

News Writing

Regional Meet • 2025



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 3,120 students enrolled in grades 9-12. While looking for ways to cut spending, the district said it would save an estimated \$1.2 million per year by switching to a new company to manage the school breakfast and lunch program across all campuses. In December, the district signed a contract with a new food service management company called SchoolYum Foods, which took over food service operations in January.

Since then, students have reported issues with their school lunch, noting a decrease in the quality of the food. When junior Kensie Washington found mold on an apple, she posted a photo on her Instagram account with the hashtag “#LeaguetownYuck.” Since her initial post in January, students have posted more than 300 photos of their lunches using the same hashtag, including photos of blue plastic found in a hamburger patty, burned pizza and undercooked chicken strips.

Last week, Washington made another post asking students to boycott the cafeteria lunch beginning April 30 until the district agrees to demand better food quality from SchoolYum Foods. In addition, 18 parents have signed up to speak at the school board meeting May 1 to bring their concerns about cafeteria food quality to the board. Washington’s mother, Mary, has printed poster-sized images of various school lunches for parents to carry with them when they speak.

You are writing for the issue of the press to be distributed April 28.

■ KENSIE WASHINGTON, junior

“At first, the bread on my sandwich seemed a little dry. Then the lettuce on my salad was brown around the edges. The mold growing on my fruit was the last straw for me. It looked like a bug had crawled through it, but it was just fuzzy, brown mold growing. It was disgusting. First, I sent a picture to my mom, and I could tell she was livid. Then I decided to take a few pictures and post them online. If this was happening to me this often, it had to be happening to others, too. I was right about that.

“It didn’t take long for my hashtag to spread. I’ve seen some yucky stuff coming out of our cafeteria since then — even worse than what I was getting. I think the most disgusting thing I saw was the pieces of blue plastic stuck inside a hamburger. I have no idea how something like that could get there.

“I know I could just bring my lunch, and sometimes I do. But I have friends who I know are supposed to receive a free school lunch. For some students, school lunch is their only hot meal of the day. Those students deserve to have a healthy, hot meal for lunch. What we get now is barely passable as food. We deserve to have something delicious, or at least edible.”

■ RAUL ESPINOZA, superintendent

“Obviously we’re aware of the concerns of the students who have been posting pictures of their school lunches. At this time, we agree that SchoolYum could do better in their mission to provide our students with healthy school meals. There are bound to be some hiccups during a time of transition, but we have no plans to terminate our contract with them.

“We made this switch in an effort to save the district money in the immediate term. During that process, we sent out bids to different companies to give them the opportunity to supply our meals. SchoolYum came in way below the other bids. While we may have seen a change in the quality, we hope the company will correct some of their quality control issues and provide better meals going forward.”

■ MARY WASHINGTON, Kensie’s mother

“I’ll be in the front row of that school board meeting with pictures of undercooked meat, burned pizza and brown, moldy, rotting food. These are the images I want our school board to see when they hear what our kids are being served, so the district can save a few bucks. The fact that this is the only choice for many students turns my stomach. The district has always claimed that the health and safety of students is its top priority. Well, these photos say otherwise. The district should fire SchoolYum and find another company that can provide decent food to our campuses, even if it costs a little more.”

■ ANGELINA BRAESE, sophomore

“I used to buy lunch every day, but I just can’t do it anymore. Last year, they had fresh fruit, salads and a hot meal with fresh meat and veggies. They had giant cookies that were actually really good. I never thought it was all that great at the time, but now I’d do anything for us to get that lunch back. At least it was edible.”

■ MARK ESS, director of nutrition services

“We have been working hard to make sure our cafeteria staff checks food before it goes into our lines for breakfast and lunch. It does seem like we are seeing more issues with the food from our new contractor since it started in January. So, while cafeteria workers are doing their best to catch everything, they simply can’t check every leaf of salad before it goes out. We will continue to work with SchoolYum to improve things as best we can. I emailed a representative from there multiple times last week and did not receive a response. This week, I have been calling a manager daily to give them our latest food issues. Hopefully, the company will get things under control soon, or we may have to look at making another change, which could cost the district a significant amount of money — money we don’t have at this point.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Approximately 34% of students participate in the federal meal program. These students typically receive both breakfast and lunch at the school cafeteria daily for free or at a discount. The federal government reimburses those expenses.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

Regional Meet • 2025 News Writing Contest Tips and Sample Story

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during 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 most timely lead, given the current circumstances, probably the future event or events. In this instance, the story will be published before a planned boycott of school lunch and a school board meeting where parents plan to speak.

