

# Feature Writing

District Meet • 2023



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **one hour**.

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 867 students in grades 9-12. Longtime district bus driver Louis Plimpton announced to students right before Spring Break that he would retire at the end of the month after 43 years in the district. Plimpton not only worked in Leaguetown ISD for 43 years, but he also attended Leaguetown schools and graduated from Leaguetown High School in 1978. While in high school, he played baseball and received a scholarship to play at Southside Junior College. However, after three semesters at SJC, he was forced to return home when his mother was injured in a car accident and needed full-time care. He began driving a school bus in 1980 and has been doing so ever since, driving the elementary and high school route every day. During summers, Plimpton works in the district maintenance department. Plimpton is one of the longest-serving employees ever to serve the district.

When he submitted his retirement paperwork to administrators, Plimpton asked for a special request. Instead of a retirement party or gift, he asked to celebrate with the students on his high school route and pick them up like normal, but instead of taking them to school, he'll drive them to Leaguetown Lanes for a round of bowling, followed by lunch at Plimpton's favorite restaurant, Golden Corral. Superintendent Maxine Wabasha agreed and even distributed and collected parent permission slips on his behalf.

On March 31, Plimpton will pick up 36 students for the last time and celebrate his retirement with them. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 28.

## ■ LOUIS PLIMPTON, bus driver

"I didn't plan to drive a bus for 43 years. I didn't even plan to drive a bus for one year, but after my mom's accident I had to stay home in Leaguetown, and I needed work fast to help us pay the bills.

"The people in this district have been so good to me over the years. Before my mom died in 2001, my schedule even allowed me to go home and check on her sometimes in the middle of the day. After she died, every single kid who got on the bus wrote me a sympathy note. I think one of the principals organized it, but still. Those kids put a lot of thought into those cards. I don't think I would have made it through that period of my life without the support and company of these kids. They're my second family.

"When a kid rides my bus, they see me every morning and afternoon from kindergarten through high school. Since we live in such a rural area, we don't get a lot of people moving in and out, so I've been able to get to know these kids. We celebrate birthdays and holidays on the bus. We celebrate graduations on the bus and college acceptance letters. Now we'll celebrate my retirement on the bus. I'm so grateful to the district administration for letting me take them bowling and out to lunch during the school day. I wanted to

■ **LOUIS PLIMPTON, bus driver (continued)**

surprise them, but then the admin told me I needed to get permission slips. I used to eat at Golden Corral every Friday night with my mom, and after she died, I kept going. I have so many memories there, and now I'll get to make the biggest memory of my life there with my kids."

■ **JENNA VAN LEER, junior**

"Lou is such a good person. He remembers our birthdays and at Christmas time, he paints snow and lights on the bus windows and dresses as Santa Claus during the bus ride, and we sing. He helps us start our school day on the right note. No matter what."

■ **JAMAR EL HINDI, senior**

"I first met Lou when I started riding the bus in kindergarten. I remember my first day of school. I got on the bus with my brother and started to cry. I was so scared. I sat in my seat and looked up to see this big hand wrapped around a stuffed purple bunny. Lou handed me the bunny and told me he was scared to go to school for the first time and asked if I would take care of the bunny for him. I still have the bunny on my desk at home. Almost every kid I know has some sort of story like that about Lou. Even when I got my car last year, I would take the bus once a week or so, just because I liked being there. He's amazing. We're all going to miss him so much."

■ **DR. MAXINE WABASHA, superintendent**

"We have some incredible employees in Leaguetown, but I have never seen this kind of outpouring of emotion for a retiring bus driver. It really speaks to his character. Louis knows that each child has an opportunity to learn every day and how they start and end that day can be the difference between success and failure. He has worked his whole career to make sure our kids succeed."

■ **TRAVIS KELLER, owner of Golden Corral in Leaguetown**

"We are honored that Louis plans to celebrate his retirement at our restaurant. He comes in every week. We haven't told him yet, but we plan to cover the expenses for his party with his kids. After so many years of supporting the community, that's the least we can do for someone who does so much for others."

■ **DOLLY CRAVENS, parent of a freshman**

"I have always known that when I put my kids on Bus 3, they're in good hands with Lou. Some of my friends thought it was a little weird that I was letting my kid go on a field trip with the bus driver, but I totally trust Lou. He deserves a happy retirement. The PTA has collected enough money to give him an airline gift card. He has been in Leaguetown all his life, and we know he's always wanted to travel. Now is his chance."

