

# Editorial Writing

State 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 1,210 students enrolled in grades 9-12. This year, a group of students founded the Environmental Action Club. Students met each Thursday afternoon and organized multiple activities such as cleaning up parks, organizing weekly carpools for students, having guest speakers after school and spreading awareness about climate change.

On Thursday, May 16, club president and senior Adelyn Winter planned a walkout for students to spread awareness and encourage community members to take action on climate change. Eight seniors, including Winter, participated by standing up in the middle of third period and walking out the front doors of the campus. The group sat down in a circle, and each student held a sign but remained silent. After an hour, security guard Joseph Morgenstern and Principal Mack Carden attempted to remove the students and return them to class, but the students refused to move. Carden called each student's parents to pick up their students. The students agreed to leave with their parents. The next day, parents met with Carden individually, where they were told that the students would receive disciplinary action, including three days of out-of-school suspension May 21, 22 and 23 — the last three days of school. In addition, the students would not be allowed to attend the senior picnic or senior party May 23. In the student handbook, the consequence for skipping class is in-school suspension.

Parents and students felt the disciplinary action was unfair and have appealed the decision to a district disciplinary committee. The committee will have an emergency meeting Tuesday, May 20, to determine whether the suspension will stand. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed May 19.

## THOSE SUPPORTING THE APPEAL

According to the student handbook, the standard discipline for skipping school is one day of in-school suspension. Three days of out-of-school suspension is out of proportion with what these students did. It is harsh to prevent the students from attending their last day of high school and their last school events. They walked out of class to bring awareness to an issue they believe in. Students should be able to exercise their right to free speech.

## THOSE OPPOSING THE APPEAL

The walkout caused a substantial disruption to regular school activities. Carden had to spend an entire day trying to get protesting students back to class and then wasted another day meeting with parents to go over the disciplinary action. Students who were not participating in the walkout stopped in the hall during passing period to watch the protest. Many were tardy to their next periods and were distracted in class.

### ■ ADELYN WINTER, senior

“The Environmental Action Club has been the most important thing I’ve done in high school. We don’t just sit around and talk about climate change. We started a school community garden on campus where we’ve harvested tomatoes, onions, garlic, squash and fresh herbs, which we donate regularly to the Leaguetown Women’s Shelter. We have 35 members who meet weekly, but each park cleanup draws more than 100 students who earn community service hours while cleaning up their community parks. I know we’re just kids, but we’ve done a lot of good. The walkout was supposed to be a way to let the rest of the school know that they can make a difference in their world, too. We didn’t do anything disrespectful during the protest. We didn’t even speak. All eight of us who participated held a sign. My sign said ‘Our school doesn’t even recycle.’ We throw away tons of paper and plastic every year, and there are no recycle bins available on campus. It’s bizarre. Other signs were about protecting wildlife, reducing carbon emissions or other issues. I don’t believe I deserve to be suspended or miss my senior picnic and party. I make straight A’s. I’m going to UT in the fall. I’ve never been in trouble before. But even if the suspension still stands, I don’t regret what we did. Our school can do better. Our planet deserves better.”

### ■ MACK CARDEN, principal

“I believe that students should have the right to free speech while at school. However, students do not have the right to substantially disrupt the school day. Unfortunately, that’s what happened in this instance. We saw a huge number of tardies. In the hallways, students had their faces pressed against the glass trying to see what these students were doing. Of course, they had all heard about it on social media. One of the students was attempting to livestream the protest. I respect all students, and I would have been happy to meet with them and discuss their issues about recycling in another way. This was not the way for them to get their point across. I believe the committee will see things the same way. We have to be consistent in our message that during school hours, students need to be in class and focused on learning.”

