

News Writing

Region 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 2,800 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In January, the school board approved the development of a “Reset Center” to replace home suspensions. A social worker and certified administrator will run the center, which is housed in a portable in the parking lot of the district administration building.

Students who are suspended will now spend their suspension time at the center instead of their homes. Students can be suspended up to three days. No student will be at the center longer than three days.

Superintendent Case Nickles suggested the Reset Center in November after district data showed that 78% of the students who were suspended during the 2019-2020 school year failed at least two core classes, and 21% of the students suspended were repeat offenders. Also, 48% of the students placed in out-of-school suspension during the 2019-2020 school year were African American and 46% were Hispanic. In the same school year, 50% of the student body was white, 25% was Hispanic, 20% was African-American, 4% was Asian and 1% was other.

While teachers and students applauded the creation of the Reset Center, a group of parents is upset that the district will spend \$130,000 a year to run the center, in addition to the \$30,000 the district spent for building updates to the portable. The parents protested at the January and February school board meetings and warned that they plan to protest outside the reset portable the week it opens.

Because of construction delays, the Reset Center will not open until Tuesday, April 26. It was supposed to open March 1. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Monday, April 25.

■ CASE NICKLES, superintendent

“Our data shows that we have a problem. Our African American and Hispanic students are suspended at a much higher rate than our white students. And those suspension rates correlate directly to our failure rates.

“Often when students are suspended, they are not supervised at home. So many of our families have both parents working. Our home suspensions are giving students a three-day vacation, and we offer no support or problem-solving for our students before they return to school. It’s no wonder so many of our students are repeat offenders.

“The Reset Center will focus on the students. The administrator and social worker will work with the students to identify problems and work to solve them. They also will help the students catch up with their school work. Other districts that have created similar centers have reported drastic improvement in student behavior. I hope that eventually we won’t need the Reset Center

■ CASE NICKLES, cont.

because our students will learn better coping strategies and stop the behavior that gets them suspended.

“We are not suggesting our students do not need consequences for inappropriate behavior, but our consequences also should not be a vacation for the students. Nor should the consequences cripple the students’ chance to be successful in the classroom. A student who sees no hope in passing a class often will choose disruptive behavior.

“Overwhelmingly, our students and staff support the Reset Center. We have a few parents who don’t. They are upset about the cost. The Reset Center will account for less than 2% of the school budget, and we hope to move our in-school suspension students to the center next year to help even more students. It is fine for parents to disagree with us, but we will not tolerate any disruption of the school day at the center. If a protest takes place and is disruptive, we will ask the police to intervene. I wish these parents could see the value of this program.

“The delay has been frustrating, but it’s the nationwide supply chain issue. Our contractors were waiting on building materials. We couldn’t open the center until the bathroom was complete.”

■ POLLY PIXTER, principal

“Our teachers overwhelmingly support the Reset Center. Our students need counseling and strategies to improve behavior. Most students do not complete class work during their home suspensions. It makes more work for everyone. While none of my administrators like suspending students, sometimes it is necessary. Now, we have an option that is more helpful than harmful for our students.”

■ JOY FRANK, junior

“I was suspended my freshman year for three days for fighting. Both of my parents work, so basically I slept late and watched television for those three days. When I came back to school, I was so far behind in all of my classes, and I still had issues with the girl I fought. It would have been nice to have been in the Reset Center and get help with my classes and behavior choices.”

■ KATE RICHARDS, parent

“The price tag is too high. Why are we spending more than \$100,000 a year on students who disrespect teachers and cause problems? The district needs to put that money into programs that support students who make good choices. Our group will continue to protest until the school board realizes it is wrong. We will have a group with signs outside the center on Tuesday. The board needs to know this fight is not over.”

■ CEDRIC BROWN, administrator who will work at the center

“We’re trying to address something that has been going on for a long time in our district. The center will give the students a place to refocus, cool down, connect and form relationships. Our goal is to let the students know that we see them and we hear them. We want them to examine their choices and help them succeed.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the 2019-2020 school year, 109 students were suspended for at least one day. On average, three students were suspended each day. During that same year, the average number of students in the in-school suspension room was seven.

