

News Writing

Region 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 750 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Two weeks ago, varsity football coach Ned Winter took one of his players, Bodie Easter, to the urgent care clinic after discovering the student had a 104 temperature. Winter had called Easter to check on him since he had been out of school for three days. Easter said he was sick and running a high fever. Both of the student's parents were at work, so Winter told Easter he would go to his house to check on him. While there, Winter took Easter's temperature and noticed the junior was hallucinating. Winter called Easter's mom, told her what was going and asked if he could take her son to urgent care. The mom agreed and thanked Winter.

This week, Superintendent David Rahmed suspended Winter with pay pending a termination hearing. Rahmed said district policy prohibits employees from transporting a student to a medical facility in personal cars. Rahmed said the issue is compounded because Winter did this during the school day.

Rahmed became aware of the incident after Easter's parents sent a letter to the superintendent praising Winter for his help.

The local teacher's association will provide counsel for Winter at the hearing, which is scheduled for Thursday, April 25. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, April 23.

■ DAVID RAHMED, superintendent

"District policy is clear on this matter. The policy protects the school district, the staff and the students. If Mr. Winter thought the student was in medical danger, then he should have called an ambulance or waited until the parents came home to take the child. It was not his place to transport the child, regardless of whether the parents wanted him to or not."

■ NED WINTER, varsity football coach

"My lawyer with the teacher's association advised me not to talk about the incident until after the hearing, but I have a few things I want to say. I do not regret my decision to take the student to the doctor. It was in the best interest of the student, and I had the permission from the parent. That's all I can say."

■ ROCHELL EASTER, Bodie's mother

"We are sick about this situation. None of this would have happened to Coach if I wouldn't have sent the letter. I just wanted the superintendent to know how grateful we were for what Coach did for Bodie. My husband was out of town for work when Bodie was sick, and I was working in Glenberry that day — almost two hours from home. A 104-degree fever is serious and

■ **ROCHELL EASTER, (cont.)**

dangerous. Bodie needed to see a doctor quickly. I tried meeting with Dr. Rahmed, but I was told that I can tell my side at the hearing. I don't think there should be a hearing, and I am calling every school board member to let them know that. This district wants to punish a coach for helping a student, for going above and beyond his duty and with parent permission. I understand rules should be followed, but sometimes rules need to be flexible."

■ **SHANE ITO, principal**

"This is a tough situation for the district and Mr. Winter. I know he cares deeply about his students, but it is imperative that our faculty and staff follow district policy."

■ **BODIE EASTER, junior**

"I don't remember Coach coming to the house to check on me. I vaguely remember getting into his car, but that's about it. If he wouldn't have come, my doctor said I could have lapsed into a coma or possibly worse. I am super-grateful that he helped, and I can't believe the school district wants to fire him for that. This is insanity. The superintendent would not have even known about it if my mom hadn't written the letter. Coach is like a parent to his players. He cares about us, and he regularly calls us if we are absent for more than a day or two. We need more teachers like him, not fewer."

■ **HUNTER YORK, school board member**

"I am aware of the situation, and I have spoken to both Dr. Rahmed and Mrs. Easter. I do have concerns. I agree our staff must follow district policy, but I also believe we must be flexible in extenuating circumstances. Perhaps we need to revisit the policy. If a staff member has parent permission, I don't see the problem with taking a student to the doctor if the child is gravely ill. I worry what might happen if we don't. I will not vote for termination."

■ **DEVON CONTRERAS, junior and football player**

"I started a petition asking for the school board to reinstate Coach immediately. So far, we have 300 student signatures. Everyone loves Coach. He drove Bodie to the doctor because he was worried about him. He shouldn't be fired because he cares about his students. My mom also started a petition for parents and community members. She has more than 200 signatures. It seems obvious that our school and our parents support Coach."

■ **KAREN TOLAR, school district lawyer**

"I can speak only in general terms. The school district has terminated three employees in the last five years for violating a district policy. None were fired for violating this particular policy."