### ■ NICOLE TRAN, parent of a senior

“My son, Daniel, participated in the protest. I wish he hadn’t done it, but in a way, I’m proud of him for being passionate about something he believes in. I know their club has been trying to get the district to agree to invest in a recycling program. He’s never been in trouble for anything before. He’ll attend Rice University this fall. The disciplinary committee includes an assistant superintendent, a parent, a teacher and an assistant principal. I have been writing emails to members of the school board asking them to share my thoughts with the committee. I hope they let my son attend his last day of school. He’s a good kid, and he deserves to have a last day of school.”

### ■ ANDREW JETT, junior

“I heard about the protest on social media the night before, but I wasn’t sure if anyone would really do it. We’re so close to the last day of school, and we’re too busy studying for final exams to do much else. I did go down during calculus to watch the activity going on outside. It was just some kids sitting in a circle. Those kids aren’t really the kind of kids I would expect to get in trouble. I’m honestly surprised they went through with it. I’ve been studying like crazy for my English and U.S. history final exams. My teacher actually ended our review session because people wouldn’t stop talking about all this protest drama. I get why they wanted to do it, but it shouldn’t be allowed during such an important time of year. Be an activist on your own time.”

### ■ AUBREY MARQUEZ, English teacher

“I’m not sure whether suspension is appropriate for these students, but that’s not for me to decide. I was trying to review for our final exam, but students kept pulling up photos and video on their phones. It was all they wanted to talk about. In that way, I’d say the protest disrupted learning on that day.”

**DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST**

## **State Meet • 2025**

### **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 a disciplinary committee will overturn a group of students' suspensions.
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 disciplinary committee 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 APPEAL**

Eight students hope to have their suspensions overturned Tuesday when a disciplinary committee decides whether or not to approve their appeal.

Principal Mark Carden suspended the students, all seniors and members of the Environmental Action Club, for the last three days of school for staging a walkout to bring awareness to climate change — chief among their concerns is that the school does not have a recycling program. In addition, the students cannot attend their senior picnic or senior party.

The committee should overturn the suspension and allow the seniors to attend their last day of school and final school events.

Students skipping school is nothing new. According to the student handbook, the consequence for skipping school is one day of in-school suspension. The punishment for these seniors would go far beyond the standard set by the school. This punishment is retaliatory.

Students broke the rules, but they had a good reason to do so. As active as the Environmental Action Club has been this year — cleaning up local parks, organizing school carpools, bringing in guest speakers — they've done their part to bring awareness to students and staff to improve quality of life on planet Earth. The action they took when they staged a walkout was well-intended. That should count for something.

These eight seniors have been working hard for four years and deserve to celebrate their last few days of school and enjoy the senior picnic and senior party. Taking these celebrations away from them goes beyond an overzealous punishment and borders on needlessly cruel.

Carden said it's important to send a message that staying in class is important and that's why the suspension should stand. But it sends the wrong message to punish students for trying to do something good for the world.

When administrators give students consequences, what's outlined in the student handbook should drive their decision-making. This comes across as revenge. When these eight students walked out, they were trying to make the school a better place. The committee should follow their lead and overturn this suspension.

**SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING THE APPEAL**

Eight students hope to have their suspensions overturned Tuesday when a disciplinary committee decides whether or not to approve their appeal.

Principal Mark Carden suspended the students, all seniors and members of the Environmental Action Club, for the last three days of school for staging a walkout to bring awareness to climate change — chief among their concerns is that the school does not have a recycling program. In addition, the students cannot attend their senior picnic or senior party.

The committee should reject the appeal and keep the students' suspensions in place.

Administrators and staff are busy enough as it is in the last weeks of school. Instead of helping students get over the line to graduate, Carden and security staff had to waste time trying to convince students sitting in a circle outside the school to get up and go to class. Now parents are wasting more of administrators' time on this appeal.

During the last few weeks of school, while students are working to prepare for final exams, the last thing students needed was a big distraction, but that's what this walkout was. There was an increase in tardies on the day of the walkout, and discussions over the protest distracted students from preparing for final exams. People weren't discussing recycling. They weren't discussing climate change. They were discussing the protest.

