

Editorial Writing



By Jeanne Acton, UIL and ILPC Journalism Director

Editorial

An article that states the newspaper's stance on a particular issue. Basically, it is a persuasive essay that offers a solution to a problem.

The FORMULA

**Intro:
Present the
problem or
situation.**

Take a stand!

Opposing viewpoints are rebutted.

Reason #1 for position

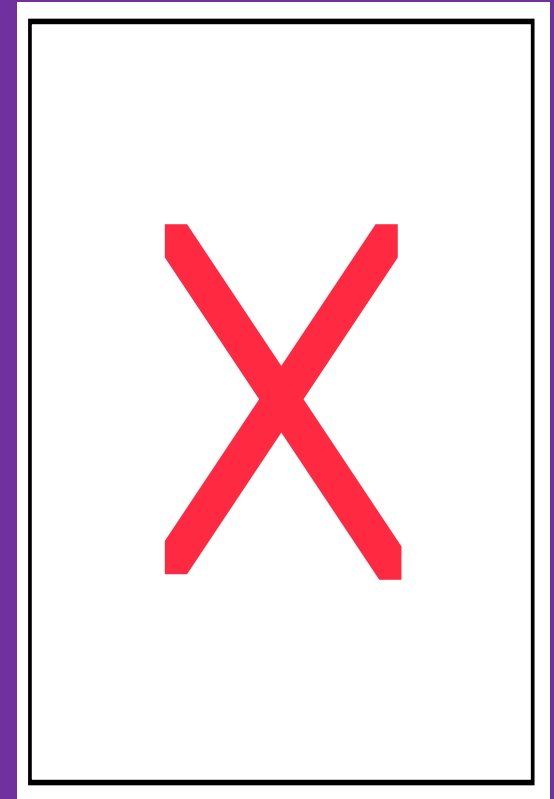
Reason #2 for position

Reason #3 for position

Evidence for all 3 points.

**Present
a logical
solution.**

**Recap
the staff
stance.**



****TIP: If you look
closely, the
formula does
look a little like
THOR!!!**

Our SITUATION ...

Leaguetown High School has 1,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Last week, junior Hayden Dean wore a National Rifle Association (NRA) T-shirt with the group's official logo and the words "I study triggerometry" printed on the back. Pictures of various guns, including assault weapons, were under the words. On Dean's way to first period, Principal Pedro Cabera stopped him and told him he needed to change his shirt. When Dean refused, Cabera contacted Dean's parents and suspended Dean for the day. By that afternoon, the local and national media were calling the school for comments about the suspension.

Cabera and Superintendent Becca Pollar explained to the media that the school district dress code prohibits clothing or articles displaying obscenities, suggestive slogans and/or images, nudity, gangs, crime, violence, occult worship, beer/alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other drug references. They both believed Dean's shirt displayed violence and would have caused a substantial disruption in school.

Howard Dean claims the district violated his son's First Amendment rights. He is demanding that the school board expunge the suspension from his son's record, publicly apologize to his son and allow his son, and any other student, to wear NRA shirts to school. Several student organizations, including the Student Council and National Honor Society, support Cabera's decision. The school board will discuss the issue at its next board meeting Thursday, May 9. You are writing for an issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, May 7.

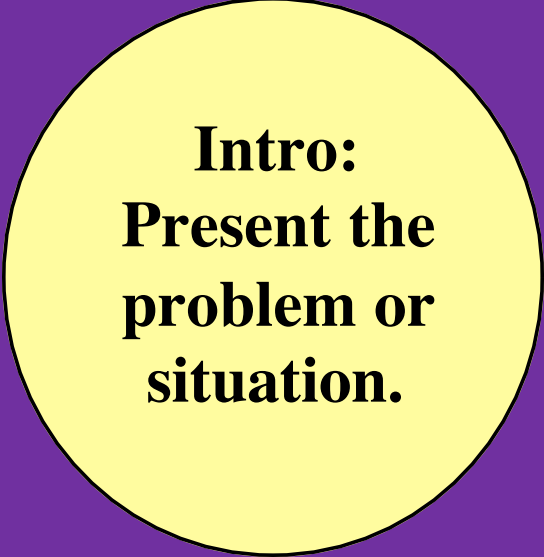
The HEAD

For example if we SUPPORT the administration:

Columbine. Parkland. Sante Fe.

