



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

VSBA Student Essay Contest
2021 Guidebook

Sponsored by



VACORP

2021 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING 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 an opportunity to present before an audience of more than 300 school board members and administrators at the 2021 VSBA Conference on Education held virtually on July 20, 2021.

This is the first 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 3.

TOPIC

Can and Should Freedom of Expression and Civility Co-exist?

In the name of the First Amendment and the freedom of expression it guarantees, rancorous rhetoric is fast becoming more commonplace across our country, causing many to wonder if it's any longer safe or beneficial to engage in democratic discourse. Is there a way to participate in conversations where various opinions and options for solving problems of common concern, weighing alternatives, resolving differences and co-existing without acrimony and hostility are possible? Is practicing civility (reasoned public discourse where respect, restraint, responsibility, and empathy coexist with free expression) still as important as self-governance, freedom of expression and individual dignity or does civility hamper free expression?

2021 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST

RECOGNITION

The contest offers the following incentives:

1st Place: \$500 cash prize

- * The first place winner is required to attend the 2021 VSBA Conference on Education, be recognized and present their essay as a speech.
- * The first through third place winners will be recognized on the VSBA website.
- * The first place winning student and their work will be recognized in an issue of the VSBA Newsletter.

SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF CONTESTANTS

Only one student per VSBA member division may submit a contest application. Each division may select their one applicant by whatever method it considers most appropriate.

ENTERING THE CONTEST & REGISTRATION DEADLINE

This contest is open until 4:00 p.m. on April 30, 2021, to all 2020-2021 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, April 30, 2021. 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: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StudentEssay2021>)
- 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 the Survey Monkey link shown above) shall be emailed to jessica@vsba.org no later than **4:00 p.m. Friday, April 30, 2021**. 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 be sure to include all four items with the email to VSBA.

2021 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST

RULES AND GUIDELINES

- All entrants must be classified as a high school student (grades 9-12) during the 2019-2020 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 first place winner. 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.

JUDGING

The finalists and 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 is shown below. The decisions of the judges are final.

(Sample of Judges Worksheet follows this page.)

2021 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST

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

Original & creative thinking

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

2021 VSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST

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
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Time Used: _____

Total Points Awarded: _____ / 100 points

Judge's Name: _____

Additional Comments:

2021 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, jessica@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