

# Editorial Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2024



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 is located near Houston and has 2,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Last week, Career and Technology Education Director Donna Herrington proposed a change to the curriculum offerings and facilities at the high school level.

In the proposal, the district would eliminate the slate of Architecture and Construction classes currently offered and would replace those offerings with additional advanced robotics classes. Currently, only Principles of Robotics is offered. The space currently occupied by the construction classes would be used to accommodate the growing robotics program, including two additional levels of robotics.

Fewer students have enrolled in construction classes in recent years. The program has gone from seven classes offered to five in the 2022-2023 school year and from five classes to four in the 2023-2024 school year. If the proposal is approved, no architecture or construction classes would be offered beginning in the 2024-2025 school year.

The school board will vote on Herrington's proposal at its next meeting Monday, Jan. 22. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Jan. 19.

## THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

This is simple supply and demand. There isn't a huge demand for the construction classes anymore. The school hasn't invested any additional resources to the program for several years. Equipment is old and expensive to replace. Students enrolled in those classes say they are not getting a world-class construction education. Any money spent on materials gets used up by the end of the year. It makes sense to invest in classes where there is a growing interest and a potential for students to join careers in high tech jobs.

## THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

Construction skills are valuable for the students who graduate with experience in that field. They learn how to make repairs and build houses. These are marketable skills they can use to get real jobs right after graduation from high school. We need quality builders in the community, and the construction program is one way to get them. The school should market construction classes better and find a way to accommodate the growth in robotics without squashing another worthwhile program.

■ **DONNA HERRINGTON, CTE director**

“It’s never easy to make the tough decision to cut a program, and this decision has been a long time coming. Every year, we invest thousands of dollars into our construction program, and it goes to things like wood, glue, fasteners, tools and consumables that we have to turn around and replace the very next year.

“As students’ habits change, we have to adjust our resources to provide the best educational experience for them. As a district, we want to give students an outcome that will lead them to an amazing career, and right now, that means focusing resources on our growing robotics program. When the school day ends, robotics students are hungry for more. Students stay after school and work on Saturdays to prepare for UIL robotics competitions. If growth continues in this direction, we will be in a position to hire a second teacher.”

■ **LIZZIE BLACK, junior**

“I was so sad to hear about the proposal to cut out construction classes. I’m in my third year of taking construction, and while we don’t have the latest and greatest equipment, we work hard to do some incredible things with what we have. Last year, we worked with Habitat for Humanity to build a real house for people to live in. The day that I got to see a family move in to a home where I actually helped nail the boards in place to build the frame was a day I’ll never forget. Now, I want to be a construction manager some day. The school should work with organizations like Habitat to build the construction program, not destroy it. I hope the school board rejects this proposal so other students can have the same experience I had and find their future career.”

■ **DENARIUS SMITTY, sophomore**

“I loved the Principles of Robotics class I took last year, but I didn’t love that there were no other robotics classes for me to take this year. I’m doing technical theater to get my art credit instead. If they added more robotics classes, we could actually win more robotics contests and make this a serious program. Robotics is the future of almost all industries, and it would be cool if our school could make the necessary updates to better prepare us for a future career in robotics engineering.”

■ **FRANK HOUSEN, construction teacher**

“I’ve been teaching in this district for almost a decade. They have never really given the construction classes a chance to be successful. We rely mostly on donated materials and hand-me-down tools to do small projects in the shop. If students want any real experience in architecture or construction, we have to work with an architecture firm or Habitat for Humanity to get our students that experience. I understand that it’s an expensive program, and I probably could have done more to market the program over the years. Hopefully, it’s not too late to do right by our students and give them the resources they need to make construction classes work.”

**DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST**

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### Editorial Writing Contest Tips and Sample Stories

**Contest Director:** Give one copy to each judge to use during critiquing/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.

