



Editorial Writing Evaluation Sheet

contestant #

In order to make this a complete learning experience, judges are asked to complete the evaluation sheet for students.

	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
The situation or problem is explained in the first two or three paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer takes an obvious stance in the first few paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer supports the stance through specific examples.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer presents a logical solution or conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What were the strong points of the editorial?

What were the weak points of the editorial?

What suggestions do you have for improvement?

Judge's Signature _____



Editorial Writing

A+ Invitational • 2020-2021

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown Press, the student newspaper of Leaguetown Middle School. From the given information, write an editorial as you would for the middle school newspaper. Remember that as an editorial writer you should support or oppose policy or action; you should not sermonize.

You have 45 minutes.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or entry. Put your number in the upper right corner of each page of your entry.

STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 1,500 students in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Each year, the Spanish Club hosts a community-wide celebration of Dia de los Muertos, a traditional Mexican holiday, on the Saturday preceding Nov. 1. Over the past 10 years, the event has grown to include participation from other organizations within the school. Last week, due to COVID-19 concerns, Principal Jason Stubbs made the decision that the event would be canceled.

"I know the students have been working for several months on plans for the event, but my priority has to be the health of our students and our community," Stubbs said. "The items the clubs have purchased and created can be used another year or for another event. It would be reckless to allow the event to go on."

Planning for the celebration begins in the spring each year. The event features a parade complete with costumed dancers, colorful floats and lively music. Art students have been working on an art exhibit featuring traditional sugar skulls, and the band has been rehearsing a Mariachi performance.

"The amount of work that has already gone into our celebration is incredible," Spanish Club adviser Maria Salazar said. "The event was cancelled without even discussing the possibility of safety measures. We have already spent money on masks to hand out at the entry to the event, as well as hand sanitation stations, and thermometers to monitor those coming in to make sure no one has a fever."

One of the most popular parts of the celebration is the food. Some of the best Mexican restaurants and food trucks from around the county sell tamales, pan de muerto, aguas frescas and more. The vendors donate a portion of their profits to the Spanish Club, making this one of the most profitable fundraisers for the group each year. The group depends on these funds to help pay for its annual trip to Mexico City.

"It is absolutely beyond disappointing that Mr. Stubbs would make this decision without consulting anyone else," the Parent-Teacher Organization president Marsha Collins said. "He has no right to disregard all of the money and hard work that has been put into planning this event so far. Mr. Stubbs hasn't cancelled any football games, but he insists on putting the brakes on this festival."

The PTO has asked the school board to reverse the principal's decision and allow the students to move forward with the celebration. The school board will vote on the proposal at its regular meeting this Wednesday. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting Stubbs

The school has to prioritize students' health. Having a large community gathering will put students at risk. The Spanish Club is free to find a fundraiser that doesn't involve large gatherings.

Opposing Stubbs

The Spanish Club is planning to take precautions that will make the event safer. The Spanish Club needs money from the event. Some large events, like football games, are already happening. Some supplies for the event have already been purchased. If Stubbs had wanted to cancel the event, he should have made that known earlier.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Invitational • 2020-2021

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JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

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Remember that for purposes of the contest these students go to Leaguetown Middle School. Contestants should not have to specify Leaguetown Middle School, because everyone reading the school paper knows where they go to school. Also, when they refer to the school board they do not have to say "Leaguetown School Board." Again, they know in what city they live.

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

After the annual Dia de los Muertos festival hosted by the Spanish Club was canceled last week by Principal Jason Stubbs, the Parent-Teacher Organization asked the school board to reverse his decision, insisting that the plans in place will keep festival-goers safe from COVID-19 dangers. The board will vote on the issue at its meeting Wednesday night.

Stubbs was wrong to cancel the annual celebration. The school board should reverse his decision and allow the festival to continue.

While Stubbs cited safety concerns due to COVID-19, the Spanish Club and other organizations involved in planning the event have been proactive in considering the safety of those attending and working at the festival. Thermometers have been ordered to allow for temperatures to be taken upon entry. Masks featuring sugar skull designs will be handed out at the gate, and hand sanitizer stations will be set up throughout the festival area. Festival goers will be safe.

