INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CONTESTANT

• **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 students must compete in each contest to allow the top two from each grade level to advance to State (See page 8 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.

Contestants may print or write in cursive.

• **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. (Substitutes 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.) **Contestants are responsible for bringing their own notebook paper, pencils, dark ink pens, and/or erasers. Nothing else should be brought to contest.** The contest director will then distribute face down the prompts on which Contestant ID labels have already been placed. When asked to do so, contestants will turn the prompt page over and write their contestant ID numbers in the upper LEFT-hand corner of each page of their writing. 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. **Contestants should NOT write on the back of their writing paper.** 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/EXITING THE CONTEST ROOM TO/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 also enter the Prose/Poetry Interpretation Contest, as noted on the Conflict Pattern. Notification of dual entry must be given in accordance to rules stated on page 11 of the *Academic Handbook*.

• **JUDGING THE ESSAYS. After providing brief instruction to judges, the contest directors should leave the room, but return during the last 30 minutes to post decisions.**

Criteria for Evaluation. Compositions are to be judged as to relative excellence in interest, organization, and correctness. While the judges are to take into consideration all three of these elements, they shall stress the element of interest more than either of the other two, and the element of organization more than correctness of style. Judges initially rank contest essays independently, but collaborate on a final decision of the top rankings at each grade level, basing decisions on these criteria:

(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."

Below is a sample prompt from the 2019 Grades 3 and 4 District Ready Writing competition:

ABOUT COWS: Think about what your know about cows and share your information in a report for your teacher. Be sure to talk about the good things AND the not-so-good things about cows.

• STUDY MATERIALS.

1) ***PSIA Ready Writing and Creative Writing Handbook for Elementary & Middle Schools* 2018-2020 edition**, which includes a variety of recent and older district and state winning compositions.

2) Prompts from previous years' contests provided in the Study Materials Packets (order form on line)

• PREPARATION FOR CONTEST. Read and follow all instructions provided in the "Rules for ALL Participants" 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 students 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 Directors.*** Two 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 (optimal).

• 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."

PRIVATE SCHOOLS INTERSCHOLASTIC ASSOCIATION

READY WRITING CONTEST

Evaluation Sheet

Contestant ID#: _____ **Grade Level:** _____

Contestant's Name / School: _____ *(Complete after contest judging)*

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read from the ballot or the *PSIA Academic Handbook* the instructions for evaluating the Ready Writing essays. Judges should read the paragraph prompts that are used by the contestants.
DIVISIONS: There are 3 separate divisions (3 & 4, 5 & 6, and 7 & 8) Each grade level is judged separately.
EVALUATION: The compositions are to be evaluated as to relative excellence in *interest, organization,* and *correctness of style*, as delineated in the PSIA *Academic Handbook* and the *Ready Writing Handbook for Elementary and Middle School*. **Please make comments constructive and supportive, but do not avoid giving constructive criticism, as well.** While judges are to consider all three elements in selecting the most effective compositions, they should weigh interest more than organization, and organization more than correctness of style. The following graph illustrates their approximate importance.

INTEREST—50% / ORGANIZATION—35% / CORRECTNESS OF STYLE—15%

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS FOR THE CONTESTANT:

Judge #1 Comment:

Judge #2 Comment:

Judge #3 Comment:

AREAS THAT COULD BE IMPROVED:

Judge #1:

Judge #2:

Judge #3: