

Literary Activities

SECTION 120: INTRODUCTION.

120-1-1 Contests-The League sponsors a competitive interscholastic program in two fields of literary activity, as follows:

(1) *Creative Writing*: School Folder Contest, Short Story Contest, Essay Contest, Poetry Contest.

(2) *Publications*: Newspaper Evaluation, Yearbook Evaluation, Magazine Evaluation, Newsmagazine Evaluation.

120-1-1 State Area School Media Meetings Attendance-In order to assist school broadcasting, magazine, newspaper/newsmagazine and yearbook advisers to better understand the role for and obligations of student media, the League shall conduct regular area meetings to clarify the responsibilities of advisers and review VHSL support programs. Every adviser shall be required to attend a meeting. New advisers must meet the obligation prior to either his/her first or second year in the job.

SECTION 121: CREATIVE WRITING CONTESTS.

121-1-1 Purpose-The purpose of the Creative Writing Contests is to encourage and stimulate the development of creative writing ability among the high school students of the state. While the emphasis is upon the general quality of the school's product rather than upon the work of the individual student, the contests provide for recognition of both school and individual.

121-2-1 School Participation-Principals should request their teachers of English to announce the contests in their classes early in the school year. The teachers should select the best examples of each type submitted (short story, poem and essay) for inclusion in the school's folder entry. All schools are urged to submit entries, since each individual contribution is rated and the ratings and criticisms are helpful in improving the standards of the school's work in this field. Folders only are accepted; no individual short story, essay or poem will be considered unless it is included in the school folder.

Policy Manual 121-2-1

121-3-1 Program-The League program in creative writing consists of separate contests for each group of schools in each of four divisions: school folder (the cumulative effort of the six original compositions submitted; see 121-5-1 and 121-5-2), short story, essay and poetry. Each member school desiring to participate submits its folder for judgment in accordance with the following rules and regulations.

121-4-1 Aids to Sponsors-To stimulate interest in creative writing and to enable sponsors and students to evaluate the quality of writing submitted in the contest, the League publishes annually a booklet containing the winning selections from each group in contests of the previous year and the comments thereon by the judges. This booklet will be sent to member schools without charge upon request to the League Office.

VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE HANDBOOK

121-5-1 Rules and Regulations-Each school entering the contest shall submit a folder containing six original compositions: two essays, two poems and two short stories.

121-5-2 Only one selection by any one student shall be included in the folder.

121-5-3 All selections shall have been written by students during the school year in which the contest is conducted. A violation, if discovered and reported to the executive or assistant director prior to or within three weeks after the date results are distributed, will result in disqualification of both the individual entry and the school folder and a redistribution of awards as necessary.

121-5-4 Essays shall be limited to not more than 3,000 words and short stories to not more than 4,000 words. Poems may be of any length.

121-5-5 Entries shall be postmarked not later than midnight March 15.

121-5-6 Entries shall be submitted in booklet form, firmly secured in a folder by either paper fasteners or staples. The cover and title page of the folder shall contain the name of the contest and the name, address and group classification of the school. The folder shall contain a table of contents listing the title and author under each type of writing, as well as page references.

121-5-7 Selections shall be typed on standard (8 1/2 x 11 inch) typewriter paper and shall be double-spaced. Frequent errors in copy reading, spelling or punctuation shall disqualify entry.

121-5-8 No illustrations shall be used in either the selections themselves or on the cover of the folder.

121-5-9 Each school entering the contest shall make every effort to determine that all compositions included in the school folder are the original work of the student author named.

121-6-1 Judgments-Creative writing contest judges are selected from college and university faculty members or professional writers. The judges rate each folder as a whole and each individual composition within each folder.

Policy Manual 121-6-1

121-7-1 Evaluations-A general summary of the contest entries by groups, with a critical evaluation of the standard of excellence attained by both schools and individuals, is prepared by the judges and distributed with the announcement of winners and individual school ratings to all competing schools. Outstanding essays, poems and short stories are collected in a booklet available to interested schools without charge if requested on the order form supplied in the Principal's Workbook.

LITERARY ACTIVITIES

121-8-1 Guidelines for Appropriate Content-Although the League has no desire or intention to act as a censoring agency, it does recognize a responsibility to maintain reasonable standards for written expression. The League strongly recommends that each school adopt and publish policy guidelines on how students may deal with questionable or controversial content and that the principal or his/her designated agent ensures that entries approved for submission in the League's creative writing competition conform to those guidelines. No entry containing plagiarized or libelous material will be rated nor will it receive an award.

SECTION 122: PUBLICATIONS EVALUATION SERVICES.

122-1-1 Purpose-The four publications evaluation services (Newspaper, Yearbook, Magazine, Newsmagazine) are intended to encourage schools to produce student publications as a part of their activities programs and to assist the advisers and editorial staffs of school publications in improving the quality of their products.