While the festival is not designed primarily as a fundraiser, money raised through the event does help pay for the Spanish Club's annual trip to Mexico City — a trip that allows students to immerse themselves in Mexican culture and learn more about the history and culture. Not only will canceling the event wipe out that money, but supplies that have already been purchased will be wasted. The negative consequences of canceling the event far outweigh the risks.

Stubbs says he is worried about the health of the students and others who would participate in the festival. However, the football games each week draw large crowds and do not implement the same safety measures that the students have planned for the festival. Football games are more likely to spread COVID-19 than attendance at the Dia de los Muertos celebration.

Canceling the annual event is the wrong idea. Our students are safe and should be allowed to celebrate.



Editorial Writing

A+ Fall/Winter • 2020-2021

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in West Texas and has an enrollment of 1,000 students in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Since 2014, the school has provided laptops in classroom sets for English, math, science and history classes – each teacher has enough laptops for their students, and at the end of each class period, the laptops remain with the teacher. Teachers in classes without laptops can reserve days in the computer lab for their class on a first-come, first-served basis.

At the start of the school year, the school gave students the choice between studying at school or at home. Students who chose to study at home were required to provide their own computer equipment. More than 200 students elected for distance learning.

In a parent survey conducted by the district last Wednesday, 14% of parents whose students are studying in person said that their decision to send their kids to school was shaped “at least in part by their access to necessary computer equipment.” In the survey, 21% of parents of at-home learners said their student has had “difficulty participating in online classes due to technology issues” in the last month.

“My family has an old desktop computer that we all share, and it’s very slow,” seventh grader Alisha Kearns said. “Some days, I’m not able to connect to class until it’s almost halfway over. Other days I can’t connect at all.”

Yesterday, Superintendent Nina Perez announced a plan to purchase individual student laptops. If the school board approves Perez’s plan, each student (including both students who are studying at home and students attending school in-person) would check out a laptop at the beginning of the spring semester and return it at the end of the school year. To fund the new laptops, \$175,000 would be cut from this year’s budget of the school’s department of fine arts.

“We need laptops in hands, fast,” Perez said. “Students who choose to learn at home are falling behind. A year of missed knowledge would be almost impossible to correct. Even the learning they’ve missed already will create a difficult gap. And it’s hurting our poorest, most vulnerable students the worst. I’m not happy about taking money from our fine arts department, but in difficult times our school has to prioritize.”

The fine arts budget is currently set at \$250,000 per year.

“This is unacceptable,” dance teacher Linda Amorous said. “We’re already working on a shoestring. I understand that this situation is unprecedented and difficult decisions have to be made, but there has to be another way.”

The school board will vote on Perez’s proposal at its regular meeting this Wednesday. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting

Computer access is very important, especially for students learning at home. Students shouldn’t have to choose between protecting their health and learning. Right now, at-home learners are falling behind because of inconsistent computer access; the school should prioritize their learning. Even for students learning in-person, laptops would be beneficial for non-core classes that currently have to reserve time in the computer lab. The department of fine arts can make do with reduced funding for the rest of the year.

Opposing

Students who chose to learn at home volunteered to use their own equipment. If they have that much difficulty with online classes, they shouldn’t have chosen to take them. The department of fine arts shouldn’t suffer for something that isn’t its fault.

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Fall/Winter • 2020-2021

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JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

The school board will vote Wednesday on a proposal by superintendent Nina Perez to provide laptops for each student. If approved, the laptops would be funded by cutting \$175,000 from the budget of the department of fine arts.

The school board should approve the proposal to ensure computer access.

Students who want to learn from home shouldn't have to choose between their health and their education. Last week's parent survey indicated that 14% of parents whose students are studying in person said that their decision to send their kids to school was shaped "at least in part by their access to necessary computer equipment." This is unacceptable.

