

News Writing

Regional Meet • 2024



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 523 students enrolled in grades 9-12. For the past six years, the district has reported that 76% of its student population is considered “economically disadvantaged,” meaning those students receive free or reduced-price lunch or other type of public assistance. Last year the Center for Disease Control and Prevention added League County to its list of food deserts, based on its lack of available fresh produce and large grocery stores in the county.

To combat student hunger, Superintendent Heyden Mayers announced the district would partner with the large supermarket chain Real Big Foods to open a small grocery store on the high school campus. Students on the free and reduced-price lunch program will be eligible to shop and purchase grocery items for their family using points that the district will assign to each student. The store, called The Leopard Spot, will sell fresh meat and produce, selected grocery items and other essentials such as toilet paper and toothpaste. Students who are not on the free and reduced-price lunch program can purchase items using cash.

The store, located on the front corner of the building, will be open six days a week and allow for street access during off-hours. The store will be staffed by students in the Life Skills classes and members of National Honor Society. All workers will operate as paid employees of Real Big Foods. Employees must complete a food safety course and employee training to work in the store.

The store will have its grand opening celebration when school starts April 29. You are writing for the issue of the press to be distributed Friday, April 26.

■ HEYDEN MAYERS, superintendent

“We know that hunger affects students’ cognitive abilities. When students come to school hungry, they can have trouble focusing in class and issues with concentration, memory and problem-solving. Many people don’t believe that schools should be concerned with whether or not our students are being fed, but the fact is, hunger is very much our problem and affects our district on a daily basis.

“After seeing Real Big Foods and all the charitable giving they’ve done over the past decade — providing food and housing for hundreds of families after hurricanes, giving jobs to people experiencing homelessness, not to mention countless scholarships — I began writing letters to them to let them know how much of a problem hunger can be for a student’s education. I’ve been keeping it quiet, but last year, they finally agreed to meet with me to see what could be done.

“We’ve been making plans for the past year, and I’m excited to say that construction began in January to renovate an old suite of conference rooms.

■ HEYDEN MAYERS, *continued*

Our hope is that this project will not only allow families in our community some much-needed access to fresh food but also will provide work experience for students in our Life Skills classes. Last night was the first time I've actually gotten a full night of sleep since I began working as a school administrator. The project will make a huge difference for our students. And it will be easier for all educators to do our jobs knowing some of our students now know where their next meal will come from."

■ MAXINE WILKES, regional manager at Real Big Foods

"Real Big Foods met with Mr. Mayers and agreed that we could make a huge impact on this community by providing facilities and inventory for an on-campus store. Our company provided funding to set up the facility. It includes freezers and refrigerator racks for produce and groceries. We have a point of sale system set up to help our employees maintain inventory and sell merchandise.

"Our closest store is about 40 miles away, so our biggest expense will be sending a truck to the school every Sunday with fresh meat and produce to stock the Leopard Spot with fresh food every week. We have a system of regional managers who will rotate visiting to train new employees and make sure things are running smoothly. Overall, this partnership will bring great things to the community and maybe even prepare some students for a career in retail."

■ BRESCIA ANDERS, junior

"This store opening could help my family a lot. My mom works as a school nurse's aide at an elementary school during the day and sometimes takes shifts at night working for a call center. She works incredibly hard to make sure my sister and I have everything we need. Since she works such long hours, sometimes she doesn't even have time to go all the way out to a real grocery store. I will be eligible to receive some points to spend at the store each month. Hopefully, I can help her out by picking up food to bring home and make us dinner a couple times a week. If I can do anything to make things easier for my mom, I want to do it."

■ TAWNIA TELLON, NHS president

"The Leopard Spot isn't just a good opportunity for NHS students to build their resume. It's also going to be a wonderful way for some students to make a little extra cash and give back to this community that has given us so much over the years. I've already completed my part of the training. We've been stocking the shelves all week, and I'll be ready to help other students run the register on opening day. This will be a real source of pride for our school."

