



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 _____

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Invitational • 2017-2018
(Distribute this sheet to judges prior to judging.)

JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

In each contestant's editorial, please look for clarity of thought, and if the writer came to a clear conclusion. Remember that many of these writers have not been trained in proper editorial writing. Therefore key considerations should be that they have made a statement of the situation and formed a stance. They should back that stance with examples. Those examples do not have to come from the data sheet. The contestant then should come to a specific solution or recommendation.

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.

Judging criteria has been developed to help you score the papers. The criteria are intended to help you evaluate the writing, not as a control over your background in editorial writing or the writing process.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL

The school board will vote Thursday whether or not to pass Superintendent Mark Trevino's proposal that would move 6th grade to the middle school. Leaguetown Middle School is the only school in the area that does not include 6th grade in middle school.

The board should pass the proposal for the benefit of students.

Polls done in neighboring schools have found that both parents and students are more satisfied with including 6th grade in middle school. This is a positive change that will help students develop responsibility and maturity.

Students will have more challenging and diverse coursework available, including the ability to choose specific tracks within major subjects. If a student is interested in biology, he/she could take biology specifically. Students will also be able to choose electives that interest them. Those options are not available at an elementary campus. Giving students the opportunity to choose classes will spark their passions and give them an idea of what they want to pursue in the future.

Finally, moving 6th grade students to middle school will prepare them for high school. Students will be able to interact with older peers and learn from them firsthand. More challenging coursework will force students to act responsibly. This will prime them for the greater challenges of high school and college.

The proposal to move 6th grade to middle school is the best option for students, which is who the school serves. On Thursday, the board should vote to approve Trevino's proposal.



Editorial Writing

A+ Invitational • 2017-2018

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 560 students. Currently, the middle school consists of grades 7 and 8. Leaguetown Middle School is the only school in the area that houses 6th grade at the elementary instead of the middle school campus. Several other area schools moved 6th grade to their middle school five years ago.

After seeing benefits of including 6th grade in middle school from other school districts, Superintendent Mark Trevino proposed 6th grade be moved to middle school instead of being housed in the elementary school for the 2018-19 school year.

“Moving 6th grade to middle school will give 6th grade students more diverse and advanced class options,” Trevino said. “Right now, they are only offered basic courses--math, science, social studies, and language arts. If placed in middle school, students would have more choices in their core courses and much more in electives.”

Polls from other nearby schools have found that students and parents are more satisfied with including 6th grade in middle school. Students say they are offered more class options and are able to socialize and learn from older students.

“My son was part of the inaugural year of moving 6th grade to middle school,” parent from a neighboring school Jessica Emerson said. “I can’t begin to describe the positive changes I saw in him that year. He became more mature, more accepting and more responsible. It was a transition, yes, but so worthwhile.”

8th grade Algebra teacher Lisa Maines says the middle school is not ready for the transition.

“The incoming 6th graders have 240 students in their class,” she said. “I just don’t think our campus can handle that. We need to thoroughly investigate if we have enough space and resources. Also, I myself have a 6th grade daughter and to be quite honest, I don’t know if she would be ready for the higher stress and responsibility of middle school. It is not an easy switch.”

Trevino has said the 6th graders would fit in the middle school, but it would be a tight squeeze. If passed, the district would hire more teachers for the middle school.

The school board will discuss and vote on the proposed move at its regular meeting on Thursday. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the proposed switch

Students can’t be sheltered forever. Incoming 6th graders are old enough to adapt to new environments. Moving students to middle school in 6th grade will benefit them academically and socially. Plus, students will have the option to choose from a wider variety of classes.

Opposing

Students simply aren’t prepared for middle school at 11-12 years old. Middle school is a higher stress environment socially, educationally and physically. Plus, Trevino himself said there will be little physical room to spare for the 6th graders. Why would the district try to cram 240 students into the middle school if they are fine where they are?

