

News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2022



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write a **news story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. 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 2,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Since August, the district has faced a shortage of bus drivers. Central office employees and the superintendent have driven bus routes to help with the shortage. To drive a bus, employees must have a Texas Commercial Driver's License with a school bus endorsement. More than 20 central office employees have upgraded their licenses to drive the buses. Superintendent Laurie Haedgen said the bus driver shortage has put a strain on the district office because of employees driving bus routes.

Starting Feb. 14, the district will combine bus routes, which will mean some students will have to be at their bus stops 30 minutes earlier, and some will get home 30 minutes later. Also, with the additional riders, students may need to sit three to a seat. The district will cut the 24 high school bus routes down to 18 routes.

To view the newly combined routes, students and parents can go to www.leaguetownisd.org/busroutes.

Haedgen said she has tried several incentive programs to bring in more bus drivers. Currently, the district is offering a \$1,000 bonus to new drivers after they complete three months on the job. The district also increased bus driver pay from \$12 an hour to \$15 an hour.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Feb. 11.

■ LAURIE HAEDGEN, superintendent

"We did not want to combine bus routes, but we didn't have a choice. The district can't find enough bus drivers. We've tried to be as creative as possible. I even drove a bus for a few weeks. In fact, several central office employees have driven routes. Unfortunately, my staff and I can't keep driving bus routes because we are not getting our regular work completed.

"If we are able to hire more drivers, we will bring back some of the eliminated routes, but until that happens, we have to run this new schedule."

■ RUDY DOUGLAS, principal

"My administrators and I worked on the new routes. Each route has a few new stops to make the new routes as equal as possible. Every bus route has been affected by these changes. It is imperative that students who ride a bus check the new times and routes for their area.

"I would encourage students to carpool when possible. The buses are going to be crowded. This is not ideal, but it is doable."

■ BRETT YOUNG, freshman

“I looked at the new routes last night. This stinks. Starting Monday, I will have to be at my bus stop 28 minutes earlier than normal. Our bus was already pretty full, and now we are going to have even more kids on it. I guess the only good thing is, my stop is one of the first stops. At least I will be able to get a seat, and I will get home about the same time in the afternoon.”

■ DESHAUNA WILLIAMS, sophomore

“I am a bus rider, but I haven’t looked at the new routes yet. The district needs to pay bus drivers more so more people will apply. Our bus is already crowded, and it can get pretty loud and rowdy. I don’t want to be on my bus any longer than I have to be. I am not happy about this change.”

■ RICK TENNISON, freshman

“Has the superintendent looked at the seats on our buses? Three high school students with backpacks will not fit in one seat. This solution is ridiculous. I am trying to find a different way to get to school. Both of my parents go to work early. I hope to find a neighbor who drives.”

■ BOB BROWN, bus driver

“I’ve been driving a bus here in Leaguetown for 15 years — ever since I retired from teaching. I love it, but it’s not the easiest job in the world. Once you get to know the kids on your bus it’s much easier, but that takes time. Our buses holds 72 students with three to a seat. Right now, I regularly have about 45 students riding each day. The district added four new stops to my route with approximately 20 new riders. It’s going to be crowded, but we will make it work.

“The \$1,000 incentive for new bus drivers is a great idea. I hope some new drivers apply.”

■ WILL WILLIAMS, director of student transportation

“The number of applications for bus drivers dropped more than 50% this year, and the number of bus riders has increased 30% over the past five years because of driving restrictions for students. Students under the age of 18 cannot have more than one non-related passenger under the age of 21 in their vehicle. Our local police department takes this law seriously. Officers patrol the parking lots before and after school looking for this specific violation.

“We are doing everything we can to recruit more drivers, but businesses across our town are facing similar shortages.”

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

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NEWS WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/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. Open with a future lead under the present circumstances. In this instance, the story comes out before the bus routes change.

Because of a bus driver shortage, students who ride the bus will have new routes starting Monday. The district combined bus routes, shrinking them from 24 to 18.

2. Use direct quotes and get those quotes early in the story. After you introduce quotes, use the transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Haedgen said," not "said Haedgen.") Avoid stacking quotes. Avoid putting two or more quotes from different people together without placing a transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

transition

Since the beginning of the school year, central office employees, including Superintendent Laurie Haedgen, have driven bus routes to help with the shortage of drivers.

direct quote

"We've tried to be as creative as possible," Haedgen said. "Unfortunately, my staff and I can't keep driving bus routes because we are not getting our regular work completed."

transition

With the new routes, students may see earlier pick up times and more crowded buses, Douglas said.

direct quote

"This is not ideal, but it is doable," he said.

3. Use third person. Don't say "our students" or "Our principal" or "Some of our students..." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "The bus routes are horrible..." without attributing that quote to someone or "The school should ..." These statements are personal opinions and cannot be made in a news story.

4. Note how in the earlier example of transition/quote, each quote is its own paragraph. Don't be afraid to use one- and two-sentence paragraphs. Journalistic writing consists mostly of one and two-sentence paragraphs.

SAMPLE STORY

Because of a bus driver shortage, students who ride the bus will have new routes starting Monday. The district combined bus routes, shrinking them from 24 to 18.

“Each route has a few new stops to make it as equal as possible,” Principal Rudy Douglas said. “Every bus route has been affected by these changes. It is imperative that students who ride a bus check the new times and routes for their area.”

Since the beginning of the school year, central office employees, including Superintendent Laurie Haedgen, have driven bus routes to help with the shortage of drivers.

“We’ve tried to be as creative as possible,” Haedgen said. “Unfortunately, my staff and I can’t keep driving bus routes because we are not getting our regular work completed.”

With the new routes, students may see earlier pick up times and more crowded buses, Douglas said.

“This is not ideal, but it is doable,” he said.

Freshman Brett Young said he will have to be at his bus stop 28 minutes earlier than usual.

“This stinks,” he said. “Our bus was already pretty full, and now we are going to have even more kids on it. I guess the only good thing is, my stop is one of the first stops. At least I will be able to get a seat, and I will get home about the same time in the afternoon.”

Freshman Rick Tennison, who rides the bus, said he is trying to find a different way to school.

“Has the superintendent looked at the seats on our buses?” Tennison said. “Three high school students with backpacks will not fit in one seat. This solution is ridiculous.”

The district increased bus driver pay from \$12 an hour to \$15, and it is offering a \$1,000 bonus to new drivers after they complete three months on the job.

“If we are able to hire more drivers, we will bring back some of the eliminated routes, but until that happens, we have to run this new schedule,” Haedgen said.

The number of bus driver applications dropped more than 50% this year, said Will Williams, director of student transportation.

“We are doing everything we can to recruit more drivers, but businesses across our town are facing similar shortages,” he said.

Bus driver Bob Brown, a retired teacher who has been driving a bus for 10 years, said he is hopeful that the \$1,000 incentive will bring in new drivers.

“I love driving my bus, but it’s not the easiest job in the world,” he said. “Once you get to know the kids on your bus it’s much easier, but that takes time.”