Keeping the suspension in place sends the appropriate message that being in class is important. School is not the time to do hobbies or practice activism. It's the time to focus on that class, graduation and building skills that will lead to a successful life. There's nothing wrong with peaceful protest, but there is an appropriate time and place.

Those supporting the students' appeal believe the purpose behind the protest was more important than any other consideration. Climate change is an important topic, but a better way to address it would be to do well in school, study environmental science and policy and work toward making real change.

A small group skipping school to make a point isn't going to get us any closer to achieving climate goals. The disciplinary committee should maintain the students' suspensions. School is for learning, not for activism.

## EDITORIAL WRITING 2025

1A—Arianna Perez—San Isidro

After eight seniors of the Environmental Action Club participated in spreading climate change awareness by leaving in the middle of third period and holding signs outside of campus, Principal Mack Carden told parents their children were to receive out-of-school suspension for the remaining three days of school. Parents and students felt the disciplinary action unfair and have appealed the decision to a district disciplinary committee. The committee will have an emergency meeting tomorrow to determine whether the suspension will stand.

The district disciplinary committee should approve the appeal.

The Environmental Action Club does not just sit around and talk about climate change. They started a community garden and donate regular to the Leaguetown Women's Shelter and do cleanups which go up to 100 student participants. The eight seniors caused zero harm and did not do anything disrespectful during the protest. They were only good students who wanted to save their Earth. A three-day suspension seems irrational for students who only wanted to be a good cause and become a change they want in the world.

Principal Carden decided to give the students three days out-of-school suspension as punishment for skipping class. However, in the student handbook, the consequence for skipping class is in-school-suspension. The eight students skipped only one period. It is not reasonable to twist the rules of the handbook and give them three days out-of-school suspension, especially during the seniors' last three events of their high school experience.

The students who participated in the environmental activism walked out of class to bring awareness to an issue they believe in. Giving students out-of-school suspensions for speaking up about what they support is unjust and shows the public that the school does not care for students' freedom of speech. All students should be allowed to exercise their right to free speech without an irrational punishment.

Those who oppose the appeal believe the walkout caused a substantial disruption to regular school activities. However, the disruption was one day and all things went back to normal after. To punish the club members for their usage of free speech is unfair. A punishment that hurts students' freedom to speak on what they believe in should not be anywhere on the campus.

As a solution, the Environmental Action Club should hold a meeting with the principal surrounding the school's paper and plastic usage. This way, the club's points could get across without causing a distraction to the school.

Students should be allowed to share their views and opinions with the public and not be punished severely. The committee should approve the appeal at its meeting tomorrow.

## 2A—Reese Hataway—Martins Mill

A disciplinary committee will meet Tuesday to determine whether the suspension will stand for eight seniors who participated in a planned walkout to spread awareness and encourage community members to take action on climate change. During third period Thursday, the group walked out the front doors of the campus, sat down in a circle and each held a sign but remained silent.

In the student handbook, the consequence for skipping class is in-school-suspension; however, Principal Mack Carden has given the students three days of out-of-school suspension May 21, 22 and 23, the last three days of school, and they are no longer allowed to attend the senior picnic or party. Parents and students felt this action was unfair and have appealed the decision.

The committee should support the appeal.

During the protest, the students did not participate in anything disruptive. They did not do anything disrespectful, and they did not speak. They walked out of class to raise awareness to an issue they believe in. Students should be able to exercise their right to free speech. Carden's decision to give the eight seniors these consequences only teaches the student body that making a stand for what they believe in will be met with repercussions. Other students in class may have been distracted, but this was not the intent of the protesting seniors. Any protest will disrupt daily activities, that is a given, and the seniors went about their walkout as peacefully as possible.