UIL Editorial Writing Contest • A+ Fall/Winter District • 2017-2018

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

Principal Aaliyah McGuire's proposal, to allow students to listen to music during class, has good intentions. However, without further rules in place the proposal should not be implemented. The school board should vote against the proposal at the meeting Thursday.

Allowing students to listen to music while they work will not prepare them for high school or for the workforce. High school does not have a rule that allows music in class, and many jobs don't allow you to listen to music while you work. Students may begin to acclimate to listening to music while they work and then have trouble working without it. A perfect example is the STAAR test. Students are not allowed to have any electronic devices during this test. On test day, they will be accustomed to using music to concentrate; this could negatively affect their performance.

The proposal impacts teachers, too. Teachers would waste time monitoring students for proper music use. If a teacher doesn't closely monitor students to make sure they aren't texting or surfing the internet, students will break the rule. However, if a teacher does closely monitor their students' use of music, they will be wasting valuable time they have to help students who have questions, grade papers or catch up on lesson plans. This proposal would only make it harder for teachers who already have enough on their plate.

Finally, there are too many questions that need to be answered before this proposal can be implemented. One issue is will students be allowed to listen to explicit music? Another question is will students be allowed to share music? Without these and other issues resolved, the proposal cannot be enacted.

Supporters of the proposal argue that the mental benefit of music overrides any problems with the proposal. The mental benefits are indeed concrete, however the proposal needs to be tailored to our school for it to be successful.

This proposal does not prepare students for high school or future careers, and in fact could do more harm than good. In addition, there are simply too many unanswered questions about how rules on listening to music would be implemented. The school board should vote 'no' to the proposal at Thursday's meeting.



Editorial Writing

A+ Fall/Winter District • 2017-2018

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.

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in South Texas and has an enrollment of 975 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Principal Aaliyah McGuire recently attended an Education Foundation conference that cited the benefits of listening to music while learning. After doing further research, McGuire decided to submit a proposal to the school board that would allow music in class.

“The benefits of music on the brain are astounding,” McGuire said. “Even more, the benefits of music on the brain while learning are off the charts. Music increases blood flow to the brain along with positive endorphins. And, a study by Stanford University found listening to music increases focus.”

Currently, cell phones are not allowed in class. Students place their phones in locked cubbies during first period and pick them up at the end of the day. Under the new proposal, students would be allowed to use their phones for music only. If caught texting or surfing the web, students would be banned from listening to music for the remainder of the semester. Students would not be allowed to listen to music during tests, presentations or teacher instruction.

“Last year, many students asked our staff if they could listen to music,” McGuire said. “The answer was always no because we didn’t have concrete research to prove the benefits of listening to music. Now, we do. If this is advantageous for our students we need to try it. I hope the school board agrees with me on this.”

McGuire brought the proposal to the attention of teachers at the last staff meeting. The staff is split on the proposal.

“There are just too many loopholes for me to be on board with this proposal,” 7th grade science teacher Max Nichols said. “We will have to monitor our students closely to make sure they aren’t texting or looking up answers on the internet, which will waste valuable time. And, what happens if students are listening to explicit music? Do we allow that?”

The school board will host a public forum at its regular meeting on Thursday and vote on the proposal at the end of the meeting. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the proposal

The science is solid; music benefits students’ learning. Listening to music helps students focus and gives an incentive for students to do their work. We know it is an incentive for students because they asked to listen to music last year. Plus, the rule system associated with the proposal leaves no room for inappropriate activity.

Opposing

Students need to be able to focus and perform without music. When students take SAT tests or STAAR tests, they won’t be able to listen to music. Additionally, teachers are going to have to keep a close eye on students using their phones. That will waste valuable time they could use for more important matters.

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

After hearing complaints that students are making insensitive cultural remarks, Principal Dedrick Tomson has proposed implementing a mandatory cultural awareness class. The class would take the place of homeroom class three days a week and would focus on learning to respect other cultures. If passed by the school board, the proposal would go into effect for the fall semester. The board will vote on the proposal at the meeting Thursday.

