

# News Writing

District Meet • 2019



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 (NOT YOUR NAME) on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 500 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In early spring, the senior class officers designed their class T-shirts. On the front of the blue shirt in large block type is the number 19 with the words “Over the Limit” under it. On the back of the shirt is the word “senior” in all caps with “#nolimits” under it.

Principal John Roberts approved the design before the shirts were printed, and last week the shirts went on sale for \$10 each. The senior class officers have sold 79 shirts so far. The class has 101 students. Since purchasing the shirts, many seniors have worn the shirts to school and to school events.

This week, Principal Roberts announced that seniors could no longer wear the shirts to school or school-sponsored activities nor could they sell the shirts at school. He said the slogan “Over the Limit” is referring to alcohol and encourages underage drinking. The legal limit in Texas for blood alcohol content (BAC) is .08.

After his announcement, senior class president Sonja Sotermay met with Roberts to explain that the slogan had nothing to do with drinking. She was unable to change his mind.

Roberts said if any senior wears the shirt to school, the student will be suspended for the day. Two offenses could result in a senior not walking at graduation, he said.

Frustrated by the decision, Sotermay called a senior class meeting yesterday morning. Several seniors suggested that every senior should wear their senior shirt to school on Friday, April 5, to protest Roberts’ decision.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, April 2.

## ■ JOHN ROBERTS, principal

“I apologize to parents and the community that I didn’t recognize the slogan as celebrating and encouraging underage drinking when I approved the design. My mind just didn’t go there. It wasn’t until a few teachers brought the slogan to my attention that I grasped the double meaning.

“To say I am disappointed in the senior class officers is an understatement. I believe they took advantage of my trusting nature. I expected more from them.

“I did meet with the senior class president, and she swears that the slogan merely means that the class pushes the limits. Frankly, I don’t buy it. Maybe she didn’t see the double meaning before the shirts were printed, but plenty of other seniors did. I am sure of it. Several seniors have been overheard in class talking about the ‘true’ meaning of the slogan.

“I have heard rumors that the seniors plan to wear their shirts to school to test me. I would recommend they not do that. I will have no choice but to suspend the entire class.”

■ **SONJA SOTERMAY, senior class president**

“This is unbelievable. Mr. Roberts gave his approval for this shirt before we printed it, and now he’s banning it for reasons that are simply untrue. ‘Pushing the Limit’ has been our class theme since we were freshmen. We pushed the limits on sports, academics, fine arts and more. Our class has won more awards than any class in the school’s history. Now we are graduating, and we will be ‘Over the Limit.’ That is what we meant with the slogan. I am sorry if Mr. Roberts sees more than that — but that is not what we meant. Not at all. Seriously, the legal limit for being intoxicated is .08. How does 19 relate to that? Mr. Roberts is being paranoid and listening to some uptight faculty.

“We haven’t decided if we are going to all wear our shirts on Friday. We are going to meet again on Thursday morning to decide. Several parents are meeting with Mr. Roberts on Wednesday afternoon, so we will see how that goes. Maybe our parents will be able to reach him.”

■ **STEPHANIE BREYER, parent of a senior class officer**

“At least 10 parents will meet with Mr. Roberts Wednesday. I understand how he could think the slogan is connected to drinking, but that is not what our children had in mind when they made the shirts. If that wasn’t their intention, they should be allowed to wear the shirts. Mr. Roberts has been at this school for only a year, so he doesn’t know the class history. When these students were freshmen, they had a T-shirt that said ‘No Limits’ after the freshman class won so many accolades that year: three district titles in volleyball, football and track, seven freshman gold medals in UIL Academic competitions, five freshman first places for Future Farmers of America and more. They were highly motivated then and continue to be today. I get the T-shirt slogan, as does every other parent. We hope we can help Mr. Roberts understand. Truly, there are teens in the world who say bad things, but our seniors are not in that group. They are a class act. They are over the limit on amazing.”

■ **RUTH JINSBURGER, history teacher**

“Yes, the senior class is a great class, but just because they have won a lot of awards, we shouldn’t allow them to do anything they want. I clearly heard two senior boys talking about how they were going to be ‘over the limit’ on graduation night. The shirts promote drinking. That’s clear as a bell.”

