Essay Competition – Grades 9-12

Competition Description:

The Essay Competition allows MISSION: STEM coordinators to reinforce STEM skills through writing. Students will choose between a non-fiction or science-fiction topic to write an original essay. Students will write an original 750-1000 word **essay** and provide a **Works Cited page**.

Non-Fiction Topics:

1. Science and technology have come a long way since many popular superheroes were first developed. Pick a superpower (or a superhero's tool) and write about how modern science, technology, and engineering have made it a reality (or close to a reality). What has been developed so far and what still needs to be modified? Use at least 2 reliable sources.

2. Research and write about a scientific breakthrough, discovery, or invention that interests you and may not be well-known yet. Why is it important? Have you ever encountered or used the discovery or invention? What does the future look like considering the discovery/invention? Use at least 2 reliable sources.

Science-Fiction Topics:

1. You have been tasked with creating an AI humanoid to help battle evil. What specific abilities do you want the humanoid to possess? What precautions must you take while developing the humanoid? What would happen if the humanoid began displaying sinister behaviors? Use scientific reasoning when you can and provide any real-life examples that you have researched.

2. Design a specialty gadget or vehicle for a hero with a disability who still wants to regularly fight crime or join large scale battles. What considerations need to be made for that specific disability?

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 Works Cited page and list of all the sources you used (and cited) in your essay.
8. Submit your cover page, finalized essay, and Works Cited page. All components should be combined into one PDF file.

Essay Competition – Judge's Evaluation Form – Grades 9-12

Please select your grade: ☐ 9th ☐ 10th ☐ 11th ☐ 12th
Please select your category: ☐ Non-Fiction ☐ Science-Fiction
Please select your topic: ☐ Modern Superpower ☐ Scientific Breakthrough ☐ AI Humanoid ☐ Design for Disability

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?
- Works Cited Page (MLA Format): _____/10
  - Does the student have a Works Cited page listing all sources used to support their chosen essay topic in MLA format?
    - For a guide on MLA formatting, please use the following: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

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 750 – 1,000 words?

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

Judge's Comments: