

Merced County Office of Education
Writing Festival

Judging Guidelines

For questions regarding the Judging Guidelines, please contact:
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Writing Festival

Entry Guidelines

Judges will determine 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each of the contest categories at each grade level.

First place winning entries from each grade level in Prose and Poetry are judged for the Gold Medal. This judging takes place after all entries have been judged and awarded. **ONE** gold medal winner is chosen from Prose and Poetry at each grade level. The Gold Medal winner is the *best of the best* in the Prose and Poetry divisions. There are no ties for this award. If there is not a best of the best at a particular grade level in Prose or Poetry, there will be no gold medal given awarded for that grade.

EL Students at ELPAC Levels 1) Emerging or 2) Expanding in English are judged and awarded separately from the general class entries. This information must be indicated on the Entry Form as an EL student entry at ELPAC 1–2 Levels. Please use the most recent scores on record to determine placement.

ELPAC Levels 3) Expanding/Bridging or 4) Bridging, will be submitted and judged with general class entries.

Students Writing in their Primary Language or Secondary Language (other than English) may submit 3 per the Division Categories and will be counted, judged and awarded separately from the general class entries.

Special Education students enrolled in Special Day Classes (SDC) are allowed to submit 3 entries per the Division/Categories. These entries are judged and awarded separately from general class entries.

Resource Specialist Program (RSP) student entries are included with the general class entry (3 per category, per class counts) for judging and awards.

Judging will be based on quality, and the length of entries should be grade level appropriate. Judging will also be based on adherence to the category descriptions and guidelines explained in the Writing Reference Book.

Spelling/punctuation errors **may be** unacceptable. Please consider grade and writer's level if an appropriate "needs" category is marked on the entry when judging on spelling or punctuation.

Judging Guidelines

Two or more judges will assess student work. An additional judge will review student's work to settle discrepancies.

In the event the judges concur that the quality of work between two students is equal, the category will be declared won by a tie.

A panel of judges will be chosen to determine the gold medal winners.

FIRST DETERMINATION: Does the submission include the core components of the text type? If yes, then move on to quality criteria. If no, then make a note on judging sheet and discard.

Quality Criteria

1. Is written with a specific task, purpose and audience in mind.
2. Is clearly written.
3. Has the organization essential to a specific type of writing.
4. Is complete and not redundant.
5. Uses precise words to convey meanings.
6. Has one or more attributes of creative writing.
7. Leaves reader with a mental picture.
8. Does something unusual with the commonplace.
9. Gives a new twist to an old idea.
10. Uses a new solution to an old problem.

Choosing Between Quality Entries

When there are several quality entries, choosing a winner can be difficult. Since personal taste is not a valid criterion for judging, three strategies for deciding quality writing are:

1. Reread each entry focusing attention on:
 - a. **The use of words** to give mental images.
 - b. **The use of action** to involve the reader in the story, description, explanation, etc.
 - c. **The appropriateness** of examples, anecdotes, or illustrations.
 - d. **The weaving together of fact and impression**, without mixing them or confusing the reader.
2. Get a third judge to read and judge the same entry.
3. Determination of placement is based on the consensus among all 3 judges.

Instructions for Judging

1. **Determine whether the entry follows the description** for the named category as detailed in the Writing Festival Reference Book. If the entry does not follow the description it must be discarded or re-sorted when possible.
2. Remember: Awards are based on the **quality** of the work. They are not given just to fill a placement.
3. **Make judgments about quality.**
 - a. Read the entry quickly
 - b. Read each quality criteria and make a quick judgment:
 1. It has criteria
 2. It does not have criteria.
 3. If more than one entry meets all of the quality criteria, you must decide which is of the best quality.
4. **When both judges have read all entries and made their initial assessment**, compare the assessments.
5. **Re-read those entries** that the judges did not rank the same and try to reach a consensus.
6. **If there are important differences in rankings**, or if judges are unable to come to agreement, get another opinion.

7. **When 1st, 2nd, and/or 3rd places are awarded**, indicate placement in designated box on google sheet.

8. **GOLD ENTRY** – WF Coordinator will combine all 1st place entries and submit for GOLD with remaining judges. One prose and one poetry will be chosen for each grade level.