■ **SAMMY ALETO, senior**

“Just because a few seniors talk mess about drinking on graduation doesn’t mean our shirts are encouraging it. Heck, you can read double meanings into so many things. My girlfriend is a cheerleader, and one of the cheers she does goes something like this, ‘Let’s get physical. Get down, get rowdy, get mean.’ Talk about double meaning, but the cheerleaders are allowed to scream that in front of first graders and grandparents. Mr. Roberts needs to relax. We didn’t mean anything about drinking with our shirts. My buddy Clarence and I were the ones who suggested the slogan. We were thinking about our freshman shirts, and Clarence and I don’t even drink. We would be the last students to encourage underage drinking.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Sotermay said any senior who wants to purchase a shirt still can. She said she will sell the shirts from her house after school.

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!**

## **DISTRICT • 2019**

### **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 the newest information. In this instance, the senior class may protest on Friday.

If a group of parents can't change Principal John Roberts' mind about his ban on the 2019 class T-shirts, seniors are considering wearing the shirts to school Friday, an act that could get them suspended and cost them the right to walk at graduation.

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

#### **transition**

Senior class president Sonja Sotermay said the outcome of the parent meeting could affect the seniors' decision.

#### **direct quote**

"Several of our parents are meeting with Mr. Roberts on Wednesday afternoon, so we will see how that goes," Sotermay said. "Maybe our parents will be able to reach him."

#### **transition**

Roberts' ban of the T-shirt at school and school activities came after teachers said the slogan on the shirt "Over the Limit" promotes underage drinking. However, when senior class officers presented the shirt design earlier this semester, Roberts gave his approval, and last week when the shirts went on sale for \$10, 79 of the 101 seniors purchased one.

#### **direct quote**

"'Pushing the Limit' has been our class theme since we were freshmen," Sotermay said. "We pushed the limits on sports, academics, fine arts and more. Our class has won more awards than any class in the school's history. Now we are graduating, and we will be 'Over the Limit.' That is what we meant with the slogan."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our student" or "John Roberts, our principal" or "Some of our students..." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "Roberts is wrong..." without attributing that quote to someone. These statements are personal opinion 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 frightened away from using one- and two-sentence paragraphs. Journalistic writing consists mostly of brief paragraphs.

### **SAMPLE STORY**

If a group of parents can't change Principal John Roberts' mind about his ban on the 2019 class T-shirts, seniors are considering wearing the shirts to school Friday, an act that could get them suspended and cost them the right to walk at graduation.

"I have heard rumors that the seniors plan to wear their shirts to school to test me," Roberts said. "I would recommend they not do that. I will have no choice but to suspend the entire class."

When Roberts banned the shirts, he said any senior who wears one to school or a school activity would be suspended for the day, and two offenses could result in a senior not walking at graduation.

Senior class president Sonja Sotermay said the outcome of the parent meeting could affect the seniors' decision.

"Several parents are meeting with Mr. Roberts on Wednesday afternoon, so we will see how that goes," Sotermay said. "Maybe our parents will be able to reach him."

Parent Stephanie Breyer said the group hopes to explain senior class history to Roberts, who has been at the school for only a year.

"We hope we can help Mr. Roberts understand," Breyer said. "Truly, there are teens in the world who say bad things, but our seniors are not in that group. They are a class act. They are over the limit on amazing."

Roberts' ban of the T-shirts at school and school activities came after teachers said the slogan on the shirts, "Over the Limit," has a double meaning and promotes underage drinking. However, when senior class officers presented the shirt design earlier this semester, Roberts gave his approval, and last week when the shirts went on sale for \$10, 79 of the 101 seniors purchased one.

"'Pushing the Limit' has been our class theme since we were freshmen," Sotermay said. "We pushed the limits on sports, academics, fine arts and more. Our class has won more awards than any class in the school's history. Now we are graduating, and we will be 'Over the Limit.' That is what we meant with the slogan."

Roberts said he initially approved the shirts because he didn't recognize the slogan as celebrating and encouraging underage drinking. After the ban, Sotermay met with Roberts but was unable to persuade him to change his mind.

"Maybe she didn't see the double meaning before the shirts were printed, but plenty of other seniors did," Roberts said. "I am sure of it. Several seniors have been overheard in class talking about the 'true' meaning of the slogan."

Sotermay said she doesn't see the double-meaning that Roberts is talking about.

"Seriously, the legal limit for being intoxicated is .08," she said. "How does 19 relate to that? Mr. Roberts is being paranoid and listening to some uptight faculty."

History teacher Ruth Jinsburger said she overheard two seniors talking about how they were going to be "over the limit" on graduation night.