School shootings, unfortunately, are on the rise. In 2018 alone, 114 people were killed or injured in 24 separate school shooting.

That's the reality students are living in. So, Principal Pedro Cabera suspended junior Hayden Dean for wearing a National Rifle Association T-shirt that displayed various images of guns, including assault rifles, underneath the phrase "I study triggnometry."



**Intro:
Present the
problem or
situation.**

****TIP: Try to be creative in how you present the situation. You can have opinion in it.**

The NECK

For example:

The superintendent agreed, and now it's the school board's turn on Thursday.

Take a stand!

****TIP: Your stand doesn't need to be long, but it MUST be clear. Get the time element in your stance if you can.**

The BODY

Give three reasons why you are taking your stand. If we supported it ...

1. Free speech has its limits.
2. School is different today. School is no longer the safe haven it once was.
3. The shirt violates the district dress code.

Reason #1 for position

Reason #2 for position

Reason #3 for position

****TIP: Look for a money reason. Use common sense.**

An ARM

Support your arguments with evidence and examples.

The courts are on the district's side. While the Tinker vs. Des Moines court case protects students' First Amendment rights, free speech has its limits. The case states if the clothing in question would "materially and substantially interfere" with the school day, the administration can prohibit it. Both the principal and superintendent believe this would have happened, and this is an administrative decision. It's their job.

Evidence for all 3 points

****TIP: Use information in the quotes to help with evidence/example.**

The other ARM

Opposing viewpoints are rebutted. You shut down the opposition.

Dean's parents say the shirt doesn't promote violence, and maybe it's not a call to arms, but it did make two teachers feel uncomfortable enough to point it out to the principal. And remember, in the Tinker case, the Supreme Court also looked at the rights of others and how they could be affected. Dean's shirt could cause anxiety and fear in other students.

Opposing viewpoints are rebutted.

****TIP: Only rebut the biggest argument from the other side.**

The LEGs

If you are going to complain about something, you must have a better way of doing it.

This isn't an easy situation, but the solution is easy. Students need to feel safe while they are at school, and the school needs to do everything in its power to make that happen, including banning shirts that could trigger violence.

**Recap
the staff
stance.**

**Present
a logical
solution.**

(Call to action)

****TIP: End with power.
Be creative if at all
possible.**

THE OTHER SIDE

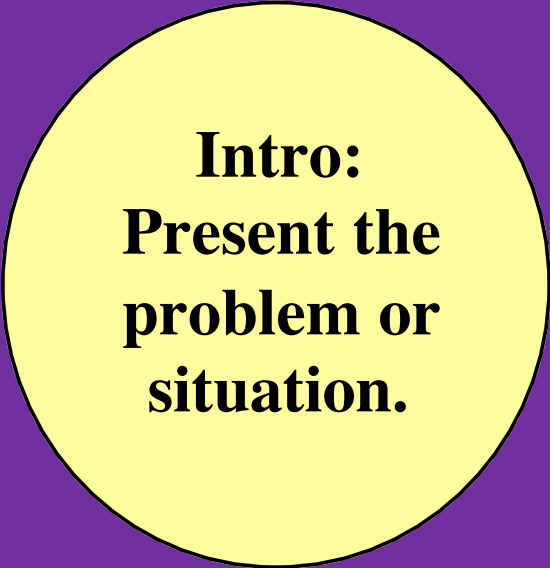
****TIP:** When you are preparing for the contest, write two editorials for each prompt – one for each side.

The HEAD

For example if we OPPOSE the administration:

Administrators and teachers may not have liked the National Rifle Association (NRA) T-shirt that junior Hayden Dean wore to school last week, but that doesn't give them the right to suspend him.

But that's what happened. When Dean refused to change his shirt, which depicted images of various assault weapons along with the words "I study triggernometry," the principal sent him home. Now, Dean's parents want the school to expunge the suspension from Dean's record and change the school's stance on NRA shirts.



**Intro:
Present the
problem or
situation.**

The NECK

For example:

When the school board meets on Thursday, it should do just that. It also should thank the Deans for not hiring a roomful of lawyers and making this bad situation also an expensive one for the school district.

Take a stand!

