

News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2025



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 4,734 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In 2021, the school board approved a proposal that would fund free school breakfast and lunch for all students in the district. About 34.5% of students in the district are economically disadvantaged. Since then, the district has seen a 4% improvement in average daily attendance and an overall bump in student performance on end of course exams and class performance.

After negotiating a partnership with the district's food supplier, Fresh Texas Foods, Superintendent Mark Rothstein announced Dec. 9 a proposal that would provide dinner at all campuses in the district for any student who wanted one. If the proposal passes, the district would serve a hot meal 15 minutes after the dismissal bell rings. After-school athletics and fine arts practice, along with any other after-school activities, would be required to allow students to eat dinner before those activities begin.

The meal would be served in the regular dining hall and, in accordance with state nutrition regulations, would include meat or meat alternative, grains, fruit, vegetables and dairy. Alternative food lines such as stir fry, pizza and sandwiches will not be open for dinner. Additionally, students must have been present in school that day to qualify for a free meal.

The school board will vote on Rothstein's proposal at its meeting Thursday, Jan. 9. You are writing for the issue of the press to be distributed Jan. 7.

■ **MARK ROTHSTEIN, superintendent**

"Nutrition plays a key role in a student's ability to learn during the school day. We've seen this in study after study. We put that theory into practice when we started our free breakfast and lunch program and saw significant results. This district is committed to ensuring that our students have access to healthy menu options that taste great for breakfast, lunch and now hopefully dinner.

"When the district signed its last contract with our supplier, Fresh Texas Foods, I noticed they had a section on their website about ending childhood hunger. They have a program where they work with districts to help offset the costs of offering free dinners to students in communities across the state. We met with them and thought this partnership might make a good fit for us.

"While this opportunity will be available to all students who want to take advantage of it, we know not every student will have dinner at school. Based on our estimates, the program will cost the district about \$1.5 million per year. That may sound like a lot of money, but in terms of a school budget, it's not when you consider the difference this change could make for some of the families in our community and a student's ability to learn. We want students to come to class with full bellies, after having had a good night's sleep because they aren't worried about where they'll get their next meal."

■ **HANNAH HILLIER, junior**

“I know my dad would have dinner ready for us when we got home from school if he could, but he works at night. With his late shift starting at 5 p.m., a lot of times he doesn’t have time to worry about dinner for us. It’s been my job to help out with dinner for my siblings. I pick up frozen pizzas. I can cook mac and cheese, and we have some other frozen things in the freezer. If I didn’t have to worry about making dinner for my brother and sister, I would be able to join Art Club or have more time to do my homework. It’s hard to have enough time to get everything done as it is. I hope the district comes through on this. My family could use it.”

■ **ROBERT SUMMERS, Director of Child Nutrition**

“About one out of every five students in Texas faces food insecurity. That means that a person is uncertain where their next meal may be coming from. Food insecurity can cause anxiety and other mental health issues that affect students in their daily lives.

“Any student can have breakfast and lunch at school, but until now, our students have always had that third meal of the day at home. But the fact is, not every student goes home to a freshly cooked meal on the table. I’m proud that Superintendent Rothstein has proposed this partnership to help students alleviate food insecurity and anxiety that could be keeping them from successful learning at school.”

■ **JACKSON MERRITT, senior**

“I can’t imagine ever having dinner at school. I know there are kids who struggle with food, so they might want that opportunity. I don’t. When the bell rings, I want to get home as soon as possible. I’m OK with the district spending money on it, though, if they think it will help others.”

■ **MITCHELL YEPURI, girls basketball coach**

“Many of our players don’t even realize they have teammates who are worried about food. They have teammates who are homeless. They have teammates who don’t get that extra support. I’m glad our district has discovered one of the things they can do that will not only improve our test scores but also will improve the overall well-being of our school community. I know we have other needs in our district, but I can’t think of a better use of our budget than this.”

