

Editorial Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2025



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 4,683 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Superintendent Val Gilmer proposed removing health education classes from the district's graduation requirements. Under the proposal, health classes would be offered as an elective, but the class would not be required for students to graduate.

After he presented the proposal, health instructors in the district wrote a letter to the school board, which they shared on social media, arguing that students who do not take health education classes in high school will miss opportunities to learn about basic nutrition, drug and alcohol awareness and other mental health topics, which they said would be detrimental to students' overall well-being.

The school currently has five employees teaching health classes on campus. Those teachers also assist with coaching a sport on campus or teach a Career and Technology Education class. If the proposal passes, only one teacher will teach health classes. The rest will be assigned to other classes or duties during the school day. No teachers would lose their jobs. However, if employees leave the district for other reasons, that health position will be cut.

To study the proposal, the school board appointed a committee of teachers, students, parents and a doctor in the community to review data and make a recommendation to the school board. The school board will hear the committee's recommendation and vote on the proposal at the school board meeting Thursday, Jan 9. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Jan. 7.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

Removing the health requirement would make room for more electives in student schedules, which could promote more student involvement. It also would give high-achieving students the ability to take additional advanced classes and make their college applications stronger. Having a daily required class for health is not an efficient use of time or money.

THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

With things like obesity, drug use and misinformation on the rise, this is not the time to remove access to quality health education from students. It is necessary for students to not only learn these topics in school. In addition, although no teachers will lose their jobs, those teachers who have traditionally taught health classes will be moved to a class where they may not necessarily be qualified to teach.

■ **VAL GILMER, superintendent**

“Schools are cutting budgets wherever they can, and in this case, it makes the most sense not to require this class anymore. Health classes will still be offered to students who are interested in learning more about health topics. But removing the requirement from our graduation plan will free up space in student schedules to take other classes that students may be interested in. We are also expecting the change to free up one or two positions that could eventually be cut to save the district significant money or transferred to another department where it is desperately needed.

“I don’t expect to have a line out the door for students to sign up for health. But for certain students, the class could prove valuable. We intend to continue to offer the class for now. We encourage all our students to seek out information on nutrition, dating violence and drugs and alcohol on our counseling web page. Here and in other places online, students can find the important information that was previously covered in our required health classes.”

■ **ARNIE RUT, health teacher**

“I don’t think the district is seeing the problem this change would cause. I’m certified to teach health and PE, and that’s it. I was hired to coach our track team and teach health classes. If there isn’t a position teaching health for me, I’m not sure where they’ll put me.

“On top of that, I’m worried about the immediate effects that not requiring health education classes will cause in this community. Have you smelled a freshman boy who hasn’t showered? Schools do so much more than teach the ABCs. This includes providing health education to teach our students about hygiene and nutrition. These aren’t throw-away classes. This is important information that our students should not go without.”

■ **CASSIE SANDOVAL, junior**

“I have been putting off this required health class since ninth grade. I’m in marching band and just found out I qualified to join jazz band next year. I wasn’t going to be able to take it because of my stupid health credit. I don’t need any additional help with my health. I’m good.”

■ **LAWRENCE STANLEY, freshman**

“I’m going to take health next year whether it’s required or not. There aren’t a lot of classes I’m interested in taking, and I’ve heard health is really easy. In the worst case scenario, I learn about how to be a healthier person. That’s a positive thing.”

■ **LESLIE SHERMAN, pediatrician**

“I’m concerned about who is going to pick up the slack when we start to see gaps in what students know about their own health, especially when it comes to drugs and alcohol. Our kids are not adequately prepared to make these decisions about their own well-being. Health class is one of the few places out there where students can learn the effect of drugs on the brain. They can see what happens to cognitive development after overconsuming alcohol. Some students will hear about these topics at home, but the fact is most will not. I hope they reconsider removing the health requirement.”

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 establish its own police force.
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. 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 PROPOSAL

The district could remove health education classes from graduation requirements, instead offering the class as an elective, if the school board approves Superintendent Val Gilmer's proposal at its Thursday meeting.

A committee made up of teachers, students, parents and a community doctor will review the data and make a recommendation before the school board votes. A group of health instructors shared a letter on social media written to the school board in opposition to the proposal.

Despite this, the school board should approve the superintendent's proposal.

Making health classes optional would give students more freedom to choose electives that align with their passions and academic goals. For high-achieving students, this means having the opportunity to enroll in advanced courses that strengthen college applications rather than being held back by a mandatory health class. Students could have more room in their schedules to explore more advanced electives, like jazz band or yearbook. A mandatory health class requirement does not allow enough flexibility in scheduling.

Students have plenty of other ways to educate themselves about health without a mandatory class. Information on topics like nutrition, dating violence, drugs and alcohol is readily available on the school's counseling web page. For students who want to learn more, health education will still be offered as an elective.

Those who support keeping health as a graduation requirement believe students need the school to sit them down and show them how to be healthy. That's not how life works. Students have the means to educate themselves on their health if they want to. As a solution, the school could provide a mandatory health workshop during the year, ensuring that all students receive fundamental health education without occupying a full semester.

If the school board supports student choice and trusts students to pursue their interests, it will vote to make health education an elective, not a requirement.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

The district could remove health education classes from graduation requirements, instead only offering the class as an elective, if the school board approves Superintendent Val Gilmer's proposal at its Thursday meeting.

A committee made up of teachers, students, parents and a community doctor will review the data and make a recommendation before the school board votes. A group of health instructors shared a letter on social media written to the school board in opposition to the proposal.

The school board should not support the superintendent's proposal.

Health classes provide students with essential knowledge on topics that are often considered taboo. At least one pediatrician opposes removing the health requirement, as it is one of the few environments where students can learn about the dangers of drug and alcohol use. While these subjects may be discussed at home, there's no guarantee they will be addressed without a mandatory class. Additionally, health classes cover vital information on hygiene and cleanliness, and without this instruction, students' overall health could be at risk.

Besides the physical risks of not requiring health classes, faculty would also be affected. All five current health teachers coach sports or teach a Career and Technology Education class. If the proposal is passed, only one teacher will teach a health class, meaning the others would be reassigned to a subject they may not be familiar with. This could decrease the quality of education students receive.

Supporters of removing health education need to recognize that making health classes optional could harm students by limiting their access to essential knowledge. To address concerns about allowing space for additional electives, the school district could consider shortening more elective courses to one semester, making room to include both health education and more elective options.

The worst-case scenario of keeping this requirement would be students learning to be healthier. But removing a required class where students learn safety and proper hygiene could stink up the school — literally. If the school board supports students' well-being, they'll keep health as a graduation requirement.