The BODY

Give three reasons why you are taking your stand. If we supported it ...

1. Students do not shed their rights — or their shirts — at the schoolhouse gate.
2. Dean's T-shirt wasn't a disruption.
3. The T-shirt did not violate the dress code.

Reason #1 for position

Reason #2 for position

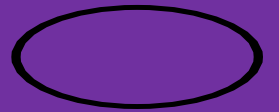
Reason #3 for position

An ARM

Support your arguments with evidence and examples.

Students do not shed their rights — or their shirts — at the schoolhouse gate. In fact, the Supreme Court ruling in the Tinker vs. Des Moines case specifically says that. It also says that the administrators can step in only if the item could “substantially” disrupt the school day. Since Dean didn’t make it to first period, no one will know if the shirt would have disrupted the day.

Evidence for all 3 points



The LEGs of our editorial

**If you are going to complain
about something, you must
have a better way of doing it.**

Dean was not a threat, and
neither was his shirt. The
administration needs to stop
being so “triggered” and meet
the Dean family’s demands.

**Recap
the staff
stance.**

**Present
a logical
solution.**

(Call to action)

What went wrong?

- You didn't take a stand.
- The argument was trite and generalized. Be specific to the situation.
- You asked too many rhetorical questions without stating an opinion.
- You used quotes. You don't need any.



What went wrong?

- The wording was pompous or pretentious.
- You turned into a preacher.
- You got off topic.
- Your argument lacked credibility.
- You used stereotypes or made personal attacks.



What went wrong?

Administrators and teachers may not have liked the National Rifle Association (NRA) T-shirt that junior Hayden Dean wore to school last week, but that doesn't give them the right to suspend him.

But that's what happened. When Dean refused to change his shirt, which depicted images of various assault weapons along with the words "I study triggerometry," the principal sent him home. Now, Dean's parents want the school to expunge the suspension from Dean's record and change the school's stance on NRA shirts.

When the school board meets on Thursday, it should do just that.

Students do not shed their rights — or their shirts — at the schoolhouse gate. In fact, the Supreme Court ruling in the *Tinker vs. Des Moines* case specifically says that. It also says that the administrators can step in only if the item could "substantially" disrupt the school day. Since Dean didn't make it to first period, no one will know if the shirt would have disrupted the day.

At the same time, school is no longer the safe haven it once was. This generation has grown up practicing lockdown drills and active shooter scenarios. Had Dean worn the shirt to school 10 years ago, maybe it wouldn't have been an issue, but in today's climate, it has a different meaning.

What went wrong?

Columbine. Parkland. Sante Fe.

School shootings, unfortunately, are on the rise. In 2018 alone, 114 people were killed or injured in 24 separate school shooting.

That's the reality students are living in. So, Principal Pedro Cabera suspended junior Hayden Dean for wearing a National Rifle Association T-shirt that displayed various images of guns, including assault rifles, underneath the phrase "I study triggernometry." He made the right choice. The superintendant agreed, and now it's the school board's turn.

When the board meets Thursday, it needs to back its administrators and let the Deans, and every other parent and student, know clothing that violates the dress code and could disrupt the school is not OK. Disruptions in the school day affect the education of every student. If there is a fight or argument, that could delay the start of a class. If there is a walk-out or protest, then students definitely are not learning. The school needs to be a place of education and that should be the focus – not guns.

What went wrong?

Starting at the dawn of each new year, intellectual institutions have instituted governing procedures to rescind such practices that materialize as unsuitable and offensive to their apprentices.

At present, the high authority of this institution has put forth a mandate that would put a halt to the donning of cotton apparel which covers the upper torso when it depicts pugnacious premises like innumerable armaments.

Remember the key to a successful Editorial ...

- Use the time element.
- Provide strong evidence to support your stance.
- Write in third person (some first person plural).
- Get creative with your start.



Remember the key to a successful Editorial ...

- Use active voice
- Be mature, fair and reasonable
- Offer a solution/call to action



On contest day ...

- Read the entire prompt
- Decide on a stance
- Using the prompt, write three supportive statements
- Highlight elaboration for your statements in the prompt
- Write

Time to work!!

- Read your prompt
- Outline your editorial using the “hot guy” sheet.
- Write your opening statement and state your position.

