

# News Writing

District 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 960 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Last week, Superintendent Jason Quinto called Principal Adam Hucks to a meeting to tell him he was being put on leave pending an investigation into his behavior. During the conversation, Quinto pulled up a video on his phone of Hucks confessing to selling drugs to students. Quinto said the video had been circulating among students on social media, and he had received several complaints from parents who had seen the video. Hucks asked Quinto to play the video several more times. While the video looked real, Hucks said he had never made any confession video and had never sold drugs.

Quinto called in Director of Technology Tracy Upton, who noticed that the lip movements did not always match up with the words Hucks was saying and that the lighting on his face was different than the lighting in the background. The three determined that the video was likely created using artificial intelligence.

Quinto sent a message to parents that afternoon, explaining that the video was not real and further discussing the dangers of artificial intelligence on social media. The email said police were opening an investigation to determine who created the video. In Texas, a person who creates and shares a fake video of another person can be charged with harassment.

The district and the Leaguetown Police Department will host an informational meeting during last period at 1:40 p.m. Monday, March 31, for parents and students about online safety and artificial intelligence. You are writing for the issue of the press to be distributed March 27.

## ■ JASON QUINTO, superintendent

“After the first parent email, I did a search for the video on Instagram. Sure enough, there it was. It had been posted for 14 hours and already had more than 20,000 views, with hundreds of likes and shares. When I called in Mr. Hucks, I was ready to fire him. When I played Mr. Hucks the video, his face went completely pale, and I could see tears welling up in his eyes. He immediately said, ‘That’s not me.’ And I believed him right away.

“The video looked so real. I called our director of technology into the conference room, and we all watched it a few more times together. She was the one who noticed the lips not always lining up with the words, and she told us all how common these AI videos are becoming. I’m not a big social media person, but I know how important online interactions are for our students. We have planned a community event, so we can make parents and students aware of the damage these types of posts can do. Online harassment can lead to fines and jail time for the people creating and posting. It’s time our students take some accountability for their actions online.”

### ■ **ADAM HUCKS, principal**

“Obviously, it was a shock to be called into Mr. Quinto’s office in such an urgent way. When I saw my face on that video talking about selling drugs to my own students, I felt sick to my stomach. I’ve never even tried drugs, let alone sold them. Police said they are assuming a student is responsible for creating the video, and it should be easy for them to find out who posted it. I’m not mad about a student doing this, but I am concerned about our students.

“If a student is upset about a decision I’ve made and wants to get revenge on me, they can write me a letter directly. Come to my office, and let’s talk. As a principal, I have to do things that students don’t always like. That’s part of my job. But another part of my job is educating students and preparing them for real life. That means they need to know there are consequences for these types of actions. I don’t deserve to have lies and rumors spread about me that could ruin my career forever. I have a wife and children who don’t deserve to see fake things about me online. I’m glad Mr. Quinto supported me and is hosting the information session about online safety. I hope our students heed the advice they receive.”

### ■ **ALLY TAUBER, senior**

“I saw the video of Mr. Hucks going around, but I’m not sure who originally posted it. It was posted by a new account. It got shared so many times just that first day. I could tell pretty quickly that it wasn’t real. Plus, if Mr. Hucks was a drug dealer, why would he say so on video? It didn’t make any sense. About the third time I watched it, I could see the background looked a little fake and fuzzy, so then I figured it was definitely fake. I don’t know Mr. Hucks super well, but he seems like a nice enough guy. I feel bad that he had to deal with all the backlash from a stupid, fake video. However, the older generations need to learn more about what online life is like. Fake videos and photos are everywhere. Half my life happens on my phone, for better or worse. I’d expect this type of thing to start happening more.”

### ■ **JOSUE SANCHEZ, parent of a junior**

“My son texted me a link to the video of Mr. Hucks making his confession. It looked real to me, so I did send an email to the superintendent’s office immediately. I’m relieved they completed the investigation and found no wrongdoing. I have always had respect for Mr. Hucks, and I’m glad he can remain principal of the school.”

