

Editorial Writing

Region 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 1,100 students enrolled in grades 9-12. After years of staffing shortages and coming close to a budget shortfall in 2022, Superintendent Chris Turner surveyed district parents and staff in January about a proposal for a new calendar, which would include a four-day school week starting with the 2023-2024 school year. In the survey, 71% of parents and 89% of district staff said they would be in favor of a four-day school week.

With the proposed schedule, students would attend school Monday through Thursday, with each day extended by one hour. The high school would start at 7:30 a.m. and end at 4 p.m.

Teachers and administrators still would work at their campuses for a half day on Fridays planning lessons, having parent conferences, doing professional development and meeting with their professional learning communities.

In addition, for high schools and middle schools, all after-school clubs and some electives (including yearbook, robotics and theater) would meet during the day on Fridays instead of during the school day.

The district would offer child care on Fridays for district students in kindergarten through fourth grade for \$300 per month. It also would offer take-home meals to students for the price of a regular school lunch, with free and reduced lunch program benefits.

The school board will vote on Turner's proposal at its meeting April 27. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, April 23.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

Students are tired. Adults don't always understand the pressure of classes, after-school jobs, clubs, homework, extracurriculars and college applications. Having an extra day to take care of business each week would reduce stress and improve mental health across the board. In addition, it would save the district money by cutting hourly employees and some staff on Fridays as well as not running buses one day a week. The shorter week also would attract new teachers to the district and improve teacher retention, curbing the teacher shortage the district has been facing for years.

THOSE OPPOSING THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

Learning outcomes are tied directly to time in school. According to a Stanford University study, school systems that implemented a four-day school week showed significantly reduced student achievement in math and reading. Making students come to school on Friday just for clubs and electives also could result in reduced participation in extracurriculars. For some students, these programs are the reason they come to school, and participation is crucial for student success. The district should not make money-saving decisions at the expense of students.

■ **CHRIS TURNER, superintendent**

“Something has to change. We still have teacher vacancies, and it’s April. We need to do something drastic to try and recruit quality teachers to the district. A four-day week has proven effective for teacher recruitment and retention. It’s time for this district to go for it.

“Yes, the district will save a little money on expenses and staffing, but the goal of the new calendar is to improve the quality of education for students by attracting quality teachers.

“I also know students are hoping to enjoy an extra day of freedom on Fridays to do some of the things they try to get done during the week, such as homework and extracurriculars. We hope the school board will approve the new calendar so students will have more flexibility in their weekly schedule to improve their mental health and reduce stress. This is a win-win for students, teachers and the district’s bank account.”

■ **DAVE KOBAIN, junior**

“I’m all for having an extra day off, but I’m worried about the electives they’re putting on Fridays. I just made our varsity theater class for next year, and I’ve already heard several other students say they won’t sign up for the class next year if we get the new schedule and it’s only offered on Fridays. We can’t do plays if we don’t have actors or technicians in the program.”

■ **LESLEY GOMEZ, sophomore**

“I hope they approve the four-day week. I stay up past midnight sometimes trying to do homework. Having this extra day to get things done would help me get more sleep. If they move yearbook to Fridays, I’ll probably drop it, but it would be worth it if we could have Fridays off. It might even give me time to get a job and earn extra money, which my family could use right now.”

■ **THERESA SUMMERS, robotics teacher**

“I’m worried about what will happen to students if we approve this new calendar. I read the study that said student test scores showed a decline with the four-day school week. It’s more than that, though. Students perform better when they are connected to their school through a club, elective or extracurricular program. Our robotics program has performed well at state for the past few years. I’m worried I won’t get funding for the program if I can’t convince students they need to come in an extra day during the week to take the class. Maybe the district is hoping that’s what will happen so they can save money and cut the program entirely. I have students who don’t do well in other classes, and the reason they get up every day and come to school is to come to robotics class. What happens to those students when there is no program for them?”

■ **CAROL HORVATH, parent of a junior**

“I’m happy about the new calendar for my 11th grade daughter. She needs the extra day to rest, do homework and research colleges. I am not excited about this calendar for my first-grader. He is still learning how to read. I’m worried about what will happen to his progress if I have to put him in day care one day a week. I know he will spend most of that time playing instead of working on his reading skills. I’m torn between supporting this calendar and wanting the schedule to stay the way it is.”

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 adopt a four-day school week.
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 adopt a four-day school week if the school board approves Superintendent Chris Turner's proposal at its meeting April 27.

With the new calendar, students would attend classes Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays would be half days for teachers, and all after-school clubs and some electives would move to Friday.

The school board should vote to adopt this proposal for the 2023-2024 school year.

The district, along with the rest of the country, is facing a severe teaching shortage. This proposal could help attract high-quality teachers at a time when they are hard to find and hopefully entice them to stay with the district.

While some studies say the proposal could impact student learning negatively, having good-quality teachers who are not overworked and have time for lesson planning, staff development and parent-teacher conferences should help mitigate those problems.

High school students have to balance school, extracurriculars, college applications and work. Switching to a four-day school week gives students more flexibility with their schedules to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Students should not have to stay up until midnight to complete all their work and activities. This schedule gives students more time to work on their time-management skills as it would force them to allocate their time wisely after school and on Fridays.

Moving extracurriculars and clubs to Fridays gives students a day where they can focus on what they love to do. Instead of staying late at school during the week, students can go home right after school and come for a few hours on Fridays to participate in extracurriculars.

Even though Fridays would be an "off" day for students, the district still would be open, with child care offered for \$300 a month and take-home meals for students at the price of a school lunch.

The district should take care of its student body and teachers. This proposal does that, and the school board should approve it.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING

The district could adopt a four-day school week if the school board approves Superintendent Chris Turner's proposal at its meeting on April 27.

With the new calendar, students would attend classes Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays would be half days for teachers, and all after-school clubs and some electives would meet then.

The school board should vote to reject this proposal and keep the current five-day calendar.

The district said this proposal is a smart way to save money. However, it's not smart to reduce students' chances at success. A study done by researchers at Stanford University shows that a four-day school week could be detrimental to students' reading and math skills.

The proposal would save the district money because it would severely damage the livelihoods of extracurriculars like robotics, theater and yearbook. Putting those electives on Fridays disincentivizes students to sign up because they won't want to come in on their days off. Eventually, without enough proper participation, the district could cut these electives all together. And for some students, electives are their connection to school. It's the reason they show up at all.

The four-day school week also places pressure on parents whose kids are not yet old enough to be left alone during the day. Offering child care on Fridays for \$300 a month is yet another strategy to make the district more money by making parents pay for the service that used to be free and came with an education.

While the proposal gives high school students more time to balance the stressors in their lives, it is vital that they understand that the real world still operates on a standard five-day work week. School should prepare students for that. Changing the calendar would cause more stress for these students in the long run when they have to work on Fridays.

If the district wants to attract and retain more quality teachers, it should find a way to increase their pay and reduce unnecessary workload on educators.

The school board shouldn't make saving money its first priority. It should focus on what is best for all the students who are looking to them for a quality education. And what's best for students is for the school board to reject this proposal.