The board should pass the proposal for student safety.

Students should always feel safe at school. Students can't learn if they don't feel comfortable in their environment. As of now, students feel unsafe. For example, the school has a student that doesn't want to go to school because of hurtful remarks made by other students. This is unacceptable. The cultural awareness class can help resolve this issue. It will teach students how to respect those who are different than them and what is not okay to say. The class is necessary to promote a positive school environment.

The class will help students in daily life, in college and in their future careers. Accepting and understanding differing cultures is necessary in society. Whether in college or the workplace, students will encounter peers of different cultures, beliefs and ideas. Knowing how to interact with them brings knowledge and perspective and will help students be successful. The earlier students learn how to do this--the better off they will be. Taking the cultural awareness class is a huge benefit to students.

Opponents of the proposal argue that the class will take away valuable time teachers and students use to complete assignments and other duties. However, school safety is more important than the convenience of the homeroom period. Homeroom will still be available two days a week, and other time can be found to complete homework, grading and other tasks.

All students deserve respect. The cultural awareness class proposed by Principal Tomson is essential to promote safety at school. The board should give a strong yes to the proposal on Thursday.



Editorial Writing

A+ Spring District • 2017-2018

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STATEMENT OF SITUATION

Leaguetown Middle School is located in North Texas and has an enrollment of 1,300 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The middle school is the most diverse in the district with 11 different ethnicities represented.

At the annual “Let Your Voice be Heard” parent meeting last month, many parents expressed concern regarding the lack of cultural knowledge and acceptance among students. Parents felt their students were not being treated well with respect to their culture.

“I can’t tell you how many times my son has come home complaining about insensitive cultural remarks from other students,” Evangelina Rodriguez said. “Peers will tease my son because of his accent and because of the way he switches between Spanish and English. This has become such a problem that my son doesn’t even want to go to school anymore.”

At the meeting, Principal Dedrick Tomson asked parents why they thought this was an issue. Many thought it was due to a lack of knowledge on understanding cultures other than your own.

“I think that at the age of 11-12 students don’t know how much a seemingly little comment can hurt,” Aiyana Cordon said. “My family is Native American. Peers simply don’t know that calling someone a “savage” is offensive to my child. Kids aren’t inherently bad, they just simply don’t know.”

After the meeting, Tomson proposed implementing a mandatory cultural awareness class, which would take the place of homeroom class three days a week for all students. The class would focus on cultural understanding and respectfully interaction. Teachers would receive training and materials for the class during workshops prior to the start of next school year.

Some teachers have expressed support for the proposal, while others have concerns.

“Homeroom is a time where I can plan lessons, grade assignments and actually talk to students,” Science teacher Casey McCoy said. “Besides conference period, that is the only time I have to do those things. If the cultural class is implemented, I will have to pile on more work to do at home. Besides, why can’t parents teach their students how to act appropriately?”

If implemented, the proposal would be put in place for the fall semester. Tomson did a poll of students last week to see how they felt about the proposal. Many students are nervous about the loss of homeroom time.

“I think the class is a good idea,” student Max Mason said. “I just don’t know if I can afford to give up that time. I use homeroom class to do homework, fill out my planner and ask for help on projects. I have football practice every day after school in the fall. I don’t know how I will have time to complete all my assignments if they take away homeroom classes.”

The school board will discuss and vote on the class at its regular meeting on Thursday. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

STANCES

Supporting the proposal

Ensuring that students feel safe and welcome at school is a top priority, which the proposal would help emphasize. Greater cultural awareness will also help students tremendously in the future. Cultural differences are seen in daily life. Learning how to understand and relate to people from different backgrounds is an essential lesson for students.

Opposing

This proposal will negatively impact teachers. The proposal will reduce the already limited time teachers have for grading and other duties. Students would also lose important homeroom class time that is important for homework and working one-on-one with their teachers. Parents should be responsible for teaching their children how to respect others--not the school.