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!**

## District • 2023 Feature Writing Contest Tips and Sample Story

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. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a bus driver's retirement celebration.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the prompt as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

Bus 3 knows how to party. Holidays. Birthdays. College acceptance letters. For 43 years, bus driver Louis Plimpton has celebrated these milestones with the students on his bus route. And he has one more party to throw. His party.

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

### **nut graph**

Plimpton has announced his retirement and has one special request for his last day on March 31: pick the kids up from his bus route and celebrate with them.

### **direct quote**

"I'm so grateful to the district administration for letting me take them bowling and out to lunch during the school day," Plimpton said. "I wanted to surprise them, but then admin told me I needed to get permission slips."

4. After the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Plimpton said," not "said Plimpton"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information in the transition.

### **transition/story-telling**

Louis took care of his mother full time for over 20 years before her death, after which, every single student on his bus wrote sympathy notes for Plimpton.

**direct quote**

“Those kids put a lot of thought into those cards,” Plimpton said. “I don’t think I would have made it through that period of my life without the support and company of these kids. They’re my second family.”

**transition/story-telling**

Over time he became one of the district’s longest-serving employees. Senior Jamar El Hindi has known him since kindergarten.

**direct quote**

“I remember my first day of school,” he said. “I got on the bus with my brother and just started to cry. I was so scared. I sat in my seat and looked up to see this big hand wrapped around a stuffed purple bunny. Lou handed me the bunny and told me he was scared to go to school for the first time and asked if I would take care of the bunny for him. I still have the bunny on my desk at home.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our school board.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “We are proud.” These statements are personal opinions and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

Superintendent Maxine Wabasha said Lou will be deeply missed by his colleagues, students and parents at the district.

“We have some incredible employees in Leaguetown, but I have never seen this kind of outpouring of emotion for a retiring bus driver,” Washaba said. “It really speaks to his character. Louis knows that each child has an opportunity to learn every day and how they start and end that day can be the difference between success and failure. He has worked his whole career to make sure our kids succeed.”

## SAMPLE STORY

Bus 3 knows how to party. Holidays. Birthdays. College acceptance letters. For 43 years, bus driver Louis Plimpton has celebrated these milestones with the students on his bus route. And he has one more party to throw. His party.

Plimpton has announced his retirement and has one special request for his last day on March 31: pick the kids up from his bus route and celebrate with them.

“I’m so grateful to the district administration for letting me take them bowling and out to lunch during the school day,” Plimpton said. “I wanted to surprise them, but then admin told me I needed to get permission slips.”

Before Plimpton’s career at Leaguetown ISD started, he was also a student and athlete in the district, graduating in 1978. He received a scholarship to play baseball at Southside Junior College, but after three semesters he returned home to take care of his mother after a car accident.

“I didn’t plan to drive a bus for 43 years,” Plimpton said. “I didn’t even plan to drive a bus for one year, but after my mom’s accident I had to stay home in Leaguetown, and I needed work fast to help us pay the bills. My schedule even allowed me to go home and check on my mom sometimes in the middle of the day, before she died in 2001.”

Louis took care of his mother full time for over 20 years before her death, after which, every single student on his bus wrote sympathy notes for Plimpton.

“Those kids put a lot of thought into those cards,” Plimpton said. “I don’t think I would have made it through that period of my life without the support and company of these kids. They’re my second family.”

Over time he became one of the district’s longest-serving employees. Senior Jamar El Hindi has known him since kindergarten.

“I remember my first day of school,” he said. “I got on the bus with my brother and just started to cry. I was so scared. I sat in my seat and looked up to see this big hand wrapped around a stuffed purple bunny. Lou handed me the bunny and told me he was scared to go to school for the first time and asked if I would take care of the bunny for him. I still have the bunny on my desk at home.”

Over the years he has remembered birthdays, decorated the school bus, and has even dressed up as Santa Claus to help bring joy to students before school.

“I have always known that when I put my kids on Bus 3, they’re in good hands with Lou,” parent of a freshman Dolly Cravens said. “Some of my friends thought it was a little weird that I was letting my kid go on a field trip with the bus driver, but I totally trust Lou. He deserves a happy retirement.”

Plimpton doesn’t know this yet, but the owner of Golden Corral intends to cover the costs of the outing, and the PTA has collected enough money for an airline gift card to give him.

“I used to go to Golden Corral every Friday night with my mom, and after she died, I just kept going,” Plimpton said. “I have so many memories there, and now I’ll get to make the biggest memory of my life there with my kids.”

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