

News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2021



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 1,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Two years ago, junior Seth Rogers started a Forensic Science Club with three other students. Science teacher Jared Curly sponsors the club. The club has 32 members who meet twice a month and do various labs and lessons about forensic science. The club also has two field trips a year to the county crime lab where they spend a day with forensic scientists.

This month, Rogers asked Principal Zach Oham if the school could offer a forensic science class for next school year. Curly agreed to teach the class if approved. Oham agreed to put the option on class choice sheets as an extra science class and said if at least 30 students sign up for the class, the school can offer it.

Since the meeting, the club has been promoting the class with posters, school announcements and even a demonstration during lunch. Student choice sheets will be distributed Feb. 15 and will be due back Feb. 19. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Wednesday, Feb. 10.

■ ZACH OHAM, principal

“Two years ago, I was a little skeptical when Seth started the club. I wasn’t sure how much interest there would be for a science club. I am happy to say I was wrong. Not only has the club grown each year, but what they learn blows my mind. Mr. Curly told me that the club follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and is almost halfway through all of them. The club only meets twice a month, but members work on lessons on their own and meet outside of regular club hours. These are dedicated students.

“I would be thrilled if the class makes, but getting 30 students to commit on their choice sheet is not easy. Even though the club has 32 members, I don’t think every member can sign up. In fact, I am certain seven of them won’t because they are seniors this year. Highly motivated students may not have room in their schedules for an elective science class that does not earn them a weighted grade. The class we will offer is not an Advanced Placement course.”

■ SETH ROGERS, junior and club president

“Since Mr. Oham agreed to put the forensic science class on the choice sheet, the club has promoted it big time. Even if all of our eligible members take the class, we won’t have enough students, but some of our club members won’t be able to fit the class into their schedule.

“If we were able to offer an AP forensic science class, it would get enough students, but that course doesn’t exist. Plus, I want students to learn and enjoy the class. That’s not easy to do in AP classes.

“A lot of students asked me what they would learn about in the class. I

■ SETH ROGERS (cont.)

love answering that question. For the club, Mr. Curly has followed the state curriculum, and it's been awesome. We have analyzed blood spatter at a simulated crime scene and explored toxicology laboratory procedures. We have examined investigations such as initial response, point of arrival, priorities, emergency situations and protection of the crime scene. I have to say everything that we have done in the club has been fascinating and hands-on. Our field trips to the crime labs are the best part. If forensic science becomes a class, the county crime lab has already agreed to partner with Mr. Curly to offer class speakers, field trips and even internships for students. When I talk about the class, students get excited. I just hope they remember that excitement when they select their classes for next year."

■ JARED CURLY, science teacher

"Being the club sponsor for the Forensic Science Club is the best part of my job. I didn't know much about forensic science when Seth asked me to be the sponsor. He pointed me in the right direction, and I fell in love with the science. It's such a hands-on science. Students understand and connect to the material. I literally have to kick students out of club meetings because they want to stay and learn more. How often does that happen? This summer, regardless of whether we have the class or not, I am going to work at the county crime lab for a month to learn even more.

"Students who are interested in criminology, science or even human nature should sign up for the class. I promise they won't be bored."

■ JILL GREGORIO, senior

"I am bummed that I won't be able to take the class. I've been in the club for two years, and I love it. I am a big crime show nerd, and the club lets me dive into all of the things I see on TV. The blood splatter lab was my favorite so far, but I love everything we do and learn in the club. I plan to major in criminology next year at college. I don't think I would be doing that without this club."

■ DENNY ARCURI, freshman

"The class sounds cool. I want to sign up for it, but I don't know if I will have room in my schedule. I am in athletics and debate, and I don't want to give up either of those."

■ JOHN TAYLOR, sophomore

"I had no idea we had a Forensic Science Club, so I am pumped they did that demonstration during lunch. I am going to join the club next month and sign up for the class. I love hands-on classes, and this stuff sounds interesting. We need more electives like this at our school."

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rogers said regardless of whether enough students sign up for the class next year, the club will continue.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

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NEWS WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY

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. Open with a future lead under the present circumstances. In this instance, the story comes out before the students choose their classes for next year.

After two years as a club, forensic science will become a class next year if at least 30 students sign up for it. Principal Zach Oham agreed to put the option as a science elective on the class choice sheet, which will be distributed on Feb. 15 and due back on Feb. 19.

2. Use direct quotes and get those quotes early in the story. After you introduce quotes, use the transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Rogers said," not "said Rogers.") 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 Seth Rogers proposed the idea to Oham after founding and leading the Forensic Science Club for two years. Science teacher Jared Curly sponsors the club and agreed to teach the course if it is approved.

direct quote

"It's such a hands-on science," Curly said. "Students understand and connect to the material. I literally have to kick students out of club meetings because they want to stay and learn more. How often does that happen?"

transition

The club is actively promoting the class option with posters, a demonstration during lunch and announcements.

direct quote

"Even if all of our eligible members take the class, we won't have enough students, but some of our club members won't be able to fit the class into their schedule," Rogers said.

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 class is so cool..." without attributing that quote to someone or "The school should ..." 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. Don't be afraid to use one- and two-sentence paragraphs. Journalistic writing consists mostly of one and two-sentence paragraphs.

SAMPLE STORY

After two years as a club, forensic science will become a class next year if at least 30 students sign up for it. Principal Zach Oham agreed to put the option as a science elective on the class choice sheet, which will be distributed on Feb. 15 and due back on Feb. 19.

“I would be thrilled if the class makes, but getting 30 students to commit on their choice sheet is not easy,” Oham said. “Highly motivated students may not have room in their schedule for an elective science class that does not earn them a weighted grade.”

Junior Seth Rogers proposed the idea to Oham after founding and leading the Forensic Science Club for two years. Science teacher Jared Curly sponsors the club and agreed to teach the course if it is approved.

“It’s such a hands-on science,” Curly said. “Students understand and connect to the material. I literally have to kick students out of club meetings because they want to stay and learn more. How often does that happen?”

The club is actively promoting the class option with posters, a demonstration during lunch and announcements.

“Even if all of our eligible members take the class, we won’t have enough students, but some of our club members won’t be able to fit the class into their schedule,” Rogers said.

While he’s promoting the class, Rogers said many students have asked him what they would learn in a forensic science class.

“I love answering that question,” he said. “For the club, Mr. Curly has followed the state curriculum, and it’s been awesome. We have analyzed blood spatter at a simulated crime scene and explored toxicology laboratory procedures. We have examined investigations such as initial response, point of arrival, priorities, emergency situations and protection of the crime scene.”

The county crime lab also agreed to partner with the class if it makes and will provide speakers, field trips and internships for students, Rogers said.

“When I talk about the class, students get excited,” he said. “I just hope they remember that excitement when they select their classes for next year.”

Whether the class makes or not, Curly said he will work at the county crime lab this summer to learn even more.

“Students who are interested in criminology, science or even human nature should sign up for the class,” he said. “I promise they won’t be bored.”

Sophomore John Taylor said after watching the demonstration in the cafeteria he is going to join the club and sign up for the class.

“I love hands-on classes, and this stuff sounds interesting,” he said. “We need more electives like this at our school.”