



**VSBA**

Virginia School Boards Association

# 2024 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 member board that may choose to do so.*

# 2024 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. It also presents a golden opportunity for our Conference on Education attendees to witness firsthand the remarkable caliber of students from across the Commonwealth, providing a vibrant showcase of excellence in education.

## **RULES & GUIDELINES – Please print and distribute as needed**

The Virginia School Boards Association is holding a personal essay/speaking contest where the first place winner will have the opportunity to present their essay before an audience of more than 200 school board members and administrators at the 2024 VSBA Conference on Education held July 23 at Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump. In addition, the first place student has the option to attend and present their essay at the 2024 Student School Board Representative Workshop held at the 2024 VSBA Annual Convention November 20-22 at the Williamsburg Lodge in Williamsburg, Virginia.

This is the fourth 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 bright, thoughtful, and accomplished students from around the state.

Specific Rules and Guidelines begin on page 2.

## **TOPIC**

**Kind Hearts, Strong Schools** – Please prepare a personal essay discussing how kindness plays an important role in the learning environment, and how decisions and actions contribute to fostering kindness in schools. Highlight the role of kindness in creating a positive and supportive educational environment. Kindness is at the root of our beliefs and the core of our society.

## **ENTERING THE CONTEST & REGISTRATION DEADLINE**

**This contest is open until 4:00 p.m. on May 6, 2024**, to all 2023-2024 school year high school (9-12) 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. Monday, May 6, 2024. Receipt of applications will be time-stamped by VSBA.**

Applicants must submit a complete application containing ALL the following items by the date shown above to be part of the contest:

- An application form (application at this link: [2024 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 must be submitted through the submission form no later than **4:00 p.m. on Monday, May 6, 2024**. The video portion of the submission must be submitted through a YouTube, Google Drive, or Dropbox link through the submission form. Remember that partial submissions will not be considered for participation in the contest, so please ensure all four items are included with your online submission.

# 2024 VSBA Student Essay Contest

## RECOGNITION

The contest offers the following incentives:

The first place winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship, sponsored by WellNet Healthcare, and certificate to be presented at the **2024 VSBA Conference on Education**, held on **July 23, 2024**. Attendance at this conference is **required** and the winner will present their essay as a speech and receive recognition. The location of the 2024 VSBA Conference on Education is:

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

First place winners also have the option to attend the 2024 VSBA Student School Board Representative Workshop held before the 2024 VSBA Annual Convention. The date of this is November 20, 2024. The location of the **2024 VSBA Student School Board Representative Workshop** is:

**Williamsburg Lodge**  
**310 South England St.**  
**Williamsburg, VA 23185**

*\* 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 2023-2024 school year.
- The school where they are enrolled must be a public high school in Virginia in a division that is a current member of the Virginia School Boards Association.
- By entering, the student agrees to present their essay/speech at the VSBA Conference on Education (**required**) if chosen as the first place winner. This is required to receive the cash award. The student has the option to attend the 2024 VSBA Student School Board Representative Workshop
- Although this is meant to be a personal, rather than an academic essay, attention should be given to content, organization, style, and correctness.
- Essays/presentations 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) and on the topic: ***Kind Hearts, Strong Schools***.
- 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 entirety from a manuscript or notes.**
- Presentations must be approximately **four to five minutes** in duration.

## JUDGING

The winner will be selected by a panel of judges chosen 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, ideas, proper use of voice and articulation, and originality are all 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

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” “likes”)
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsored by:



## 2024 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 or the student. 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](mailto: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