



# Take a Stand with Editorials.

UIL Editorial Writing // Session 116  
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# Editorial Writing

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



# When you get the prompt ...

01

**Look for the dates.**

When will a decision be made? What is the future event?

02

**What's the central issue?**

What is the main concern for your readers?

03

**Who supports the pro and the con?**

Think about who is supporting which side. Which side do you think is right?

04

**What difference can you make?**

What should happen next?

05

**Who is the audience?**

What will they care about the most?

# The Prompt

# Editorial Writing

District Meet • 2023



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the high 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

Leaguetown High School has 3,600 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Since 1900, the high school's mascot has been the Leopards. After Title IX was passed in 1972, the athletic department made the decision to name all girls teams the "Lady Leopards," and for the past 40 years, that has not changed.

The "Lady Leopards" logo is on a wall-sized mural in the gymnasium. It's on jerseys, T-shirts and bumper stickers throughout campus and the community.

While attending a basketball tournament in San Antonio this December, varsity girls captain and senior Nicole Moutry observed the other teams in attendance and took note of their mascot names and logos. Over the next month, Moutry wrote a proposal and produced a petition to formally drop the word "Lady," so all high school teams would be known as the "Leopards." Her petition has more than 2,200 signatures from students, parents and community members.

Moutry presented her proposal and petition to the school board in February and the board will vote on the proposal at its meeting Monday, March 27. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, March 23.

## **THOSE SUPPORTING THE MASCOT CHANGE**

There is no reason to distinguish between the gender of each mascot. A Leopard is a Leopard. Adding the word "Lady" diminishes the ferocity and power of female athletes and makes the name of the team sound diminutive. Female athletes are just as strong as their male counterparts and should not be treated differently.

## **THOSE OPPOSING THE MASCOT CHANGE**

The Lady Leopards mascot has been around for more than 40 years and is ingrained in the tradition of the school. There is no plan in place to pay for this change. The expense it would take to repaint the mural in the gym, purchase new jerseys and equipment and replace every iteration of the words all over the school is not worth the effort just to make some students feel better about the name of the mascot.

# The Prompt

## ■ NICOLE MOUTRY, senior varsity basketball captain

“When I was at a tournament in San Antonio, I wrote down every mascot of the teams in attendance, and more than 60% of the teams had some sort of feminine qualifier to their name like ‘Lady Dragons’ or ‘Bisonettes.’ And I looked out on the court and saw all these tough girls taking elbows, playing through injuries and sweating all over the court and I thought, ‘this ain’t it.’ We are not Lady Leopards. We are Leopards. We are every bit as competitive and tough as the varsity boys. So, I want us to change our our name to the Leopards.

“As far as paying to make all these changes, some of the other members of my team as well as members of the volleyball and soccer teams have made a group chat, and we are coming up with a list of local businesses we could contact to sponsor our jersey replacements. So hopefully that would give us a starting point to pay for some changes.

“Every girl on all three teams signed the petition, as well. This is something that is really important for our mindset, especially as our season is winding down and as my team looks ahead to next season. I want to leave a legacy for the girls coming after us. I want them to know that they are athletes, and they are no different from the male athletes at the school.”

## ■ VICTORIA MOMOA, athletic director and varsity girls basketball coach

“Nicole has been a tremendous athlete for us all four years of her high school career, and I’m proud to say that she earned a scholarship to the University of North Texas to continue playing in the fall. It was no surprise after her grit and leadership throughout our season that she would want to make a change like this and send a clear message to our community that our female athletes are here to dominate just as much as our male athletes. As athletic director, I have some concerns about the budget and how those details would be worked out if the school board does decide to accept her proposal. But regardless of the decision, I’m proud of Nicole’s team. I’m proud of the season they had and now I’m proud that here at the end of her career, she is choosing to make a stand about something she believes in.”

## ■ CJ POCOCK, junior boys soccer player

“I know lots of girl athletes, and we do lots of events and team-building stuff with the girls soccer team. They practice hard and play hard, so I don’t have any issues with a change to the mascot name. I’ve never thought of them as any different than us.”

