

Editorial Writing

Invitational B 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 4,400 students enrolled in grades 9-12. After a series of hallway fights and students caught vaping in bathrooms during first semester, principal Dr. Patricia Monroe introduced a new bathroom pass system to reduce unsupervised hallway time. When the system was implemented on Jan. 3, students received a personalized printed copy of the student handbook with a bright, yellow cover to use as their bathroom pass. On the back of the handbook is a table with five rows where students will have their teacher list the time leaving class, the time returned to class, the date and their signature. Students will have five opportunities to go to the bathroom during class time in the spring semester and no more. Students with certain medical needs will be able to use the bathroom more often, as needed.

Members of the school board and Dr. Monroe received numerous email complaints as a result of the new system, and parents took to the district's Facebook page to share their opinions as well.

A group of concerned parents and students said they will speak during the public comment section at the school board meeting on Feb. 6 and formally ask the board to intervene and remove the new bathroom pass system.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Feb. 3.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE NEW SYSTEM

After social media trends that urged students to destroy school property last year, the number of fights in the hallway this year and the amount of vaping that happens in the bathrooms, it's clear that students aren't responsible enough to be in the halls unsupervised. Limiting the number of times a student can be excused from class to go to the restroom is one way to cut down on the number of people in the hallways causing problems when they should be in class learning.

THOSE OPPOSING THE NEW SYSTEM

Students should not be limited on the number of times they can use the bathroom. It's unhealthy to hold it when it's time to go. The six-minute passing period is not enough time to go from one end of the building to the other and stop along the way. Access to the bathrooms is also a necessity for girls having their periods. High school students are almost adults and should be able to take cues from their own bodies and know when it's appropriate to take a break.

■ **DR. PATRICIA MONROE, principal**

“As an administrator, I am tasked with keeping students safe at this school. That is my number one priority. Period. And if reducing the number of bathroom passes available for students is going to help me reach that goal, then that’s what we’re going to do. Last year, students tore apart our bathrooms, and the repairs cost us thousands. This year, we are averaging two major fights a week, and the vaping issue is a daily occurrence. It would be dereliction of duty for me as the leader of this school not to take any substantial action in making this campus a safer place for our students and teachers. Of course, we will listen to parent and student input at the school board meeting, but I try not to take too much advice from keyboard warriors on Facebook. I’m going to do what needs to be done to keep the school safe.”

■ **EMMA HUNZEKER, senior**

“Here we are in the fifth week of this hall pass program, and I used all my bathroom passes the week I had my period. What are we supposed to do? Just sit there in class when we know we need to go? And since basketball season started, I’ve increased my water intake a ton. I fill up my water bottle at least twice during the school day. I guess I’ll just be late to class if I have to use the bathroom. I don’t see any other choice. My mom and I will be at the school board meeting to ask them to have administrators remove this ridiculous system. I’ve never felt as uncomfortable or as unsafe as I do now at school.”

■ **JACK VINSON, parent of a junior**

“I plan to attend the school board meeting to protest the new bathroom pass program. My son plays football and needs to hydrate throughout the day. And now they aren’t going to let him use the restroom? That’s not going to happen. He will use the restroom when he needs to, regardless of how many signatures are on his bathroom pass.”

■ **ELI JAY, World History teacher**

“It’s nice to see students having to take responsibility for their actions. Five trips to the restroom is plenty. They can take a break before or after school and during passing periods or lunch. There are plenty of opportunities. And now they aren’t missing valuable class time.

“I always had the same kids leave my class a few times a week to use the bathroom. I know of at least one student who left my class to use the bathroom and left the building in handcuffs because he really left class to go fight someone. And everyone puts these fights all over TikTok now, so other kids who know about it will ask to leave class just to go record the fight and hope their video goes viral. The fewer kids walking around the halls, the better.

“The only thing I don’t like about the new system is that I have to touch this disgusting, yellow student handbook to sign their pass that goes with them into the bathroom. What are kids supposed to do with this thing while they go? Then I have to sign it when they get back. I’ve just been making the kids sign it themselves.”

■ **JONNAY JACKSON, freshman**

“I’ll be honest. I don’t always go to the restroom when I ask to go. Sometimes I just need to do a lap around the building to refocus and take a little brain break, especially in the afternoon. A short walk helps me do that, and then I come back to class and can do even better on my tests and assignments. I guess there’s no way I can do any of that now. I need to save my bathroom passes for emergencies.”

DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST**Editorial Writing/Invitational B • 2023
Contest Tips and Sample Editorials**

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/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, definite staff stance. The situation is whether the school should continue the new bathroom pass program.
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 principal should..." write instead, "The principal should."
3. Don't waddle into the editorial. Get right to the point and, as a general rule, don't ask a lot of 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 get 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 story 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 a lot of credibility toward the story itself.
8. Watch for factual errors. Pay attention to minor details. Also, stay focused.
9. Don't clutter up the editorial with cliches 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

In response to hallway fights and vaping in the bathroom, Principal Patricia Monroe implemented a bathroom pass system that limits students to five bathroom trips per semester. Students and parents who oppose this new system plan to speak at the school board meeting Monday.

The school board should keep Monroe's new bathroom pass system for the safety and well-being of students and teachers.

Last year, the school had to pay thousands of dollars for bathroom repairs after students destroyed school property to participate in an online trend. It is clear that students can't be trusted to respect their school and keep it clean and safe.

The use of e-cigarettes has become common among teens. Vaping is a dangerous practice, especially for minors. Since the bathroom stalls are the top hiding spot for smoke breaks, it makes sense to limit bathroom trips to prevent students from vaping.

The school deals with an average of two hallway fights a week. Limiting the amount of traffic in the hallways during classes can help prevent fights and subsequently the crowds and viral video attempts that come from these altercations.

Before the new bathroom pass system, students would ask to use the bathroom just to get out of class. This new system will help keep students in the classroom, engaging and learning.

Students opposed to the system say they should be able to go to the bathroom whenever they want for health reasons, but students with certain medical conditions will be allowed to receive exemptions and be able to use the bathroom as needed. Five bathroom trips is more than enough since students can also use the bathroom during lunch and passing periods.

Monroe has said she is open to ideas and input from students and parents, but safety will continue to be her top priority. And that's as it should be.

The school should keep the new bathroom pass system and keep our students safe.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING

In response to hallway fights and vaping in the bathroom, Principal Patricia Monroe implemented a bathroom pass system that limits students to five bathroom trips per semester. Students and parents who oppose this new system plan to call for its removal at the school board meeting Monday.

The school board should remove the system and find another way to manage disciplinary issues without stripping students of the ability to perform a necessary human function as needed.

The school claims that people with medical conditions will receive accommodations, but there are so many different reasons that students may need to use the restroom.

Student athletes try to drink a certain amount of water to help with their performance, which may require more frequent bathroom trips. For girls, bathroom access is essential during their periods. The new bathroom system doesn't account for how the human body works. When nature calls, you have no choice but to respond.

If administrators want to limit hallway fights and vaping, they should find other initiatives that affect the students doing wrong, not all students. To prove they really care about the long-term safety of the students, administrators should invest in programs that aim to help individuals quit vaping altogether.

The bathroom pass is on the back of the student handbook, and students have to get the back page signed before and after they use the bathroom. Students will also have to take this pass into the bathroom with them. This system is very unsanitary with teachers and students repeatedly touching a book that has been in the bathroom multiple times. It's disgusting to make people touch it.

Keeping students safe starts with in-school programs that promote good behavior and a strong sense of community. Students will not feel safe and comfortable in a school that limits their every function.

The school board should listen to the demands of the students and parents and discontinue this offensive system.