

News Writing

State Meet • 2018



You are a reporter for the League-town **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 NOT YOUR NAME on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 2,500 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In early April, a 17-year-old student was charged with making a terroristic threat after he posted on social media that he was going to “shoot up” the school. The student has been removed from school pending an investigation. The police reported that no weapons were found at the student’s residence or in his possession.

After the arrest, the school board held an emergency meeting with the superintendent and high school administration. The following week, the administration rolled out several new policies, which took effect immediately. They include a single point of entry at the beginning of each school day, a volunteer parent brigade to monitor the halls and four new panic buttons in offices around the school. The administration also closed the campus during lunch for juniors and seniors.

Frustrated by the new policies, the Student Council officers met with the administration to request open campus lunch privileges for juniors and seniors and a second entrance for the start of school. Principal Cal Rivers said he lacked the authority to make those changes. Instead, he invited the Student Council officers to meet with the superintendent and school board president next Thursday, May 10.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, May 8.

■ CAL RIVERS, principal

“I understand the students’ frustration, and I appreciate the civil way they presented their concerns. We have changed the school quite dramatically, but student safety is our number one priority. Students don’t think one of these tragedies can happen at their school until it happens. And then it’s too late.

“I admit. Lunch is a bit of a problem. Our cafeteria does not comfortably hold all of our students, even with two lunches. We’ve opened some of the hallways for students during lunch, but the areas are still quite crowded. Perhaps we can tweak the schedule to create three lunches. I am not a fan of bringing back open campus, and I was clear with the Student Council officers on that. Luckily for them, it’s not up to me alone.”

■ VIRGINIA LEACH, school board member

“The students are not thrilled about the changes we’ve made. They have made that abundantly clear with their emails and phone messages. We can live with upset students if we can increase their safety.

“Students need to remember these changes are temporary. Over the summer, we plan to bring in a national school security company to evaluate our school and help us create more secure campuses.”

■ **SPENCER WEATER, Student Council president**

“Lunch is a nightmare. The start of school is a nightmare. We have hundreds and hundreds of students crowded into very small areas. I can’t think of a better place for a shooter to be. We feel like sitting ducks when we are in the long line to enter school each day.

“I appreciate that Mr. Rivers invited us to the meeting, but I am worried that the superintendent and school board president already have their minds made up. We are going to have to be very persuasive, and that is exactly what we plan to do. Reni Bauhaus, the Student Council secretary, is working on a video showing the problems at the beginning of school and lunch. She also is interviewing multiple students, so the administration hears more than our voices. If students have lunch stories or stories about trying to get into school, they should come to Mrs. (Debi) Cummins’ room after school on Wednesday. We don’t have much time, and we want this video to be very persuasive. Two students I know haven’t eaten lunch since the change. They have dance in the gym right before lunch, and by the time they get to the cafeteria, the lines are too long. I have been late to first period more than five times because of the wait to get into school. I have AP English first period.

“In the video, we also are including what we like about the changes. We appreciate the parents in the hallways, and the panic buttons were great ideas. The administration went too far with the other stuff. They want to keep us safe. We get that, but we need to be able to learn, too. It’s hard to learn when you are late and hungry.”

■ **JAI MALHAR, junior**

“School feels like a prison now. I don’t want to come anymore. Everything is a headache — getting into school, eating lunch, walking the halls. They have sucked all of the joy out of school. It was scary when that student was arrested, but the administration has gone overboard. They need to dial it back a bit.”

■ **CHASTITY MURRILO, science teacher**

“The new adjustments have changed the school. The students are frustrated. The teachers are wary, and no one seems to be happy. We need to find a balance. Safety is of the utmost importance, but we also have to ensure that we are creating a learning environment for the students. I don’t envy the administration. They have to make tough choices right now. I am impressed, though, by the student leaders. They shared with me the first part of their video, and it’s quite good — quite persuasive. They offer some good solutions to the one point of entry problem.”

