



# TAKE A STAND

**UIL Editorial Writing**

*Alyssa Boehringer, UIL Journalism Director*



# EDITORIAL WRITING

An article that states the newspaper's stance on a particular issue. Basically, it's a persuasive essay that offers a solution to a problem.

# WHEN YOU GET THE PROMPT

1. LOOK FOR DATES
2. WHAT'S THE CENTRAL ISSUE?
3. WHO SUPPORTS THE PRO AND THE CON?
4. WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN YOU MAKE?
5. WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?



# Editorial Writing

District Meet • 2023



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 3,600 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Since 1900, the high school's mascot has been the Leopards. After Title IX was passed in 1972, the athletic department made the decision to name all girls teams the "Lady Leopards," and for the past 40 years, that has not changed.

The "Lady Leopards" logo is on a wall-sized mural in the gymnasium. It's on jerseys, T-shirts and bumper stickers throughout campus and the community.

While attending a basketball tournament in San Antonio this December, varsity girls captain and senior Nicole Moutry observed the other teams in attendance and took note of their mascot names and logos. Over the next month, Moutry wrote a proposal and produced a petition to formally drop the word "Lady," so all high school teams would be known as the "Leopards." Her petition has more than 2,200 signatures from students, parents and community members.

Moutry presented her proposal and petition to the school board in February and the board will vote on the proposal at its meeting Monday, March 27. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, March 23.

## THOSE SUPPORTING THE MASCOT CHANGE

There is no reason to distinguish between the gender of each mascot. A Leopard is a Leopard. Adding the word "Lady" diminishes the ferocity and power of female athletes and makes the name of the team sound diminutive. Female athletes are just as strong as their male counterparts and should not be treated differently.

## THOSE OPPOSING THE MASCOT CHANGE

The Lady Leopards mascot has been around for more than 40 years and is ingrained in the tradition of the school. There is no plan in place to pay for this change. The expense it would take to repaint the mural in the gym, purchase new jerseys and equipment and replace every iteration of the words all over the school is not worth the effort just to make some students feel better about the name of the mascot.

## ■ NICOLE MOUTRY, senior varsity basketball captain

"When I was at a tournament in San Antonio, I wrote down every mascot of the teams in attendance, and more than 60% of the teams had some sort of feminine qualifier to their name like 'Lady Dragons' or 'Bisonettes.' And I looked out on the court and saw all these tough girls taking elbows, playing through injuries and sweating all over the court and I thought, 'this ain't it.' We are not Lady Leopards. We are Leopards. We are every bit as competitive and tough as the varsity boys. So, I want us to change our name to the Leopards."

"As far as paying to make all these changes, some of the other members of my team as well as members of the volleyball and soccer teams have made a group chat, and we are coming up with a list of local businesses we could contact to sponsor our jersey replacements. So hopefully that would give us a starting point to pay for some changes."

"Every girl on all three teams signed the petition, as well. This is something that is really important for our mindset, especially as our season is winding down and as my team looks ahead to next season. I want to leave a legacy for the girls coming after us. I want them to know that they are athletes, and they are no different from the male athletes at the school."

## ■ VICTORIA MOMOA, athletic director and varsity girls basketball coach

"Nicole has been a tremendous athlete for us all four years of her high school career, and I'm proud to say that she earned a scholarship to the University of North Texas to continue playing in the fall. It was no surprise after her grit and leadership throughout our season that she would want to make a change like this and send a clear message to our community that our female athletes are here to dominate just as much as our male athletes. As athletic director, I have some concerns about the budget and how those details would be worked out if the school board does decide to accept her proposal. But regardless of the decision, I'm proud of Nicole's team. I'm proud of the season they had and now I'm proud that here at the end of her career, she is choosing to make a stand about something she believes in."

## ■ CJ POCOCK, junior boys soccer player

"I know lots of girl athletes, and we do lots of events and team-building stuff with the girls soccer team. They practice hard and play hard, so I don't have any issues with a change to the mascot name. I've never thought of them as any different than us."

