

Connecticut's

Laws of Life

Essay Program Handbook

2011-2012

Celebrating 12 Years!



440 Wheelers Farms Rd., Milford, CT 06461 www.ethicsed.org

The *Laws of Life* Essay Program

Welcome to the *Laws of Life* essay program in Connecticut!

The *Laws of Life* essay program is a character-education program that gives students in grades 5-12 the unique opportunity to reflect and write about their core values, principles and ideals that will guide them throughout their lives. The *Laws of Life* program encourages a dialogue between students and their teachers, parents and community members to advance positive values and character. *Laws of Life* is a non-sectarian, academic activity that typically identifies universal ethical principles and *laws of life* such as – love, service, perseverance, honesty, respect and courage. These values are recognized to be life affirming, support positive citizenship and transcend religion, culture and national borders.

The School for Ethical Education has been administering the *Laws of Life* essay program in Connecticut since 2000. Public and non-public school participants have recognized the great value in having students *write from the heart* to identify their “*laws of life*”. The program was established by Sir John Templeton in 1987. With the support of the Templeton Foundation, the *Laws of Life* essay program has been established as an effective character-building activity with students participating from nations around the world.

Benefits of Participation in the *Laws of Life* Program

- Provides students the opportunity to write, reflect and discuss their values with peers, teachers, parents and others
- Motivates students to “write from the heart” to produce excellent narratives
- Integrates the writing process with effective character education
- Encourages schools to obtain community support to recognize student writing
- Provides schools a positive opportunity to recognize students’ values
- Promotes a sense of positive community within the classroom
- Prepares students for writing process on standardized tests (in CT, the CMT and CAPT)
- Fits easily into any writing curriculum (Language Arts/English, History, Social Studies, Health)
- Encourages students of all writing ability to participate
- Provides lesson outlines to catalyze *laws of life* essays

Laws of Life has been approved for implementation in Connecticut schools by CAS (Connecticut Association of Schools) and endorsed by National School Boards Association and is on the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ National Advisory List of Student Contests and Activities.

Contact Us

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) administers Connecticut’s *Laws of Life* essay program with support from Wright Investors’ Service (Milford, CT) and other corporate and private sponsors. For more information, please contact SEE at (203) 783-4439 or visit our website at www.ethicsed.org.

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Laws of Life Overview

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) organizes *Laws of Life* as a two-tiered program in Connecticut. SEE invites schools and districts to register and provides these local organizations with program guidelines and consulting to administer their own local *Laws of Life* essay program.

Local *Laws of Life* Programs

Local programs follow the steps outlined in this handbook and complete a process that is suggested to include:

- Students introduced to think about their own *laws of life* with a prompt from literature, history, personal reflection or quotes/maxims.
- Teachers use a writing process which includes pre-writing, outlining, drafting, editing, peer and family review, final writing and presentations to complete *Laws of Life* essays.
- Final essays are evaluated by readers outside of the class using a *Laws of Life* essay judging rubric.
- A class/community celebration provides closure for the local process with opportunity for students to share essays and local winners are recognized for their essays.
- The school submits one essay (for every 100 participants) to SEE for entry into Connecticut's statewide *Laws of Life* program for judging.

All of the preceding steps **are not** required to host a local *Laws of Life* program. The main goal is to have students reflect and write from the heart about their values. Schools and districts are encouraged to “**do what fits**” for their program to benefit their students.

Statewide *Laws of Life* Program

At the statewide program level, SEE accepts essays from the local contests and completes the following steps:

- Each essay submitted to SEE is copied with only a numeric identifier and then judged by two professional readers.
- Scores for all essays are compiled and the top ten essayists are invited to a statewide *Laws of Life* essay celebration.
- The *Laws of Life* essay celebration is usually held in early May at a central location in Connecticut and includes a dinner for the students, their immediate family and teacher.
- Selected student essays are presented along with a keynote speech by a respected guest speaker.
- Depending on funding levels, student winners are awarded gift certificates and a U.S. Savings Bond.

