

staff stances

Family conferences lack substantial feedback, need improvement in approach

At the mid of each semester, students take a day off so parents can spend that time talking with advisors. During the 30-minute meetings, parents discuss information about upcoming events, students can discuss issues with scheduling, teachers, classes or peers, and advisors issue recaps or heads ups about the school year.

For students, conferences provide the most effective way to communicate, particularly about social and academic issues or to ask questions. However, conferences do not always provide students and parents with meaningful feedback from other teachers about student performance.

For students who simply don't have many issues and do well in classes, the feedback is generic, "great, keep up the good work."

Family conferences hold importance but require improvement, and a recent survey

showed nearly 50 percent of the Upper School believes conferences could deliver more meaningful information.

Before the meetings, all teachers could be given an evaluation form for each student he or she teaches. This could include questions about the quality of the conference.

needs help in another class the advisor offers little resource. Evaluations from each teacher the student has would help alleviate this issue.

Advisors should be trained to provide more meaningful feedback.



Editorial Writing Study Guide

For Grades 6, 7 & 8





Box 199 | Hunt, Texas 78024 | 800.391.2891 | Fax: 830.367.3824
hexco@hexco.com
Linda Tarrant / President & Owner

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Editorial Writing

FOR GRADES 6, 7 AND 8

WRITTEN BY

Bobby Hawthorne

This manual is intended for students seeking to prepare for the UIL's junior high/middle school Editorial Writing Contest.

The author of the book is Bobby Hawthorne, an Austin writer, writing instructor and contributing reporter and columnist for Texas School Business magazine. He worked for the University Interscholastic League for 28 years, retiring as director of academics in 2005. For 20 years, he served as UIL director of journalism.

In 2006, he authored *Longhorn Football: An Illustrated History*. A year later, he produced the text for *Home Field*, a book of landscape photographs of Texas high school football stadiums by Jeff Wilson.

In 2009, the UIL commissioned him to produce a 200-page history of the UIL as part of its centennial anniversary.

He is also the author of numerous books and monographs on scholastic journalism, including *The Radical Write*, a popular writing and reporting textbook for high school journalists and publications advisers.

utbobby@gmail.com





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Editorial Writing Study Guide

For Grades 6, 7 & 8

BY BOBBY HAWTHORNE
AUSTIN, TX 2015

getting started

UIL editorial writing

There are many excellent reasons why a sixth or seventh or eighth grader like yourself should want to participate in the UIL's Editorial Writing contest. None of them involve actually working for a newspaper.

Let me take a wild guess: You don't read a newspaper every day. In fact, you may not read a newspaper every other day. Or ever.

Am I right?

I thought so. The sad fact is, few adults these days read a daily newspaper, and far fewer junior high or middle school students do. That explains, in part, why newspapers are in such bad shape, financially and otherwise.

Even those young people who do read a newspaper now and then probably do not read the staff editorials. They might read a sports story or two, or the comics, or a feature in the food or fashion section, but they probably do not read the staff opinion because editorials typically deal with complicated adult issues like politics and economics and war.

So, this begs the question: Why should a sixth or seventh or eighth grader want to learn how to write a newspaper editorial?



Ask the obvious questions

According to the fact sheet, administrators have the right and the obligation to create an appropriate learning environment. Principal Duffey said, “The bottom line is, the administration doesn’t feel like these types of pants are appropriate for school.”

If you oppose Duffey’s proposal, you might want to ask the following questions:

- Who is “the administration?”
- Is this one person’s opinion?
- Or is it all of the middle school administrators?
- Is this policy consistent with other middle schools in the district?
- Why must it be enforced immediately?
- Why is there no input from students or parents?

Be prepared to defend your point of view. Anticipate the other side’s debating points.

Anticipate the other side’s strongest point and acknowledge it. For example, they claim, “Girls do not dress provocatively to go to work or church. Nor should they wear form-fitting clothing to school, which is, in a way, their job.” Your response? “School is not a job. People can change jobs. This is a public school, and students are required by law to attend school. Many families can’t afford to send their children to private or parochial schools. These children should not be subjected unfair rules simply because they attend a public school.”