

• **ENTRIES.** As many as THREE students from EACH GRADE LEVEL (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) OR ages 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 respectively by Sept. 1 of the current school year, if in an ungraded school, may be entered in the READY WRITING District Contest from each school. Designated adults representing each school will select contestants to represent the campus at the District Meet based on their abilities in writing, as well as other factors, which are decided upon by the individual school.

• **ADVANCING TO STATE.** 4 must compete in a grade for 2 to advance (See page 7 for complete rules.)

• **NATURE OF THE CONTEST.** Ready Writing is “usually” writing that explains, or expository writing. It can also include narration and persuasion. Contestants come to contest “ready” to write on their choice of one of two prompts given. **Contestants should not place their names anywhere in their essay.** The prompts will either state or imply the purpose for writing, the format, the audience and the point of view. There are basically three types of writing categories used in this contest:

- 1) description - describe a happening, person, object, or idea from imagination or memory;
- 2) narration - write a story with dialogue;
- 3) persuasion - describe and argue one side of an issue; describe both sides of an issue, then argue one side; write an editorial; or write a letter to persuade. These are examples.

The **maximum time allotted** for writing is as follows: Grades 3 & 4—45 minutes
Grades 5 & 6—60 minutes
Grades 7 & 8—90 minutes.

• **WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CONTEST.** The contest director will announce the time and place that contestants and one adult should report for receiving evaluations and awards. **Contestants are responsible for bringing their own notebook paper and pencils, dark ink pens, and erasers.** Contestants will be asked to write their contestant ID numbers in the upper right hand corner of each page of their writing and their grade levels in the upper left hand corner of each page. The contest director will tell contestants their ID numbers, usually during roll call. (Alternates taking the place of a registered contestants who are absent should be sure to let the contest director know as they enter the room to save time in roll call.) The contest director will then distribute the prompts face down. When asked to do so, contestants will turn the prompt page over and write their contestant ID numbers in the upper right hand corner and their grade levels in the upper left hand corner of the prompt. Then, contestants

will begin planning and writing within the time allotment stated above. Contestants may write on their prompts, which will be returned with their papers and evaluations on the release date for all contest materials. **Contestants should place the page number on each succeeding page of their writing in the right hand column on the top line of each page.** There will be no discussion of the prompts prior to the start signal. The contest director may give a 15-minute warning prior to the end of the time period; however, contestants should manage their own time in case a signal is unable to be given. Contestants may exit the contest room prior to the end of the contest time by quietly turning in all of their papers (including notes) to the contest director and quietly exiting. No contest material or notes should be taken from the contest room. Contestants should indicate to the contest director which pages are to be judged and which are to be discarded.

• **ENTERING THE CONTEST ROOM LATE FROM ANOTHER CONTEST.** As a district and campus option (to be determined by the adults in charge of the contest on the campus), contestants may enter the Poetry Interpretation Contest AND the Ready Writing Contest, which are scheduled at the same time. Notification **MUST** be given to the meet director in writing that these contests are in conflict, in order that arrangements may be made for the Poetry contestant to speak first or second in the preliminary or final round, THEN go to the other contest. No additional time will be given for the contest in which the contestant must arrive late. In most cases, very little time will have been lost if the guidelines are followed, and the contestant will be able to participate fully in both events.

• **JUDGING THE ESSAYS.** *The Criteria for Evaluation.* The compositions are to be graded as to relative excellence in interest, organization, and correctness. While the judges are to take into consideration all three of these elements in selecting the most effective compositions, they shall stress the element of interest more than either of the other two, and the element of organization more than correctness of style:

- (i) **Interest (50%)** depends primarily upon substance, upon having something to say that is worth saying because of its acuteness of analysis and its originality of thought. It depends next upon clarity, for no reader can be interested unless he understands exactly the writer’s ideas or points. It depends finally upon the inclusion of specific details and examples which individualize the composition as an outgrowth of the writer’s character and experience.

- (ii) **Organization (35%)** has clarity as its main goal. The plan of the whole composition should be such that each part contributes to an understanding of the writer’s main idea or thesis, no part being misleading or unrelated to that thesis. The organization of each paragraph should be directed to the logical and full development of one idea.
- (iii) Issues of **correctness of style (15%)** are of two types. The first, and the one to be most stressed by the judges, is that based upon an attempt to achieve clarity of communication. Sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, and word usage which hinder clear communication are thus to be considered incorrect. An issue of secondary importance is that which is based upon mere convention. Errors in sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word usage, and spelling which do not hinder clear communication but which fail to conform to standard usage constitute this type of incorrectness.

• **SAMPLE PROMPT.** Instructions on the prompt page contestants receive in competition are as follows: “Select only one of the two topics that follow. Write the title of the topic you have chosen at the top of your paper. Remember not to use your name or any reference to your school in your composition. Your composition should be written as directed by the topic prompt.”

Here is a sample prompt from the **2007 Grades 7/8 District Ready Writing competition:**

Lost It - OK: Have you ever lost something that you were happy to lose? Write a short story for *Teen Monthly Magazine* about something lost that ended up being good to lose.

• **STUDY MATERIALS.**

- 1) *PSIA Ready Writing and Creative Writing Handbook for Elementary & Middle Schools*
- 2) Prompts from previous years’ contests

• **PREPARATION FOR CONTEST.** Read and follow all instructions provided in the “Information Pertaining to All Contests” section of the *PSIA Academic Handbook*. Observe and practice with students all rules and procedures delineated in the “Instructions to the Contestant” and in the “Checklist for Contest Directors” and the “Checklist for Judges.” Preparation for the Ready Writing Contest should include instruction using the current edition of the *PSIA Ready Writing and Creative Writing Handbook for Elementary and Middle Schools*, which provides the best resources to prepare for contest. Information on how to construct prompts, plus many example prompts and essays of contestants who have advanced to state competition are included in this resource. In addition, how to select students for competition, practice formats for writing, and writing checklists, along with an elaboration on the three evaluation criteria are included. Prompts from previous years’ contests can be ordered on the PSIA Study Materials Order Form.

• **PERSONNEL NEEDED FOR CONTEST.**

1. *Contest Director.* May be a knowledgeable coach of contestants in the contest.
2. *Assistant Director.* A knowledgeable coach from a different school other than director’s.
3. *Judges.* Three language arts persons who have not coached any students in the contest, and are not affiliated with the schools, if at all possible.

• **SAMPLE COMMENTS BY JUDGES.**

These comments illustrate the types of comments preferred on the contestants’ evaluation sheets:

• **Under Constructive Comments:**

- “I enjoyed how you framed in a story for the introduction and conclusion. That’s what makes the reader want to finish it.”
- “You have proven each idea so well with details to back up your point. You have thought out your reasons well.”
- “I can tell you are a risk taker! Keep on trying to incorporate vocabulary you come across in reading!”
- “What wonderful ideas to help a new student feel more comfortable. You must be a really good friend to have.”
- “Your insightful story reveals your careful attention to detail.”
- “I like your use of humor (1-800-MAKEMONEY). You elaborated on your ideas and offered suggestions/solutions to the problems you cited.”

• **Under Areas Needing Improvement:**

- “I think you mean ‘exclaimed’ instead of ‘reclaimed.’ Use another synonym. What other words could you use instead? As you practice writing, learn to use a thesaurus.”
- “You might indent for new paragraphs when you have a new rule or idea.”
- “Watch verb tense—some present, some past.”
- “Word usage—fill - feel.”
- “Work on being specific—What do you talk about with your distant cousins? How exactly do you relax?”
- “Watch spelling.”
- “Expand your ideas.”
- “Organize thoughts into separate paragraphs.”