Connecticut's *Laws of Life* Timeline 2011-12

Activity	Month(s)
SEE accepts <u><i>Laws of Life</i></u> registration by local schools or districts Early registration and program administration is encouraged	September 2011-January 31, 2012
Local essay programs are completed and encouraged to include the writing process within relevant academic subject areas. Essays are graded with a <i>Laws of Life</i> rubric	September 2011 - February 2012
Local celebrations are hosted for essay participants	Any time after completion of local essay program
Local program winning essays (1 per 100 participants) are sent to SEE All statewide participants should hold the date of May 2, 2012 for the statewide celebration	September 2011 and no later than March 1, 2012
Essays out to statewide judges	March 9, 2012
Statewide essay judging	March 2012
Essays due back from Judges	March 27, 2012
Notification of statewide essay winners	April 6, 2012
Statewide <i>Laws of Life</i> Celebration	Wednesday, May 2, 6:00 to 8:30 PM at Amarante's in New Haven

Endorsing Organizations

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National School Boards Association

Connecticut Association of Schools approved list of activities

The John Templeton Foundation

Recommended Steps to Administer a Local *Laws of Life* Essay Program

- Identify one or more teachers and their classes who are participating in the program (if more than one teacher, the school/district should designate a coordinator). The contact with SEE will be referred to as a coordinator whether he/she is administering one or more classes.
- Coordinator registers with SEE by faxing or mailing registration form to SEE by registration deadline. See appendix for all *Laws of Life Registration* forms.
- Establish a *Laws of Life* committee to help administer the program. This committee can be students that support this effort as a service-learning project or can include fellow faculty, administrators and parents.
- *Laws of Life* committee determines program timeline and inclusion of community judges, program celebration, essay publication and contribution and presentation of awards
- Develop a program budget if celebration and awards are planned
- Provide training/information session for teachers participating in program (a *Laws of Life* Teacher's guide is available through SEE from the Templeton Foundation) Use link to foundation resources at <http://www.lawsoflife.org/>
- Plan strategies to integrate the *Laws of Life* essay into existing curriculum through subject matter analysis of character studies in history, literature (review example lessons on website) or current events, health lessons, or appropriate writing prompts for English or Language Arts.
- Identify writing process steps to include peer and family review of essays.
- Recruit and communicate with potential *Laws of Life* judges to read and grade essays with a *Laws of Life* rubric (provided in appendix).
- Discuss grading objectives with judges.
- Collect and number essays and determine method of forwarding essays to judges without student names.
- Organize celebration forum for all participants (individual classes or combined groups) and include invitation to parents, essay judges, administrators and local media.
- Include opportunity for students to share lessons from the essays with peers and adults.
- Identify a strategy to "publish" selected or all student essays through real or virtual bulletin boards, anthologies, school websites...
- Include an evaluation to seek feedback and closure on the program.
- Summarize and publish evaluation to the *Laws of Life* committee and community.
- Forward top essays (1/100 participants) to SEE for inclusion in statewide program.

These steps are not all required to participate in the *Laws of Life* program. **Do what fits** for your class and school. Greater benefits accrue to your students and school as they participate in the full process. Students, parents, other teachers and administrators are all brought together in a positive community activity while the important task of excellent writing is advanced. Students in service clubs or class service-learning projects can be engaged to help facilitate the communication with judges, community businesses for program awards and the organization of a *Laws of Life* celebration event.

How does SEE assist schools?

SEE provides schools with contest materials that include this program handbook and access to supplemental material from the Templeton Foundation. In addition, SEE can assist coordinators through direct consultation regarding successful practices to administer their program, generating publicity and obtaining financial support from local community organizations and businesses. SEE also coordinates the statewide essay program and will host a recognition celebration. At this statewide celebration, 10 essay finalists are recognized and awarded for their writing.

Help your students write from the heart and explore their *Laws of Life*!

The following pages contain ideas and suggestions for coordinators and teachers to implement a *Laws of Life* essay program.

Do what fits your class or school needs. We welcome (1) individual teachers who implement a *Laws of Life* essay as a single class assignment; (2) coordinators who implement a grade-wide essay program for a whole school or district or (3) anyone who helps students in grades 5-12 reflect and write about positive values.

As a service-learning provider, SEE encourages teachers to recognize how *Laws of Life* can be implemented as a service-learning project with the leadership and service of a dedicated class or service club. To learn more about the strategy of service-learning, visit SEE's website at www.ethicsed.org and go to the YES (Youth: Ethics in Service) program.

At whatever level you choose to participate in *Laws of Life*, we welcome you to a great experience in teaching and learning where Connecticut students, parents and teachers celebrate the process of writing about *Laws of Life*.

***Laws of Life* Essay Scoring Criteria**

As you begin a *Laws of Life* essay program, it is helpful for teachers and students to know the grading criteria for the completed essay. The following scoring rubric is suggested and supported by a judge's scoring form in the appendix. If these criteria are used, an essay could earn a total of 24 points as follows.