"The shirts promote drinking," she said. "That's clear as a bell."

When the seniors were freshmen, they had a T-shirt printed that said "No Limits" after they won many accolades, including three district titles in volleyball, football and track and seven gold medals in UIL Academic competitions. Senior Sammy Aleto and his friend came up with the "Over the Limit" slogan.

"Just because a few seniors talk mess about drinking on graduation doesn't mean that our shirts are encouraging it," Aleto said. "We were thinking about our freshman shirts, and Clarence and I don't even drink. We would be the last students to encourage underage drinking."



**Yippee!! You're the director of the journalism contests. To make your life a little easier...**

**WE HAVE ENCLOSED:**

- The contests
- Judging criteria
- A statement to the judges
- A statement to the contestants
- Contest Tips. (Provides examples of how stories/heads should have been written and a sample story. Clip a copy to each entry to provide immediate feedback.)

**NOW, YOU NEED TO:**

- Make certain you have read the journalism section of the *UIL Journalism Handbook*. You can download it free from the UIL website at: [http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/Journalism\\_Handbook\\_2018-19.pdf](http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/Journalism_Handbook_2018-19.pdf).
- Inventory the contest packet. Hopefully, there won't be any problems. If you find one, please call it to my attention. Call me at work at 512/232-4924, home at 512/740-3463 or e-mail me at [jacton@uiltexas.org](mailto:jacton@uiltexas.org).
- **READ THE ENCLOSED STATEMENT TO YOUR JUDGES.**  
Discuss the judging criteria and clarifications with the judges.
- **Do not give the tips to students.**
- Share the "Tips" with the judges (**BEFORE** they judge) and clip one copy to each contestant's entry **AFTER JUDGING**. Judges should write directly on EVERY student's entry and then attach one copy of the Contest Tips to each entry.
- Thanks and good luck!

# Statement to Judges

## JOURNALISM CONTEST DIRECTOR

***Please copy and distribute the following statement to the judges***

1. Divide papers among the judges.
2. Every paper **MUST** be read and edited by at least one judge. *No paper should EVER be returned without written comments.*
3. Every judge does not have to read every paper. Strive for two readings for each paper. A third reading may be necessary for papers that contend for placing in the top six.
4. Avoid sarcasm or unduly harsh criticism. Remember: these are high school students, not professionals.
5. Please review the “Tips” for each contest. This sheet is consistent with the contest manual and what has been taught at conferences.
6. Realize that the UIL style may differ slightly from what you have been taught, what you practice or your newspaper’s style. If you have serious disagreement, please take them up with the UIL office, not the contestants or the meet director. For example, in the news, feature and editorial writing contests, it is not necessary to identify the school, Leaguetown High School. We create this contest as if students attend Leaguetown High School. Therefore, we assume high school students know the name of their school. Also, since AP style constantly changes, watch simply for writers to follow a consistent style. Some students (and newspapers) prefer addressing people with Mr./Mrs./Ms. title on second and subsequent uses.
7. In the Feature Writing contest, students have the freedom to develop scenes as they feel the scenes *may* have existed. The scenes must be a natural extension of the story. Please read “Contest tips” before judging.
8. In the editorial writing contest, students have the freedom to propose solutions or suggest answers they feel might resolve the problem. They do not have to be those proposed on the fact sheet. Also, they are urged to write in third person, but they may use first person plural on occasion.
9. In the headline writing contest: the main deck of a main/secondary headline combination may contain but does not need a verb. For example:

## Out of Air

# Statement to the Contestants

## JOURNALISM CONTEST DIRECTOR

*Please read the following statement to contestants*

1. Place your number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your entry. Do not put your name or your school's name on any part of the contest entry. If you do, you may be disqualified.
2. Write on one side of the paper only. Write legibly. This is a request, not a requirement.
3. It is suggested that you double space so judges may edit and write comments more extensively on your entry. This is a request, not a requirement.
4. You may use a dictionary and/or a thesaurus (bound or electronic) during News, Editorial, Feature and Headline contest. You may also use an AP stylebook. You may not use a journalism text or other textbook. No resources are allowed during the Copy Editing contest.
5. You may not talk during the contest. If you have a question, raise your hand and the contest monitor will come to you.
6. If you use a computer, you are responsible should it malfunction. You will have the remaining time to complete the contest in longhand, but you will not be given extra time. You must complete the print command before the monitor asks everyone to quit writing. If the computer malfunctions do not make noise trying to fix it. The monitor will ask you to leave if you are causing too much commotion. You may not use a computer in the Headline Writing contest or the Copy Editing contest.
7. Make sure all of your electronic devices (cell phones, ipods, etc.) are turned off. You may be disqualified for disrupting the contest if your devices go off.
8. When you are finished, please turn in your paper and quietly exit.