## ■ CEDRIC MACK, principal

"I understand and empathize with the students looking to change the name of the mascot. The problem is, when you have such a long-standing tradition like a mascot name, people don't realize the expense that the school community will have to go through in order to enact these changes. All our forms will need to be re-created. We're talking about changes to our facilities and changes to our website. It's not a simple switch we can just flick and change the name of a mascot. This is something that will need to be done over time. I'm not convinced that now is the right time to take on some of these monetary expenses and additional challenges."

## ■ JACK BLAKEY, junior

"This seems like a waste of time and money. Our school needs a computer lab and new science equipment. I don't think it should be the school's responsibility to waste money on these superficial things when what we have is fine."



# EDITORIAL PERSON

AKA THE HIGHLY-CAPABLE  
AND HARDWORKING HUMAN

**Paragraph 2:** Take a stand. Choose a side. Tell the reader what SHOULD happen. Set this clear and concise statement in its own paragraph.

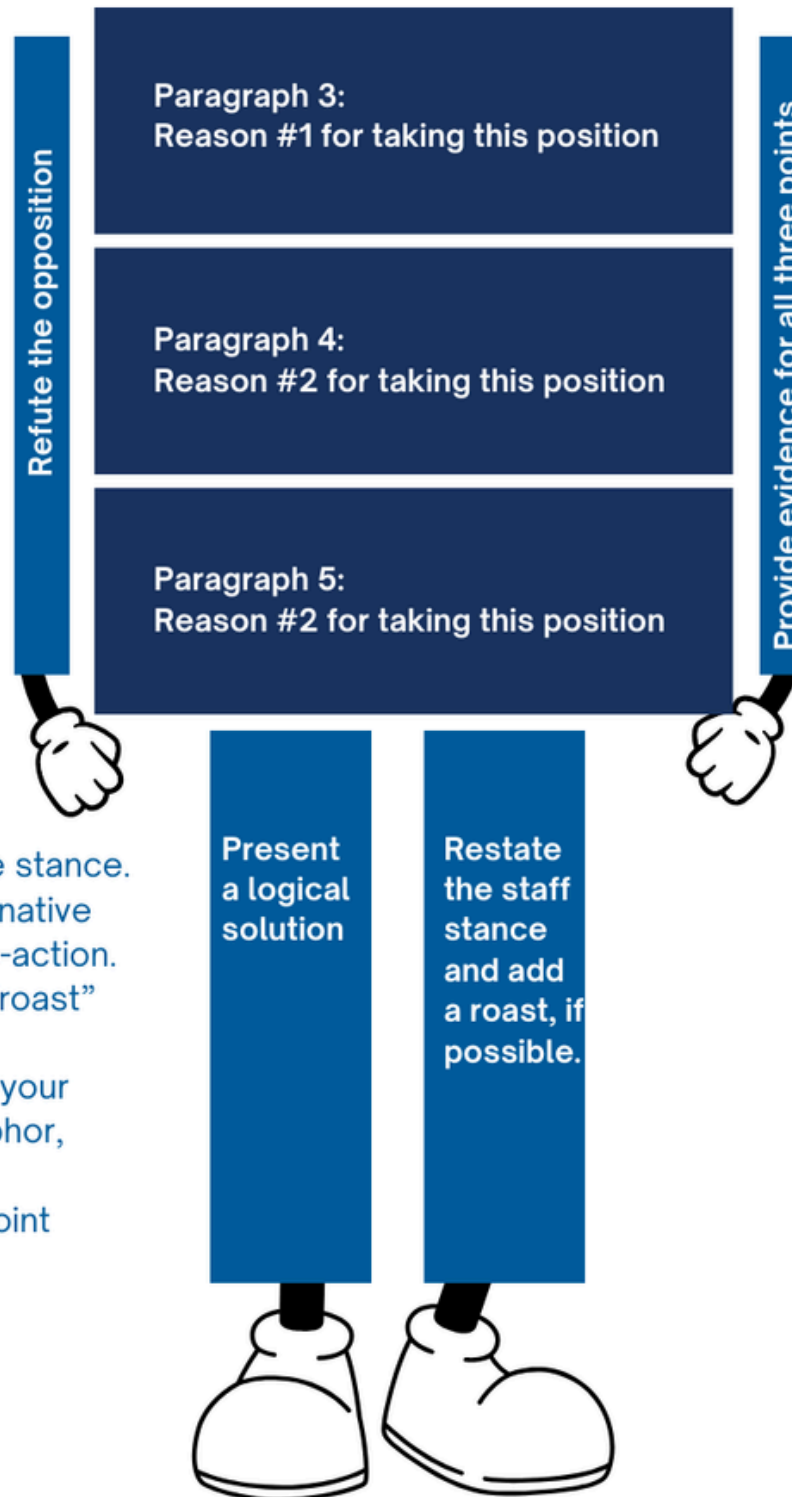
Tell the reader what the other side believes, and then tell the reader why they're wrong. You can do this in its own paragraph or weave it into your reasons.