Content (1-10 pts)

Most important criterion—Is the essay positive and life-affirming? Does it have universal appeal? Does it include a **clearly articulated** *law of life* that would make the world a better place if everyone practiced it? Would most people agree that this is an important *law of life*? Did the essay make you both think and feel? Did the essay “move” you in some way? Did you learn something special and compelling about the author? Did the essay capture a value or an ideal in a unique and special way?

Presentation (1-8 pts)

Important criterion—Is the essay easy to read? Is it clearly written? Were you able to tell exactly what the author was trying to share? Do the ideas and paragraphs flow smoothly?

Grammar and Spelling (1-6 pts)

Criterion—Unless there are glaring mistakes that suggest a sloppy and hurriedly written essay, proper grammar and spelling is weighted less heavily. However, judges should determine to what extent poor grammar and spelling might distract a reader from understanding the basic message of the essay.

Tips for Coordinators

Build a team or committee to support a *Laws of Life* program. The team can include students, other faculty, administrators, parents and community organizations. The purpose in team formation is not simply to distribute tasks for the program, an important goal for *Laws of Life* is to expand the size of the community that reflects, writes or discusses with students the values associated with *Laws of Life*.

Resources

There are additional resources that include examples of past Connecticut student *Laws of Life* essays available at SEE's website at www.ethicsed.org and from the John Templeton Foundation's website that supports *Laws of Life* -- <http://www.lawsoflife.org/>

Copy master forms are available in the appendix of this handbook.

Registration

The registration form included within the appendix of this handbook is also available at SEE's website—www.ethicsed.org
Registration is due into SEE by the end of January (see current timeline).

Parental involvement

Encourage teachers to have students share their essays with their parents/guardians during the drafting/revising phase of the writing process.

Student responses

Writing a *Laws of Life* essay can evoke powerful emotions and experiences for your students. The essays are meant to focus students on life-affirming and positive values. In rare cases, a student may write about something that raises a concern about the student's well-being. Should this situation arise, we recommended that you consider the following options: 1) Discuss your concerns with the student and 2) Make a referral to an appropriate professional.

Community resources

Local community organizations such as the Rotary, Lions, Women's Clubs and Exchange Clubs and businesses have proven helpful to many *Laws of Life* programs. An example letter soliciting community support is provided in the appendix.

Judges

Teachers (in any subject area), school administrators, ancillary staff, school board members, local newspaper writers or college professors all make wonderful judges. When selecting judges, think about going beyond the walls of your school to expand the community dialogue about *Laws of Life*. A judge recruitment letter form is in the appendix and notes the estimated time requested to judge essays which typically (with practice) averages about 10 to 15 minutes per essay.

Student Recognition and Celebration

Hosting a celebration at the end of the writing program is a great way to recognize the wonderful stories, student effort and value of the *Laws of Life* program. The celebration is also another way the *Laws of Life* message can be disseminated into the broader community. Celebrations can take place during the school day while inviting guests, parents, judges and media into the school or as an afterschool event with hosts such as Barnes & Noble Super Stores where in collaboration with their coffee house partner Starbucks, have offered to help schools host *Laws of Life* celebration events and provide in-store discount cards to the participants. Additionally, other ways to celebrate include school-wide announcements, assemblies, the school Web site, the school newsletter, bulletin boards, board of education meetings and school yearbooks and newspapers.

Instructions for Submitting Entry Forms and Essays to SEE

Local essay programs that have registered with SEE are invited to submit one essay for every 100 *Laws of Life* participants to Connecticut's statewide program.

- Each essay should include a completed Student Entry Form (see appendix for form).
- Parental signature is required on the Student Entry Form if the student is under 18. Because Student Entry Forms require a signature we suggest that the form can be completed, scanned and emailed as a PDF attachment. If you don't have scanning capability, the forms may be sent by fax or mail (see below).
- On the student essay, insert the essay title, as well as the page number in the header of every page of each essay. Example: *TITLE* - Page 1 of 2. Please be sure that the title on the Student's Entry Form matches the title on the essay exactly.
- Essays are requested to be sent by email as a Word document attachment. Essays may be submitted any time after registration but must be submitted by the first week of March (see current timeline).
- *The essay itself should not contain the student's name, school name or any other type of identifier of the writer. The student's name and essay title will be on the Student Entry Form.*
- *Laws of Life* sets a five-page limit to essay length; however, essays are suggested to not exceed three pages and many excellent essays average about two pages. Please have students format their essay with 12 point font, 1.5 line spacing and a 1-inch margin all around.

If you are submitting more than one essay, and you have document scanning capacity, your email to lawsoflife@ethicsed.org will include—

- Attachment 1--Completed and signed Student Entry Form 1 (PDF file),
- Attachment 2--A copy of Essay 1 with title and page # in header of each page (Word file)
- Attachment 3--Completed and signed Student Entry Form 2 (PDF file),
- Attachment 4--A copy of Essay 2 with title and page # in header of each page (Word file)
- Attachment 5--Completed and signed Student Entry Form 3(PDF file), etc.

If you do not have scanning capacity, please email each essay as a separate Word attachment to lawsoflife@ethicsed.org and then mail or fax the completed and signed Student Entry Forms as per directions here.

If Student Entry Forms (see appendix) cannot be scanned and emailed then mail them separately from the essays to—

School for Ethical Education
440 Wheelers Farms Road
Milford, CT 06461
Atten: Laws of Life

Or fax to (203) 783-4461

Contact us at lawsoflife@ethicsed.org if you have any questions regarding submission of your students' essays and entry forms.

Tips for Teachers

Writing Prompts

The following writing prompts can help students in a pre-writing phase to identify their topic for a *Laws of Life* essay. Whatever the writing catalyst may be, the greatest benefit of the *Laws of Life* process is obtained when student have the opportunity to complete a full writing process (outlining, drafting, peer/family review, editing, publishing.)

- *Think of a family member, or a parent, or a friend whom you admire. What law(s) of life does that person demonstrate? How has that person influenced your law(s) of life?*
- *Describe a personal experience that has helped you develop your law(s) of life.*
- *Describe a time in your life when someone has helped you. How has this affected your law(s) of life?*
- *What law(s) of life would you like to develop to become a better person?*
- *Before too long, you will be graduating from high school. What are the most important law(s) of life that you believe will guide you in college or in the workplace?*
- *When you become a parent, what law(s) of life will you teach your children?*
- *Do you have a law of life that encourages you to be responsible for those who are less fortunate?*
- *Imagine that you have lived a long and meaningful life. As you look back on your life, what is it that you are most proud of? What law of life did you demonstrate?*

Writing prompts may also be directly connected to existing academic objectives. For example, students assigned to read *The Diary of Ann Frank* have written *Laws of Life* essays about Ms. Frank's perseverance. Students involved in the study of Homer's *Odyssey* can write essays analyzing the character of Odysseus and suggest and support with text references *Laws of Life* for Odysseus. SEE has completed a full unit lesson plan with worksheets to support the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and have students write a *Laws of Life* essay (see next page) in addition to shorter activity units to help students reflect on the novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Holes*. Additionally, in history classes it is an excellent comprehension exercise to assign students the evaluation of great leaders and have them speculate on the leader's *Laws of Life* in essay form and support their evaluation with two or three historical facts. Finally, the Templeton Foundation encourages students to reflect on quotes or maxims and analyze the *Laws of Life* supported by the quote.

Example maxims/quotes

Honesty is the best policy	To have a friend is to be a friend	Do unto others as you would have others do unto you
Don't judge a book by its cover	No act of kindness, no matter how small is ever wasted	Never, never, never, never give up
If at first you don't succeed, try, try again	You are only as good as your word	It is better to give than to receive
Your attitude determines your altitude	You are either part of the solution or part of the problem	Life is the sum of your choices

Do what fits! There are a variety of ways the *Laws of Life* essay can be woven seamlessly into many content areas with the benefit of students reflecting on important civic values.

***To Kill a Mockingbird* Lesson Plan**

SEE has completed a lesson plan to teach Harper Lee’s American classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (TKAM) and write a *Laws of Life* essay. The unit is designed to be taught to students in middle or high school. The teaching objectives of this unit will enable students to:

- Complete the reading of TKAM with an understanding of the setting and cultural factors impacting the characters.
- Recognize how ethical principles, values or *laws of life* can help a person live a meaningful and successful life.
- Learn to evaluate characters and situations by applying *laws of life*.
- Complete a writing process to identify *laws of life* demonstrated by a TKAM character and reflect on the importance of that *law of life* to them personally.
- Discuss their *law of life* with peers, parents and other adults.

While our TKAM unit provides you with activities to complete throughout the reading of the novel, you can choose to make individual selections of some or all the activities as it fits your time and schedule.

This TKAM unit specifically helps students “develop criteria for making informed judgments and decisions, and uphold their beliefs in order to conduct themselves in a moral, ethical and legal manner;” as stated in Connecticut’s Common Core of Learning for Aspects of Character.

