

# News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2023



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 2,700 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In October, a bus driver was put on leave after dropping off a kindergarten student at the end of his street with no adults present at the bus stop. The child was found at 5:15 p.m. after he had wandered around his neighborhood for more than an hour trying to find his house. After a two-week investigation, the bus driver was permitted to return to work after completing an additional safety training course.

On Jan. 23, the district will implement a bus card system. Students will have to swipe an identification card when entering or exiting a school bus. Parents will be able to access information on an app called Dismissal X-Press, including a timestamp of when their child enters or exits a school bus.

Students at Leaguetown High School are already required to wear their school-issued ID card on a lanyard and will use the same card when entering or exiting a school bus. Students who lose their ID card must visit the main office and pay a \$10 replacement fee for a new card. High school students who attempt to board a bus without an ID card will not be permitted to ride. Elementary and kindergarten students will be issued new ID cards and will have them clipped to their backpacks to avoid misplacing them. Teachers will ensure all bus riders have their cards before dismissal.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Jan. 20.

## ■ LYNN KUYKENDALL, superintendent

“School employees should not leave elementary children unattended. Period. Student safety is our top priority, so we expect the new ID card system will put parents’ minds at ease. This way they should know where their students are during arrival and dismissal. We have issued reminders to all our bus drivers about our current safety policies and trained all drivers on the new ID card system. We are still experiencing a shortage of bus drivers, so we are also hoping the new system makes drivers’ jobs a bit easier as they will spend less time counting heads on the bus.”

## ■ SHAYNA WEST, bus driver

“I’ve been a bus driver here for 12 years. I know the bus driver who made this error in judgment just assumed the kid knew his own way home and wanted to keep her bus route on schedule. We get a nasty email from transportation if our bus is late getting back to the barn. I’m OK with the new ID card system because if a student doesn’t get on the bus or gets off at the wrong stop, parents will know right away, and I can concentrate on driving my bus safely. I hope this is a good deal for everybody. Seeing these kids’ smiling faces is the best part of my day.”

■ **PHILLIP HUONG, freshman**

“I lost my school ID card like the second week of school, so I guess I’ll have to pay the \$10 for a new one. To be honest, I’ll probably lose that one too. I know we’re supposed to wear them every day, but nobody really does. Teachers are supposed to check and make sure we’re wearing them every day during first period, but they’re too busy taking attendance and doing other things at the beginning of class, so the ID cards have kind of become a joke.”

■ **JOHN TURPIN, director of student transportation**

“We are going on year two of a debilitating bus driver shortage. These drivers are committed to doing the right thing for the district. Safety is super important to them. I know we had one driver who got overwhelmed and made a bad decision, but for the most part, we rarely have safety issues on our buses. It seems like there’s an app for everything these days. I guess it was just a matter of time before we’d need one to have our kids ride the bus.”

■ **DESHAWN DOTSON, parent of an elementary student and high school student**

“I go to work at 5:30 a.m. every day and depend on my freshman daughter to get my 9-year-old ready for school and on the bus. I trust her to get their breakfast ready and make sure they both get to school on time. Sometimes at drop-off, I get to the bus stop early and have to wait on the bus because they haven’t even left the school yet. So I’m excited about the app because I’ll have peace of mind that they got on the bus in the morning, and I’ll also know when each kid is on their way home so I can meet them at the bus stop. I read on the “Leaguetown Cares” Facebook group about the child who was dropped off with no adult present. I know people were upset about that situation. Not knowing the whereabouts of your own child is a pretty terrifying thought, so I hope no parent in Leaguetown ever has to go through what that parent went through. It seems like the district has come up with a decent solution to make sure it never happens again.”

■ **McKENSIE FARMER, junior**

“I don’t have car insurance right now, so I need to use the bus to get to and from school. I don’t see why everyone makes a big deal about having to wear ID cards and using them to get on the bus. It’s a safety thing and it’s not that hard to do. It’s time to grow up. Adults have to wear ID cards at work all the time. If this is all we have to do to keep things secure and make sure little kids don’t get left behind, then I have no problem keeping up with the card. Swipe on. Swipe off. It seems pretty easy.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

District officials declined to comment further about the incident with the bus driver in October, except to say that the incident was investigated, and the employee was reinstated. They did not release the names of the driver or the student involved.

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

## Invitational A • 2023 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 story comes out before the new card system is implemented.

The district will implement a bus card system on Jan. 23 that will help parents keep track of their children on buses with the app Dismissal X-Press.

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 ("Kuykendall said," not "said Kuykendall.") 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 Dismissal X-Press app allows parents to see timestamps of when their children have entered and exited the bus.

### **direct quote**

"I'm excited about the app because I'll have peace of mind that they got on the bus in the morning, and I'll also know when each kid is on their way home so I can meet them at the bus stop," parent Deshawn Dotson said. "I read on the 'Leaguetown Cares' Facebook group about the child who was dropped off with no adult present. It seems like the district has come up with a decent solution to make sure it never happens again."

### **transition**

High school students are already required to wear ID cards at school and will use their ID card to swipe on and off the bus. High school students who do not have their ID cannot board the bus and must buy a new one from the office for \$10.

### **direct quote**

"I lost my school ID card like the second week of school, so I guess I'll have to pay the \$10 for a new one," freshman Phillip Huong said. "To be honest, I'll probably lose that one too. I know we're supposed to wear them every day, but nobody really does."

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 "ID cards probably won't work..." or "The school 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. Don't be afraid to use one- and two-sentence paragraphs. Journalistic writing consists mostly of one- and two-sentence paragraphs.

## SAMPLE STORY

The district will implement a bus card system on Jan. 23 that will help parents keep track of their children on buses with the app Dismissal X-Press.

This decision is in response to an incident that happened in October when a bus driver dropped off a kindergarten student without a parent present at the bus stop, leaving the child lost in his neighborhood for more than an hour.

“Student safety is our top priority, so we expect the new ID card system will put parents’ minds at ease,” Superintendent Lynn Kuykendall said. “This way they should know where their students are during arrival and dismissal. We have issued reminders to all our bus drivers about our current safety policies and trained all drivers on the new ID card system.”

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“I’m excited about the app because I’ll have peace of mind that they got on the bus in the morning, and I’ll also know when each kid is on their way home so I can meet them at the bus stop,” parent Deshawn Dotson said. “I read on the ‘Leaguetown Cares’ Facebook group about the child who was dropped off with no adult present. It seems like the district has come up with a decent solution to make sure it never happens again.”

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“I lost my school ID card like the second week of school, so I guess I’ll have to pay the \$10 for a new one,” freshman Phillip Huong said. “To be honest, I’ll probably lose that one too. I know we’re supposed to wear them every day, but nobody really does.”

Elementary school students will have their ID cards clipped to their backpacks, and teachers will check to ensure that bus riders have their cards before dismissal.

“It’s a safety thing and it’s not that hard to do,” junior McKensie Farmer said. “If this is all we have to do to keep things secure and make sure little kids don’t get left behind, then I have no problem keeping up with the card. Swipe on. Swipe off. It seems pretty easy.”

Although the district is facing a bus driver shortage, Superintendent Kuykendall said she hopes that the app will help bus drivers save time and focus on driving students safely.

“I’m OK with the new ID card system because if a student doesn’t get on the bus or gets off at the wrong stop, parents will know right away, and I can concentrate on driving my bus safely,” bus driver Shayna West said. “I hope this is a good deal for everybody. Seeing these kids’ smiling faces is the best part of my day.”