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Spring 2025 High School

JOURNALISM

PRACTICE PACKET



editorials, features, headlines, news and copy editing

BY BOBBY HAWTHORNE



JOURNALISM PRACTICE PACKET

Spring 2025

Written by

Bobby Hawthorne and Rhonda Moore

Bobby Hawthorne is a popular instructor at journalism workshops and seminars for high school students nationwide and has been published in every national scholastic press association periodical. He has also written numerous handbooks and manuals on writing-related topics. In 2005, he retired from the University Interscholastic League where he served as director of academics and director of journalism. In 2009, he wrote, designed and produced a 200-page history of the UIL as part of its centennial anniversary. He is a regular columnist for Texas School Business magazine, published by the Texas Association of School Administrators. Hawthorne is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin (BJ 1975, MA 1985) and continues to live in Austin.

Rhonda Moore is a retired journalism adviser who worked most recently at McCallum High School in Austin, Texas. She is a CSPA Gold Key recipient and was awarded Texas' Edith Fox King Award. She was named the 2004 Max R. Haddick Teacher of the Year and received JEA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. Her students won NSPA's Pacemaker Award, CSPA's Silver Crown Award and ILPC's Gold, Silver and Bronze Star Awards. She was executive director of the Texas Association of Journalism Educators from 1996-2017.

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JOURNALISM PRACTICE PACKET – Spring 2025



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editorialwriting

HEXCO INVITATIONAL | SPRING 2025 / A

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown Press

The Leaguetown Press is the official student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. This means you're a student at Leaguetown High.

From the following information, write a **STAFF EDITORIAL** as you would for the Leaguetown Press, keeping in mind that it is Leaguetown High's student newspaper.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. Put your number on your paper.

You have 45 minutes.

Leaguetown is located north of Dallas. Leaguetown High's student population is 2750.

Leaguetown High School is banning prom dresses that show too much skin, leaving a number of female students and their moms fuming. Superintendent Freeman Burr said the district dress code policy is not new and was not a secret to students who had to sign a contract to attend the prom. The contract calls for appropriate formal dress and states that students dressed inappropriately will not be allowed into the dance.

The dress code — which is a separate online document that is part of a student code of conduct — prohibits bare midriffs, halter tops, tube tops, strapless tops, see-through lace tops, spaghetti strap tank tops, and short mini-skirts.

Burr said the issue came to light when students started sharing pictures of their dresses with faculty and staff, who became concerned with what they saw. Some dresses, he said clearly crossed the line. You are writing for the Jan. 22 issue of the Leaguetown Press.

■ For prom dress ban

Prom is typically considered a formal event, and some believe longer dresses align better with its traditional standards. A ban may be seen as encouraging modesty, aligning with certain cultural or community values. Clear rules can make it easier for school staff to enforce dress codes fairly and consistently.

Supporters might argue that prohibiting mini-skirts minimizes potential distractions and fosters a more focused, respectful environment.

If the dress code applies uniformly to all students, it could promote a sense of fairness.

■ Against the prom dress ban

Clothing is a form of self-expression, and a ban on certain styles will restrict students' ability to showcase their individual styles. Students worry that administrators will be given too much leeway in terms of deciding what's appropriate and what's inappropriate.

Dress codes often disproportionately affect female students, leading to concerns about fairness and reinforcing gender stereotypes. Enforcing a ban may draw attention to students' bodies, leading to discomfort and contributing to negative body image.

Students from diverse cultural backgrounds may have different norms regarding appropriate attire, and strict rules might not consider these differences.

Focusing on dress code enforcement can detract from addressing more pressing concerns, like student behavior or inclusivity.



featurewriting

HEXCO INVITATIONAL | SPRING 2025 / F

You are a reporter for the Leaguetown Press

The Leaguetown Press is the official student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. This means you're a student at Leaguetown High.

From the following information, write a **FEATURE STORY** as you would for the Leaguetown Press, keeping in mind that it is Leaguetown High's student newspaper.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. Put your number on your paper.

You have 60 minutes.

Leaguetown is located near Bryan. Leaguetown High School has a student population of 2,122 (9-12). One of its most successful programs is 4-H, which is America's largest youth development organization. According to its national website, "In 4 H programs, kids and teens complete hands-on projects in areas like health, science, agriculture and civic engagement in a positive environment where they receive guidance from adult mentors and are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles."

In December 2024, a flash flood ripped through Southeast Texas. Several cities and towns along the Colorado River were devastated. Leaguetown's 4-H members organized a relief effort to provide school supplies to tiny Walnut Grove Elementary School in Fayette County. The backpacks were ready to go when students returned to class Jan. 7, 2025.

The collection effort was led by LHS 4-H sponsor Siena De Leon. Her students collected enough school supplies to fill 150 student backpacks. Items collected include pencils, crayons and markers, glue sticks, hand sanitizer, notebook and construction paper, lunch boxes and scissors. She gave special thanks to senior Nathan Wells.

You are writing for the April 22 issue of the Leaguetown Press,

■ Ms. Siena Guttadauro, LHS 4-H sponsor

"I'm so proud of these kids, especially Nathan. This project wasn't my idea. Nathan came in and suggested we find a way to help the elementary school in the Walnut Grove school district. It's really small, and it's not exactly rich. He'd read about how it'd been flooded, so, I contacted their superintendent, and they were so excited, and that's how the ball got rolling.

"The fact is, when the school year starts, kids need crayons, glue, paper and markers. Good students can't do their work if they don't have the necessary materials. We hit up every big supermarket and home supplies stores in a 50-mile radius, and they came through for us. I think it speaks well of the generosity of people during times of crisis."

■ Nathan Wells, senior

"I'll probably never meet the people we helped, but that doesn't matter. I consider this a helping hand to a good neighbor. I believe each of us is called to help people in need. That's what my parents have taught me. You can choose to help people halfway across the world, but when it's your home that's been affected, it's your duty to help your neighbors who are suffering. A lot of the people we met during our trips down there lost everything. We couldn't turn our backs on them. Most importantly, we wanted the backpacks to be waiting for them when they returned to class after winter break."