A group of students will boycott cafeteria food starting April 30 over complaints of poor food quality. In addition, a group of 18 parents will share their concerns about cafeteria food to the school board at its May 1 meeting.

2. Use direct quotes and use those quotes early in the story. Start with the most important interview to 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 ("Washington said," not "said Washington.") Avoid putting two or more quotes from different people together without placing a transition between them (stacking quotes). Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the story flow, and that the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

transition

In December, the district signed a new contract with SchoolYum Foods, estimating it would save \$1.2 million annually. With students reporting food quality issues since January, Director of Nutrition Services Mark Ess said he emailed a representative multiple times last week without a response.

direct quote

"While cafeteria workers are doing their best to catch everything, they simply can't check every leaf of salad before it goes out," Ess said. "Hopefully, the company will get things under control soon, or we may have to look at making another change, which could cost the district a significant amount of money — money we don't have at this point."

transition

Washington launched the hashtag #LeaguetownYuck on Instagram. Since then, students have shared more than 300 photos highlighting cafeteria food issues, including blue plastic in a hamburger patty, burnt pizza and undercooked chicken strips. Recently, Washington created the post asking students to boycott school lunches.

direct quote

“For some students, school lunch is their only hot meal of the day,” Washington said. “Those students deserve to have a healthy, hot meal for lunch. What we get now is barely passable as food. We deserve to have something delicious, or at least edible.”

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.

5. End with a strong quote that wraps up the story.

SAMPLE STORY

A group of students will boycott cafeteria food starting April 30 over complaints of poor food quality. In addition, a group of 18 parents will share their concerns about cafeteria food to the school board at its May 1 meeting.

“At first, the bread on my sandwich seemed a little dry,” junior Kensie Washington said. “Then the lettuce on my salad was brown around the edges. The mold growing on my fruit was the last straw for me. It looked like a bug had crawled through it, but it was just fuzzy, brown mold growing.”

In December, the district signed a new contract with SchoolYum Foods, estimating it would save \$1.2 million annually. With students reporting food quality issues since January, Director of Nutrition Services Mark Ess said he emailed a representative multiple times last week without a response.

“While cafeteria workers are doing their best to catch everything, they simply can’t check every leaf of salad before it goes out,” Ess said. “Hopefully, the company will get things under control soon, or we may have to look at making another change, which could cost the district a significant amount of money — money we don’t have at this point.”

Washington launched the hashtag #LeaguetownYuck on Instagram when she first started taking photos of her food. Since then, students have shared more than 300 photos highlighting cafeteria food issues, including blue plastic in a hamburger patty, burnt pizza and undercooked chicken strips. Recently, Washington created the post asking students to boycott school lunches.

“For some students, school lunch is their only hot meal of the day,” Washington said. “Those students deserve to have a healthy, hot meal for lunch. What we get now is barely passable as food. We deserve to have something delicious, or at least edible.”

Washington’s mother, Mary Washington, said the district should be prepared to spend a little more money if it means safe and healthy food for students.

“I’ll be in the front row of that school board meeting with pictures of undercooked meat, burned pizza and brown, moldy, rotting food,” she said. “These are the images I want our school board to see when they hear what our kids are being served, so the district can save a few bucks.”

Approximately 34% of students participate in the federal meal program for daily breakfast and lunch. Aware of concerns, superintendent Raul Espinoza said the district does not plan to terminate the SchoolYum Foods contract.

“SchoolYum came in way below the other bids,” Espinoza said. “While we may have seen a change in the quality, we hope the company will correct some of their quality control issues and provide better meals going forward.”

Sophomore Angelina Braese, who used to buy lunch daily, said she has stopped due to the poor quality.

“Last year, they had fresh fruit, salads, a hot meal with fresh meat and veggies,” Braese said. “I never thought it was all that great at the time, but now I’d do anything for us to get that lunch back. At least it was edible.”