

News Writing

State Meet • 2024



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

From the given information, write a **news 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 **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 1,980 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In April, the newly elected 2024-2025 student council officers had a planning session for next fall's homecoming. Junior and incoming senior class president Lynsey Hanklin suggested that next year the school should have its first gender-neutral homecoming court and make other changes to the week's events in the interest of making the school feel more inclusive. After discussing the issue with several students, Hanklin wrote a proposal and presented her ideas to the entire student council, which voted to approve the new gender neutral homecoming court and events for homecoming in fall 2024, pending a vote by the student body.

Instead of having a king, queen, beau and sweetheart, as well as a prince and princess of clubs, athletics and fine arts, the court will have two honorees for each of the following categories: homecoming royalty, clubs royalty, athletics royalty and fine arts royalty. The two individuals with the most votes in each category will win a spot on the homecoming court. In addition to changes with the court, the powderpuff football game, where girls play and boys dress as cheerleaders, will be replaced with a co-ed kickball tournament, where any student can sign up to play on a team based on grade level.

On May 10, the student council hosted a town-hall style meeting where students could ask questions about the proposed changes to homecoming structure. On Wednesday, May 15, students will vote on the proposed changes. Seniors will not be permitted to vote since they will not be in school next year. You are writing for the issue of the press to be distributed May 14.

■ LYNSEY HANKLIN, incoming senior class president

"In 2024, our society shouldn't divide everything by boys and girls. There's no such thing as 'boy activities' and 'girl activities' anymore. I feel strongly that our student council should reflect the school community we are here to serve. Our school has five boys on its cheer team. There are several football teams out there now with female players and coaches. So why does it make sense to have a powderpuff football game where we regress to making boys dress up in skirts to cheer on girls in a flag football game? Even the term 'powderpuff' is making fun of female athletes. A kickball tournament makes so much more sense, and it sounds like more fun, too.

"I feel the same is true for homecoming court. Why should someone's gender play into whether their fellow classmates can honor them? With the new court structure, any person in the school will be eligible to win a spot on the homecoming court. No position is considered male or female. This is the best way to represent our student body, and I expect the results on Wednesday to show that."

■ **TONY FALCO, sophomore student council representative**

“I’m proud of Lynsey for making this proposal to the student council, and I’m glad we’re taking it to the students. One of the things I love about being involved in student council is that big decisions like this are truly made by the students. Students can effect change in their school. Students have a voice. That’s the way it should be. I’ve wanted to be involved in student council since I was in middle school and saw my older sister involved in all the activities in high school. It looked like so much fun, and even through the hard work, she was making a difference in the school. Homecoming is always one of my favorite weeks of the year. If we make these changes, I’ll be a junior and I’ll have a hand in reimagining some traditions that will stay with the school for years to come. That’s a pretty cool legacy to leave. I hope the students vote in favor of the changes.”

■ **EDIE CHASE, student council sponsor**

“I’ve been the student council sponsor here for 12 years, but it’s been the last three years since COVID that students have been taking a look at our activities and thinking about ways to improve them for future classes. It’s an exciting time to be involved with the student council. The student leaders are super creative. They care so much about the students here and what they can do to give the community a memorable high school experience. It will be interesting to see what happens with Wednesday’s vote. I’m not sure it’s the slam dunk they think it is, but whichever way things fall, students are learning about the democratic process. Student council leaders have the right attitude about it. They want to represent the will of the student body.”

■ **LISA JACCAR, junior**

“I don’t have a problem with changes in general, but our traditions matter to me. They mean something. I don’t think these changes are fair. For example, our three drum majors in band next year are all going to be male. There are like 300 people in band. If a good portion of band votes for homecoming court, chances are good that two of the drum majors will win Fine Arts Royalty. I’m first chair violin in the orchestra and leader of the orchestra leadership team. Since band is so much bigger than any other fine arts group, their drum majors will win no matter what. Since they’re all boys, at least orchestra and dance students might have a chance if we had to have a girl on the court. I think fewer groups will be represented on the homecoming court — not more. Maybe they should add more categories to get more students involved. My friends and I are planning to vote against the changes to next year’s homecoming.”