## ■ CEDRIC MACK, principal

“I understand and empathize with the students looking to change the name of the mascot. The problem is, when you have such a long-standing tradition like a mascot name, people don’t realize the expense that the school community will have to go through in order to enact these changes. All our forms will need to be re-created. We’re talking about changes to our facilities and changes to our website. It’s not a simple switch we can just flick and change the name of a mascot. This is something that will need to be done over time. I’m not convinced that now is the right time to take on some of these monetary expenses and additional challenges.”

## ■ JACK BLAKEY, junior

“This seems like a waste of time and money. Our school needs a computer lab and new science equipment. I don’t think it should be the school’s responsibility to waste money on these superficial things when what we have is fine.”

# The highly capable and hardworking human

**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.**

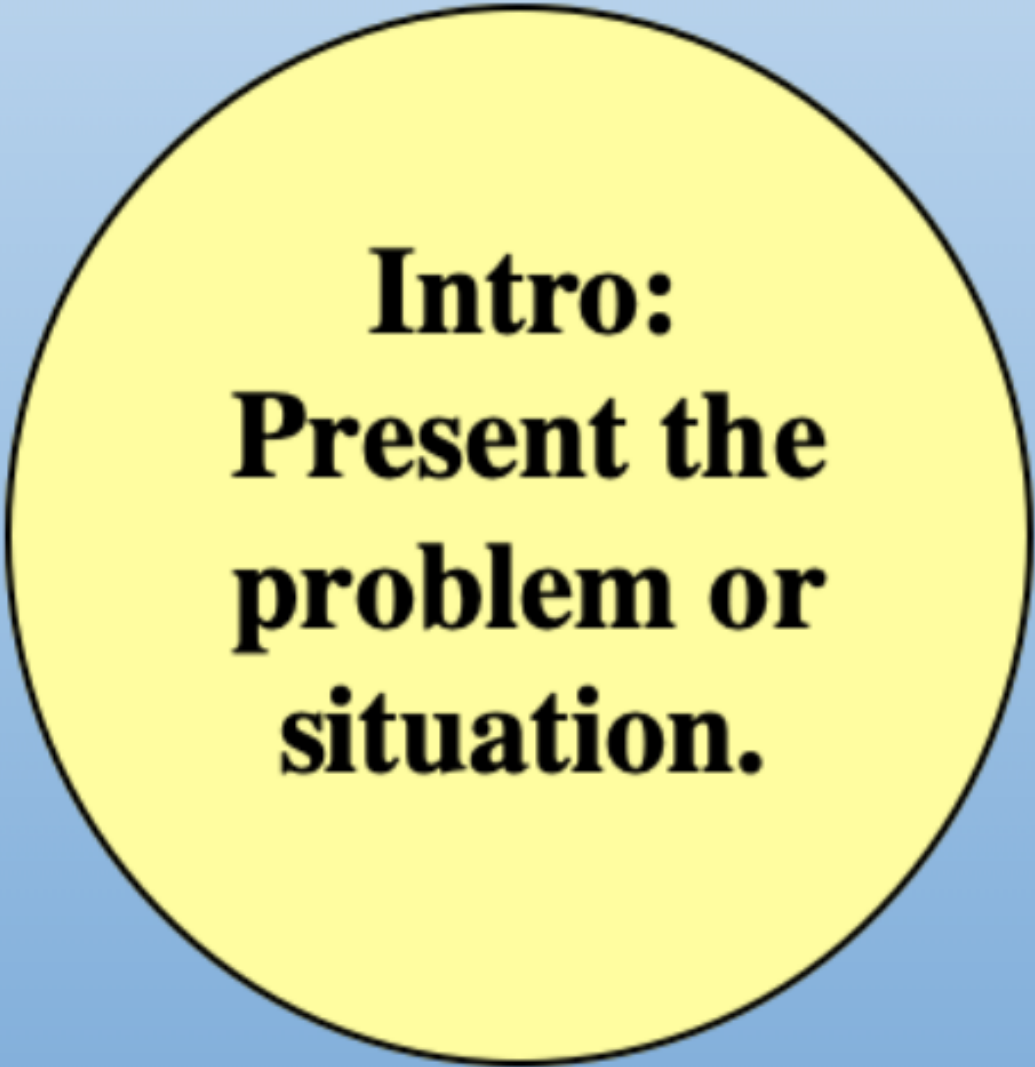
**Present  
a logical  
solution.**

**Recap  
the staff  
stance.**

**No quotes!**

# The head

The lead



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

Girls sports teams could have an adjustment to their mascot if the school board approves a petition by senior Nicole Moutry to drop the word “Lady” from the Lady Leopards team name at its March 27 meeting.

**Don't be afraid to drop your opinion in the lead. Be creative. Get the time element in the head or neck.**



# The neck

Take a stand

**Take a stand!**

The school board should vote to change the names of girls sports teams so that all school teams are known as the “Leopards.”

**Be clear and concise. Set the stance apart in its own paragraph.**

# The body

**Reason #1 for position**

**Reason #2 for position**

**Reason #3 for position**

Give three reasons why you're taking this stand.

- The word “lady” diminishes the power of female athletes.
- It's common for teams to experience mascot changes.
- They have a fundraising plan.

**TIP: Include thoughts that aren't given to you in the prompt.**

# The arms

Opposing viewpoints are rebutted.



Evidence for all 3 points



Support your argument with evidence and examples.

If huge organizations with large fan bases can make such changes to their names to be more respectful of marginalized communities, the school can make the effort to consolidate the boys and girls teams into one mascot.

While it may take time, fundraising and hard work, changing the names of the girls sports teams is possible. Moutry has even suggested reaching out to local businesses to sponsor jersey replacements as an option.

