



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 • 2022-2023

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 455 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. A survey by the American Psychological Association found that nearly half of all teens — 45 percent — said they were stressed by school pressures. After attending a Department of Education “Stress-Free” seminar, guidance counselor Kristie Harris has proposed the creation of a “safe space” for students in an empty Art classroom near the front office.

This room would be staffed in rotation with Harris and school psychologist, Asha Garland. Over the summer, Harris and Garland traveled to Fresno, California to visit a school that created a safe space for students. The school has already seen a decrease in students’ stress levels and an increase in classroom participation.

“Plenty of schools have created a social-emotional safe space on-campus for their students to go to if they are feeling stressed or overwhelmed,” Kristie Harris said. “The classroom we want to use has been out of use since I started working here in 2016. I hope we can repurpose that space into something really special for our students.”

Harris and Garland have already collected donations from teachers and parents in the district who donated items such as art supplies, calming sensory toys, board games, and books to furnish the space. Students will be able to receive counseling, unwind with activities, mediate issues with their peers, or meditate in this room.

“I already know the kids are going to take advantage of this program,” math teacher Steven Seegel said. “I already have such limited time to teach these kids, and now students are going to use this room as an excuse to cut class. The space used to be an art classroom before budget cuts. Why don’t we just reinstate art classes again?”

The safe space would be open for drop-ins before school and during lunch. Students can be referred to the room by teachers and administrators throughout the school day.

Harris and Garland will present their plan at a board meeting this Thursday. The board will either pass or reject this proposal.

You are writing an issue of The Press that will be distributed on the Tuesday before the scheduled meeting.

STANCES

Supporting:

The creation of an on-campus safe space would allow students to decompress, talk to an adult, or help solve issues with their peers. The program will cost the school next to nothing since most of the furnishings have been donated already. Students will only be able to go during the day if they are referred to by a teacher, so it won’t be a major distraction throughout the day.

Opposing

The safe space will be a distraction in the classrooms as many students will ask their teachers to go throughout the day. It is unnecessary because both Harris and Garland already have offices that are open to students throughout the school day. The classroom was originally for art classes before budget cuts in 2015, so if the school has extra money to spare, it should go to reinstating art classes.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Invitational • 2022-2023

(Distribute this sheet to judges prior to judging.)

JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

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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

The school board will hear a proposal by guidance counselor Kristie Harris on Thursday for the repurposing of an old classroom into a social-emotional safe space for students.

The school board should reject the proposal and allocate funds elsewhere.

The proposed classroom for the safe space would be in an old art classroom. This classroom became obsolete in 2015 because of budget cuts, when the art program was cut. The school board should focus on funding the art program again so students can take art classes again.

The school psychologist and guidance counselor already have offices where students can come and talk to them. Moving them into a bigger space will not make that much of a difference.

Students may try to take advantage of the safe space and it can become irritating for teachers when students are constantly asking to leave class to go to the safe space. Since the safe space is only fully open before school and during lunch, it will probably get really crowded in there during those times.

The school board should not repurpose the classroom into a safe space. Instead, they should take the necessary steps to reinstating the art program.



Editorial Writing

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 2,700 students in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Two years ago, Leaguetown ISD began providing free lunches to all students through the National School Lunch Program, designed to help students whose families are affected by food insecurity. Approximately 2,000 students daily participate in the program, while the remainder of the student population brings lunch. The students who bring their own lunch do so for a variety of reasons, including food allergies and a preference for vegetarian and vegan meals.

On Thursday, the district announced via social media that five Leaguetown teachers had been terminated after a three-day investigation showed that they had been accepting free school lunches from students who did not plan to eat them since they had brought their own lunch. According to school superintendent Rodney Braxton, the investigation showed that the practice occurred throughout the school year and was captured on district security cameras.

“Our investigation showed that the theft of these meals was happening daily and has been happening for months,” Braxton said. “When confronted, the teachers admitted they were eating lunches intended for their students.”

The National School Lunch Program is intended to provide lunches for students of the district only and employees are not eligible. According to school administration, the district could be fined or even have their enrollment in the program terminated due to the misuse. The district also plans to pursue criminal charges.

“The act of receiving federal free lunches which one is not entitled to is fraudulent behavior, abuse of official capacity, and theft of federal funds, carrying with it criminal consequences,” campus principal Samantha Hendrickson said. “We really have no choice.”

The teachers, however, claim there is more to the story. They insist that they did not force or even ask the students to bring them their lunches, maintaining the students saw that the teachers were often too busy to take a lunch break and brought them their tray. The employees all contend that they did not know it was against federal regulations and assumed the lunches would just be tossed if they were not eaten.

“Why would we put our careers and our certificates on the line over a school lunch that would cost us \$3.00? That doesn’t make sense,” teacher Angela Velaro said. “It’s really just a misunderstanding.”

Many of the parents are siding with the teachers and are angry the district terminated employees who were valuable assets to the campus.

“It is absurd that these educators have lost their jobs and are being threatened with criminal charges,” parent Bill Everston said. “My son is one of the students who brought his lunch to his teacher some days, and he says it was always his idea. He was just trying to be nice.”

A group of parents has started a petition asking that the teachers be reinstated to their positions. They plan to attend the regularly-scheduled school board meeting this Wednesday to speak and present their signatures. You are writing for the issue of The Press to be distributed the Tuesday before the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the decision to terminate the teachers

These educators all sign a form at the beginning of each school year that says they have read and promised to abide by the employee handbook. The cost of school lunches for employees is clearly stated in the handbook, as are the rules of the federal program. These employees knew what they were doing and that it was against the rules.