### ■ **TRACY UPTON, director of technology**

“Artificial intelligence and social media are a part of the daily lives of students. We can regulate phone use during class time. We can block certain apps and websites on school devices. We can take every measure out there to prevent situations like this, but the best thing we can do to prevent this is to educate the community about the dangers of social media and online harassment. It’s not going away. Between classes, or when students get home, what do they do? Get on their phones. Scroll social media. We can’t prevent that. But we can arm them with the tools to protect themselves and be safe when they’re online.”

### ■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

In Texas, online harassment is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to 180 days in jail and up to a \$2,000 fine.

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

## District Meet • 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 an informational meeting about artificial intelligence.

After a fake video falsely implicating Principal Adam Hucks of selling drugs to students went viral, the district and Leaguetown Police Department will host a meeting during last period Monday to raise awareness about online safety and the risks of artificial intelligence.

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 ("Quinto said," not "said Quinto.") 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 receiving parent complaints about the video, Quinto watched it and discovered the video had amassed 20,000 views in 14 hours. He then called Hucks to a meeting to inform him that he would be placed on leave pending an investigation.

### **direct quote**

"When I played Mr. Hucks the video, his face went completely pale and I could see tears welling up in his eyes," Quinto said. "He immediately said, 'That's not me.' And I believed him right away."

### **transition**

When Hucks denied the video's authenticity, Director of Technology Tracy Upton identified mismatched lip movements and confirmed the video looked fake and was likely made using artificial intelligence.

### **direct quote**

"We can take every measure out there to prevent situations like this," Upton said, "but the best thing we can do to prevent this is to educate the community about the dangers of social media and online harassment."

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

After a fake video falsely implicating Principal Adam Hucks of selling drugs to students went viral, the district and Leaguetown Police Department will host a meeting during last period Monday to raise awareness about online safety and the risks of artificial intelligence.

“We have planned a community event so we can make parents and students aware of the damage these posts can do,” Superintendent Jason Quinto said. “Online harassment can lead to fines and jail time for the people creating and posting. It’s time our students take some accountability for their actions.”

After receiving parent complaints about the video, Quinto watched it and discovered the video had amassed 20,000 views in 14 hours. He then called Hucks to a meeting to inform him that he would be placed on leave pending an investigation.

“When I played Mr. Hucks the video, his face went completely pale, and I could see tears welling up in his eyes,” Quinto said. “He immediately said, ‘That’s not me.’ And I believed him right away.”

When Hucks denied the video’s authenticity, Director of Technology Tracy Upton identified mismatched lip movements and confirmed the video looked fake and was likely made using artificial intelligence.

“We can take every measure out there to prevent situations like this,” Upton said, “but the best thing we can do to prevent this is to educate the community about the dangers of social media and online harassment.”

Senior Ally Tauber said she saw the video going around, but said she could tell quickly it was not real.

“If Mr. Hucks was a drug dealer, why would he say so on video?” she said. “It didn’t make any sense. About the third time I watched it, I could see the background looked a little fake and fuzzy, so then I figured it was definitely fake.”

Online harassment is classified as a Class B Misdemeanor in Texas, carrying a penalty of up to 180 days in jail and a fine of up to \$2,000. Hucks said he isn’t mad about the video, but it concerns him that it might have been made by a student.

“As a principal, I have to do things that students don’t always like,” Hucks said. “But another part of my job is educating students and preparing them for real life. That means they need to know there are consequences for these actions.”

Meanwhile, Upton said taking steps like the informational meeting are an important part of preventing situations like this from happening in the future.

“It’s not going away,” she said. “Between classes, or when students get home, what do they do? Get on their phones. Scroll social media. We can’t prevent that. But we can arm them with the tools to protect themselves and be safe when they’re online.”