■ **ALESHA GRANGER, parent and volunteer for hall brigade**

“I am happy to help in the halls. The more adult presence, the safer the school. As a parent, I was happy with how quickly the board and administrators acted to make safety changes. They went into action immediately. Sure, some of the changes are tough for students, but the administration has said from the beginning that the changes are temporary. Students need to remember that, and they need to remember why the changes happened. These are not random arbitrary rules.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The lawyer for the 17-year-old student said his client is innocent and that someone hacked his social media site.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

STATE • 2018

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 the newest information. In this instance, the Student Council is making a video for a meeting with school administrators.

To persuade school administrators to rescind some of its new policies resulting from a school-shooter threat, the Student Council officers are creating a video to show the problems with a one-entry system and closed lunch. Officers are asking students to share their stories this Wednesday.

2. Use direct quotes and get those quotes high in the story. After you introduce quotes, use the transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Rivers said," not "said Rivers.") Avoid stacking quotes. Avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing a transition between them. Also, make sure transitions tell information to help the action of the story and the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

transition

The Student Council officers will share the completed video with Principal Cal Rivers, the superintendent and the school board president Thursday. The officers will meet with the administrators to request open campus lunch privileges for juniors and seniors again and a second entrance for the start of school.

direct quote

"If students have lunch stories or stories about trying to get into school, they should come to Mrs. (Debi) Cummins' room after school on Wednesday," Student Council president Spencer Weater said. "We don't have much time, and we want this video to be persuasive."

transition

The new policies are a result of a terroristic threat in early April in which a 17-year-old student allegedly posted on social media that he was going to "shoot up" the school. When the police searched the student and his residence, they found no weapons. The student has been removed from school pending the investigation. The lawyer for the 17-year-old student said his client is innocent and that someone hacked his social media site.

After the incident, the school board implemented several new policies aimed at enhancing school safety.

direct quote

"Students need to remember these changes are temporary," school board member Virginia Leach said. "Over the summer we plan to bring in a national school security company to evaluate our school and help us create more secure campuses."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our student" or "Cal Rivers, our principal" or "Some of our students..." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "Rivers is mean..." without attributing that quote to someone. These statements are personal opinion 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 frightened away from using one- and two-sentence paragraphs. Journalistic writing consists mostly of brief paragraphs.

SAMPLE STORY

To persuade school administrators to rescind some of its new policies resulting from a school-shooter threat, the Student Council officers are creating a video to show the problems with a one-entry system and closed lunch. Officers are asking students to share their stories this Wednesday.

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"If students have lunch stories or stories about trying to get into school, they should come to Mrs. (Debi) Cummins' room after school on Wednesday," Student Council president Spencer Weater said. "We don't have much time, and we want this video to be persuasive."

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After the incident, the school board implemented several new policies aimed at enhancing school safety.

"Students need to remember these changes are temporary," school board member Virginia Leach said. "Over the summer we plan to bring in a national school security company to evaluate our school and help us create more secure campuses."

The policy changes include a closed campus for lunch, a single point of entry for the start of the school day, a volunteer parent brigade to monitor the halls and four new panic buttons in offices around the school.

"I admit. Lunch is a bit of a problem," Rivers said. "Our cafeteria does not comfortably hold all of our students, even with two lunches. We've opened some of the hallways for students during lunch, but the areas are still quite crowded."

Weater called lunch and the start of school "nightmares."

"We have hundreds and hundreds of students crowded into very small areas," he said. "I can't think of a better place for a shooter to be."

Weater said he's been late to his first period English AP class more than five times, and he knows two students who haven't been able to eat lunch since the school mandated the changes.

"They have dance in the gym right before lunch, and by the time they get to the cafeteria, the lines are too long," he said.

Science teacher Chastity Murrilo said more balance is needed.

"The students are frustrated," she said. "The teachers are wary, and no one seems to be happy. We need to find a balance. Safety is of the utmost importance, but we also have to ensure that we are creating a learning environment for the students."

Junior Jai Malhar said school feels like a "prison" now.

"I don't want to come anymore," he said. "Everything is a headache — getting into the school, eating lunch, walking the halls. It was scary when that student was arrested, but the administration has gone overboard."

At the meeting, StuCo officers also will share what they like about the changes, Weater said.

"We appreciate the parents in the hallways, and the panic buttons were great ideas," he said. "The administration went too far with the other stuff. They want to keep us safe, we get that, but we need to be able to learn, too."