On days when the Reset Center has no students, the administrator and social worker will work at the high school and offer counseling and mediation services. They also will check in with students who were at the center.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

REGION • 2022

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. As a general rule, open with a future lead. Here, the story comes out before the center opens.

Despite parent opposition to the project, the district will open the Reset Center, an alternative to home suspensions for high school students, tomorrow. The same group of parents plans to protest at the center when it opens.

2. Use direct 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 ("Nickles said," not "said Nickles.") 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 and the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

transition

Nickles said if the protest is disruptive to the center, the district will call for police assistance.

direct quote

"I wish these parents could see the value of this program," he said.

transition

Nickles suggested the Reset Center after district data showed that 78% of the students who were suspended during the 2019-2020 school year failed at least two core classes, and 21% of the students suspended were repeat offenders.

Also, 48% of the students placed in out-of-school suspension during the 2019-2020 school year were African American and 46% were Hispanic. In the same school year, 50% of the student body was white, 25% was Hispanic, 20% was African-American, 4% was Asian and 1% was other.

direct quote

"Our data shows that we have a problem," Nickles said "Our African American and Hispanic students are suspended at a much higher rate than our white students. And those suspension rates correlate directly to our failure rates."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our students" or "our superintendent Case Nickles" or "Some of our students ...". Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "home suspensions are good..." without attributing that quote to someone.

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

5. Make sure both sides are represented in your story. Try to be as objective as possible.

■ CASE NICKLES, cont.

because our students will learn better coping strategies and stop the behavior that gets them suspended.

“We are not suggesting our students do not need consequences for inappropriate behavior, but our consequences also should not be a vacation for the students. Nor should the consequences cripple the students’ chance to be successful in the classroom. A student who sees no hope in passing a class often will choose disruptive behavior.

“Overwhelmingly, our students and staff support the Reset Center. We have a few parents who don’t. They are upset about the cost. The Reset Center will account for less than 2% of the school budget, and we hope to move our in-school suspension students to the center next year to help even more students. It is fine for parents to disagree with us, but we will not tolerate any disruption of the school day at the center. If a protest takes place and is disruptive, we will ask the police to intervene. I wish these parents could see the value of this program.

“The delay has been frustrating, but it’s the nationwide supply chain issue. Our contractors were waiting on building materials. We couldn’t open the center until the bathroom was complete.”

■ POLLY PIXTER, principal

“Our teachers overwhelmingly support the Reset Center. Our students need counseling and strategies to improve behavior. Most students do not complete class work during their home suspensions. It makes more work for everyone. While none of my administrators like suspending students, sometimes it is necessary. Now, we have an option that is more helpful than harmful for our students.”

■ JOY FRANK, junior

“I was suspended my freshman year for three days for fighting. Both of my parents work, so basically I slept late and watched television for those three days. When I came back to school, I was so far behind in all of my classes, and I still had issues with the girl I fought. It would have been nice to have been in the Reset Center and get help with my classes and behavior choices.”

■ KATE RICHARDS, parent

“The price tag is too high. Why are we spending more than \$100,000 a year on students who disrespect teachers and cause problems? The district needs to put that money into programs that support students who make good choices. Our group will continue to protest until the school board realizes it is wrong. We will have a group with signs outside the center on Tuesday. The board needs to know this fight is not over.”

■ CEDRIC BROWN, administrator who will work at the center

“We’re trying to address something that has been going on for a long time in our district. The center will give the students a place to refocus, cool down, connect and form relationships. Our goal is to let the students know that we see them and we hear them. We want them to examine their choices and help them succeed.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the 2019-2020 school year, 109 students were suspended for at least one day. On average, three students were suspended each day. During that same year, the average number of students in the in-school suspension room was seven.

On days when the Reset Center has no students, the administrator and social worker will work at the high school and offer counseling and mediation services. They also will check in with students who were at the center.