**Paragraph 6:** Restate the stance. You may include an alternative logical solution or call-to-action. You may also include a "roast" or "zinger." This is just a memorable way to drive your point home. Use a metaphor, comparison or powerful language to drive your point home in the conclusion.



Stance

**Paragraph 1:** Present the problem or situation. Similar to a news lead, but can include opinion. Should include the future event or most timely element of the issue.



*Tips*

Get the future event in the lead, if there is one.

Use your voice throughout the editorial. You can use your opinion beginning in the first sentence.

There are no quotes in an editorial.

You may choose either side of the issue and be successful.

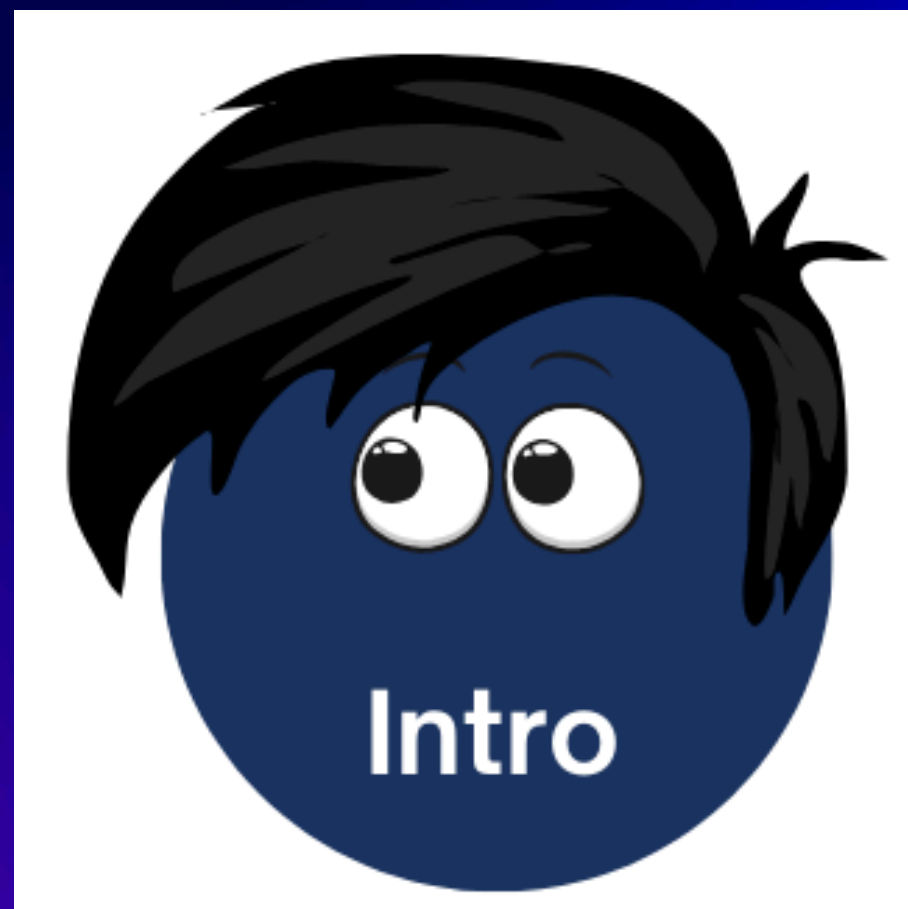


**NO QUOTES!**



# HEAD

## THE LEAD



Girls sports teams could have an adjustment to their mascot if the school board approves a petition by senior Nicole Moutry to finally drop the diminutive word “Lady” from the Lady Leopards team name at its March 27 meeting.