Supporting the petition to reinstate the teachers

Teachers have little time to eat meals during the school day, often spending their lunch periods tutoring students, grading papers, or completing other duties. The meals would have been thrown away if the students had not received them, and once the students got their tray, it really should not matter what they do with it or who eats it. So much of the food on student trays is thrown away, anyway. Why shouldn’t someone eat it?

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Fall/Winter • 2022-2023

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JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

A group of parents will argue at this week's school board meeting for the reinstatement of five teachers who were caught eating free school lunches, given to them by students who were not eating them.

The teachers were fired after a three-day investigation, where they caught them taking the food from students on security cameras. The school district is also pursuing criminal charges against the educators.

The educators should be reinstated because the food would have ultimately gone to waste if they had not eaten it.

Two years ago, when the school started offering free lunch for all students, many students still brought their own lunch. Students who brought their own lunch then began offering their school lunch to their teachers. The teachers were accepting a kind gesture from their students.

The teachers also had no malintention to steal or cheat the system. If they had known that accepting these lunches would get them fired, they wouldn't have done so. There is no reason to press charges on the teachers as it is an obvious mistake on their part.

The food that the teachers were eating would have probably been thrown away by students anyway, contributing to more trash and food waste. Feeding hard-working teachers seems like a better use for the food than rotting in a trash can.

The school board should reinstate these teachers and recognize this whole situation as a simple mistake, rather than a criminal plot against the school.



Editorial Writing

A+ Spring District • 2022-2023

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in West Texas and has an enrollment of 342 students in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Last week a teacher was accused of disciplining students in her classroom with a ringing noise generated by her cell phone. Students say the sound was very hard to listen to and that their teacher, Lydia Clayborn, kept playing it even after students begged her to stop.

“When Mrs. Clayborn put on the ringing noise, everyone was covering their ears,” one student said. “It was torture. My friend started crying and two students left the room. Mrs. Clayborn finally turned it off, but then she played it again two more times that day.”

Clayborn admitted she played the high-pitched frequency because she had been having trouble with her students talking when they should be working. She got the idea after reading an article about high-pitched frequencies kids can hear but some adults cannot. She searched online and found several samples of the frequency, which she downloaded and saved on her phone.

“All I wanted to do was persuade my students to work quietly,” Clayborn said. “Ever since the pandemic, their behavior is just not the same as it used to be. I never had trouble with classroom management before, but this year the students have simply been out of control.”

Parents of the students are upset and are asking superintendent Barry Leopold to suspend Clayborn or to discipline her in some way.

“It is ridiculous that someone who works with children every day and who is trained to handle students in the classroom would resort to such tactics just because the students are talking too much,” parent Cindy Seawell said. “She needs to be removed from the classroom immediately. Our children could have had their hearing permanently damaged.”

According to local physician Randall Harriman, high frequency sound causes two types of health effects: hearing loss from extended exposure and subjective effects which may already occur after a few minutes such as headache, tinnitus, fatigue, dizziness and nausea.

“These high-pitched frequencies can cause problems both in the short-term and the long-term,” Harriman said. “Several of the students involved did complain later of headaches, but more concerning is the possible effect to their long-term hearing.”

Leopold said that no plans have been made at this time to suspend or terminate Clayborn, but he has agreed to meet with the parents next Thursday to hear their concerns. You are writing for an issue of The Press that will be distributed on the Tuesday before the scheduled meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the decision to suspend the teacher

Teachers are expected to be in control of their classrooms and there are measures in place to deal with students who do not comply with the rules. If the teacher was having trouble with student behavior, she should have contacted her administrators for suggestions rather than taking such a drastic step. Several of these students are now afraid to be in her classroom and they may have hearing damage that will not be revealed for years.

Supporting the decision to allow the teacher to remain in the classroom

The teacher made a mistake but had no intent to harm the students. The article she read did not discuss any of the possible negative health effects, and students often use similar sounds to camouflage their use of cell phones in the classroom. Suspending or terminating the teacher is far too harsh of a consequence for an innocent mistake.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Spring District • 2022-23

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

Superintendent Barry Leopald will hear from concerned parents Thursday following an incident in which teacher Lydia Clayborn played a high-frequency ringing noise in her classroom on her phone, causing great discomfort for her students.

Superintendent Leopald should suspend Clayborn for putting children through emotional and physical distress.

Classroom management has been a struggle for teachers since going back to school after the pandemic, however, Clayborn could have reached out to her administrators or co-workers for help, before resorting to high-pitched noises. If Clayborn still wanted to use the noise in the classroom, she should have cleared it with her administrators first.

Students begged Clayborn to turn off the noise and very clearly expressed their discomfort through crying, covering their ears, or walking out of the classroom. This reaction created an even greater distraction from learning, rather than helping the situation. However, Clayborn still chose to play the sound again later that day.

Many students suffered from headaches after the incident, but the long-term effects of the sound on student's hearing is still unknown. Clayborn potentially put students in harm's way and they may suffer the consequences later on in life.

Children should feel safe in school and Clayborn's actions have left many children feeling reluctant to go back to her class. The superintendent should suspend Clayborn for her drastic actions that made a bad situation even worse.