

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."