The full TKAM teaching unit and worksheet files can be downloaded from--

<http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/lawsoflife/index.htm>

<i>TKAM</i> Unit Activities and Objectives	
Activity Number	Learning Objectives*
Activity 1	(90 mins) Students will be able to identify important elements of the U.S Great Depression to acquire background knowledge that pertains to Harper Lee’s novel <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> (TKAM)
Activity 2	Students will be able to understand the term <i>laws of life</i> and begin recognizing the application of values, positive character and ethical principles in TKAM and in their own lives.
Activity 3	Students will be able to apply a <i>law of life</i> by recognizing what Atticus values in a selected quote, “ <i>You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it</i> ”p.33
Activity 4	Students will be able to define the <i>law of life</i> “courage” through a class discussion. This discussion will review how courage exists both in TKAM and how students’ experience it in their own lives.
Activity 5	Students will become familiar with the values that existed in the culture during the Scottsboro Trials as a way for them to understand the time period during TKAM.
Activity 6	Students will be able to recognize what <i>law of life</i> is most important to them as demonstrated by a TKAM character and begin outlining an essay to describe their <i>law of life</i> .
Activity 7	Students will use their outline and begin drafting a <i>law of life</i> Essay in a letter format while using TKAM as a resource.
Activity 8	Students will edit their letter (essay) with the help of their peers and a scoring rubric. Students will recognize alterations that need to be made and discuss with one another the <i>laws of life</i> they believe help people live successfully.
Activity 9	Students will be able to reflect and discuss their <i>law of life</i> by sharing their letters and discuss the importance of <i>laws of life</i> in TKAM and in life today.

*Except for Activity 1, all activities are designed to be completed in 45 minutes.

Suggested Lesson Outline for *Laws of Life* Program

- I. Introduce *Laws of Life* to students— encourage students to use the essay they will be assigned to reflect on values, character traits or principles that will help them live successful lives.
- II. Pre-writing activity—depending on your curricular connection, have students define values and character traits that may be used as a basis for analysis of literature, historical characters, maximums/quotes or their own reflection on *Laws of Life*.
- III. Outlining—provide students example outlines for their essay that relate to your assignment. Have students draft their own outline by identifying main points and supporting information.
- IV. Drafting—working from their outline, have students draft their first narrative
- V. Peer or family review—provide reviewers a judge’s rubric to work from and request formal review comments (constructive responses) for writers. Ask reviewers to affirm or question the clarity of the essay to identify a life-affirming *Law of Life*.
- VI. Editing—allow students to edit their own writing with the assistance of peer/family review and seek clarity to link their introduction, supporting narrative and concluding paragraph.
- VI. Publishing—provide students an opportunity to “publish” their essay via oral presentation, virtual or real bulletin boards, and class or school websites.

With the conclusion of this lesson outline, the teacher or school coordinator should implement the local plan to have the essays judged to determine which essays are forwarded onto SEE for the Connecticut statewide evaluation. One essay for every 100 local participants may be forwarded to SEE with a completed Student Entry Form (see pg 10).

Remember! **Do what fits** for your class or school. This outline is only suggested from other successful *Laws of Life* essay programs.

Appendix

The following forms may be used for local *Laws of Life* programs and for communication with the SEE for the statewide essay program.

Copy master forms in this appendix include—

- Registration form
- Judge's Scoring form
- Essay Judge Recruitment letter
- Essay Judge Appreciation certificate
- Student Essay Entry Form
- Student Participation certificate
- Community Support Request letter
- Press Release template
- Coordinator Evaluation form
- Teacher Evaluation form
- Student Evaluation form

Connecticut's
Laws of Life

Essay Program
2011-12 Registration Form
A writing program for students in grades 5-12

Name of Program Coordinator: _____

School Position Title: _____

E-mail address (required): _____

School: _____

School Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: () _____ Fax: () _____

Application Date _____

Participant Estimates

Writing Teacher	Grade level	Est. # of essayists

Please add additional teachers on a separate sheet.

