



Writing Events

JUDGE'S BALLOT

___ CREATIVE WRITING

___ READY WRITING

___ EDITORIAL WRITING

INSTRUCTIONS

Each judge should use a copy of this form to rank each contestant's entry. Refer to the *Constitution and Contest Rules* or Evaluation Sheet for the criteria used to evaluate each contest.

SITE _____

DATE _____

GRADE 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

CONTESTANT

JUDGE

NUMBER/CODE

TITLE OF COMPOSITION

RANK

PLACE WINNER*

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* PLACE WINNER indicates the final ranking (first through sixth place) of the contestants if several judges evaluate the papers.

Judge's signature _____



Editorial Writing Evaluation Sheet

contestant #

In order to make this a complete learning experience, judges are asked to complete the evaluation sheet for students.

	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
The situation or problem is explained in the first two or three paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer takes an obvious stance in the first few paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer supports the stance through specific examples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer presents a logical solution or conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What were the strong points of the editorial?

What were the weak points of the editorial?

What suggestions do you have for improvement?

Judge's Signature _____



Editorial Writing

A+ Invitational • 2014-2015

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown Middle School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the middle school newspaper. Remember that as an editorial writer you should support or oppose **policy or action**; you should not sermonize.

You have **45 minutes**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or entry. **Put your number in the upper right corner of each page of your entry.**

STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 975 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The school's mascot is the Warriors.

Middle school administrators have implemented a new policy on pep rallies for the 2014-2015 school year. Schoolwide pep rally assemblies have traditionally been scheduled on the day of each varsity football game during the fall, as well as prior to other selected games and activities during the year. The schedule remains the same, but the format of this year's pep rallies is very different.

"School spirit should be about unity in supporting your fellow students," Principal Cliff Jenkins said. "A pep rally should not be divisive and create animosity between classes or grade levels, it should be a time when the entire school comes together."

In the past, seating at pep rallies was divided by grade level, and the program always included several competition cheers in which cheerleaders would encourage each grade level group to yell louder than the other grades. Near the end of the pep rally, the student dressed as the school's Warrior mascot would lead the traditional Warrior Pride cheer – the loudest grade would receive the Warrior's Spear to carry to the game that day, and would get to join the team on the gym floor for the school song.

Under the new policy, seating is assigned by homeroom, with all grade levels mixed together. The competition cheers have been replaced by unified cheers, chants and music, and the Warrior Pride cheer is also a unified cheer, with the Spear going to a student or student group of the week as selected by teachers and the Student Council.

The change is controversial among students. "Pep rallies are about tradition, and the competition yells are part of our tradition here," said 8th grade football player Paul Taylor. "We're supposed to be getting everyone fired up to win the game, not holding hands around a campfire."

You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on Wednesday, prior to a football pep rally on Thursday.

STANCES

Supporting the new pep rally policy

School spirit activities should be for the school as a whole, not a competition that is inevitably "won" by older students and used to demean or belittle younger students. With concerns about bullying at an all-time high, schools should be doing everything they can to bring students together. Traditions are important, but sometimes they have to change while new better traditions take their place.

Opposing

Traditions are what give school spirit its meaning. Without them a pep rally is just another assembly. The competition cheers, and especially the Warrior Pride cheer, energize everyone and fire up the team. Watering down the pep rally puts out that fire. The traditional cheers are not personal attacks, and no one is harmed by a little friendly competition.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Invitational • 2014-2015
(Distribute this sheet to judges prior to judging.)

JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

In each contestant's editorial, please look for clarity of thought, and if the writer came to a clear conclusion. Remember that many of these writers have not been trained in proper editorial writing. Therefore key considerations should be that they have made a statement of the situation and formed a stance. They should back that stance with examples. Those examples do not have to come from the data sheet. The contestant then should come to a specific solution.

Remember that for purposes of the contest these students go to Leaguetown Middle School. Contestants should not have to specify Leaguetown Middle School, because everyone reading the school paper knows where they go to school. Also, when they refer to the school board they do not have to say "Leaguetown School Board." Again, they know in what city they live.

Judging criteria has been developed to help you score the papers. The criteria are intended to help you evaluate the writing, not as a control over your background in editorial writing or the writing process.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL

School spirit should not be based on which grade yells the loudest. It should be about all students encouraging each other and pulling together for a common goal. The change in pep rally policy this year is a good one that the administration should keep and improve on.