**Refute the opposition and tell us why the other side is wrong. (Can be its own paragraph)**

# The legs

**Recap  
the staff  
stance.**

**Present  
a logical  
solution.**

*(Call to action)*

Every girl on the volleyball, basketball, and soccer team has signed the petition. It is imperative for the school board to listen to its athletes and how they want to be represented in their community. Teams should drop the “Lady” and all be Leopards together.

**TIP: Propose your own solution from outside the prompt.**

**TIP: ROAST**

# ROAST



# ROAST

There's nothing wrong with being a lady. The school board should reject this proposal and keep the traditional name the way it is — the way it has been since 1972.

**Make it memorable.**

# Sound advice:

- Get the time element in there.
- No whining “it’s not fair.”
- Don’t over–stretch.
- Keep it third person or first person plural.
- Double check spelling and grammar.
- Use active voice.
- Offer a good solution or call to action.
- Develop your own recipe for a salty, spicy ROAST.

# Editorial Writing

State Meet • 2023



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the high 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 your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 1,700 students enrolled in grades 9-12. This month, junior AP U.S. History students were assigned a research paper to count as their final exam in the course. For the assignment, students were required to conduct thorough research on one aspect of the United States' involvement in the Cold War. Students were to provide a thesis, personal analysis and provide a bibliography with multiple sources.

At the conclusion of the assignment, AP U.S. History teacher James McGowan used an online artificial intelligence content detector to determine that five of the 108 papers submitted to him had a significant portion of the assignment written using an AI generator, such as ChatGPT. These students each received a zero on the assignment, with the opportunity to resubmit it for a 50. They also received compulsory expulsion from the National Honor Society. Per the student code of conduct, which each of the five students signed along with their parents, teachers may offer grade reductions as a consequence for cheating or plagiarism.

All five students have written a formal appeal to the sponsor and faculty advisory committee for National Honor Society, asking to be reinstated in the organization. The NHS faculty advisory committee will issue a response to their formal request for appeal at its next closed session meeting on May 24. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Monday, May 22.