TOTALS:

CLASSES: _____ GRADES: _____ Total # of STUDENTS: _____

Has your school participated in *Laws of Life* in the past? _____ If so, which years? _____

Has your school had a statewide contest winner? What year(s)? _____

Can you download a copy (PDF file) of Connecticut’s *Laws of Life* Program Handbook? ___ Yes ___ No

If not, how many copies of the Program Handbook do you need mailed to you? _____

When will your students be writing their essays? _____

Do you know what your writing prompts will be? (Ex: character in literature or history, quotes, family or personal stories) _____

Will you be having an award reception/celebration for your contest winners? ___ Yes ___ No

If not, how will you recognize your essayists? _____

Do you have plans to involve the community in your contest, such as: (please check all that apply)

_____ Local Businesses _____ PTA _____ Community Civic Group

Others? _____

If you have the community involved in your contest, what are they doing? (check all that apply)

Participating as judges _____

Providing donations for prizes _____

Helping organize or host the awards ceremony _____

Would you like SEE staff to assist you with ideas for community support? ___ Yes ___ No

SEE has a template for a press release on our web site. Will you use this template to inform local media? ___ Yes ___ No

Would you be willing to send to SEE a copy (with full citation) of any media your project generates? ___ Yes ___ No

Is there anything that SEE staff can help you do to get your contest started or to strengthen your current program?

Program Coordinator’s Signature/Date

School Administrator’s Signature/Date

Early registration and program administration is encouraged.

Please submit no later than **January 31, 2012** to SEE by fax (203) 783-4461,

Scan and E-Mail—lawsoflife@ethicsed.org

Or mail to SEE, 440 Wheelers Farms Rd., Milford, CT 06461 Atten: Laws of Life

If you have any questions please visit SEE’s website at www.ethicsed.org

Or call SEE at (203) 783-4439

Laws of Life Scoring Criteria

Content	Presentation	Grammar & Spelling
<p>Most important criterion—Is the essay positive and life-affirming? Does it have universal appeal? Does it include a clearly articulated <i>law of life</i> that would make the world a better place if everyone practiced it? Would most people agree that this is an important <i>law of life</i>? Did the essay make you both think and feel? Did the essay “move” you in some way? Did you learn something special and compelling about the author? Did the essay capture a value or an ideal in a unique and special way?</p>	<p>Important criterion—Is the essay easy to read? Is it clearly written? Were you able to tell exactly what the author was trying to share? Do the ideas and paragraphs flow smoothly?</p>	<p>Criterion—Unless there are glaring mistakes that suggest a sloppy and hurriedly written essay, proper grammar and spelling are weighted less as a criterion. However, judges should determine to what extent poor grammar and spelling might distract a reader from understanding the basic message of the essay.</p>

Essay Judge Request Letter

Date _____

Name, title _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Dear _____

_____ School would like to invite you to participate as an essay judge for our *Laws of Life* essay program. The *Laws of Life* essay program is designed to give students the opportunity to reflect, write, discuss and affirm values and character traits that will help them become successful people and positive citizens.

If you agree to participate, you can anticipate receiving no more than ten essays to read and score with the use of the Judge's Scoring Rubric provided with this letter. Essays will be sent out to judges on _____, with a request to have the score sheets returned by _____. With practice, each essay should take about 10 minutes to read and score.

As noted on the Judge's Scoring Rubric, the essay content is weighted more heavily than presentation or grammar. Has the writer clearly articulated a positive and life-affirming principle? Did the essay make you both think and feel? Once you have evaluated the questions of content, we then ask you to evaluate the presentation and mechanics of the essay.

The *Laws of Life* program is one of our school's strategies to teach excellent writing by engaging students in a topic they enjoy while developing positive character and citizenship. We welcome your consideration of participating as a judge and would be grateful for your response. Should you choose to participate, you will also be invited to our *Laws of Life* celebration of student essays on _____, to be hosted at _____.

Thank you for your consideration and I would appreciate your reply by phone or email by _____. My phone number is _____ and my email address is _____

Sincerely,

Connecticut's

Laws of Life

Essay Program Judge

Certificate of Appreciation

Presented to

Your volunteer time to support the judging of *Laws of Life* essays reveals your commitment to advance positive character in our community. Thank you for putting your *ethics in action!*

Program Coordinator

Date

2012 Student Essay Entry Form

Laws of Life

Essay Program

Student Entry Form (return to SEE no later than March 1, 2012)

The Laws of Life essay program gives young people in grades 5-12 the unique opportunity to reflect and write about values that they believe will help them live successful and productive lives.

The Laws of Life statewide essay writing program is administered by The School for Ethical Education (SEE). SEE's mission is to encourage learning experiences that foster positive character and promote responsible and caring communities. For more information about this program visit SEE's website at www.ethicsed.org.

STUDENT ESSAYIST: Please complete this form, and return to your teacher.

Make sure your name appears only on this cover sheet and nowhere on your essay.