Students are constantly placed in situations where they are divided, by how they dress, how tall they are, what activities they participate in and much more, including their grade level. A schoolwide pep rally should be a place where students are united, not divided. Competition cheers almost always favor the 8th graders, leaving younger students discouraged and feeling like they are a less important part of the school. The new policy makes sure that everyone's support matters.

Concerns about bullying are at an all-time high, and the surest way to encourage bullying is to pit students against each other based on some particular group they happen to fall into. Establishing unified spirit activities is a great way for the school to help students see what brings them together instead of what sets them apart.

Opponents of the new pep rally policy like to talk about tradition. Traditions are an important part of school spirit, but they are not the only part, and they are not set in stone. Traditions are changed all the time, sometimes as a result of safety concerns, sometimes based on practical issues and sometimes simply because times have changed. The new pep rally format is an opportunity to establish some great new traditions, like more music, new cheers and the Spear going to a student or group everyone can rally behind.

There will always be people who are opposed to trying anything new. Sometimes they have a valid point, but not this time. The administration got it right with the new pep rally policy. They should keep it in place and work with students to make it even better.



Editorial Writing

A+ Fall/Winter District • 2014-2015

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown Middle School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the middle school newspaper. Remember that as an editorial writer you should support or oppose **policy or action**; you should not sermonize.

You have **45 minutes**.

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 1,100 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The School Board of Leaguetown ISD is considering a new program to allow monitoring of students' activity on social media when there are safety concerns. Superintendent Jack Tillson proposed the new program after attending a conference on school safety which included a presentation from two school districts in other states that adopted monitoring programs in 2013. Administrators from both districts called the programs "very promising" in decreasing incidents of bullying and reducing threats of violence, though both declined to give specific numbers, saying the programs are still too new to provide complete data.

If approved by the board, LISD would hire a company, School Security Solutions, that employees former law enforcement agents as security consultants. The monitoring system would be available anytime school officials received a tip from a staff member, student or parent that a student was involved in illegal activity, bullying or threats of violence. When a tip is received, a security consultant reviews that student's public social media activity for items of concern and then advises school officials on how to proceed.

"The safety of our students has always been my number one priority, but hearing this presentation really opened my eyes to how much we're missing when we don't look at social media," Tillson said. "So many potentially harmful, dangerous situations could be prevented if we were just more aware of what our kids are doing online."

The proposed program has prompted concerns about privacy and free speech among some students and parents, with close to 100 people signed up to speak against the proposal at the upcoming board meeting.

"Education about online safety is a good thing, but this Big Brother stuff goes way too far," said middle school parent Lauren James. "Kids have free speech rights too, and that includes the freedom to have in-person or online conversations without someone looking over their shoulder."

The school board will discuss and vote on the proposal at its regular meeting on Thursday. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the proposed social media monitoring program

Parents send their children to school with the expectation that the school will do everything possible to keep them safe. That includes following up and investigating when concerns are raised about possible threats. It would be irresponsible not to include social media in that follow-up. The monitoring program would only look at public postings, so privacy is not an issue.

Opposing

A personal conversation is intended only for the people involved, even if it happens in a public place. Everyone, regardless of age, should have the right to speak freely without worrying that what they say is being secretly monitored. School officials have the authority to monitor what happens on school grounds, but what happens off school grounds, including on social media, is none of their business.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Fall/Winter District • 2014-2015

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JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

School safety is very important, but if students are forced to pay the price for that safety with the loss of privacy and free speech, then the cost is much too high. The school board should protect students' rights as well as their safety by voting to reject the proposed social media monitoring program.

American society is currently involved in a debate about the proper balance between security efforts and the protection of basic rights such as privacy and free speech. Controversy continues to grow around government monitoring programs as well as private companies collecting and misusing their customers' personal information. Schools should be educating students about these issues, not taking sides.

We have no doubt that Superintendent Tillson has the best of intentions in proposing this monitoring program, and that he is sincere in his concerns for student safety. However, there are ways to address those concerns without trampling students' rights in the process. The school district should increase online safety education for all students and provide safe, private ways for students, teachers and parents to report concerns about threats or bullying. The district should also provide more training for teachers, counselors and administrators on how to handle those situations. If everyone is working together in a trusting environment, there will be no need for intrusive monitoring programs.

Supporters of the proposal dismiss privacy concerns by saying that only public postings would be monitored. However, a personal conversation is still personal, even if it happens in a public place. Also, monitoring one student's social media activity would clearly involve viewing the activity and conversations of other students that one person may have interacted with. Therefore it is not accurate to say that monitoring would be limited only to specific concerns about one student.