■ **CARMELA MCGREGOR, principal**

“I’m a little worried I’ll get some phone calls from parents, and I do have some questions about the changes myself. What if all boys end up on the court? Or all girls? I’m not sure that will accomplish their goal of being inclusive. It’s an interesting decision the student council made to make so many drastic changes to next year’s homecoming. Our administrators will support the students in whatever decision they make in the vote Wednesday. Any time the students use their voices in an effort to make the school better, that’s a win for us as educators.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The school’s homecoming court was established in 1950 with homecoming king and queen. In 1979, beau and sweetheart were added for the runners-up to the king and queen. Then in 1989, the school added prince and princess of clubs, athletics and fine arts.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

State Meet • 2024 News 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. Open with a future lead under the present circumstances. In this instance, the story will be published two days before the student body votes on a proposal to change traditional homecoming activities.

A gender-neutral homecoming court could replace the traditional king and queen if the student body approves the change when they vote on student council's proposal Wednesday.

2. Use direct quotes and use those quotes early in the story. After you introduce quotes, use the transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute the quote. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Hanklin said," not "said Hanklin.") Avoid stacking quotes. Avoid putting two or more quotes from different people together without placing a transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story, and the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

transition

Junior and incoming senior class president Lynsey Hanklin proposed the changes.

direct quote

"In 2024, our society shouldn't divide everything by boys and girls," she said. "There's no such thing as 'boy activities' and 'girl activities' anymore. I feel strongly that our student council should reflect the school community we are here to serve."

transition

In addition to abandoning king, queen, beau and sweetheart titles, the proposed change would replace "prince and princess" of clubs, athletics and fine arts with a more general title, like "athletics royalty." Two seniors would be honored for each category.

direct quote

"With the new court structure, any person in the school will be eligible to win a spot on the homecoming court," Hanklin said. "This is the best way to represent our student body, and I expect the results on Wednesday to show that."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our students" or "our principal" or "Some of our students." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "This idea probably won't work..." or "The district should ..." without attributing that quote to someone. These statements are personal opinions and cannot be made in a news story.

4. Note how in the earlier example of transition/quote, each quote is its own paragraph. Journalistic writing consists mostly of one- and two-sentence paragraphs.

5. End with a strong quote.

SAMPLE STORY

A gender-neutral homecoming court could replace the traditional king and queen if the student body approves the change when they vote on student council's proposal Wednesday.

Junior and incoming senior class president Lynsey Hanklin proposed the changes.

"In 2024, our society shouldn't divide everything by boys and girls," she said. "There's no such thing as 'boy activities' and 'girl activities' anymore. I feel strongly that our student council should reflect the school community we are here to serve."

In addition to abandoning king, queen, beau and sweetheart titles, the proposed change would replace "prince and princess" of clubs, athletics and fine arts with a more general title, like "athletics royalty." Two seniors would be honored for each category.

"With the new court structure, any person in the school will be eligible to win a spot on the homecoming court," Hanklin said. "This is the best way to represent our student body, and I expect the results on Wednesday to show that."

Another proposed change involves removing the powderpuff football game, where girls play flag football and boys are cheerleaders, in favor of a co-ed kickball tournament where any student can play on a team based on grade level.

"Why does it make sense to have a powderpuff football game where we regress to making boys dress up in skirts to cheer on only girls in a flag football game?" Hanklin said. "Even the term 'powderpuff' is making fun of female athletes. A kickball tournament makes so much more sense, and it sounds like more fun, too."

Student council sponsor Edie Chase said newly elected student council leaders are taking a creative approach to improving school activities.

"It will be interesting to see what happens with Wednesday's vote," she said. "I'm not sure it's the slam dunk they think it is, but whichever way things fall, students are learning about the democratic process. Student council leaders have the right attitude about it. They want to represent the will of the student body."

Junior Lisa Jaccar said she and her friends plan to vote against the proposal because it goes against traditions as far back as 1950. She raised concerns about the fairness of fine arts honorees since larger organizations, like band, which has multiple males in leadership roles, could sway the vote and remove opportunities for females in fine arts to be included on the court.

"I'm first chair violin in orchestra and leader of the orchestra leadership team," Jaccar said. "Since band is so much bigger than any other fine arts group, their drum majors will win no matter what. Since they're all boys, at least orchestra and dance students might have a chance if we had to have a girl on the court. I think fewer groups will be represented on the homecoming court — not more."

Sophomore Tony Falco said he's excited to be in a group like student council that can make changes to the school.