Student's Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____
(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

School _____

Writing Teacher _____

Essay Title _____
(Exactly as it appears on the header of each page of your essay)

Home Street Address _____

City/Town _____ ZIP _____ Home Phone () _____

Parent's cell or e-mail _____

Parents'/Guardians' Names _____

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING:

YES NO The School for Ethical Education has my permission to make any editorial, but not content, changes necessary for publication.

YES NO The School for Ethical Education may include my full name with my essay if it is published or used to publicize the contest.

YES NO The School for Ethical Education has my permission to include my photograph (without my name) to publicize the program.

YES NO I agree if I am chosen as a statewide winner, that I am willing and able to attend an evening reception and dinner celebration in New Haven on May 2, 2012 at no charge to me and two family members.

Signature of Essayist

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if student is under age 18)

Connecticut's

Laws of Life

Essay Writer

Certificate of Recognition

Presented to

Your effort to finish a *Laws of Life* essay reveals a commitment to your personal development of character and ethics. You are encouraged to continue your reflection on

Laws of Life and the daily effort to put *ethics in action!*

Program Coordinator

Date

Community Support Template Letter

(On school letterhead)

Date
Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear

I am seeking your assistance in support of the *Laws of Life* essay writing program. The *Laws of Life* essay gives students an opportunity to reflect and write about values that they believe will help them live a successful life. *Laws of life* are universal laws – love, service, honesty, respect and courage and are acknowledged to transcend religion, culture and national borders. *Laws of life* are positive, life-affirming values that can be inspirational for students and others.

The program has widely been recognized to help engage students to “write from the heart” and promotes the important academic skill of writing while including a focus on character to help build positive citizenship at home, school and in the community.

The *Laws of Life* program was created in 1987 by Sir John Templeton and has spread across the United States and to more than 30 countries. Each year over 60,000 students write a *Laws of Life* essay. The School for Ethical Education (SEE) a non-profit educational organization in Milford administers Connecticut’s *Laws of Life* program. You can learn more about *Laws of Life* at SEE’s website—www.ethicsed.org.

Our *Laws of Life* essay writing program will take place [dates] and we plan to provide our students with a recognition and celebration reception on [date] at [location]. In recognition of your commitment to our students, we are hoping that your organization [NAME] would be willing to provide support for this event by providing [be specific]. We welcome you to attend the celebration reception and would identify any contribution you would make to help the event become a success.

Please feel free to contact me at (name of school) at (school phone) or (your e-mail) if you have any questions. We will follow-up with a phone call to see you are able to contribute.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Your name and title

Press Release Template

[INSERT DATE HERE]
[COORDINATOR NAME,
ADDRESS, E-MAIL, PHONE]

Contact: [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[School name] Students Write and Celebrate their *Laws of Life*

Students in grades _____ at _____ School wrote from their hearts as they took part in a *Laws of Life* essay program. The *Laws of Life* essay program encourages students to reflect and write about the values they believe will help them live successful and productive lives. Students wrote and edited their *Laws of Life* essay during ____ [month].

Laws of Life essays were written as part of their _____ [subject] class. _____ [coordinator's name and position] coordinated the contest. [Could add names of participating teachers] The essays were evaluated by a panel of judges that included _____, _____ and _____ [names of judges and positions].

_____ [student winner] and _____ [student winner] were the authors of the top essays and were awarded _____ [what prizes were]. _____ [All of the essay writers? Or winners?] were/will be recognized at _____ (how, where, when they were/are to be recognized).

“_____ [quote from coordinator/principal about why school participating in *Laws of Life*],” said _____ [. “_____ [quote from a teacher who participated about the experience or why he/she participated].”

Among the topics the students wrote about were _____ [topics]. _____ [student winner]'s essay was entitled “_____,” and _____ [student winner]'s essay was called “_____.” _____ [student winner] and _____ [student winner] will be recognized at _____ [where, when, how].

_____ [student winner] and _____ [student winner]'s essays have been submitted to the School for Ethical Education (SEE) of Milford, CT to be entered into a statewide judging of essays. Students whose essays are selected as the top essays in the statewide competition will be honored at an awards ceremony in the spring.

The *Laws of Life* essay program was created by Sir John Templeton in 1987 and has spread throughout the United States to more than 30 countries around the world. SEE is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization that encourages learning experiences that foster positive character. For more information about *Laws of Life* visit www.ethicsed.org.

--End--

Coordinator Evaluation Form***Laws of Life* Essay Program****Coordinator Summary and Evaluation**

Please complete this form and return it to SEE by mail, e-mail or fax.