**Don’t be afraid to drop your opinion in the lead. Be creative. Get the time element (future event) in there.**



# NECK

TAKE A STAND



Stance

The school board should approve the proposal to change the names of girls sports teams so that all school teams can unite and be known as the “Leopards.”

**Be clear and concise. Set the stance apart in its own paragraph.**



# BODY

## GIVE REASONS FOR TAKING YOUR STANCE

Paragraph 3:  
Reason #1 for taking this position

Paragraph 4:  
Reason #2 for taking this position

Paragraph 5:  
Reason #2 for taking this position

Give three reasons why you're taking this stand.

- The word “lady” diminishes the power of female athletes.
- It's common for teams to experience mascot changes.
- They have a fundraising plan.

**TIP:** Include thoughts that aren't given to you in the prompt.

# RIGHT ARM

SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT WITH  
EVIDENCE AND EXAMPLES



If huge organizations with large fan bases can make such changes to their names to be more respectful of marginalized communities, the school can make the effort to consolidate the boys and girls teams into one mascot.

**Bonus points if you use examples not given to you in the prompt.**



# LEFT ARM

REFUTE THE OPPOSITION.

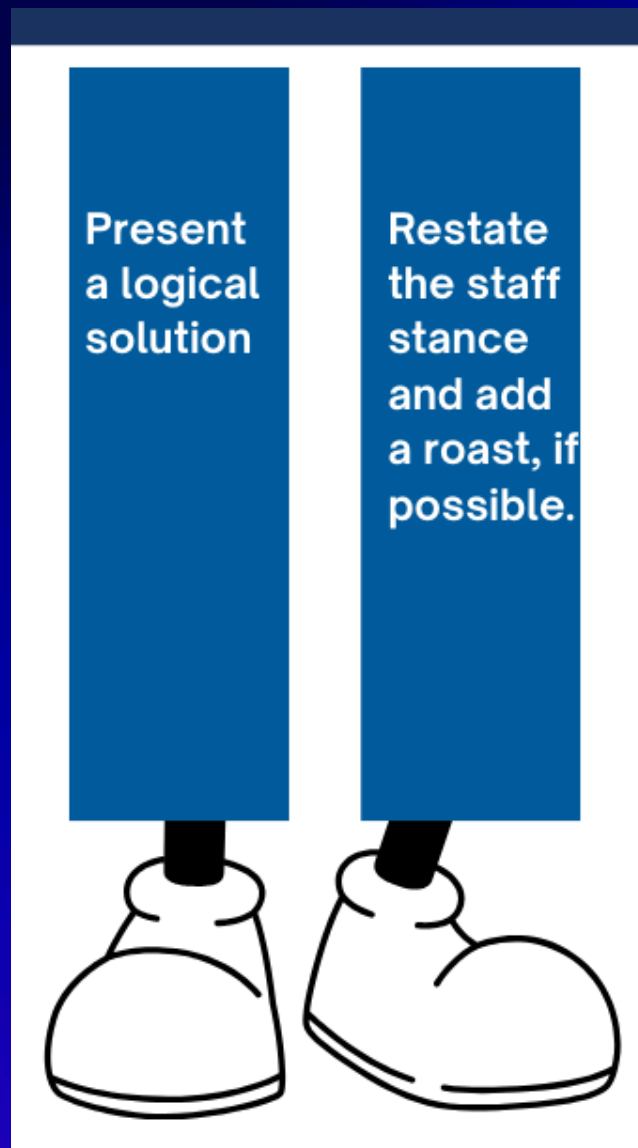


While it may take time, fundraising and **hard work**, changing the names of the girls sports teams is possible. Moutry has even suggested reaching out to local businesses to sponsor jersey replacements as an option.

