



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 _____

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Invitational • 2018-2019
(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 or recommendation.

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

With students showing a lack of focus in their afternoon classes, principal Melissa Vaske proposed adding recess time to the end of lunch. The goal would be to help students let out their energy and refocus. The proposal includes a 20 minute recess for sixth graders and a 15 minute recess for seventh and eighth graders. The recess time would come from taking two to three minutes off of each class period. The school board will vote on the proposal at Thursday's meeting.

The board should deny the proposal for recess time.

Students are not in elementary school anymore. Middle school is supposed to be a stepping stone into high school. Recess time does not adequately prepare them for a busy high school day where they are supposed to balance homework, organizations, and jobs.

Teachers need to find a better way to get students to focus. Those who act out and get the class off-topic in afternoon classes should be reprimanded, not rewarded with play time. The idea that adding recess time will keep students from losing focus in class would be just like adding nap time to stop students from falling asleep in class—it's still going to happen.

Supporters of the proposal argue that the recess time will allow students to be more productive in their afternoon classes because with the current school day, instructional time is lost refocusing the class. This sends the wrong message that bad behavior is rewarded. Approving this proposal would encourage some students to act up again in hopes of getting more recess or other time away from class.

Students need to be taught personal responsibility. The recess time proposed by Principal Vaske is not going to do that. The board should give a strong no to the proposal on Thursday.



Editorial Writing

A+ Invitational • 2018-2019

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 West Texas and has an enrollment of 700 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Last month, principal Melissa Vaske proposed adding recess time within the school day after noticing so many students unable to focus in classes.

If the school board approves this proposal, students in 6th grade will have 20 minutes added on to their lunch time and students in 7th and 8th grade will have 15 minutes. The time for recess would come from shortening each class period by 2-3 minutes.

“Recess gives us an opportunity to provide students with a much-needed break in the middle of the day,” Vaske said. “From what I’ve seen, it’s harder for students to focus in their afternoon classes when they have been in a classroom since 8 a.m. This will give them a chance to blow off some steam and get outdoors.”

While the Parent-Teacher Association and many parents support the proposal, others are concerned about it taking away instructional time.

“How is this supposed to prepare them for high school?” parent Paul Contreras said. “These kids need to learn how to focus and behave in class without play time. Those skills are important going forward in school.”

Teachers support the proposal.

“I spend more time in my afternoon classes trying to get the class on track than I do teaching,” science teacher Janice Stephens said. “I have only 50 minutes with my students a day, and I need to make the most of those. If giving them recess time gets them more focused in my class, then I think it’s a good idea.”

The proposed recess time would take place right after lunch, and students would have the choice to spend the time in the gym or outside in the courtyard area.

“I think recess would definitely be a nice break in the day, but we aren’t kids anymore,” eighth grader Rylee Mulligan said. “If it passes, most students will just play on their phones. I don’t think it will help with behavior problems.”

The school board will vote on whether or not to approve the recess time proposal at its regular meeting Thursday, Sept. 27. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Tuesday, Sept. 25.

STANCES

Supporting the proposal

Adding recess time would allow students to let off some steam and refocus for classes later in the day. Right now, teachers are losing more than 2-3 minutes of instructional time just disciplining students. Middle school can be a stressful time, and students should be able to take a little time to relax and have fun.

Opposing

First, this isn’t really recess. There is no playground. Second, there is no recess in high school. Students need to learn how to focus now. They shouldn’t be rewarded because they can’t behave appropriately in class.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Fall/Winter District • 2018-2019

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

The school board will vote on Monday whether to reverse Principal Seth Penprase's new detention policy where those in detention wear orange t-shirts and do various chores around the school building after school. After a parent posted photos of students cleaning in orange shirts on social media, other parents began questioning the policy as well.

The board should reverse the detention policy.

It is not the responsibility of students to provide their own clean learning environment. The school has custodians who are paid to clean the school and know how to do the job safely and correctly. Students should not be exploited for free labor as a punishment.

The range of actions that can land students in detention ranges from tardiness to getting in a fight. Grouping them all together and giving them the same punishment of cleaning the school is unfair. The old policy of having a silent period is enough for most students and they make the needed correction. For those who continue to be a problem, the administration can look into additional punishments.

Those in support of the policy say that it holds students accountable for their actions, but that groups too many students into the same category. Maybe it would help some students, but for those who only violated a minor rule once, being made to wear an orange shirt and clean the school is downright embarrassing. There are juvenile detention centers for those who need that kind of correction. Public school is not the place to make students feel like inmates.

A return to the previous detention policy is the best option for students, and doing what is best for students is the school's first priority. The board should vote on Monday to reverse the new detention policy.



Editorial Writing

A+ Fall/Winter District • 2018-2019

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in North Texas and has an enrollment of 800 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. According to a new detention policy which started earlier this month, students serving detention must wear orange T-shirts and clean the school.

After a post was shared on social media of students in the T-shirts cleaning the school, a group of parents demanded that school officials do away with the new detention policy. The school board agreed to discuss the policy at its next meeting.

Parent Millie Lopez shared the post after she saw students cleaning windows while she was waiting in the carpool line.

“I couldn’t believe what I saw,” she said. “What kind of message does this send to kids who just got in trouble for talking during class? If my child is acting up, I would rather their teacher come to me than make her scrub windows.”