122-2-1 Program-The League program in the field of student publications consists of separate evaluation services for each group of schools in each of four divisions: newspapers, yearbooks, magazines and newsmagazines. Where practical, comparative ratings are assigned to entries within Groups A, AA and AAA. Each member school desiring to participate submits its publications for evaluation in accordance with the following regulations and instructions.

122-2-2 In order that all interested schools may receive the benefits of additional training as well as the comments and criticisms of the evaluators for all publications, League-sponsored workshops will be offered each fall on the dates specified on the Activities Calendar (inside front cover of *Handbook*). Information regarding the content and the general organization of the workshops will be mailed to every member school well in advance of each activity.

122-3-1 School Participation-Every school producing a publication, no matter how infrequently or in what form, is encouraged to participate in the appropriate publication evaluation service in order that its advisers and staffs may benefit from the criticisms, suggestions and comments of the evaluators. Each entry receives an individual evaluation. Mimeographed publications have an equal chance of receiving top awards in comparison with more costly printed publications as each will be considered on its merits within the limits of the medium used.

Policy Manual 122-3-1

Rules and Regulations:

122-4-1 Entry Deadline-Only those publications which are received in the League Office on or before the deadline date for entry specified on the Activities Calendar (inside front cover of *Handbook*) will be accepted for the evaluation services.

122-4-2 A school may enter any or all of the evaluation services.

122-4-3 Only entries which are submitted with the official entry form, complete and properly certified by the school principal, and appropriate fees and postmarked not later than the deadline date for entry will be accepted.

VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE HANDBOOK

122-5-1 Evaluation Procedures-Each evaluator prepares an evaluation of each entry. This consists of a written report on the appropriate evaluative criteria booklet and annotated comments written on the publications which have been submitted.

122-6-1 Levels of Evaluation-For the purpose of assigning publications to levels of evaluation within each group classification, all schools entering publications shall be listed by order of their membership as recorded in their evaluative criteria booklets.

(1) Newspaper, Newsmagazine and Yearbook entries shall be listed in order from the largest school membership being served to the smallest and each publication shall then be subdivided into rating levels, each with a separate evaluator.

(2) Magazine entries shall be listed in the same order and shall be subdivided into rating levels as necessary, each with a separate evaluator.

122-7-1 Awards-The ratings of Trophy Class, First Place, Second Place and Third Place will be awarded within each level of evaluation. No maximum or minimum number of awards, within the four award classifications, are allotted to any rating level.

122-7-2 All ratings and awards given will be announced at the Fall Publications Workshop and a listing of all publications rated shall be distributed to all member schools.

122-8-1 Evaluative Criteria-The Evaluative Criteria Booklets are designed to provide general guidelines for the incorporation of sound journalistic practices and will be sent to evaluators along with the registration form which assists the evaluator by permitting the staff to alert him/her to special problems in finance, production, personnel and/or possibly such complications as peer expectations and traditions. The more that an evaluator knows about a publication, the more capable he/she is in rendering a realistic reaction to the work accomplished and in suggesting methods for improvement.

122-8-2 Any member school may propose changes in the evaluating criteria by mailing suggestions to the League office, by presenting these suggestions, in writing, to the assistant director at a Publications Workshop or by sending the suggestions to the chairman of the Scholastic Publications Advisory Committee.

122-8-3 Proposed changes shall be discussed at the regular meetings of the Scholastic Publications Advisory Committee. Proposals which the committee adopts would become effective the following school year and would be printed and distributed to all member schools immediately after acceptance.

122-9-1 Publications Evaluators-Evaluators used to evaluate publications submitted to the Publications Evaluation Services shall be selected by the assistant director depending on their knowledge of the particular type of publication and their prior experience with evaluating publications. The assistant director may select both Virginia and non-Virginia evaluators for original evaluations and/or re-evaluations.

LITERARY ACTIVITIES

122-10-1 Guidelines For Responsible Journalism-Although the League has no desire or intention to act as a censoring agency, it does recognize a responsibility to maintain reasonable standards of responsible journalism. The League believes that the publication of slanderous and/or libelous statements, obscenities or nudity should not be a part of a secondary school publication. Experience has disclosed that while such violations are indeed rare, problems occasionally arise in areas such as letters to the editor, poems and staff attempts to produce "cute" captions, copy and/or headlines. The League strongly recommends that each school adopt and publish a Code of Journalistic Standards which can serve as a guide for the various staffs and potential contributors and will spell out what will and will not be acceptable material for publication. Furthermore, no publication will be rated nor will it receive an award if it uses obscene graphics or language (whether obvious, coded or disguised). No publication containing plagiarized or libelous material will be rated nor will it receive an award.