"If we make these changes, I'll be a junior and I'll have a hand in reimagining some traditions that will stay with the school for years to come," he said. "That's a pretty cool legacy to leave."

Last week, student council hosted a meeting where the student body could ask questions about the proposed structural changes to next year's homecoming.

"Our administrators will support the students in whatever decision they make in the vote Wednesday," Principal Carmela McGregor said. "Any time the students use their voice in an effort to make the school better, that's a win for us."

Feature Writing

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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 648 students in grades 9-12. This year, sophomore Alfonse Delgado joined the culinary arts program after years of observing and helping his mom in the kitchen. The class is double-blocked for students to prepare and serve meals for catering jobs and box lunches to faculty and staff on Fridays.

During winter break, Delgado applied to be cast in a new Food Network show called “Home Chef Champions.” In February, he received a call to audition via Zoom, and a few weeks later, the casting director notified him that he was selected to compete on the show. The Food Network will fly Delgado and one family member to Los Angeles May 25 to film his episode and compete to win \$15,000. Delgado will compete against three other amateur chefs in three different rounds: appetizer, entree and dessert. During each round, contestants will receive a box of three surprise ingredients they must use to create their plate. Judges will eliminate one contestant during each round, and the last chef remaining will be named Home Chef Champion. His episode is scheduled to air in the fall.

To help him prepare for the competition, the school will have a practice day May 17 when people and groups can present Delgado with their own surprise ingredient boxes to allow him to practice using different ingredients before the show taping. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed May 15.

■ ALFONSE DELGADO, sophomore

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen. My dad died when I was little, so it’s just been the two of us. To save money, we never ordered pizza or went out to eat. We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods. That’s what I think of when I think of cooking at home. For the past year, I’ve been the main chef of the house. It feels pretty good to take what my mom has taught me and do my part to contribute to the household. Each week, I plan a menu and make a grocery list. I love doing it.

“We spent all winter break binge-watching the last season of ‘Home Chef Champions’ before my mom finally convinced me to see if they were taking applications. The Zoom audition was a little awkward. They had me set up my computer in my kitchen and talked to me while I prepared a tamale casserole. My mom came on-camera and tasted my creation at the end of the audition. She took a bite and actually started crying. The casserole was OK. It needed cilantro on top. I think she was just proud to taste the dish that might get me on TV. It must’ve worked.

“I was preparing to season a pork roast when I got the phone call from

■ ALFONSE DELGADO, continued

the casting director. I dropped a jar of apricot preserves on my foot and screamed. I was so thrilled and proud to be doing something special with my cooking. My episode will feature me and three other high school students from around the country. At this point, I don't care that much if I win or lose. I just want to make my mom proud. Don't get me wrong. It would be great to get \$15,000 and put a down payment on a new car for my mom. I'm bringing her with me to film the episode in L.A. She would do anything for me. I hope I get the chance to celebrate her for teaching me everything I know that got me here.

"I'm going to use all the skills from my mom and all the training I've had in culinary arts. It's tough because I have no idea what the surprise ingredients will be. Could be Skittles, peanut butter, pomegranate or Cap'n Crunch. I have no idea. But Ms. Day said to make sure I have salt, fat, acid and heat on each plate and that I taste my food as I go. I think if I follow her words of advice and keep thinking about doing this for my mom, victory could taste pretty sweet."

■ GLADYS DAY, culinary arts teacher

"On the second day of school, I gave students a chicken breast, access to seasonings and a stainless steel pan, just to see what students would come up with. Most of them didn't even get the chicken cooked through. Alfonse tenderized his chicken and seasoned it well. I didn't even need to eat lunch because I finished eating his assignment. We'll be pulling for him when he's in L.A. I've only taught Alfonse for one year, but if I've ever taught any student who can pull off something like this, it's him. I'm sure he'll put together some delicious food for those judges.

"We've been advertising his practice day like a 'Stump the Chef' kind of event. We had different classes and groups sign up for different blocks of time. People will come down to our kitchen and give Alfonse 30 minutes to make something with whatever they put in the box. I know the admin team is planning to bring in some plant-based hamburger meat, American cheese and popcorn. Who knows what he'll make out of these things. I'm sure students will come up with some pretty creative ingredients, and by the time he gets to L.A., he'll be ready."

■ JENAI DELGADO, Alfonse's mother

"When Alfonse was a toddler, I would sit him up on the counter with me when I was gathering ingredients to cook. He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them. He's always been my little assistant in the kitchen. At some point when he was in eighth grade, his cooking got way better than mine. Since he's gotten older, he's taken over all the cooking. His enchiladas are better than any I've ever made. He's also just so funny and creative. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn't surprised he was chosen. Of course, I'm a little biased.

"We've never been to California before. We plan to stay a couple extra days and see some of the sites and take a few studio tours. I'm so grateful to have Alfonse, not just because he's such a good cook. He's a fantastic son."

■ ADRIANA SANCHEZ, senior

"My friends and I are putting together a box with a cucumber, Red Vines and shrimp. I'm not sure I'm going to want to eat whatever Alfonse comes up with, but it will at least be interesting to see what he does. I was in his culinary arts class, and Alfonse was so far ahead of the rest of us. He spends most of the class time just experimenting and trying new techniques out of our textbook. We're all excited for him to represent Leaguetown on the Food Network. "

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

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1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a sophomore who will appear on a Food Network cooking show.

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 close to the prompt. Judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

After spending his winter break binge-watching amateur chefs cook with surprise ingredients on his favorite show, sophomore Alfonse Delgado finally applied to be a contestant on "Home Chef Champions." And months later he will go from viewer to competitor, vying for a \$15,000 prize against three other amateur chefs in Los Angeles.

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

nut graph

As anticipation grows for his episode, which films May 25 and will air this fall, students and faculty can visit the culinary classroom May 17 to present Delgado with surprise ingredient boxes to mimic the competition and help him practice.

direct quote

"I've spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen," Delgado said. "We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods."

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 ("Delgado said" not "said Delgado"). 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

Delgado's mother, Jenai Delgado said he has been in the kitchen since he was a toddler and as his skills improved, he took over all the cooking.

direct quote

"He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them," she said. "He's always been my little assistant in the kitchen. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn't surprised he was chosen. Of course, I'm a little biased."

5. Always use third person. Don't say "our student" or "our students." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "Go Alfonse!" These statements are personal opinions and should not be used 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.

After a full day of practice, Delgado said he'll take all the skills his mom taught him and all the training from culinary arts class and do his best to win the cash prize, which he would use put a down payment on a new car for his mom. But no amount of practice can prepare him for those mystery boxes.

"I have no idea what the surprise ingredients will be," he said. "Could be Skittles, peanut butter, pomegranate or Cap'n Crunch. I have no idea. But Ms. Day said to make sure I have salt, fat, acid and heat on each plate and that I taste my food as I go. I think If I follow her words of advice and keep thinking about doing this for my mom, victory could taste pretty sweet."

SAMPLE STORY

After spending his winter break binge-watching amateur chefs cook with surprise ingredients on his favorite show, sophomore Alfonse Delgado finally applied to be a contestant on “Home Chef Champions.” And soon he will go from viewer to competitor, vying for a \$15,000 prize against three other amateur chefs in Los Angeles.

As anticipation grows for his episode, which films May 25 and will air this fall, students and faculty can visit the culinary classroom May 17 to present Delgado with surprise ingredient boxes to mimic the competition and help him practice.

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen,” Delgado said. “We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods.”

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“He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them,” she said. “He’s always been my little assistant in the kitchen. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn’t surprised he was chosen. Of course, I’m a little biased.”

After watching “Home Chef Champions” with his mom, she was the one who convinced Delgado to apply. He said during his Zoom audition, his mother cried on camera taking a bite of his tamale casserole.

“I think she was just proud to taste the dish that might get me on TV,” he said. “It must’ve worked.”

Delgado said he plans to take his mother with him to L.A. for the audition.

“She would do anything for me,” he said. “I hope I get the chance to celebrate her for teaching me everything I know that got me here.”

As a sophomore, Delgado signed up for culinary arts class to improve his skills even further. His teacher Gladys Day said if any of her students could pull off a win, it’s him.

“On the second day of school, I gave students a chicken breast, access to seasonings and a stainless steel pan, just to see what students would come up with,” she said. “Most of them didn’t even get the chicken cooked through. Alfonse tenderized his chicken and seasoned it well. I didn’t even need to eat lunch, because I finished eating his assignment.”