## THOSE SUPPORTING THE STUDENTS' APPEAL

Using an artificial intelligence tool is not the same thing as plagiarism. It can help a writer generate words, but the writer must still generate good ideas. Students who completed this assignment using AI, still had to do research and learn the material. They should not be punished because a teacher and the school don't yet understand the newest tool at students' disposal. This is a tool that is not going away. The school should encourage students to use the best tools to achieve the best work, which will better prepare them to use AI effectively when they go to college or enter the workforce.

## THOSE OPPOSING THE STUDENTS' APPEAL

Students signed a code of conduct at the beginning of the year. They knew the consequences of plagiarism when they started this assignment. They also knew "character" was one of the key pillars of NHS, and plagiarism could cause them to be removed from the organization. These students used software to write their paper for them. Now they are facing the consequences. Students go to school to do one thing — learn. A teacher can't evaluate student work if the student isn't the person completing the assignment. Now, those students should face the consequences.



■ **JAMES MCGOWAN, AP U.S. History teacher**

“I knew this was coming, but I didn’t know it would be this year and with some of my top students. I heard a few of them talking about how AI works one day, so I had a hunch they might be thinking of trying it. A lightbulb went off. I looked up some free AI detector tools and ran some of the papers through a couple of the programs. The first two didn’t do anything, but sure enough, when I got to the third paper, two different detection tools told me that the student had not written most of the paper. They got an AI program to do it for them instead. From that point on, I checked every paper. Not only were the papers generated by artificial intelligence easy to spot — they also weren’t good papers.

“Writing an essay isn’t only about words. It’s also about logic and creating and supporting an argument. As an educator, I was disappointed in the situation. I have always taken academic integrity seriously. I want my students to be successful on the AP test, in college and when they go to work. This means the work students submit should be done by the student — not a computer.”

■ **CAROLL HATHAWAY, junior**

“I was one of the students who used AI. I did all my own research about the Soviet arms race and created an outline for the paper. I wrote a strong thesis. Then I asked ChatGPT to write a 2,500-word research paper about the United States’ involvement in an arms race with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It didn’t generate a very good paper. So I went back and asked the software about specific topics of each paragraph I wanted. I made several edits to the final product. I don’t know how Mr. McGowan was able to tell I used ChatGPT, but I think this paper was pretty good. I still learned about the Cold War, which was what the assignment was asking us to do.

“I have done more than 500 hours of community service this year. I have all A’s. I plan to apply to several Ivy League schools next year. Removing me from National Honor Society is needlessly cruel. Maybe the school wants to establish itself as the dominant superpower, like the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.”

■ **DOUG ROSS, assistant principal**

“One of the cornerstones of education is that students learn the most when they are active participants in the learning process offered by their teachers. This AI-generated essay situation presents a number of difficulties. On one hand, it is not traditional plagiarism because it is not outright copying of the work of another. However, it is like plagiarism because it uses ideas that don’t originate with the student, even though the student had to supply the AI tool with the parameters to write the essay. When we investigated the situation with the teacher, it was clear that the students did not write their own essays. The students admitted to using AI, and administrators investigated. Removal from NHS is an automatic consequence for academic dishonesty.”

■ **JUANA GUTIERREZ, senior**

“I understand why the teachers and administrators reacted the way they did, but it’s not fair to these students to change their grade and remove them from NHS. People don’t understand how ChatGPT works. It’s not like they were cheating. ChatGPT can’t simply write a good essay. The students had to do a lot of work to generate the papers they created. If they didn’t set up the parameters of the argument, the output would have been trash. I’m about to be our valedictorian, and I’ve used ChatGPT several times to help me formulate my thoughts on an assignment. It’s a good tool that’s not going anywhere. We should embrace it.”

# 1A Champion – Arianna Perez, San Isidro HS

Five students have written formal appeal to the National Honor Society sponsor and faculty advisory committee in an effort to be reinstated after being appealed for cheating and plagiarizing. The NHS faculty advisory committee will issue a response to their formal request for appeal at its next closed session meeting on Wednesday.

The National Honor Society should accept the students' appeal to be reinstated. Using an artificial intelligence tool is not the same thing as plagiarism. It can help a writer generate words, but the writer must still come out with innovative ideas. Students who completed the assignment using AI still had to do research and learn the material, which was the whole point of the assignment to begin with.