Some parents were upset with the color of the T-shirts, as they are the same color as prison uniforms.

“These students looked like prison inmates cleaning the school,” parent Michelle Owusu said. “Students should never be treated as inmates as a form of punishment.”

Principal Seth Penprase said he started the policy and saw it as a way for students to be held accountable for their actions.

“Every action has a reaction and it’s better that they learn it now,” he said. “I don’t want to students to like the consequences. If they did, this wouldn’t work. Right now, two good things have resulted from this policy. Our school is cleaner, and we have less disruptions in class. Once students turn 18, they will have to do community service if they get in trouble. This is no different from that.”

If the new policy is reversed, students will go back to serving detention in a monitored classroom after school for 45 minutes where they must sit in silence.

“I had detention last week because I was late to class,” sixth grader Mitchell Thomas said. “I didn’t really mind cleaning the school, but it was just embarrassing wearing that massive orange shirt. Everyone walked by me after school and saw. I just don’t think it’s fair to have to dress like that when I was only late to my first period class by three minutes.”

The school board will discuss the detention policy at its regular meeting Monday, Sept. 24. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on this Friday, Sept. 21.

STANCES

Supporting the detention policy

This policy holds students responsible for their actions. With the old policy, they were just sitting silently in a room for 45 minutes and not being productive. Now, the school is getting cleaned, and the students are less likely to act up in class.

Opposing

This new policy is unfair and embarrassing to students and treats them like inmates. The school has custodians to clean the school. There was nothing wrong with the old detention policy. If parents think their children need to be disciplined further, they can make them clean at home.

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

After watching the movie "Eighth Grade" with her own middle school-aged niece and nephew, Principal Lauren Young has proposed a screening of the movie for all eighth graders next Friday, April 12. Because of the "R" rating of the movie, some parents are against the screening. They believe it contains content that is innappropriate for middle-schoolers to see. The school board will vote on the proposal at their meeting Tuesday.

The board should pass the proposal for the movie screening.

The topics of anxiety, depression, and even the bad language and sexual innuendos addressed in "Eighth Grade" are nothing new to middle schoolers. Students are the ones going to school every day and dealing with those very real problems. Sheltering them from watching the movie doesn't stop those things from happening in real life.

Young planned for students to have a discussion in small groups with a teacher after the screening. This can be really helpful for someone who feels like they have no one else to turn to with their problems and creates a safer, more open school environment.

Opponents of the proposal argue that middle schoolers aren't mature enough to handle the content shown in the movie seriously enough. Parents aren't the ones overhearing gossip in the locker room and the cafeteria. Parents aren't the ones struggling with the transition to high school. Students are. A potential solution could be allowing parents to sign a permission slip to either allow their student to participate in the screening or not.

The discomfort of some parents shouldn't determine what happens to all the eighth grade students. The movie screening proposed by Principal Young promotes a better school environment. The board should give a strong yes to the proposal on Tuesday.



Editorial Writing

A+ Spring District • 2018-2019

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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. After seeing the movie “Eighth Grade,” principal Lauren Young proposed having a screening of the movie for eighth grade students next Friday, April 12. The school board has to approve all movies shown in schools with a rating of “PG-13” or “R.”

Parents have expressed concern because the movie has an “R” rating and contains topics that they consider inappropriate for middle schoolers. The specifications for the “R” rating on “Eighth Grade” indicate it is for language and mild sexual content.

According to one movie review, the movie is “a realistic, relatable indie dramedy about going through adolescence. Elsie Fisher stars as socially awkward eighth grader Kayla, a social media-savvy teen who’s enduring the awkward transition between middle and high school.” Common Sense Media rates the film appropriate for ages 14 and up.

“I can’t believe that this movie could be shown at any school — especially a middle school,” parent Lisa Brooks said. “I saw the movie myself, and I would not want my daughter watching it. If the school board approves this proposal, I will be keeping her home from school that day.”

Young saw the movie with her niece and nephew, who are both in eighth grade. They told Young they loved the movie and every middle school student should see it.

“The movie opened my eyes to what it’s like to be a middle school student in this day and age,” Young said. “I want the eighth graders to be able to see it, so maybe they can understand that they aren’t the only ones feeling anxious about school and life.”

Young said teachers will lead discussions in small groups after the movie.

“I understand why she wants to show students the movie, but I don’t think all of the students are mature enough to take it seriously,” English teacher Carol Summers said. “Teachers are going to be the ones to struggle and refocus the students after the screening.”

“My mom took me to see the movie when it first came out,” eighth grader Devin Field said. “It’s the first movie about school that I’ve seen that I can actually relate to. There is some inappropriate stuff in there, but I’ve heard much worse things in the locker room. Honestly, I don’t know why it’s rated R. It should be PG-13.”

The school board will discuss and vote on whether or not to approve the movie screening at its regular meeting this upcoming Tuesday, March 26. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on this Monday, March 25.

STANCES

Supporting the movie screening

The message in the movie is something that eighth graders need to hear. The movie is realistic because eighth graders deal with these issues every day. Taking time out of the school day to give students a space to talk with peers and adults about these issues can only help students and the culture of the school.

Opposing

There is an “R” rating on the movie for a reason. Most middle schoolers aren’t mature enough to take the topics discussed in the movie seriously. Parents should be the ones to show their children the movie if they think it is appropriate.