You can do this in its own paragraph or weave it into your examples.

# LEGS

RESTATE THE STANCE. GIVE A SOLUTION OR CALL-TO-ACTION.



Every girl on the volleyball, basketball, and soccer team has signed the petition. It is imperative for the school board to listen to its athletes and how they want to be represented in their community. Teams should drop the “Lady” and all be Leopards together.

**TIP: Propose a solution not found in the prompt.**

**‘NOTHER TIP: Roast!**





# ROAST



# ROAST

A ZINGER.

A WAY TO MAKE YOUR PAPER  
MEMORABLE TO THE READER  
(AND THE JUDGES!)

There's nothing wrong with being a lady.  
The school board should reject this  
proposal and keep the traditional name the  
way it is — the way it has been since 1972.

**Make it memorable!**



# EDITORIAL PERSON

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AND HARDWORKING HUMAN

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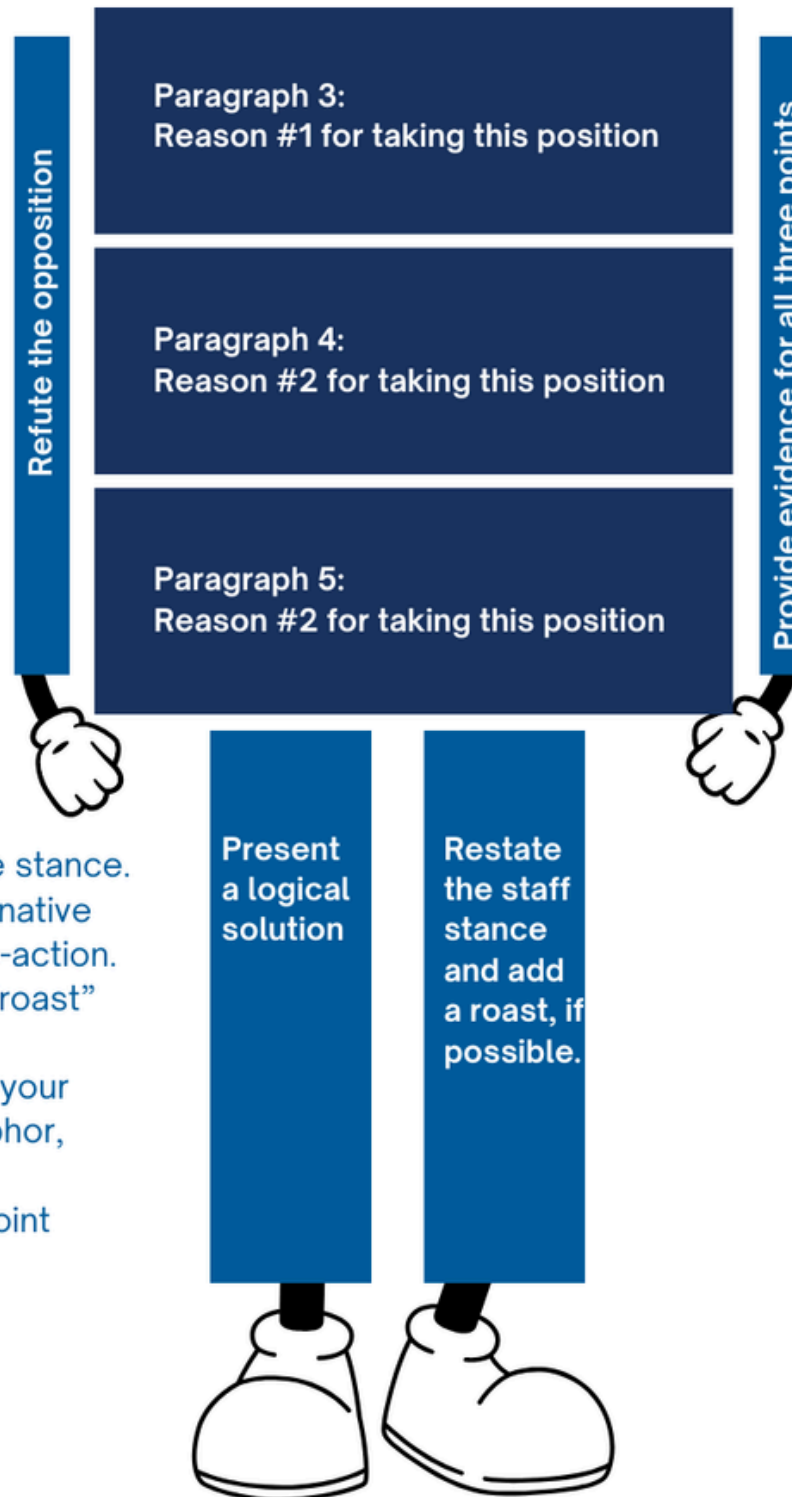
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# SOUND ADVICE