1. Lead with a statement of the situation and then take a clear, definitive staff stance. The situation is whether or not the district should eliminate Architecture and Construction classes.
2. As a general rule, use third person. If you must use a pronoun, use first person plural (we, meaning "we, the newspaper staff"). Do not use first person singular (I, me, mine) or second person (you). Avoid unnecessary use of pronouns. Rather than "We believe the district should..." write instead, "The district should."
3. Don't waddle into the editorial. Get right to the point and, as a general rule, don't ask questions. An editorial should answer questions, not ask them. Above all, remember that your purpose is to make thoughtful, logical arguments in support of your position, not to engage in a tirade. The editorial should not be long — 450 words at the most. Although it's not recommended all the time, sometimes a writer could use a feature opening to grab the reader's attention and draw them into the story.
4. Look for the future angle. Your paper comes out before the school board meeting.
5. Once you've stated your position/stance, the body of the editorial should support your stance and refute the opposition.
6. After the body of your editorial, complete the editorial with a specific solution.
7. Avoid direct quotes unless the quote adds substantially to the editorial. You can pull information from these quotes, as has been done here, but it's not necessary to attribute that information unless the person has substantial credibility.
8. Watch for factual errors. Pay attention to minor details. Also, stay focused.
9. Don't clutter up the editorial with clichés or trite phrases such as "adults don't understand teens" or any variation thereof. Also, edit out the name of the school unless it is necessary for clarity. It isn't necessary to say "Leaguetown Independent School District" or "Leaguetown High School." Students know the name of the school. They don't need to be reminded.

## **SAMPLE EDITORIAL/SUPPORTING**

The district could eliminate the Architecture and Construction classes offered in favor of additional advanced robotics classes if the school board approves a proposal at its meeting Monday. If the proposal is approved, the change in curriculum would begin in the 2024-2025 school year.

The school board should vote in favor of Career and Technology Education Director Donna Herrington's proposal.

The Architecture and Construction program has cut three classes in recent years, with fewer students enrolling each term. The demand has lowered, and the school hasn't invested in new equipment for several years. They receive only hand-me-down tools and new scraps of wood.

As students' interests change, the district must adjust its resources to support growing programs. The robotics students stay after school and work on Saturdays in preparation for UIL robotics contests. These students are ambitious to do more, and the district should divert more resources to them.

Additionally, the district invests thousands of dollars into consumable resources for the Architecture and Construction program. The wood, glue, fasteners and tools bought each year must be replaced for the next year.

Those in opposition to the proposal argue that the Architecture and Construction program gives students marketable skills to gain employment after graduation from high school. Yet, students have not been enrolling in these classes in large numbers, so not enough students benefit. One student noted that robotics is the future of many industries as a form of engineering.

It is in the best interest of the district to invest in growing programs as students' interests change with the times. If the school board values providing the best educational experience for its students, it must vote in favor of Herrington's proposal.

**SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING**

The district could eliminate the Architecture and Construction classes offered in favor of additional advanced robotics classes if the school board approves a proposal at its meeting Monday. If the proposal is approved, the change in curriculum would begin in the 2024-2025 school year.

The school board should not vote in favor of Career and Technology Education Director Donna Herrington's proposal.

Herrington draws on the robotics students' time commitment as support for her proposal. These students stay after school to prepare for UIL robotics contests. The construction students do not participate in this commitment simply because they do not have UIL contests that relate to their program. What the director fails to note is that instead, the construction students commit their time outside of school to work with Habitat for Humanity, with whom they have built an entire house.

Additionally, the construction students rely on donated materials and hand-me-down tools. The district has not purchased equipment in years, which correlates with a drop in student enrollment in the program. Thus, the issue is not a lack of interest on the students' behalf but a lack of materials to further their education and involvement in the program.

Those in support of the proposal argue that the Architecture and Construction program lacks the student interest of the robotics classes. Yet, there is evidence of strong engagement in both programs. One simply has the means to support it while the other does not. This is a fault of the district's lack of investment in the construction classes, which sends the message that robotics is more important to the future of students.

The district should reapportion its investments to best support both programs and grant students the ability to pursue their interests in either. If the school board values equal opportunity in the classroom and learning environment, it must vote against Herrington's proposal.