Essay Competition – Grades 3-5

Competition Description:

The Essay Competition allows MISSION: STEM coordinators to reinforce STEM skills through writing. Students will choose between non-fiction or science-fiction topics to write an original essay. Students will write an original 350-500 word **essay** and provide a **reference page**.

Non-Fiction Topics:

1. Some animals exhibit superpowers. For example, a gecko can walk straight up a glass wall and a diving bell spider can breathe while underwater. Select an animal that has a "superpower" and explain the science behind it. If humans could adopt the superpower, in what ways would it be useful?

2. Write about a real-life superhero who works in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM). Why do you admire this person? What do they do and why is their job important? Remember, not all superheroes wear capes!

Science-Fiction Topics:

1. Super strength and invincibility sound awesome on paper, but what everyday issues could they potentially cause? Think of a profession where those qualities specifically could be troublesome.

2. Imagine you're a technology-based hero. Explain your unique gear and abilities using plausibly realistic concepts rather than vague comic book science.

Suggested Process Map:

1. Choose a topic from either the non-fiction or science-fiction list.
2. Research the topic.
3. Draft the essay, read, and review.
4. Ask your MISSION: STEM coordinator, ELA teacher, and/or parent/guardian for feedback.
5. Revise based on the feedback, and if necessary, repeat by going back to step 3 with changes.
6. Finalize your essay.
7. Create a reference page and list of all the sources you used in your essay.
8. Submit your cover page, finalized essay, and reference page. All components should be combined into one PDF file.

Essay Competition – Judge's Evaluation Form – Grades 3-5

Please select your grade: ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐ 5th
Please select your category: ☐ Non-Fiction ☐ Science-Fiction
Please select your topic: ☐ Animal Superpowers ☐ Real-life Superhero ☐ Super Strength ☐ Tech Hero

Student Name	
Title of Essay	
School/Organization Name	
School District	
Judge Name	

EVALUATION CATEGORIES **POINTS**

Organization:

- Cover Page includes the following: _____/5
  - Student's Name and Grade
  - Selected Category
  - Selected Topic
  - Official School/Organization Name
  - Official School District Name
  - Coordinator's Name and Email
- Grammar, spelling, and formatting: _____/5
  - Is the student's writing free of spelling errors, punctuation error, and sentence errors (e.g. misplaced sentence parts, subject/verb agreement issues, sentence fragments run-ons)?
  - Is the essay double-spaced with 1-inch margins and written in a 12-point font?
  - Does the essay include an introduction, well-structured body paragraphs, and a conclusion?
- Reference Page lists all sources used to support the chosen topic: _____/10
  - Books/Magazines/Newspapers: Provides the title of the reference and author's last and first name
  - Websites: Provides the website link

Essay:

- Adherence to Topic: _____/10
  - Does the student's writing address the chosen topic effectively?
  - Does the student's writing maintain focus and relevance throughout the essay?
- Originality and Coherence: _____/20
  - Does the student's writing present an original perspective?
  - Is the essay age-appropriate, logical, and cohesive?
  - Does the student maintain a strong and convincing voice?
  - Does the student maintain a well-organized and logically structured essay with appropriate transitions?
- Creativity: _____/15
  - Does the student's writing show creativity and imagination?
- Analysis and Use of Evidence: _____/30
  - Does the student demonstrate a deep understanding of their chosen essay topic?
  - Does the student utilize credible sources effectively to support arguments made in their essay?

- Does the student ensure ideas are fully developed and well-supported by the sources in their Works Cited page?
- Does the essay integrate sources into their essay content in a way that enhances their arguments?
- Does the student ensure that the evidence from their sources is relevant, accurate, and convincing?

- Word Count: _____/5
  - Does the student's essay meet the required word count of 350 – 500 words?

TOTAL (maximum 100 pts) **_____/100**

Judge's Comments: