

# News Writing

District 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 5,100 students enrolled in grades 9-12.

On Dec. 16, the Basketball Booster Club hosted a faculty vs. student basketball game as a fundraiser. Teachers and coaches played against players from both the girls and boys varsity basketball teams.

At the game, which was held during the school day, several students sneaked into the arena to fight other students in attendance. After a physical altercation went on for a few minutes in the top of the bleachers, officials had to stop the basketball game and send all students back to class for the last 30 minutes of the school day because of safety concerns.

No students or adults were seriously injured during the altercation at the game, and students who participated in the fight were all identified by school administrators and received discipline in accordance with the student code of conduct. Several videos of the incident were posted to TikTok by students present. One recording received more than 2 million views over the next few weeks. Law enforcement used the videos as part of their investigation.

After videos circulated on social media following the incident, Principal Raul Jimenez proposed an amendment to the student code of conduct wherein students who record violence, such as fighting, on campus on their phones would receive mandatory placement for 30 days at the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program campus.

The school board will vote on the proposal at their meeting Monday, March 27. You are writing for an issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, March 24.

## ■ RAUL JIMENEZ, principal

“Students do not understand the damage being done when they record fighting, bullying or any type of violence on their phones. I know the impact TikTok has had on our culture for young people. I see that desire to get attention through views, likes, shares and clicks. But the act of recording violence and posting it for millions of people to see not only encourages further fighting and violence, but it also puts people in the video at risk. Those videos will live on the internet for years to come, and in a few short years, people involved will apply for colleges and for jobs. Having that content on the internet can put our students’ futures at risk.

“We have had a policy against filming fights for years where students who do so would receive in-school suspension for one day. In many recent incidents, including the fight at our basketball game, students recording these physical altercations have interfered with teachers, administrators and law enforcement attempting to intervene. With this new proposal, those who violate the rule by recording fights on campus will receive the same disciplinary result as the students involved in the fight. They’ll be placed at

■ **RAUL JIMENEZ, principal (continued)**

DAEP for a minimum of 30 days.

“While there, students will receive work from their teachers to complete. They also will be suspended from all UIL activities and will not be allowed on their home campus for any school activities until the conclusion of that disciplinary placement.

“Our hope is that this change in policy will not only prevent students from recording fights but will also prevent the fights themselves. Our number-one priority is to keep students safe, and if this policy change can make students safer, then this is what we should do.”

■ **HANNAH McMAHON, senior**

“Students feel safe fighting and doing things on campus that they wouldn’t do on the street. I guess going to DAEP is better for them than going to jail, so lots of fights happen here that wouldn’t happen outside of school. We have fights in the hall at least every couple of weeks. People will run toward the same place in the hall with their phones out, and that’s how you know there’s a fight. You’ll see multiple angles of a fight go viral on TikTok before it gets taken down.”

■ **CHRIS SMITH, school resource officer**

“Sometimes we see a physical event start to unfold, but we can’t get to it to stop it quickly. Being in a school is different than being a patrol officer. I can’t throw bystanders out of the way. These are kids. We need this proposal to move forward to help police and administrators get immediate access to the parties involved in an altercation and to keep everyone safe. If bystanders know they can get in trouble for filming, hopefully they will stay out of the way. It’s not worth it to go viral.”

■ **MARCELLUS WHEATON, English teacher**

“When something happens in the hall, we can’t get to it to help because everybody is recording. It doesn’t even have to be a fight. A student falls down and other students gather around taking pictures and video instead of helping. Students shouldn’t act like this. They shouldn’t be fighting, and when people film it, we see more fights in the next few days, so it is more and more disruptive to the school. The halls are so full already, and it makes it dangerous for the rest of us.”

■ **ROY RICHMOND, sophomore**

“How can they stop students from recording in a public space and then punish them for doing it? It sounds like a First Amendment violation to me. People are going to fight sometimes, and nowadays people, especially teens, record everything. I get the school wants to keep us safe, but this is too much.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The student code of conduct already prohibits “recording in any way that disrupts the educational environment or invades the privacy of others,” and “behaving in any way that disrupts the school environment or the educational process.”

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

## District • 2023 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 comes out before the school board votes on a new disciplinary proposal.

A new amendment to the student code of conduct, proposed by Principal Raul Jimenez, would send students who record violence on campus to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program campus for a minimum of 30 days. The school board will vote on the proposal at their meeting on March 27.

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 the quote. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Jimenez said," not "said Jimenez.") 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 amendment is in response to a fight that broke out during the faculty vs. student basketball game Dec. 16, resulting in a video of the fight going viral on TikTok.

### **direct quote**

"We have had a policy against filming fights for years where students who do so would receive in-school suspension for one day," Jimenez said. "With this new proposal, those who violate the rule by recording fights on campus will receive the same disciplinary result as the students involved in the fight."

### **transition**

During the basketball game, several students sneaked into the arena with the intention of starting a fight with other students. After a fight broke out in the stands, officials stopped the game and students were sent back to class for the remaining 30 minutes of the school day.

### **direct quote**

"Kids feel safe fighting and doing things on campus that they wouldn't do on the street," senior Hannah McMahan said. "Going to DAEP is better for them than going to jail, so lots of fights happen here that wouldn't happen outside of school."

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 program 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

A new amendment to the student code of conduct, proposed by Principal Raul Jimenez, would send students who record violence on campus to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program campus for a minimum of 30 days. The school board will vote on the proposal at its meeting on March 27.

The amendment is in response to a fight that broke out during the faculty vs. student basketball game Dec. 16, resulting in a video of the fight going viral on TikTok.

“We have had a policy against filming fights for years where students who do so would receive in-school suspension for one day,” Jimenez said. “With this new proposal, those who violate the rule by recording fights on campus will receive the same disciplinary result as the students involved in the fight.”

During the basketball game, several students sneaked into the arena to fight with other students. After a fight broke out in the stands, officials stopped the game and students were sent back to class for the remaining 30 minutes of the school day.

“Students feel safe fighting and doing things on campus that they wouldn’t do on the street,” senior Hannah McMahon said. “Going to DAEP is better for them than going to jail, so lots of fights happen here that wouldn’t happen outside of school.”

Several videos of the incident were posted on TikTok, one of which received more than 2 million views. School resource officer Chris Smith said this could encourage others to record fights in an attempt to go viral, which can make a fight difficult to stop.

“Sometimes we see a physical event start to unfold, but we just can’t get to it to stop it quickly,” school resource officer Chris Smith said. “I can’t throw bystanders out of the way. These are kids. We need this proposal to move forward to help police and administrators get immediate access to the parties involved in an altercation to keep everyone safe.”

Sophomore Roy Richmond said he has concerns about the new policy violating students’ First Amendment rights.

“How can they stop students from recording in a public space and then punish them for doing it?” he said. “People are going to fight sometimes, and nowadays people, especially teens, record everything.”

The student honor code already prohibits recording or behaving in, “any way that disrupts the educational environment or invades the privacy of others,” establishing a precedent for this new proposal.

“Our hope is that this change in policy will not only prevent students from recording fights, but will also prevent the fights themselves,” Jimenez said. “Our number-one priority is to keep students safe, and if this policy change can make kids safer, then this is what we should do.”