Coordinator's Name: _____

Program Participants _____

1. Did your school/district use the Program Handbook that SEE provided? ___ Yes ___ No

If so, please indicate if the handbook was:

___ Very helpful ___ Somewhat helpful ___ Not helpful

2. Did you connect the *Laws of Life* essay writing to your curriculum? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, please describe how you connected your *Laws of Life* essays to your curriculum

3. Did you recruit essay judges? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, please note the title of your judges (ex: school administrator, board members, college professor...)

4. Did you use the scoring rubric provided by SEE to judge your students' essays? ___ Yes ___ No

If so, please indicate if the rubric was:

___ Very helpful ___ Somewhat helpful ___ Not helpful

If you used your own scoring rubric, we would be grateful if you would share that with us.

5. Please describe how your essayists were recognized or celebrated for their writing.

6. Did you organize a school/district committee or service-learning team to support the program? ___ Yes ___ No If Yes, please describe who was involved and how they helped.

7. Please describe how parents were involved in the program?

8. Please describe how your students were able to have a dialogue with (fellow students, parents, community members) regarding their *laws of life*.

9. We would be grateful for any observations you might share regarding the outcomes you observed from your school/district participating in *Laws of Life*.

10. Did you receive any press coverage (school or local paper) for your project? ___ Yes ___ No If yes, please provide a link or copy and press clippings that may have reported on your *Laws of Life* program.

11. Do you have a Facebook page? ___ Yes ___ No
If yes, would please “like” SEE’s Facebook page? ___ Yes ___ No

Thank you for your feedback!

The School for Ethical Education would like to thank you for your participation in Connecticut’s *Laws of Life* Essay Program. Together we are fostering learning experiences that promote positive character and responsible and caring communities.

The School for Ethical Education 440 Wheelers Farms Road · Milford, CT 06461
Phone (203) 783-4439 · Fax (203) 783-4461
E-mail: lawsoflife@ethicsed.org

Teacher Evaluation Form***Laws of Life* Essay Program****Teacher Evaluation**

Your feedback is very important to us. Please complete this form and return it to your school's Laws of Life coordinator OR mail, e-mail or fax it to The School for Ethical Education (SEE). Thank you!

Name (optional) _____ School _____ Date _____

1. Is this your first experience with the Laws of Life program? Yes No

2. Did you use the Program Handbook that SEE provided? Yes No

If yes, please indicate if the Handbook was:

Very helpful Somewhat helpful Not helpful

3. Did you connect the *Laws of Life* essay writing to your curriculum? Yes No

If yes, please describe how you connected *Laws of Life* essays to your curriculum

4. Please indicate whether you believe the *Laws of Life* essay program is:

Extremely valuable Somewhat valuable Not valuable Comments:

5. Please provide any suggestions you have to improve the administration of the *Laws of Life* program.

6. Would you like to participate in the *Laws of Life* program in the future? Yes No

7. Please provide any anecdotes or observations that illustrate the outcomes that took place as they may have related to your class's participation in the *Laws of Life* program. (Ex--student, his or her family, your class or you)

8. Did you receive any press coverage (school or local paper) for your project? Yes No

9. Do you have a Facebook Page? Yes No If yes, would you please "like" SEE's Facebook Page? Yes No

Student Evaluation Form
***Laws of Life* Essay Program**
Student Reflection

We are interested in your thoughts about participating in the *Laws of Life* essay program. We welcome your responses and ideas to help us improve the experiences of students in the future.

Name of your school: _____ Your grade: _____ Date _____

1. I discussed my essay with: (check as many as apply)
 My teacher Other Students My Family
 Others (specify) _____

2. If you discussed your essay with others, how valuable or important was this experience?

3. Please check the response that best describes your experience with the Laws of Life essay program:
 Very positive Positive Negative Very negative

4. How did you feel about writing this essay? Please check one.
 I liked it more than other writing assignments.
 I liked it as much as other writing assignments.
 I liked it less than other writing assignments.
Comments:

5. Did you learn something about yourself by writing your *Laws of Life* essay? Yes No
Please note the most important thing that you think you learned.

6. Did you get to hear or read the *Laws of Life* essays of any classmates? Yes No
If yes, did you learn anything meaningful from those essays?

7. Has writing a *Laws of Life* essay helped you identify value(s) you want to live by?
Please explain.

8. Do you recommend that other students participate in the program? Yes No
Please explain why or why not.

9. Other comments or suggestions (use back of sheet if necessary):

Thank you for your responses. Please return this sheet to your teacher.

Notes