- Get the time element in there.
- No whining “it’s not fair.”
- Don’t over-stretch.
- Keep it third person or first person plural.
- Double check spelling and grammar.
- Use active voice.
- Offer a good solution.
- Develop your own recipe for a salty, spicy ROAST.



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State Meet • 2024



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Leaguetown High School has 1,062 students enrolled in grades 9-12. To comply with a 2023 state law requiring at least one armed security guard on every school campus in Texas, the district hired retired police officers to serve as school marshals for the 2023-2024 school year. However, in March, Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti proposed creating a district police department to replace the armed school marshal program and comply with the state law by employing licensed police officers in this role. Currently, when an arrest happens on campus or an investigation begins, the district collaborates with three different municipal law enforcement agencies since parts of Leaguetown ISD extend into both Springfield and Travis City.

The proposal includes hiring a district police chief, dispatcher and one officer for each of the two high school campuses and the three middle school campuses for the next two school years. The district would hire officers for elementary schools starting with the 2026-2027 school year. Fedrigotti estimated the cost of creating the department would top \$1.2 million for infrastructure, equipment, facilities and police vehicles, in addition to the new employee salaries. On a 228-day schedule, the police chief would be paid \$120,000, and the campus officers would start at \$60,000.

The school board will vote Thursday, May 16, on whether to approve Fedrigotti's proposal and establish the Leaguetown ISD Police. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, May 14.

## THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

If the district cares about safety, a district police department is the best way to meet the requirements of the state law. School marshals can't do all the things a police force can do, like make arrests or investigate crimes. If a major incident were to happen on a campus, having police already on-site would bring peace of mind to parents and students. In addition, the relationship between the school district and local police departments is complicated as administrators have to work with three different departments. Forming a district department simplifies the process and makes safety more efficient.

## THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

If the district hires its own police department, who is responsible for ensuring the district itself is following the law? The fact is, sometimes school districts do things that are illegal or unsafe. Citizens depend on police to enforce laws for everyone. If the district is paying police salaries, it would become too easy for police to help the district sweep unethical or illegal activities under the rug rather than sharing information with the public. Furthermore, the cost of the department could be better used to hire additional teachers to improve students' educations.

### ■ ALBERTO FEDRIGOTTI, superintendent

"We moved enough money around last year to comply with the new state law and employ an armed marshal on every campus in the district. The cost isn't that much more to take the next step and create a district police department. No additional tax increase would be required for the community.

"When we have a safety incident on a campus and need law enforcement, it takes time to contact municipal police and get someone there. They do a wonderful job, but they have so much more going on than just keeping an eye on the schools. There's another level of efficiency in that a campus officer can build relationships with the students on campus. They can have access to records and schedules. They know where to go and where things are. Simply having a positive police presence on a school campus goes a long way to promoting safety and preventing crimes.

"On top of everything else, you can't put a price tag on safety. If you ask any parent in the district, they'll tell you they will feel safer having police officers right here on campus. It's as simple as that."

