

Tips on Having an Opinion Piece Published

- Keep it short. The *Observer* publishes op-ed opinion pieces (usually not more than 750 words), Viewpoints (usually about 500 words) and letters to the editor (less than 500 words).
- Write clearly and persuasively. Make sure the first sentence or two explains what you're going to say. In English-teacher jargon, have a topic sentence.
- Be clear about what you are asking the editor to do: Identify your submission as a letter, Viewpoint or op-ed.
- Send the newspaper the cleanest copy you can. Have someone else – or several others -- read it before you send it. This is particularly important because we are educators and education advocates. An error-ridden, rambling piece will not send the right message about high quality education and will not be published.
- Identify yourself fully in an italic line at the bottom of the piece, or in your letter's signature. "John Smith is a principal at Jane Doe High in Huntersville."
- Make your arguments based on the merits, not on the motives of others or your personal opinion. "We need to invest in our children by paying employees competitive salaries," rather than "The county workers all get raises every year and we should too."
- Keep your arguments focused in a positive way on the needs of children and staff, not on misperceptions or misinformation. "We believe all students can learn," rather than "It's not fair that everyone thinks that students at my school can't learn -- they're wrong."
- Be clear about who the reader is. The readership for the *Observer* is broad. The readership of niche or specialty publications such as QCityMetro and the *Huntersville Herald* is more homogeneous.
- Keep it civil and factual in tone. You will be more persuasive with reasoned arguments than with overheated, emotional statements.