Lack of computer access means that at-home learners are falling behind. In the survey, 21% of parents of at-home learners said their student has had "difficulty participating in online classes due to technology issues" in the last month. When students aren't able to consistently access online classes, they miss out on important learning.

Even for students who are still learning in-person, laptops will be beneficial. Currently, non-core classes have to compete for time in the computer lab. Laptops can be used in any class at any time.

Those opposed to the proposal say that the department of fine arts shouldn't be punished for something that isn't its fault; however, the school should do what benefits the most students. Not every student takes classes in the department of fine arts, but every student would benefit from computer access.

Access to computers and, by extension, to online classes should be an absolute priority for the school. The school board should approve Perez's proposal to ensure computer access.



Editorial Writing

A+ Spring • 2020-2021

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in Central Texas and has an enrollment of 445 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Last Wednesday, teachers learned that a large group of students planned to hold a 30-minute walk-out to demand stronger safety measures in the school. The students planned the protest after a student bragged about bringing a weapon to school in his backpack last month, and the school made no changes in safety protocols.

Teachers reported the planned protest to Principal Emma Lemming, who immediately called a school assembly and announced that if the students walked out, the Winter Prom would be canceled. Following the announcement, the student organizers canceled the protest.

"We simply cannot have students taking it upon themselves to walk out of school in some sort of attempt to change how we run things around here," Lemming said. "We are responsible for their safety as well as their education, and when they rebel in this way, it is unacceptable. I am thankful to the teachers who reported the situation. We had just enough time to put a stop to the protest."

The students who planned to protest are angry that Lemmings threatened to cancel the Winter Prom, a school tradition. The students and their parents have asked the superintendent to allow them to reschedule the protest without repercussions.

"It's so upsetting that we weren't allowed to express ourselves," Student Council president Lauren Hellman said. "All we wanted to do was let the school know that students are concerned. We're scared. The administration hushed up the details about what happened last month and aren't doing anything new to ensure our safety. We just want to be safe when we come to school. But they don't want to listen to us."

Superintendent Mike Jameson, who has not made his decision yet, scheduled a meeting Thursday with Student Council officers and the students who organized the original protest.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Tuesday, two days before the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the students

Students are trying to exercise their First Amendment rights. They are justified in expecting the school to improve safety after last month's incident. Students are the ones at risk if the school isn't safe. Their voices need to be heard. Plus, protesting is a good lesson in civic engagement and encourages critical thinking.

Opposing the students

If the students want to protest, they should do it outside of the school day. Teachers should not have their classes disrupted because students do not agree with the decisions of school administration. Students have no right to disrupt learning. If students want changes, they should schedule a meeting with the principal to discuss their concerns.

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

Because Principal Emma Lemming threatened to cancel the Winter Prom if students walked out of school to demand stronger safety measures, the organizers canceled the protest. On Thursday, the organizers and Student Council officers will meet with Superintendent Mike Jameson to discuss a possible rescheduled protest without penalty.

Jameson should allow students to hold the walkout without penalty because students deserve to have their voices heard regarding safety policies that affect them.

Students' concerns about safety are legitimate. The original plan for the protest came after an incident last month in which a student bragged about bringing a gun in his backpack at school. If students feel unsafe, they should be allowed to advocate for stronger safety measures.

The students are the ones at risk from lax safety measures. They are afraid and want their voices heard. A walkout is effective because it can't be ignored. School administrators would be forced to take students' concerns seriously.

Plus, organizing a protest is a good civic lesson for students and involves critical thinking. It allows students to use and understand their First Amendment rights. The administration should applaud the students for being engaged and caring about each other.

Those opposed to the protest say that students are disrupting education. It's true the school day will be interrupted for 30 minutes, but that interruption is part of the point. School administrators will have no choice but to listen. Protests throughout history have changed America for the better. Students learn about that in history class, and now they could have a chance to be a part of the change.

Jameson should allow students to reschedule the protest without imposing Lemming's penalties. Student's safety is too important of an issue to silence students.