### ■ SOPHIE MINSON, English teacher

"The last school I worked at had its own district police department. If you've ever heard of the 'school to prison pipeline,' this is where it begins. We saw a huge increase in student arrests, suspensions and expulsions for incidents that happened outside of school. These outcomes were definitely more prevalent among students of color and students with disabilities. They even had a student who accused a basketball coach of pushing him against a wall during practice. The kid had a concussion. Instead of an arrest, the coach was transferred to a middle school at the end of the year and was never investigated or arrested. These are the things we can look forward to when we have a permanent police presence."

### ■ JARAH RICHARDSON, junior

"It's weird having the school marshals on campus. We know they aren't real police. They look a little like regular security guards, but they carry a gun on their belts. Having real police on campus is a good idea. In the worst case scenario, they can break up or even prevent fights in the halls. In the best case, they can help keep us safe and enforce the laws. For example, last year someone stole my wallet out of the locker room. The assistant principal checked the security cameras, and we saw who it was, but two days went by before they could bring the kid in and ask him about it. He got in trouble, but by that time, he had already spent all my cash. I got nothing back. Having police right there could've made a difference. I know my parents are happy about the proposal, and they hope the school board passes it."

### ■ JENNY SANCHEZ, parent

"Not only would having police on campus make me feel better sending my kids to school, these police officers will set a good example for the young people on campus. Students should develop positive relationships with police officers while they're young. I love the idea of having police in the community doing positive work to prevent crime rather than just responding to it when it happens."

### ■ DAN RYDELL, senior

"It's sad that we can't even have school anymore without cops or security around. Seeing police at school would make me feel uncomfortable, like I'm about to get in trouble. I definitely don't need that kind of distraction when I'm trying to take a test or work on a project. If we have more than \$1 million to spend on police, we could hire additional teachers with that money instead and make a real positive impact on students. This is huge a waste."

### ■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights showed that schools with police officers on campus have 30% fewer fights and threats and a 150% increase in weapon detection on campuses. The same study also showed an increase in student suspensions, expulsions and arrests.



**WHAT'S THE ISSUE?**

**WHAT SIDE  
WOULD YOU TAKE?**



**WHAT REASONS  
WOULD YOU GIVE?**

**WHAT'S THE MOST  
FAIR SOLUTION?**

# TIERNEY WITHROW, ARGYLE HS

## 5A STATE CHAMPION, TOPS IN TEXAS

A proposal by Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti would create a district police department by hiring a licensed police chief, dispatcher and one officer for each of the two high school campuses and the two middle school campuses. The estimated cost of creating the department would top \$1.2 million for infrastructure, equipment, facilities, vehicles and employee salaries. The school board will vote on the proposal Thursday.

The board must pass Fedrigotti's proposal to create a district police department.

The current campus police system is not efficient. To comply with a 2023 state law requiring at least one armed security guard on every school campus, the district hired retired police officers to serve as school marshals. When an arrest happens on campus, the district and marshals collaborate with three different law enforcement agencies. Forming a district police department simplifies the process of keeping students safe.

If a major incident were to happen on a campus, having police on site could diffuse the situation faster. A study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights showed that schools with police officers on campus have 30% fewer fights and threats and a 150% increase in weapon detection on campuses. The district needs police working to prevent crime rather than just responding to it when it happens.

Those opposing the proposal believe creating the department is too costly. However, there will be no additional tax increase for the community. According to Fedrigotti, the cost of forming the department is a small increase to funds used last year to hire the marshals.

A district police department would be beneficial to the district. Students, staff and parents must speak at the board meeting and show their support for Fedrigotti's proposal to prioritize campus safety.



# JOY ZHOU, LAKE TRAVIS HS

## 6A STATE CHAMPION

To comply with a state law requiring armed security guards on school campuses, Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti proposed creating district police department rather than their current marshal program that requires the school to collaborate with three different law enforcement agencies.