Benjamin Franklin warned that those who would give up essential liberty for temporary safety deserve neither. The school board should keep Franklin's words of wisdom in mind and vote against the proposed monitoring program at Thursday's meeting.



Editorial Writing

A+ Spring District • 2014-2015

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown Middle School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the middle school newspaper. Remember that as an editorial writer you should support or oppose **policy or action**; you should not sermonize.

You have **45 minutes**.

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 1,200 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Leaguetown Independent School District includes three middle schools, two high schools and 11 elementary schools.

Currently all LISD schools begin each day at 8 a.m. and dismiss at 3:30 p.m. Superintendent Judith Owens has proposed a new schedule that would set later start times for the middle and high schools. Those campuses would begin at 9 a.m. and dismiss at 4:15 p.m. The schedule would also move elementary campus start times to 7:45 a.m. with a 3 p.m. dismissal to allow more flexibility in bus schedules.

Owens based her proposal on current medical research showing that teenagers are biologically geared to stay up later and sleep later. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently issued a statement calling on school districts to adopt later start times for older students, citing health benefits and improved academic performance.

“My husband is a pediatrician, and when he told me about this new report I was amazed,” Owens said. “When I taught middle school I often dealt with sleepy students in the mornings, but we didn’t know there was a scientific reason for it. The schedule change I’ve proposed will take some getting used to, but it’s the right thing to do for our kids.”

A group of Leaguetown Middle School parents has organized to oppose the proposal. Their concerns focus on how the proposed schedule would impact families with single parents or with two working parents who would have children attending campuses with different start and dismissal times.

“Dr. Owens’s heart is in the right place, but I don’t think she’s thought through what this change would mean for working parents,” said Thomas Brady, a parent with a 6th grader at Leaguetown Middle School and two children in elementary school. “My wife and I both have to be at work at 8 a.m. What is our (6th grade) daughter supposed to do for that extra hour in the morning? We also count on her to look after her younger brother and sister in the afternoon, but with this change she wouldn’t get home until well after they do.”

The school board will discuss and vote on the proposed schedule change at its regular meeting on Thursday. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the proposed schedule change

Students’ health must come first, period. Sleep is not only vital for good health, but current medical science also shows that teenagers need to be able to sleep later. In addition to the health benefits, students who are more awake and alert will perform better academically. Solutions can be found to help parents adjust to the staggered start times, but students’ health is more important than convenience.

Opposing

School schedules need to work for families. They don’t need to be changed to fit the latest trend or to follow medical research reports that will probably change in a year anyway. Working parents already have to struggle with after school care. The school district shouldn’t be making that harder plus creating a juggling act in the mornings that many parents simply won’t be able to manage.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Spring District • 2014-2015

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

Sleeping later sounds like a great idea, but when it comes to changing the school schedule there are too many other consequences that need to be considered. The school board should put Superintendent Owens's proposed schedule change on hold until those issues can be properly addressed.

The superintendent's proposal would have the school day for the middle schools and high schools start at 9 a.m. and end at 4:15 p.m., while also moving the elementary campus start time slightly earlier to 7:45 a.m. and ending their day at 3 p.m. She bases her proposal on current medical research showing that teenagers are biologically geared to stay up later and sleep later, as well as a recent report from the American Academy of Pediatrics calling on school districts to adopt later start times for older students.

While we do not doubt the science, we do encourage the board not to rush into making such a drastic change. A group of middle school parents is speaking out against the proposal. They have serious concerns that should be addressed before any change is made.

Many families have children of different ages who attend school at different campuses. Many of those families also have two parents who work or are single parent households. Managing staggered start times would be extremely difficult for those families, and staggered dismissal times might be an even bigger challenge. Currently, an older sibling can take care of a younger brother or sister after school until a parent gets home from work. The proposed new schedule would make these important arrangements impossible, since the elementary campuses would dismiss more than an hour earlier than the middle and high schools.

Supporters of the proposal argue that the health benefit for students is the only issue that matters. Students' health is certainly very important, but sleep is not the only part of that picture. A healthy family life is also important, and this schedule change would be very disruptive for families.

There may be good ways to address some of the parents' concerns, but the schedule change should not be adopted until possible solutions can be explored. The school board should put families first at Thursday's meeting and put this proposal on hold.