Good luck.



## **JUDGING CRITERIA**

### **SPRING MEET JOURNALISM CONTESTS**

In an effort to standardize judging procedures statewide, the League office has compiled a list of journalism contest judging guidelines. This list of guidelines will be included in each district and regional contest packet and will be available to State Meet contest judges. It is the responsibility of each journalism contest director to see that all contest judges are familiar with and adhere to these guidelines.

#### **■ HEADLINE WRITING (30 minutes) NEW TIME FOR 2019!**

1. Within count. **Note:** All letters, digits, punctuation marks, spaces, grammatical marks count as one (1).
2. Wording specific, accurate; unnecessary wording omitted.
3. Verb needed in main, secondary or both decks. At times, though, a verb is not necessary in both the main and secondary head.
4. Emphasis on active verbs.
5. Past tense avoided.
6. Split phrases (modifiers, verbs) avoided.
7. Redundancy in wording avoided.
8. Does not sacrifice accuracy for creativity or cuteness.
9. Main headlines not dependent on secondary headlines.
10. Secondary headlines emphasize significant aspect of news.
11. Grammar, spelling, punctuation correct.
  - A. It is permissible to use upstyle (ALL CAPS) or downstyle headlines.
  - B. Students need not complete all six headlines to win. It is possible that five good headlines will win over six mediocre ones, or four excellent heads will win over six poor headlines. The final decision rests with the judges, but no contestants shall be disqualified solely on the basis of not completing all six headlines.

#### **■ EDITORIAL WRITING (45 minutes)**

1. Introduction presents problem, provides staff stance.
2. Lead grabs reader's attention.
3. Evidence provided to support stance taken.
4. Direct quotes avoided unless absolutely necessary.
5. Writing tight. Wording active, precise.
6. Other viewpoints presented and evidence is shown to refute those viewpoints.
7. Conclusion recaps staff position and contains call to action and/or solution.
8. Third person emphasized, although first person plural may be used occasionally.
9. Editorial tone fair, mature.
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

### ■ FEATURE WRITING (60 minutes)

1. Lead grabs reader's attention and fits mood of story. It is permissible for students to set a scene for the feature prompt. The scene may include details that are not in the prompt.
2. Writing tight. Wording active, precise.
3. Slang, cliches, jargon avoided.
4. Facts presented in logical sequence.
5. Smooth transitions.
6. Quotes, paraphrasing used effectively.
7. Persons identified fully, accurately.
8. Feature theme fully developed.
9. Utilizes time peg (if necessary)
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

### ■ NEWS WRITING (45 minutes)

1. Sound news judgment in lead selection.
2. Facts presented in descending order of importance.
3. Information flows. Smooth transitions.
4. People identified fully, accurately.
5. Quotes, paraphrasing used effectively.
6. Extraneous information omitted; writing tight.
7. Wording active.
8. All news questions answered. Newspaper style incorporated.
9. Editorialization avoided.
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

### ■ STYLE/TITLES

- ✓ Newspaper style includes the option of using titles of Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. with names of adults. Students should be identified fully at first mention and by last name thereafter (1st use - senior Jeanne Acton; second and subsequent uses - Acton or Ms. Acton). It is permissible to use first names only on the second reference in feature stories. AP style calls for adults to be identified by full name at first mention, and then with appropriate title and last name thereafter. Be aware of deviations from AP style. If a contestant is consistent in the use of their style, it is not recommended you penalize the contestant for not following strict AP style. We ask that you look for consistency and understandability in the use of a contestant's style.

### ■ SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Journalistic proficiency shall be the standard by which entries are judged. In papers of similar journalistic quality, secondary considerations of grammar, spelling and neatness may be used to determine contest results. The contest does not intend, however, to test grammar or spelling skills, and each entry should be judged on its journalistic merit before other considerations come into play.

### ■ COPY EDITING (15 minutes) NEW CONTEST FOR 2019

- ✓ A key to the Copy Editing Contest will be included with your material. Part III is graded only to break ties.