When the school board votes on Thursday, they should accept Fedrigotti's proposal because creating a district police department would not cost a lot more than what is already being allocated, it would increase efficiency and allow police to develop a trusting relationship with students and staff.

Those arguing against the proposal claim that the \$1.2 million required to build new infrastructure and pay officers is too costly when the school's current system works. However, the cost would be mitigated through the reallocation of current funds for the marshal system, and no additional tax increase would be required.

Furthermore, the cost of a serious accident or threat to students' safety is more detrimental than the potential costs. Under the current system, school marshals can not make arrests or investigate crimes. In contrast, schools with police officers on campus can and have 30% fewer fights according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education Office. Marshals can not act with the same efficiency as the school must communicate between departments. By the time a major incident is reported, under the current system, it may be too late.

Some students do not feel comfortable around security or police. This would remain true for both school marshals and real district police. However, district police could develop closer relationships with the students and staff to mitigate feelings of discomfort. Students would also be more educated on how to interact with law enforcement and can practice asking for help when needed, a vital skill for after they graduate. District police will not only improve the safety of students and staff, but allow police to foster an environment built on trust. If corruption is a concern from the police's close relationship with the district, checks must be put in place such as with outside inspections or a joint solution with occasional collaboration with outside agencies while still retaining the benefits of efficiency and increased safety of a district police department, that can properly address serious incidents.

If the school board cares about student safety over economic costs, they should accept Fedrigott's proposal while putting proper checks in place.

# BRIELLE KELLEMS, COMANCHE HS

## 3A STATE CHAMPION

Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti submitted a proposal in March detailing plans for an on-campus police force. This district police department would replace the current school marshals and comply with state regulations of having armed guards on site. The school board will vote on the proposal Thursday.

The school board should not pass the proposal.

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights revealed in a study that having an active police presence in schools increased the number of suspensions, expulsions and, most importantly, arrests. The school to prison pipeline is a real occurrence that affects thousands of Americans every year. Having a district police department would put vulnerable adolescents in a position to be arrested for mistakes or expelled and forced into at-risk positions. If the administration wants students to have the best opportunities and stay away from a vicious cycle, then they must not allow active officers to police the district.

Community trust in law enforcement is at an all-time low. Students deserve to feel safe and comfortable at school, but following recent events, it is more likely that a police force will make them feel uneasy at best. After the tragedy at Uvalde Texas, where local law enforcement failed to adequately respond to an active threat, parents may be uncomfortable having police officers encharged with the protection of their children.

Checks and balances must be in place amongst institutions of power. School districts are not infallible. The school district cannot be held accountable for any wrongdoing if they oversee the law enforcement. Furthermore, the legal and ethical concerns of a private police force with the purpose of controlling children has not been appropriately addressed by the administration.

Some might argue that a district police department would make students and families feel safer, but a police force will not truly do that. Any sense of safety would be a false one, which is proven to be much more dangerous than an awareness of risks and hazards. Moreover, a heavy police presence would likely make students nervous in the wake of increased allegations of police violence and brutality.

The community should encourage the school board to fail this proposal. Instead the administration should focus their efforts and resources toward education and passive safety. Updating school infrastructure or implementing new extracurricular opportunities would do more to enrich the students' educational experiences.

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If the school board cares about student safety over economic costs, they should accept Fedrigott's proposal while putting proper checks in place.



# WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

- You didn't take a stand or it wasn't clear enough.
- Your argument was too general. Be specific to this situation.
- You asked too many rhetorical questions without stating an opinion.
- You used quotes. Don't do that.
- You whined too much.
- You got off-topic.
- You lacked credibility or didn't use evidence.
- You used stereotypes or made personal attacks.

# ON CONTEST DAY...

- Read the entire prompt
- Decide on a stance
- Using the prompt, write three supportive statements
- Highlight the evidence in the prompt
- Ask yourself what points you'd make aside from what's given to you.
- Think about a roast, reasoned solution or call-to-action.
- Write it



# TAKE A STAND

**Alyssa Boehringer**

**UIL Journalism Director /ILPC Director**

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