

News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2020



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 2,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Two years ago, the high school changed from a traditional seven-period day to an eight-period block schedule where students attend four classes on A day and four classes on B day. Since the switch, the Student Council has asked the administration to create some sort of study hall time for students. The Student Council officers say students are overwhelmed with eight classes and need some time during the school day to do homework.

This week, Principal John Eduardo suggested the school add a 40-minute flex time into the schedule every day after first and fifth period. Students could work on homework or go to a teacher for help on an assignment during the flex period. In January, Eduardo visited two schools in Central Texas that have flex periods. Those administrators say the new schedule has reduced failure rates at their respective schools.

Eduardo pitched the idea to the faculty. About half of the faculty support the plan, but the other half said they do not want to lose 10 minutes from each class to create this flex period. The Student Council officers support the idea and so does the Parent-Teacher Association.

The flex period would not start until after spring break and would need school board approval. Eduardo will take his proposal to the school board meeting Thursday, Feb. 13. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Wednesday, Feb. 12

■ JOHN EDUARDO, principal

“When our school switched to block scheduling two years ago, our failure rates did increase slightly. That is not something you want to see. For more than a year, the Student Council officers have complained that homework loads have increased with the new schedule. The officers have been asking for some type of relief to help students out, and my administrative team has been exploring options. After visiting the two schools in Central Texas, I was sold on the flex period. At first, I worried that it would be wasted time, but I was amazed at the number of students working or getting help during the flex period at those schools. Very few students were just messing around. And those principals said their failure rates decreased.

“What I like about the flex period is students will have flexibility. We will set up an online check-in system where students can put in where they want to flex. For instance, each student will have an assigned flex teacher, but if they fill out the online flex portal, they can move to any teacher they want. Let’s say I need help in geometry. Then, I can flex into that teacher’s class and get help. I simply have to put that into the online system. Honestly, it’s pretty genius. At those two schools, we saw so many students getting individual help. Students

■ JOHN EDUARDO (cont.)

who don't need help can flex into a club or the gym or other extracurricular — if that teacher approves.

“I know some of our teachers are not excited about this. They don't think it will work. But the schools we visited had similar populations, and it was quite successful. Teachers also complained about losing 10 minutes of their classes. I understand that. But if this helps our passing rate and our student stress, then it's worth it. Teachers will need to be more creative with how they teach and possibly condense some information.”

■ MCKENZIE COOPER, junior and Student Council officer

“Mr. Eduardo told the officers about this flex idea a few weeks ago. The Student Council thinks it's a great idea. Eight classes is tough for students. We need some relief. I play volleyball and softball, so for most of the school year I am either staying late for practice or games. I don't have much time at night to do homework. It was hard with seven classes. It's almost impossible with eight. I often stay up past midnight doing homework. Everyone thought it would be easier with block scheduling because we only have four classes a day, but teachers are giving us twice as much homework as before. It's too much.”

■ ESMI VEGA, social studies teacher

“I teach three sections of AP World History. Since we went to block scheduling, I have less time with my students each school year. It is extremely difficult to cover all of the material during our school year. Yes, homework has increased, but it had to. I only see the students two to three times a week. Now, the administration wants to make our class time even shorter. I don't know how I will get through the curriculum. And if I don't, my students won't be prepared for the AP test. Maybe instead of this flex period, we need to go back to the regular seven-period day. The AP teachers do not support the flex period. We can't. We don't have enough time to cover the curriculum.”

■ DANIEL POLLARD, English teacher

“I teach four sections of junior AP English. I can't lose one minute of class time if we want any of our students to get a three or four on the AP exam. We need more time with our students, not less.”

■ WILSON UKEJE, freshman

“The flex period would definitely help me. I feel like the only thing I do after school is homework. My parents also cannot help me with my math anymore. If I could visit with my math teacher a few times a week, I would have a much better grade in math.”

■ MONICA TORRES, athletic director

“All of the coaches support this flex period. Since we moved to block scheduling, we try to use half of our athletic period as a study hall, which cuts into our practice time. But if our athletes aren't passing, they aren't playing. We have seen a spike in failing grades in the last two years. The flex period is a solid idea to help our students.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Under the seven-period school day, students received 170 hours of instruction in each class, each year. With block scheduling, students receive 135 hours of instruction. The flex period would reduce that time even further, to 124 hours of instruction per class, per year.