The school should treat this situation with the student handbook in mind. The seniors skipped class, so they should be met with one day of in-school suspension, not



three days of out-of-school suspension plus being prohibited to attend their senior activities. The student handbook contains policies that should stand for these students. Administration cannot ignore the rules and punish the students according to how they feel. The eight seniors should be treated equitably and should be given consequences that align with the policy set before in the student handbook.

Those who oppose the appeal say the walkout caused a substantial disruption to regular school activities; however, the direct actions of the eight seniors do not account for the actions of the other students who were distracted in class. The protesting seniors should be given just consequences according to their direct actions. Carden should not give the seniors this excessive punishment, but instead, stick to the student handbook.

The committee should support the appeal and agree to the lesser punishment outlined in the student handbook because for what the students did, it would not be appropriate to ban them from their last few days at school as a senior.

### 3A—Ella Wolf—Grandview

Eight seniors in the Environmental Action Club received three days of out-of-school suspension after staging a walkout for action against climate change. A group of parents and students believe the disciplinary action is unfair and appealed the decision to a district disciplinary committee. The committee will hold an emergency meeting tomorrow to decide if the suspensions will stand.

In order to maintain an environment focused on learning and teach students real-world skills, the board needs to stand by the decision to suspend this group of students.

Although the protest the group conducted was peaceful, there were other, more respectful ways to discuss their concerns. If students want to foster change, it's important to learn the skill of negotiation with those in positions of power. The Environmental Action Club could have approached administrators with their thoughts on making the school more environmentally friendly. Instead, they chose a route that disrupted learning and diverted staff from other tasks. It's appropriate for this kind of act to be met with a punishment due to its defiant nature. The skill of protest is important, but inappropriate and untimely in a situation where negotiation is readily available.

It's also important to note that the protest had negative effects on both students and teachers. It created a schoolwide buzz that disrupted class activities for the majority of the day. This is favorable for the Environmental Action Club, but it isn't productive for other students who prioritize their studies while at school. The suspensions these seniors are receiving are essentially a compensation for students who lost valuable class time during the busy exam season. If an action has a significant negative impact on others,

consequences must follow. It was unfair for the club members to misuse other student's time to forward their ideals.

Those who believe the eight seniors should not receive suspension may argue that they were simply exercising free speech. However, while free speech is a right, an education is a privilege. These students could have performed their protest anywhere in order to send a message. Receiving an out-of-school suspension will assist in teaching critical thinking and assessing time and place before acting. The disciplinary action does not impede their right to free speech, it simply states that they should not have disrupted school. The Environmental Action Club should have considered their fellow students' education before performing their protest.

The Environmental Action Club's protest unnecessarily disrupted school when the eight seniors could have instead attempted negotiation. If the district disciplinary committee truly values students' educational opportunities, they will stand by the suspensions at tomorrow's emergency meeting.

#### 4A—Abigail Bautista—Sulphur Springs

Eight seniors of the Environmental Action Club could face out-of-school suspension and miss the last three days of school after walking out to protest and spread awareness on climate change. In response, parents and students who felt the disciplinary action to be unfair, appealed to a district disciplinary committee. The board will determine the stance of the suspension Tuesday.

The board should oppose the appeal as the walkout caused disruption to regular school activities.

While students have the right to free speech at school, they do not have the right to disrupt the school day for other students. Those who were not participating in the walkout stopped in the hall during passing period to watch the protest. Many were tardy for their next period and were distracted in class. As school is also preparing to end, many students are beginning to study for their final exams. Learning cannot be facilitated if students are not focused on their education, but rather focused on a protest from a club during a key part of the year.

Further, students can be activists and exercise their right to free speech on their own time. The eight students who walked out could have protested elsewhere and not during their classes or school hours. The seniors were likely aware of the consequences that walking out of school would have as, according to the handbook, the standard discipline for skipping school is one day of in-school-suspension. The students, however, refused to return to class as administrators spent an entire day getting the students back

inside. Their refusal ultimately resulted in three days of out-of-school suspension as opposed to in-school suspension.

