



Tulare County
Office of Education
Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools



Foundations for Life Essay Contest

for 6th -12th Grade Students

Sponsored by
Tulare County Office of Education & CHARACTER COUNTS!

Foundations for Life is a quotation-based program that promotes reading, critical thinking, and writing skills while simultaneously introducing or reinforcing character education.

Foundations for Life is adapted from the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest established by the John Templeton Foundation and is endorsed by the

American Association of School Administrators (AASA),
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

Foundations for Life has many benefits for students and teachers. The program:

- engages students intellectually and emotionally
- integrates easily into existing curricula and activities
- provides excellent practice for state testing and SAT or ACT exams
- advances NCLB standards-based goals
- offers prestigious county - wide recognition and cash prizes for winning essays

Contest Prompt:

Reflect – Choose a maxim* (quotation) that you find meaningful and reflect on how that maxim applies to your life and/or the world around you.

Express – Write an essay that demonstrates an understanding of the underlying wisdom of the quotation.

Commit – Integrate the maxim's message and the insight derived from it into a long-term life strategy that reinforces good character.

*You can find the Maxims at the following link: <http://www.tcoe.org/ERS/StudentEvents.shtm#FoundationsForLife>

How Do You Participate in the *Foundations for Life* Contest?

Foundations for Life and the Tulare County Office of Education offer this recognition program to further encourage students to write essays. There are several benefits to participating in this event, including:

- commendations for participation
- enhancement of college applications and student resumes
- potential media recognition for students and schools
- cash awards for winning essay

Foundations for Life essays submitted for consideration are judged primarily on *compelling content*. **We strongly recommend that teachers or administrators allow students to choose their own personally meaningful maxim (quotation) from the handouts provided.** This will facilitate more insightful essays that truly reflect students' experiences in life and their understanding of character.

County Contest Rules:

- Up to five essays per grade/per school can be submitted.
- Each essay must have a completed and signed *Contest Entry Form* attached
- Essays must relate to one of the *Foundations for Life* maxims.
- Maximum length of essays is 1000 words.
- The **DEADLINE** for postmarking submissions to the 2009 TCOE Contest is

April 3, 2009.

All essays submitted are divided by grade for judging purposes. All submissions will receive certificates of commendation.

A cash prize of \$ 100 will be awarded to the top essay in each grade level.



Foundations for Life Contest Entry Form

ESSAYIST: Please complete the following form and staple it on top of your essay.
Incomplete information may disqualify your essay from the contest.

NAME: _____ AGE: _____

SCHOOL: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ PHONE: () _____

TEACHER: _____ GRADE: _____

FFL MAXIM: Volume #: _____ Issue # _____ Maxim # _____

ESSAY TITLE: _____

Have you previously won this contest? (*Please check one.*) YES NO

If so, when and what was your topic? _____

By signing this form, you (and your parent or legal guardian, if you are under 18) give Tulare County Office of Education and national **Foundations for Life** contest committees permission to use your name, essay, and likeness at their discretion in print and electronic media to publicize and promote the contest.

SIGNATURE(S):

Essayist _____ Date: _____

Parent or Guardian _____ Date: _____

If you prefer to remain anonymous, check below:

If you use my essay, please do not include my name or likeness with it.

Judge's Review Form

Student Name/School _____ Grade _____

Essay Title _____ Total Points _____

Please assign points to each essay in the following categories. (Please do not use "partial points.") Then add them up below and write the final sum in the Total Points space at the top.

Compelling Content

Scale 1 to 10 pts

- is moving and thought provoking
- directly relates to the maxim chosen
- clearly illustrates a relationship to a "foundation" or "value"
- is positive and life-affirming
- has universal appeal
- demonstrates that living up to the value(s) would make the world better
- offers a compelling insight into the essay's author

Compelling Content Total

Presentation

Scale 1 to 5 pts

- is clearly written (grammar and spelling do not impede message)
- is easy to read
- clearly conveys what the author intended to share
- has ideas and paragraphs that flow smoothly

Presentation Total

Additional Comments:

Total Essay Points

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Foundations for Life

Fact Sheet

Purpose (as articulated at the 2004 *Foundations for Life* Summit)

- To inspire young people to *reflect* upon, *express*, and *commit* to profound and enduring truths that will guide them to make ethical and effective choices throughout life.

Strategies

- Provide an essay and/or discussion program that will stimulate students (6th through 12th grades) to *reflect* on the meaning of profound maxims and how they apply to their own lives and the world, *express* the underlying wisdom of the quotations in their own words, and *commit* to incorporating their new insights into long-term life strategies.
- Provide educators and youth leaders with a free, easy-to-use program that helps them teach young people reading, critical thinking, and writing skills while simultaneously reinforcing character education efforts.

Benefits

- Enhances analytical writing skills
- Advances standards-based education goals
- Helps prepare students for state standards assessment tests and college entrance exams
- Gives educators an easy, effective way to enhance character education efforts
- Promotes the discovery of core values that move young people toward positive futures

Facts

- *Foundations for Life* is a nonpartisan, secular program developed by the nonprofit Josephson Institute of Ethics and its CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition. The program is adapted from the John Templeton Foundation's worldwide *Laws of Life* Essay Contest and is administered locally by the Tulare County Office of Education.
- Program materials are free to participating schools, districts, youth-serving organizations, communities, and states.
- *Foundations for Life* offers an opportunity for students of participating organizations to take part in a **County-wide Essay Contest** (with chances for Public recognition and cash prizes).
- Educators can creatively incorporate the program into existing English, social studies, history, and character education curricula AND can choose to hold their own essay contests.
- Involvement with CHARACTER COUNTS! or any other character education program is NOT required for participation in *Foundations for Life*.