During the “Stump the Chef” style practice event, groups will sign up for time blocks where Delgado has 30 minutes to create a dish with whatever three ingredients are in the box.

“My friends and I are putting together a box with a cucumber, Red Vines and shrimp,” senior classmate Adriana Sanchez said. “I’m not sure I’m going to want to eat whatever Alfonse comes up with, but it will at least be interesting to see what he does.”

After a full day of practice, Delgado said he’ll take all the skills his mom taught him and all the training from culinary arts class and do his best to win the cash prize, which he would use put a down payment on a new car for his mom. But no amount of practice can prepare him for those mystery boxes.

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Editorial Writing

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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 1,062 students enrolled in grades 9-12. To comply with a 2023 state law requiring at least one armed security guard on every school campus in Texas, the district hired retired police officers to serve as school marshals for the 2023-2024 school year. However, in March, Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti proposed creating a district police department to replace the armed school marshal program and comply with the state law by employing licensed police officers in this role. Currently, when an arrest happens on campus or an investigation begins, the district collaborates with three different municipal law enforcement agencies since parts of Leaguetown ISD extend into both Springfield and Travis City.

The proposal includes hiring a district police chief, dispatcher and one officer for each of the two high school campuses and the three middle school campuses for the next two school years. The district would hire officers for elementary schools starting with the 2026-2027 school year. Fedrigotti estimated the cost of creating the department would top \$1.2 million for infrastructure, equipment, facilities and police vehicles, in addition to the new employee salaries. On a 228-day schedule, the police chief would be paid \$120,000, and the campus officers would start at \$60,000.

The school board will vote Thursday, May 16, on whether to approve Fedrigotti's proposal and establish the Leaguetown ISD Police. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, May 14.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL

If the district cares about safety, a district police department is the best way to meet the requirements of the state law. School marshals can't do all the things a police force can do, like make arrests or investigate crimes. If a major incident were to happen on a campus, having police already on-site would bring peace of mind to parents and students. In addition, the relationship between the school district and local police departments is complicated as administrators have to work with three different departments. Forming a district department simplifies the process and makes safety more efficient.

THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

If the district hires its own police department, who is responsible for ensuring the district itself is following the law? The fact is, sometimes school districts do things that are illegal or unsafe. Citizens depend on police to enforce laws for everyone. If the district is paying police salaries, it would become too easy for police to help the district sweep unethical or illegal activities under the rug rather than sharing information with the public. Furthermore, the cost of the department could be better used to hire additional teachers to improve students' educations.

■ ALBERTO FEDRIGOTTI, superintendent

“We moved enough money around last year to comply with the new state law and employ an armed marshal on every campus in the district. The cost isn’t that much more to take the next step and create a district police department. No additional tax increase would be required for the community.

“When we have a safety incident on a campus and need law enforcement, it takes time to contact municipal police and get someone there. They do a wonderful job, but they have so much more going on than just keeping an eye on the schools. There’s another level of efficiency in that a campus officer can build relationships with the students on campus. They can have access to records and schedules. They know where to go and where things are. Simply having a positive police presence on a school campus goes a long way to promoting safety and preventing crimes.

“On top of everything else, you can’t put a price tag on safety. If you ask any parent in the district, they’ll tell you they will feel safer having police officers right here on campus. It’s as simple as that.”

■ SOPHIE MINSON, English teacher

“The last school I worked at had its own district police department. If you’ve ever heard of the ‘school to prison pipeline,’ this is where it begins. We saw a huge increase in student arrests, suspensions and expulsions for incidents that happened outside of school. These outcomes were definitely more prevalent among students of color and students with disabilities. They even had a student who accused a basketball coach of pushing him against a wall during practice. The kid had a concussion. Instead of an arrest, the coach was transferred to a middle school at the end of the year and was never investigated or arrested. These are the things we can look forward to when we have a permanent police presence.”

■ JARAH RICHARDSON, junior

“It’s weird having the school marshals on campus. We know they aren’t real police. They look a little like regular security guards, but they carry a gun on their belts. Having real police on campus is a good idea. In the worst case scenario, they can break up or even prevent fights in the halls. In the best case, they can help keep us safe and enforce the laws. For example, last year someone stole my wallet out of the locker room. The assistant principal checked the security cameras, and we saw who it was, but two days went by before they could bring the kid in and ask him about it. He got in trouble, but by that time, he had already spent all my cash. I got nothing back. Having police right there could’ve made a difference. I know my parents are happy about the proposal, and they hope the school board passes it.”