Those who support the appeal argue that is harsh and unfair to bar the students from the last days of their senior year. However, as seniors, they are aware of the consequences of the walkout and their subsequent actions posed. The penalties they will face because of their actions will not affect their college attendance in the fall.

The board should reject the parents' and students' appeal. School was significantly disrupted because of the protest, leading across campus to lose focus. Ultimately, the actions of the senior members were disruptive and unnecessary during school hours.

## 5A—Ruchira Prasad—Frisco Independence

Following a student-led protest initiated by the school's Environmental Action Club where a group of eight seniors planned a walkout to raise awareness on climate change, Principal Mack Carden issued three days of out-of-school suspension to those involved. In response to the disciplinary action, parents and students appealed the decision to the district's disciplinary committee. The committee will vote on the appeal on May 20.

The committee should vote for the appeal.

First, the disciplinary consequences force students to miss a crucial time of the year. According to the student handbook, the standard discipline for skipping school is one day of out-of-school suspension, but with Carden's consequences, it's three—May 21, 22, 23—the last three days of school. For seniors, these final days of their high school careers are one of the last opportunities they have to meet with friends and teachers. Missing this period of time because of the suspension prevents students from saying a 'proper' goodbye to the relationships they have made over the course of the past few years.

Moreover, the proposal infringes on students' rights. Holding the ability to protest is a fundamental right that should be guaranteed to all students, but Carden's actions imply that this is not the case. Students should not be penalized for exercising a right that is granted to them as Americans. Critics of the appeal believe that the disciplinary actions are justified due to the disruption caused by the student's walkout. However, they are missing one, crucial fact—the walkout's intentions. The goal of the protest was to let students realize the difference they could make in their communities by expressing a real-world issue they are passionate about—not to disrespect the administration. Requiring

those involved to miss three days of school is simply out of proportion to the incident at hand.

Ultimately the committee should recognize that the disciplinary consequences don't address the problem in a way that respects the rights of their students by voting in favor of the appeal. In the end, they need to consider the impact their actions will have on their students as they strive to create a community where every voice is heard.

## 6A—Nethra Tatiraju—Cedar Park Vista Ridge

To take action against climate change, eight seniors from the Environmental Action Club skipped class to participate in a silent protest. They received three days out-of-school suspension from Principal Mack Carden. Parents and students who felt the punishment was unfair have appeals the disciplinary action to a district committee, and the committee will determine whether the suspension will stand at its meeting on Tuesday.

The committee should support the appeal, and the students' punishment should be reduced.

According to the student handbook, the consequence for skipping class is one day of in-school suspension. The students were unfairly punished. Three days of out-of-school suspension is out of line when the designated punishment is one day of in-school-suspension. Carden should opt for this lesser punishment that aligns with the student handbook.

The students did not engage in any disruptive behavior. They simply held up signs, and none of them spoke or actively attempted to disrupt school activities. A three-day suspension is excessive for a silent protest that was not intended to cause any harm. Furthermore, students have the right to free speech while at school, and they should not be punished for standing up for what they believe in. They should be encouraged to take action to solve problems within their community.

In addition, the suspension is set for the last three days of school, which would cause the students to miss the senior picnic and the senior party. The last days of high school are extremely valuable, and these students do not deserve to miss out on these



one-in-a-lifetime experiences. The suspension should be scheduled to ensure that the students will get to enjoy their final day of high school.

Opponents of the appeal argue that the walkout caused significant disruption to classroom activities. However, the students are the ones who decided to ignore classwork and watch the protest. Instead of only punishing the protestors, the students who chose to pull up their phones during important work or stop in the hallways and be tardy to their next class should be given disciplinary action as well.

These eight students were given unfair and excessive punishment for simply standing up for what they believe in. Their behavior was harmless and clearly not intended to cause disruption. It is only fair that the committee supports the appeal and reduces the students' punishment to a more appropriate one day in-school-suspension.