



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association

2023 Student Essay Contest Guide



Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any board that may choose to do so.

2023 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

PURPOSE

This contest is designed to give high school students in Virginia an opportunity to express creative ideas and concepts, conduct research, think critically, practice public speaking skills, and subsequently receive recognition for doing so. It is also an opportunity for our Conference on Education attendees (approximately 300+ school board members and administrators) to see and hear examples of the quality of students the schools within the Commonwealth are producing.

RULES & GUIDELINES – Please print and distribute as needed

The Virginia School Boards Association is holding a personal essay/speaking contest where the winner will have the opportunity to present before an audience of more than 300 school board members and administrators at the 2023 VSBA Conference on Education held July 13 at Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump.

This is the third year the Virginia School Boards Association will hold this contest. We hope that this contest will bring out the very best in students' writing and speaking efforts and allow our attendees to witness examples of the bright, thoughtful, and accomplished students from around the Commonwealth.

Specific Rules and Guidelines begin on page 2.

TOPIC

THE MEANING OF CIVILITY - The term civility can mean many things to many people. It's more than politeness or agreeing with a person on everything. It is at the root of our beliefs and at the core of what our society is. Prepare a personal essay discussing the meaning of civility, how it impacts the learning environment, and ways to find a shared understanding with others.

ENTERING THE CONTEST & REGISTRATION DEADLINE

This contest is open until 4:00 p.m. on May 5, 2023, to all 2022-2023 school year high school students who are enrolled in school divisions that are current members of the Virginia School Boards Association. The application process must be completed in its entirety **online no later than 4:00 p.m. Friday, May 5, 2023**. Receipt of applications will be time-stamped by VSBA and confirmation of acceptance sent to the applicant within 3 business days of receipt.

Applicants must submit ALL of the following by the date shown above to be part of the contest:

- An application form (application at this link: [2023 VSBA Student Essay Contest Submission Form](#))
- A 600-750 word personal essay
- A video of the essay presented as a speech
- A completed and signed Parental Release Form (see page 6 of this document)

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR PRESENTATION TO VSBA

All of the required materials listed in the section above (excluding the application, which is to be submitted via the link shown above) shall be emailed to communications@vsba.org no later than **4:00 p.m. Friday, May 5, 2023**. The video portion of the submission must be compressed and in a transferable quality. Supported file formats are .mp4, .mov, .mpg, or .avi. Participants may also upload their video to YouTube and attach the link to their submission email. Remember that partial submissions will not be considered for participation in the contest, so please ensure all four items are included with the email to VSBA.

2023 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

RECOGNITION

The contest offers the following incentives:

The winner will receive a \$500 scholarship and plaque to be presented at the 2023 VSBA Conference on Education being held on July 13, 2023. Attendance is required to present their essay as a speech and receive recognition during the conference. The location of the conference is:

Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump
12042 W Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23233

** The winner will also be recognized on the VSBA website and in an issue of the VSBA newsletter.*

RULES AND GUIDELINES

- All entrants must be classified as a high school student (grades 9-12) during the 2022-2023 school year.
- The school where they are enrolled must be a Public High School in Virginia.
- By entering, you agree to present your essay/speech at the VSBA Conference on Education if chosen as a finalist. This is required to receive the cash award.
- Although this is meant to be a personal, rather than an academic essay, attention should be given to content, organization, style, and correctness.
- Essays/presentation must be original. However, consultation with teachers or other resources is encouraged. Plagiarism is not acceptable.
- Credit must clearly be given to any source where borrowed material is directly used or quoted.
- Essays should be approximately 600-750 words in length (appropriate for 4-5 minutes of speaking).
- A video of the presentation in its entirety must be submitted with this application.
- Presentations should be memorized, but students may use 3x5 note cards as references during their presentations. **Presentations may not be read in the entirety from a manuscript or notes.**
- Presentations must be approximately **four to five minutes** in duration.
- If you would like to request accommodations, please contact communications@vsba.org.

JUDGING

The winner will be selected by a panel of judges selected by the Virginia School Boards Association. Criteria for judging the essays and the presentations include quality of the written essay both in form and content and student delivery qualities as demonstrated in the video. Accuracy of facts, demonstrated mastery of the topic, effective communication of concepts, thoughts, and ideas, proper use of voice and articulation, and originality all are important. A sample of the judging worksheet can be found on the next page. The decisions of the judges are final.

Virginia School Boards Association Contest Judging Worksheet

Student: _____ School: _____

Division: _____

Essay/Speech Title: _____

CRITERIA

NOTES

Essay Qualities (_____ /30 points):

- No plagiarism in evidence
- Well-organized information
- Accuracy of material
- Informative
- Resources credited appropriately

Speech Presentation (Video) (_____ /35 points):

- Captures the attention of the audience
- Organizes ideas (presents a specific point of view)
- Introduces and uses research effectively
- Interprets and understands the subject
- Uses resources and references appropriately

Student Delivery Qualities (_____ 35 points):

- Shows poise and confidence and passion
- Speaks fluently and with clarity
- Uses satisfactory pronunciation
- Has control of filters ("ums" "you knows" like")
- Effectively uses voice quality and volume
- Delivery is smooth and natural
- Develops a rapport with the audience
- Uses body movements appropriately (gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, posture)

Observed Time Limit	Yes	No
Time Used: _____		

Total Points Awarded: _____ / 100 points Judge's Name: _____

Additional Comments:

2023 VSBA CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST

Parent/Legal Guardian Media Recording Release for Students

I, _____, Parent/Legal Guardian of _____ (student's name), hereby grant permission to the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) to use the above-named student's video, photo, and likeness for promotional purposes by VSBA in all manners, including, but not limited to: news releases, photographs, video, audio, website, and other electronic or printed published media. I agree that these videos, photos, and/or voice recordings may be used for a variety of purposes without further notifying me. I understand VSBA shall not use any of the student's personally identifying information, except for the student's full name, the school that he/she attends, and the student's grade, without first obtaining my express permission. VSBA has my permission for this use until I submit a written revocation of my permission to the VSBA Office at 200 Hansen Road, Suite 2, Charlottesville, VA 22911, communications@vsba.org, or you may call 800-446-8722. I understand the VSBA does not have control over a third party who retrieves my student's information published by the VSBA and uses it without my permission. I agree to hold the VSBA harmless for such misuse of my student's information.

Parent/Legal Guardian Printed Name

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date