■ **MILLIE STUESSY, parent of a sophomore**

“I’m so happy the district is adopting this program. As a parent, I do what I can for my son’s friends. I’ve purchased bags of groceries for them to take home. I try to cook nutritious and filling meals when they come over. When one of my son’s friends stayed the night last year, I ran them over to Whataburger to get some late-night food. He asked if he could cut his burger in half and drop it off at his house for his 11-year-old brother on the way home. This kid felt guilty knowing that he was having a good dinner, and his brother wasn’t. I told him that we would get a couple of extra meals on the way out, and we could drop them off. I wish more districts would see this and do something. I would rather see money spent on programs like this than some of the other things our district spends their money on. This program will make a real difference.”

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

Invitational A • 2025 News Writing Contest Tips and Sample Story

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during 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 the most timely lead, given the current circumstances, probably the future event or events. In this instance, the story will be published before the school board votes on a proposal to provide free dinner to students.

The district could begin serving free dinner for students at school if the school board approves Superintendent Mark Rothstein's proposal at its meeting Thursday.

2. Use direct quotes and use those quotes early in the story. Start with the most important interview to 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 ("Rothstein said," not "said Rothstein.") Avoid putting two or more quotes from different people together without placing a transition between them (stacking quotes). Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the story flow, and that the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

transition

After the district began providing free breakfast and lunch to students in 2021, the district saw a 4% improvement in average daily attendance and an additional bump in test scores and class performance.

direct quote

"About one out of every five students in Texas faces food insecurity," director of child nutrition Robert Summers said. "That means that a person is uncertain where their next meal may be coming from. Food insecurity can cause the anxiety and other mental health issues that affect students in their daily lives."

transition

The proposal is in partnership with the district's food supplier, Fresh Texas Foods, which has a program working with school districts to offset costs of offering free dinners. If approved, the program would cost the district about \$1.5 million per year.

direct quote

"That may sound like a lot of money," Rothstein said. "In terms of a school budget, it's not when you consider the difference this change could make for some

of the families in our community and a student's ability to learn.”

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 that wraps up the story.

SAMPLE STORY

The district could begin serving free dinner for students at school if the school board approves Superintendent Mark Rothstein's proposal at its meeting Thursday.

The cafeteria would serve hot meals to students present during the school day, starting 15 minutes after dismissal. Students participating in after-school groups would be permitted to eat before their activities begin.

"Nutrition plays a key role in a student's ability to learn during the school day," Rothstein said. "This district is committed to ensuring that our students have access to healthy menu options that taste great for breakfast, lunch and now hopefully dinner."

After the district began providing free breakfast and lunch to students in 2021, the district saw a 4% improvement in average daily attendance and an additional bump in test scores and class performance.

"About one out of every five students in Texas faces food insecurity," Director of Child Nutrition Robert Summers said. "That means that a person is uncertain where their next meal may be coming from. Food insecurity can cause anxiety and other mental health issues that affect students in their daily lives."

The proposal is in partnership with the district's food supplier, Fresh Texas Foods, which has a program working with school districts to offset costs of offering free dinners. If approved, the program would cost the district about \$1.5 million per year.

"That may sound like a lot of money," Rothstein said. "In terms of a school budget, it's not when you consider the difference this change could make for some of the families in our community and a student's ability to learn."

Junior Hannah Hillier said since her dad works late shifts, she is responsible for providing dinner for her siblings.

"I know my dad would have dinner ready for us when we got home from school if he could," she said. "I pick up frozen pizzas. I can cook mac and cheese, and we have some other frozen things in the freezer. If I didn't have to worry about making dinner for my brother and sister, I would be able to join Art Club or have more time to do my homework. I hope the district comes through on this. My family could use it."

Girls basketball coach Mitchell Yepuri said a program like this could improve the overall well-being of the school community.

"Many of our players don't even realize they have teammates who are worried about food," he said. "They have teammates who don't get that extra support. I know we have other needs in our district, but I can't think of a better use of our budget than this."

Rothstein said despite the cost, the program could do a lot to improve student learning.

"We want students to come to class with full bellies," he said, "after having had a good night's sleep because they aren't worried about where they'll get their next meal."