■ KYLE DOYLE, sophomore

"I'm on a waiting list to get a job at The Leopard Spot. I'm still new to NHS, but there aren't a lot of jobs around here for 16-year-old kids, so it's a high-demand position. Even if I never get one of the jobs, it will be awesome to have a little store on campus. It's crazy that we have to drive at least 30 minutes to get to a real grocery store. Having something here will help out my parents a lot."

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the state of Texas accountability system last year, most schools rated D or F came from districts with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. A recent study by the Education Research Foundation revealed that food insecurity causes an overall lack of participation in school and extracurricular activities.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

Regional Meet • 2024 News Writing Contest Tips and Sample Story

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critiquing/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 will be published the Friday before a new on-campus grocery store will open.

Students on the free and reduced-price lunch program can purchase grocery items using district-assigned points at an on-campus grocery store, called The Leopard Spot, which will open Monday. All other students can shop at the store using cash.

2. Use direct quotes and use those quotes early in the story. After you introduce quotes, use the transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute the quote. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Mayer said," not "said Mayer.") 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

The store will operate in partnership with the supermarket chain Real Big Foods, which set up the facility and will train employees and provide fresh meat, produce and grocery items to sell at the store.

direct quote

"We agreed that we could make a huge impact on this community by providing facilities and inventory for an on-campus store," Real Big Foods regional manager Maxine Wikes said. "Overall, this partnership will bring great things to the community and maybe even prepare some students for a career in retail."

transition

Junior Brescia Anders said her mom works long hours as a nurse's aide for an elementary school during the day and takes shifts at night working for a call center, leaving little time for grocery store trips.

direct quote

"Hopefully, I can help her out by picking up food to bring home and make us dinner a couple times a week," Anders said. "If I can do anything to make things easier for my mom, I want to do it."

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 "This idea probably won't work..." or "The district should ..." without attributing that quote to someone. 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. Journalistic writing consists mostly of one- and two-sentence paragraphs.

SAMPLE STORY

Students on the free and reduced-price lunch program can purchase grocery items using district-assigned points at an on-campus grocery store, called The Leopard Spot, which will open Monday. All other students can shop at the store using cash.

The Leopard spot will hire students in Life Skills classes, as well as National Honor Society members, to run the store.

“We know that hunger affects students’ cognitive abilities,” Superintendent Heyden Mayers said. “When students come to school hungry, they can have trouble focusing in class and issues with concentration, memory and problem-solving.”

League County was added to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s list of food deserts based on the lack of available fresh produce and large grocery stores. The closest large grocery store is 40 miles away, and while looking for a solution, Mayers has been writing to the supermarket chain Real Big Foods to see if they could help.

“We’ve been making plans for the past year, and I’m excited to say that construction began in January to renovate an old suite of conference rooms,” Mayers said. “Our hope is that this project will not only allow families in our community some much-needed access to fresh food but also will provide work experience for students in our Life Skills classes.”

The store will operate in partnership with the supermarket chain Real Big Foods, which set up the facility and will train employees and provide fresh meat, produce and grocery items to sell at the store.

“We agreed that we could make a huge impact on this community by providing facilities and inventory for an on-campus store,” Real Big Foods regional manager Maxine Wikes said. “Overall, this partnership will bring great things to the community and maybe even prepare some students for a career in retail.”

Junior Brescia Anders said her mom works long hours as a nurse’s aide for an elementary school during the day and takes shifts at night working for a call center, leaving little time for grocery store trips.

“Hopefully, I can help her out by picking up food to bring home and make us dinner a couple times a week,” Anders said. “If I can do anything to make things easier for my mom, I want to do it.”

Student employees will operate as paid employees of Real Big Foods.

“We’ve been stocking the shelves all week, and I’ll be ready to help other students run the register on opening day,” NHS president Tawnia Tellon said. “This will be a real source of pride for our school.”

With the on-campus store opening, Mayers said he expects to see positive changes in students and staff.

“Last night was the first time I’ve actually gotten a full night of sleep since I began working as a school administrator,” he said. “The project will make a huge difference for our students. And it will be easier for all us educators to do our jobs knowing some of our students now know where their next meal will come from.”