of students, it doesn't matter if they are ranked No. 75 or 95. Yet, students who are not at the top of their class will take unnecessary AP classes to chase a higher class rank. They may struggle in those AP classes or miss out on unweighted electives that could provide valuable experiences and make them more well-rounded students.

THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

Class rank has become a part of the high school experience. It gives students a goal, and the healthy competition is good practice for the real world. Students who have been working for years to achieve a certain class rank should not have that opportunity stripped away. Class rank also could encourage students to take more AP classes, which prepare students for college and give students a more robust academic experience overall.

■ JAY WESTBROOK, principal

“After days of constant emails and phone calls, I’d had enough. I understand how hard some of our top performing students work to earn a spot as valedictorian and salutatorian. I know how hard some students have to push themselves to get into the top 10% or top 5% depending on what university they’re trying to attend. In this process, students have forgotten that they are more than just a number with six numbers after the decimal point. We have students who are gifted writers, musicians and athletes, but many of them will never know it because they are so obsessed with achieving a higher class rank that they’ll take AP underwater basket weaving if it means they may receive some extra weight on their GPA. Sharing class ranks with students has created an unhealthy environment for these students. Let’s remember that they are still kids for now and try to make learning fun again.

“If my proposal passes, students who are trying to earn automatic admission will be notified at the beginning of their senior year that their GPAs are within that threshold. If a student’s GPA is high enough, the university they are applying for will take notice. The highest ranking graduate in Texas receives a tuition waiver for their first year. They’ll still receive that. Students need to understand that there are other ways to make themselves stand out on a college application. I hope students and parents see that we are trying to develop students into the leaders of tomorrow, not just the competitors of tomorrow. Learning should be about knowledge and bettering one’s self. It’s not a race.”

■ KEVIN JORDAN, senior

“I’ve been No. 1 in the class since I was a freshman. That’s never changed. I’ve taken almost all AP classes and never gotten a B. I’m not sure what more I could have done to keep my spot as valedictorian. I understand that with all the weighted AP classes, it’s a competitive environment. I know Krisinia is very smart and was probably getting good grades as well. I just didn’t realize how close we were. I wish I would have known sooner.

“My plan is to attend Stanford and study entrepreneurship. Then I want to get my masters in business administration from somewhere on the East Coast. Having a published class rank has helped me set goals throughout high school, so I knew what I needed to do to get there. I hope they don’t change it. If anything, they should publish class ranks more often, so students know where they really stand.”

■ ARUSHI SINGH, junior

“All my friends signed up to take yearbook my sophomore year, but my parents wouldn’t let me. They wanted me to take more AP classes to improve my GPA and class rank. I’m number 92 in the class out of 397. That’s not a bad rank, but I’m probably not headed to Harvard. I plan to go to UNT to study finance. I don’t need to be at the top of my class to do that, but my parents don’t understand.”

■ CONNIE KARUSHANK, AP music theory teacher

“Every year, I have students show up in my class who don’t play an instrument or read music but think it’s a good idea to take an advanced music theory class anyway. I know it’s for the GPA boost. I can teach theory to any student who wants to take it, but without the context of wanting to read music or write music, it just doesn’t seem like a very fun class for them to take. I feel for those students who don’t really want to be here.”

■ MIKE ARMISEN, college admissions counselor

“It is not uncommon in Texas for a high school not to publish class ranks. Colleges don’t count that against students at all. Some universities have ways around it. For example, at Texas State University, the admissions office will rank the students who come from schools that don’t rank to get a good idea of how a student would perform against their peers. We have been handing out these notifications to students for years, and in many ways I do think they find it helpful. Perhaps they could notify students who are in the top 10% or the top 25%, just so they have an idea. I’m all for giving students as much information about their performance as we can.”

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 will discontinue publishing class ranks.
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

Class ranks could be a thing of the past if the school board passes Principal Jay Westbrook's proposal at its May 1 meeting.

After receiving a series of complaints following the January class rank announcement, Westbrook proposed doing away with publishing class ranks starting next school year. If the proposal passes, students will only be notified if they have automatic admission to public Texas universities. With no valedictorian or salutatorian, teachers would vote for two students to give speeches at graduation.

The school board should support the proposal.

The intense focus on rank causes extreme stress among students, leading to anxiety and unhealthy competition. This year, the race for valedictorian came down to a margin of just 0.01 point, creating disputes and demands for meetings. Additionally, eight parents whose students fell out of the top 10% demanded recalculations, alongside numerous other parent email complaints. This only creates more work for staff and stress for students and parents. Reducing success to a single number is not just arbitrary. It is also detrimental to students' mental well-being.

Without class ranks, students would have the freedom to take courses they enjoy without GPA calculation pressure. One student wanted to take yearbook, but her parents discouraged it because it wouldn't improve her rank. That class could have provided valuable experience in writing, photography and teamwork — skills just as essential as academic achievements. The focus on class rank limits students from exploring electives that harness creativity, passion and personal growth.

Eliminating class rank would make the graduation ceremony more meaningful by recognizing students for different accomplishments. Staff voting on graduation speakers would ensure the speakers would represent qualities beyond academic success. By highlighting different strengths, the event would become a celebration of well-rounded students who are prepared to succeed.

While those opposed to the proposal claim class rank is vital for college admissions, colleges also value extracurriculars, leadership and personal statements. Universities do not penalize students whose schools do not provide a class rank.

This change is an easy A for the district. The board should vote in favor of this proposal if they care about students' mental health, well-roundedness and real-world success.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

After students and parents complained about the newly calculated class ranks, Principal Jay Westbrook proposed getting rid of class rankings beginning next school year. The school board will vote on the proposal at its May 1 meeting.

If passed, counselors will notify students if they qualify for automatic admission to Texas public universities their senior year. Additionally, staff would vote for two students to give speeches at graduation without valedictorian or salutatorian recognition.

The school board should reject this proposal.

Class rank provides students with a measurable benchmark for their academic progress, helping them set clear goals. If a student wants to attend Harvard, having published ranks would allow that student to set a specific target and understand how to reach it. Knowing their positions relative to their peers motivates students to work harder and strive for continuous improvement.

Ranking promotes college readiness by ensuring students tackle challenging coursework. Students who want a high class rank take AP courses with more weight, and these classes teach critical thinking, time management and study skills since they mirror college curriculum. By striving for a high rank, students gain a deep understanding of the effort required to succeed in college, helping them transition smoothly into the demands of higher education.

Eliminating class rank makes it difficult to recognize students who have excelled academically. Class rank is an important way to acknowledge those who have consistently worked hard and achieved outstanding results. One of the most prominent forms of this recognition is the valedictorian and salutatorian speeches at graduation and the scholarships that go along with those honors. Without class ranks, top students may not have a clear indication that they've excelled over their peers, depriving them of deserved recognition.

Those who advocate for eliminating class rank argue that it creates pressure, but they overlook how it allows top performers to stand out to admissions across applicants with the same qualifications. To address the stress associated with rankings, counselors could offer a course on managing academic pressure and stress.

If the school board wants to maintain a tradition of academic excellence, it should reject this proposal to ensure students remain motivated to achieve success.