

News Writing

Invitational B 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 2,600 students enrolled in grades 9-12. After the community voted against a school bond package in 2021, the school has become increasingly overcrowded, having grown from a school population of 1,500 to 2,600 in three years. This year, students do not fit in the cafeteria during the two scheduled lunch periods. Students who don't get a chair typically sit on the floor, on the ground outside or in the main hallway to eat their lunches. As a result, custodians have had to work overtime to clean food and trash after each lunch.

In an effort to alleviate these problems, Principal Margaret Zwigoff proposed allowing some seniors the privilege of off-campus lunch. Zwigoff said administrators hope if some of the 380 seniors take advantage of the program, it will reduce overcrowding at lunch.

To earn off-campus lunch, seniors must be passing all classes, have no unpaid debts with the district and have a form signed to gain permission from a parent or guardian. Approved students will receive a sticker with a QR code, which they will place on the back of their ID cards and scan with the front office before leaving for the 40-minute lunch period.

The first day seniors will be allowed to leave campus during lunch is Monday, Feb. 12. You are writing for the issue of the press to be distributed Friday, Feb. 9.

■ MARGARET ZWIGOFF, principal

"District officials and the bond committee saw this problem coming a mile away. Leaguetown High School hasn't been renovated or refurbished at all since 1983. Our community had the opportunity in 2021 to vote in favor of a bond that would renovate Leaguetown High School and almost double the square footage of our campus. That didn't happen. Now, we're beginning to feel just one of the effects of overcrowding in that we simply don't have enough seats for everyone at lunch. I hope our community remembers this the next time they're faced with a bond issue in the voting booth.

"Sending seniors off campus isn't ideal. I worry about the safety of our students driving around and hurrying to get back for class. I worry about students coming in late to class or bringing food back and trying to eat in the classrooms. But the fact of the matter is, it isn't healthy or safe to have students eating lunch on the ground. It's embarrassing when parents or community members visit our campus and have to see the state of our lunches.

"We also can no longer afford to pay our custodial staff overtime to clean the additional areas left a mess after the lunch periods. We've been finding food in classrooms and in the library. Again, it's not ideal, but I'm hoping the solution will remove some of that pressure during lunch."

■ **ALLISON STONE, custodian**

“I hope Ms. Zwigoff’s plan works. It’s taken us twice as long to clean after lunch as it did last year. We have to cover the library, the main hallway and even go outside to clean out there. Most days, I can’t clock out until an hour or two after my regular shift is supposed to end. And now we have another issue — bugs. We haven’t had a cockroach problem in years, but sure enough, sometimes I go in a classroom and turn on the lights and see those little guys scatter. It’s because kids eat their lunch all over the building now.”

■ **ENRIQUE FERNANDEZ, sophomore**

“I don’t even eat lunch anymore. I’ve just been studying in the library during my lunch period. There are too many people. You have to step over them just to get inside the cafeteria. I think they should do more to make students keep the cafeteria clean. They’re the ones making the huge messes every day.

“I do hope it clears up a little if some of the seniors are allowed to go off campus. If it doesn’t, maybe they should open it up to other grade levels to go off campus. I get all A’s and pay for my parking pass at school, just like all the seniors. People like me should be able to go off campus too. In the meantime, one of my senior friends has already agreed to bring me Chipotle whenever I want.”

■ **ELIZABETH COEN, senior**

“Lunches have been totally disgusting this year. After lunch, the whole school smells like trash. After Monday, I’ll never set foot in that cafeteria again. My friends and I are already planning to go to Whataburger on Monday for our first off-campus lunch.”

■ **SERGEANT CEDRIC HOLMES, student resource officer**

“I’m not in favor of the off-campus lunch idea. In other areas of the state where off-campus lunch is common, we see a prevalence of car accidents and speeding. We have a large number of new drivers all trying to get to the same place at the same time as quickly as they can. They don’t drive defensively, and that’s when we’ll see a lot of problems. I hope they find another solution soon. It’s not worth losing someone in an accident. In the meantime, we’ll have extra officers on patrol around the school and fast food restaurants nearby to try and keep the speeds down.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

In 2021, voters rejected a \$80 million bond proposal that included major renovations to the high school, including a new cafeteria space, performing arts center and gymnasium.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

Invitational B • 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 before the school allows seniors to go off campus for lunch.

Because of overcrowding in the cafeteria, some seniors will be allowed to leave campus during lunch starting Monday.

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 ("Zwigoff said," not "said Zwigoff.") 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

The school has not been renovated since 1983. In 2021, voters rejected an \$80 million bond proposal where renovations would have included a gymnasium, performing arts center and a new cafeteria space. Since then, the school has grown from 1,500 to 2,600 students.

direct quote

"I don't even eat lunch anymore," sophomore Enrique Fernandez said. "I've just been studying in the library during my lunch period. There are too many people. You have to step over them just to get inside the cafeteria."

transition

Zwigoff said the school can no longer afford to pay custodial staff overtime to clean after lunch periods. Custodian Allison Stone said this year it takes staff twice as long to clean lunch since they have to clean the library, main hallway and outside where students eat.

direct quote

"And now we have another problem — bugs," Stone said. "We haven't had a cockroach problem in years, but sure enough, sometimes I go into a classroom and turn on the lights and see those little guys scatter."

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.

SAMPLE STORY

Because of overcrowding in the cafeteria, some seniors will be allowed to leave campus during lunch starting Monday.

“Now, we’re beginning to feel just one of the effects of overcrowding in that we simply don’t have enough seats for everyone at lunch,” Principal Margaret Zwigoff said. “I hope our community remembers this the next time they’re faced with a bond issue in the voting booth.”

The school has not been renovated since 1983. In 2021, voters rejected an \$80 million bond proposal where renovations would have included a gymnasium, performing arts center and a new cafeteria space. Since then, the school has grown from 1,500 to 2,600 students.

“I don’t even eat lunch anymore,” sophomore Enrique Fernandez said. “I’ve just been studying in the library during my lunch period. There are too many people. You have to step over them just to get inside the cafeteria.”

Zwigoff said the school can no longer afford to pay custodial staff overtime to clean after lunch periods. Custodian Allison Stone said this year it takes staff twice as long to clean lunch since they have to clean the library, main hallway and outside where students eat.

“And now we have another problem — bugs,” Stone said. “We haven’t had a cockroach problem in years, but sure enough, sometimes I go into a classroom and turn on the lights and see those little guys scatter.”

To qualify for off-campus lunch, seniors must be passing all classes, have no unpaid debts with the district and have a form signed with permission from a parent or guardian. Students will then receive a QR code to place on the back of their ID cards to scan at the front office before leaving.

“After lunch, the whole school smells like trash,” senior Elizabeth Coen said. “After Monday, I’ll never set foot in that cafeteria again. My friends and I are already planning to go to Whataburger on Monday for our first off-campus lunch.”

Student Resource Officer Sergeant Cedric Holmes said there is a prevalence of car accidents and speeding in other areas of the state where off-campus lunch is available. Extra officers will patrol around school and nearby restaurants to keep driving speeds down.

“Sending seniors off campus isn’t ideal,” Zwigoff said. “But the fact of the matter is, it isn’t healthy or safe to have students eating lunch on the ground. It’s embarrassing when parents or community members visit our campus and have to see the state of our lunches.”