

News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2018



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, located in Central Texas, has 1,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In September, Texas Department of Transportation officials approached Principal Stan Lee about a possible opportunity for students at the school. TxDOT wanted a group of students to produce a safety video for teen drivers. Two students from Leaguetown were killed and two were critically injured last year in three separate car accidents.

Lee proposed giving the project to the advanced broadcast class, taught by Mena Gallegos, and TxDOT agreed. The students in the class wrote, directed, starred in and produced three four-minute public service videos focused on the five most common risk factors for teen drivers — speeding, using a cell phone (both texting and talking), driving under the influence, the presence of teen passengers and lack of driving experience.

The class finished the videos in mid-December and sent them off to TxDOT for its stamp of approval. Last week, Ximena Topa, the public information officer for TxDOT, came to the class to praise the students for their work. She also described the next step — distributing the videos to high schools across the state on March 1, before students go on spring break.

Topa also gave the class permission to show the videos to the school before they are released statewide. The class will premiere the three videos three days in a row during second period starting Monday, Feb. 5. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, Feb. 1.

■ STAN LEE, principal

“Last year was an exceptionally tough year for our students. We’ve never lost so many students in one year. When TxDOT approached me, I jumped on the opportunity. I will support anything that keeps our students safer on the road. Ms. Gallegos agreed 100 percent and so did her students.

“I’ve seen the videos, and they are perfection. Honestly, it’s hard to believe the students did all of the work. That’s how good the videos are. The students took this job seriously and created stellar pieces of work with spot-on messages for our students.”

■ XIMENA TOPA, TxDOT public information officer

“TxDOT has never done anything like this before, but I am so glad we did. Last year, more than 6,000 teens were killed in vehicle crashes. That’s 200 more than the previous year. The number is creeping higher every year. TxDOT has safety videos, but we don’t have safety videos created by students for students. That will make a difference. The videos are so professional, but they also are perfect for students. I think these videos will reach students much better than anything my office has created. I am thrilled at the outcome of this partnership.”

■ MENA GALLEGOS, broadcast teacher

“When Mr. Lee told me about this opportunity, I knew it would be a great experience for my advanced students, but I wasn’t positive they would embrace it. They did. In fact, the first day the entire class showed up after school to start brainstorming ideas. I had to kick the students out of my room at 6 p.m.

“The final products are inspirational. They are informative and emotional, and they were created completely by the students. TxDOT gave us the five risk factors to focus on. My students were on their own after that. These videos are going to save lives. I am sure of it.”

■ CEDRIC BROWN, junior

“I am so proud of the videos. I co-wrote one of the videos, and I star in another one. I’ve never done much acting. I was worried about being in front of the camera. One of my best friends was killed in a car accident last year, so I swallowed my fears for him. His favorite saying was, ‘Suck it up, Buttercup.’ And that’s exactly what I did. I can’t wait to watch the rest of the students’ reactions to the videos. I hope they listen to our message — really listen.”

■ FRANNIE EVANOVICH, sophomore

“This was definitely a labor of love. Everyone in our class knew someone who was killed or hurt in a car accident last year. If we make one student stop texting while driving, or one student who has been drinking gives the keys to a sober friend, then it’s a win for us — all of us. Some of us in the class calculated how many hours after school we worked on these videos. I was shocked. We all worked more than 100 hours after school to produce them, but every minute was worth it.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

TxDOT donated \$3,000 to the school for the broadcast program to cover any costs of the video.

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 videos will air Monday.

During second period next week, the school will premiere three teen driving safety videos created by the advanced broadcast class. Then on March 1, the Texas Department of Transportation will release the videos to the rest of the high schools in the state.

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 ("Lee said," not "said Lee.") 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

Last year, two students were killed and two were critically injured in three separate car accidents. It was an "exceptionally tough year" for students, Lee said.

direct quote

"We've never lost so many students in one year," he said. "When TxDOT approached me, I jumped on the opportunity. I will support anything that keeps our students safer on the road."

transition

The project includes three four-minute videos focused on speeding, using a cell phone (both texting and talking), driving under the influence, the presence of teen passengers and lack of driving experience.

direct quote

"Last year, more than 6,000 teens were killed in vehicle crashes," TxDOT public information officer Ximena Topa said. "That's 200 more than the previous year. The number is creeping higher every year."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our students" or "Our principal Stan Lee" or "Some of our students..." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "The students are 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

The school will premiere three teen driving safety videos created by the advanced broadcast class during second period next week. Then on March 1, the Texas Department of Transportation will release the videos to the rest of the high schools in the state.

In September, the Texas Department of Transportation officials asked Principal Stan Lee if students would be willing to create driving safety videos for all Texas high schools. Lee spoke with broadcast teacher Mena Gallegos and her advanced classes took on the project.

“TxDOT gave us the five risk factors to focus on,” Gallegos said. “My students were on their own after that. These videos are going to save lives. I am sure of it.”

Last year, two students were killed and two were critically injured in three separate car accidents. It was an “exceptionally tough year” for students, Lee said.

“We’ve never lost so many students in one year,” he said. “When TxDOT approached me, I jumped on the opportunity. I will support anything that keeps our students safer on the road.”

The project includes three four-minute videos focused on speeding, using a cell phone (both texting and talking), driving under the influence, the presence of teen passengers and lack of driving experience.

“Last year, more than 6,000 teens were killed in vehicle crashes,” TxDOT public information officer Ximena Topa said. “That’s 200 more than the previous year. The number is creeping higher every year.”

Topa said this is the first time TxDOT has had safety videos created by students for students.

“I think these videos will reach students much better than anything my office has created,” she said. “The videos are so professional, but they also are perfect for students.”

The students in the class wrote, directed, starred in and produced the videos.

“I am so proud of the videos,” said junior Cedric Brown who was nervous about acting in the videos. “One of my best friends was killed in a car accident last year, so I swallowed my fears for him. I can’t wait to watch the rest of the students’ reactions to the videos. I hope they listen to our message — really listen.”

TxDOT donated \$3,000 to the class to cover the costs of making the videos.

“Honestly, it’s hard to believe the students did all of the work,” Lee said. “That’s how good the videos are. But the students took this job seriously and created stellar pieces of work with spot-on messages for our students.”

The students in the broadcast class worked more than 100 hours after school to produce the videos.

“This was definitely a labor of love,” sophomore Frannie Evanovich said. “Everyone in our class knew someone who was killed or hurt in a car accident last year. If we make one student stop texting while driving, or one student who has been drinking gives the keys to a sober friend, then it’s a win for us — all of us.”