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The school board will determine whether to terminate or reinstate Winter. The hearing is organized like a trial. Both sides will have lawyers and can interview witnesses. Unlike trials, though, hearings rarely last more than an hour or two.

Coach Winter has been at the school for 23 years as a coach and physical education teacher.

The other six school board members declined to comment until after the termination hearing.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

REGION • 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 hearing is Thursday.

After driving a sick student to an urgent care clinic in his personal car, varsity football coach Ned Winter faces possible termination for violating district policy. But one school board member says he does not support terminating Winter and will not do so at Thursday's termination hearing.

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 ("Winter said," not "said Winter.") 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

District policy prohibits district employees from transporting a student to a medical facility in personal cars.

direct quote

"If a staff member has parent permission, I don't see the problem with taking a student to the doctor if the child is gravely ill," Hunter York, school board member, said. "I worry what happens if we don't do that."

transition

When he found out about the incident, Superintendent David Rahmed suspended Winter with pay.

direct quote

"If Mr. Winter thought the student was in medical danger, then he should have called an ambulance or waited until the parents came home to take the child," Rahmed said. "It was not his place to transport the child, regardless of whether the parents wanted him to or not."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our student" or "David Rahmed, our superintendent" or "Some of our students..." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "Rahmed is awful..." 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

After driving a sick student to an urgent care clinic in his personal car, varsity football coach Ned Winter faces possible termination for violating district policy. But one school board member says he does not support terminating Winter and will not do so at Thursday's termination hearing.

District policy prohibits district employees from transporting a student to a medical facility in personal cars.

"If a staff member has parent permission, I don't see the problem with taking a student to the doctor if the child is gravely ill," Hunter York, school board member, said. "I worry what happens if we don't do that."

When he found out about the incident, Superintendent David Rahmed suspended Winter with pay.

"If Mr. Winter thought the student was in medical danger, then he should have called an ambulance or waited until the parents came home to take the child," Rahmed said. "It was not his place to transport the child, regardless of whether the parents wanted him to or not."

The incident in question happened two weeks ago when Winter went to junior Bodie Easter's house to check on him since he was running high fever and both of Easter's parents were at work. Winter found Easter hallucinating with a 104 fever, so the coach took him to an urgent care facility after getting permission from Easter's mom.

"I do not regret my decision to take the student to the doctor," Winter said. "It was in the best interest of the student, and I had the permission from the parent."

Winter has garnered support from students and community members. Junior football player Devon Contreras started a petition asking for the school board to reinstate Winter immediately. So far, he has 300 student signatures.

"My mom also started a petition for parents and community members to sign," he said. "She has more than 200 signatures. It seems obvious that our school and our parents want Coach to come back."

Rahmed learned of the incident after Easter's mother, Rochell Easter, sent the superintendent a letter, praising Winter's actions.

"A 104-degree fever is serious and dangerous," Rochell Easter said. "Bodie needed to go to the doctor and quickly."

Easter's dad was out town for work, and his mother was working in Glenberry that day — almost two hours away.

"I don't really remember Coach coming to the house to check on me," Easter said. "I vaguely remember getting into his car, but that's about it. If he wouldn't have come, my doctor said I could have lapsed into a coma or possibly worse. I am super-grateful that he helped, and I can't believe the school district wants to fire him for that."

At the termination hearing where each side will have lawyers and access to witnesses, the school board will decide Winter's fate.

"The school district has terminated three employees in the last five years for violating a district policy," district lawyer Karen Tolar said. "None were fired for violating this particular policy."

Rochell Easter said she tried to meet with Rahmed but was told she could present her case at the hearing.

"I don't think there should be a hearing, and I am calling every school board member to let them know what I think," she said. "This district wants to punish a coach for helping a student, for going above and beyond his duty and with parent permission. I understand rules should be followed, but sometimes rules need to be changed."

Winter has been employed here for 23 years as a coach and a physical education teacher.

"Coach is like a parent to his players," Easter said. "He cares about us, and he regularly calls us if we are absent for more than a day or two. We need more teachers like him, not fewer."



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.
- 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.
- **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.