One of the students who used AI for their assignment was a junior. According to her, she did all her own research about the Soviet arms race and created an outline for the paper. The artificial intelligence's role in her assignment was to make her writing become clearer and concise, which sparks no form of negative use of the program. In the end, she still learned about the Cold War and lost no value of its information in the process.

People, especially teachers and administrators, do not understand how ChatGPT and other AI programs work. These programs cannot simply draft good essays. Students put a lot of their own work to generate papers and assignments they create. Saying that students used it to cheat and plagiarize is insane and misunderstanding.

## Continued: 1A Champion – Arianna Perez, San Isidro HS

Those who oppose the proposal believe the five students plagiarized in their assignment. However, this was not the case as the students only used it as a form of assistance. This is recent technology that many administrators still do not understand. The students should not be punished because a teacher and the school do not yet comprehend the newest tool at students' disposal.

As a solution, students who use any form of AI should let teachers know in their assignments to avoid any sort of consequence.

Forms of artificial intelligence are popping up faster than ever today. It is a valuable tool that is not going anywhere, and everyone should embrace it. The National Honor Society should approve the students' appeal to be reinstated in the organization this Wednesday.

# **Tops in Texas (6A Champion) – Kavya Nandagiri, Shadow Creek HS**

After using AI on their AP U.S. History final, five students are appealing their removal from the National Honor Society. On May 24, the faculty advisory committee will decide whether or not to reinstate the students.

The committee should not reinstate the students and spend little time debating this issue.

When the students joined NHS they knew that academic dishonesty would lead to removal, yet chose to use ChatGPT to write their papers anyway. The students signed a code of conduct at the beginning of the year and not allowing them to face the consequences of their actions undermines the validity of every rule in that code.

Furthermore, not punishing the offending students is unfair to the others who completed the assignment honestly. Placing students who used AI and students who organically wrote their essays on the same level could frustrate honest students and cause them to use AI tools on future assignments. The standards of behavior for NHS students should not be compromised by reinstating these students.

Even though the students didn't plagiarize in the typical way their actions were still dishonest. None of the students approached their teacher about using AI, they were deliberately secretive about their plans. The fact that they did not copy their essay from another person doesn't change that they passed off ChatGPT's words as their own.

## **Continued: Tops in Texas – Kavya Nandagiri, Shadow Creek HS**

While some of the students argue that they still had to put work in to create a good essay with ChatGPT, their teacher was able to recognize the AI generated work easily. Despite having to provide ChatGPT with good parameters and doing research, the students were unable to develop their argument effectively evident by the poor quality of the essays. The process of writing out an essay increases the familiarity a student has with the material, hence why the assignment was to write a full paper not just an outline.

Minimizing consequences for using AI tools will lead to a decline in authentic writing. Even if AI will be used for mundane writing in the future, the skills students learn through writing essays are invaluable to their futures in college and careers. If the board does not punish students for using AI, they are putting the future success of students at risk.

The advisory committee must deny the appeal for reinstatement to NHS at the meeting on May 24. The community should voice their opinions and fight for the protection of authentic writing for the skills students gain from it.

# What could go wrong?

- You didn't take a stand or it wasn't clear enough.
- Your argument was too general. Be specific to this situation.
- You asked too many rhetorical questions without stating an opinion.
- You used quotes. Don't do that.
- You turned into a preacher.
- You got off-topic.
- You lacked credibility or didn't use evidence.
- You used stereotypes or made personal attacks.

# On contest day...

- Read the entire prompt
- Decide on a stance
- Using the prompt, write three supportive statements
- Highlight the evidence in the prompt
- Think about a roast, reasoned solution or call-to-action.
- Write it

A large crowd of people, mostly young adults, is seated in bleachers, likely at a graduation ceremony. In the foreground, a close-up of a woman's face wearing glasses is visible. The background shows a large audience of graduates and guests.

# Happy writing!

Contact me any time.  
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