■ JENNY SANCHEZ, parent

“Not only would having police on campus make me feel better sending my kids to school, these police officers will set a good example for the young people on campus. Students should develop positive relationships with police officers while they’re young. I love the idea of having police in the community doing positive work to prevent crime rather than just responding to it when it happens.”

■ DAN RYDELL, senior

“It’s sad that we can’t even have school anymore without cops or security around. Seeing police at school would make me feel uncomfortable, like I’m about to get in trouble. I definitely don’t need that kind of distraction when I’m trying to take a test or work on a project. If we have more than \$1 million to spend on police, we could hire additional teachers with that money instead and make a real positive impact on students. This is huge a waste.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights showed that schools with police officers on campus have 30% fewer fights and threats and a 150% increase in weapon detection on campuses. The same study also showed an increase in student suspensions, expulsions and arrests.

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Editorial Writing Contest Tips and Sample Stories

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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 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 PROPOSAL

The district could end the school marshal program and establish its own police department if the school board approves Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti's proposal at its meeting Thursday.

If the school district values the safety of its students, the board will vote in favor of a proposal seeking to improve an inadequate program.

The school marshal program was created to comply with the 2023 state law requiring an armed security guard on every school campus in Texas. Unlike a police officer, a school marshal cannot make arrests or investigate crimes. One student compared the marshals to the likes of a glorified security guard. In the case of one student's stolen wallet, the perpetrator was found on security camera, but two days passed before he was brought in for questioning — during which time all the student's money was spent. A district police department offers necessary and valuable services on-site to students and faculty.

When a safety incident occurs on campus, administrators contact municipal police for assistance. In serving the district, which includes three different municipalities, the system of communication and collaboration with those law enforcement agencies is clunky. Placing designated police on campus will encourage efficiency and preventative operations. A study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights found that campus' police reduced fighting by 30% and increased weapon detection by 150%.

Yet, those in opposition of the proposal are concerned a police presence will encourage arrests, suspensions and unethical behavior. A positive police presence will deter this demand. A campus officer will build relationships with students, set an example of positive behavior and prevent crime rather than respond to it. A small scope of their responsibilities is to break up and prevent fights, but a police officer's mission is to ensure safety and to enforce the laws that protect students.

The district must recognize that the proposal for a district police department encourages an environment where threats are quickly assessed and prevented. If the school board considers student safety a priority, they will vote in favor of the superintendent's proposal.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL

The district could spend an extra \$1.2 million to establish its own police department and remove the school marshal program if the school board approves Superintendent Alberto Fedrigotti's proposal at its meeting Thursday.

If the school board cares about justice, they should reject the superintendent's proposal.

If police are paid employees of the school district, what happens when someone who works for the district breaks the law? Public relations is important to a school organization. The reputation of a school affects real estate values in a community. With police on the district's payroll, what's to keep police from sweeping bad news under the rug rather than sharing it out in the open? One teacher recalled working for a different district with its own police department. An employee pushed a student against a wall and gave him a concussion and rather than pressing charges and removing the employee, administrators moved the employee to another campus to save face. That's not the environment our students deserve.

Fedrigotti said the expense of having a police department isn't much. While \$1.2 million may not be a lot in terms of a school budget, it could be better spent on 15 additional teacher salaries — something that would actually improve students' educational experiences.

It's true that a U.S. Department of Education Study found fewer fights and threats on campuses with real police, but that same study also showed an increase in suspensions, expulsions and arrests. There's a good chance those consequences are for activities that don't even occur on school grounds. Students do not want police to bring their regular business into the school building. An increased police presence makes some students feel even more nervous and uneasy, not less. Students should be focused on assignments and classwork, not worried about what the police are up to out in the halls.

Those supporting the proposal believe the district having its own police department will make them safer. But the school marshal program is already fulfilling the state requirement. These marshals may not be licensed police officers, but they have done their jobs in keeping our school safe this year.

The district should not waste money by establishing its own police department, and the district should reject Fedrigotti's proposal. The school district and law enforcement should continue to operate independently to ensure equal justice under the law — for students and for the district.