



# 2024/2025 BBB AKRON LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST

The Laws of Life Essay Contest asks students in grades 9-12 to self-reflect and write about ethical principles that will help them develop leadership skills and their character. During the process, they will learn more about themselves and what they stand for after reading the *UncommonSense*® FRAMEWORK. Additionally, it gives teachers the opportunity to further know their students and encourage empathy and compassion.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

The Laws of Life Essay Contest is open to schools with students in **grades 9-12** throughout the following counties: **Ashland, Medina, Portage, Richland, Summit and Wayne.**

BBB Akron sponsors this valuable experience for Ohio's youth because we believe that to have trustworthy businesses tomorrow, we must encourage strong character in our youth today.

## IS THERE A SPECIFIC LENGTH?

Essays should be no more than **three pages**, typed, single-sided and double-spaced.

## HOW ARE THE ESSAYS JUDGED?

Essays are judged primarily on content. A sample judging rubric is provided on the website.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

A local contest is as simple as one teacher and one class - or whatever works for your community. All resources are available on BBB Akron's website on how to start the contest.

Download them for free at: **BBB.org/local/0272/loI**

*(Students may also participate independently if your school does not offer it as an in-class project.)*

The Teacher's Guide has suggested lesson plans, essay prompts and recommendations on how to integrate this writing assignment within state and Common Core standards.

## Still have questions?

Contact **Kimberly Ickes, Senior Director of Administration** at **kickes@akronbbb.org** or **330-564-2483** for help on how to get started.

## STUDENT CASH AWARDS

**Best Overall:** \$750      **Best Special Theme:** \$500      **Gold:** \$250      **Silver:** \$150      **Bronze:** \$100

Students also receive a certificate and acknowledgment on social media. In 2024, **102 essays** were submitted with **over \$5,000** in prizes given to 17 students, teachers and contest coordinators; as well as certificates for their winning entries.

*In order to increase the amount of money awarded to students, we have reduced Teacher/Coordinators awards to a max of \$50.*



INSPIRING ETHICAL CHAMPIONS OF TOMORROW



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## WHAT TEACHERS SAY

"I love that writing affords us the opportunity to think and create. This contest allows students a chance to be self-reflective and grow as individuals. We can use this to bridge the gap between the literature and our lives." *Mr. Joel Shurance, English Department Head, Cloverleaf High School*

"Allows students to think about their morals and values and how that affects their choices now and in the future." *Ms. Kelly Miller, Business Entrepreneurship Instructor, Wayne County Schools Career Center*

"I would also like to thank you for all the work you guys do down at the BBB with this essay contest. This is always such a great opportunity for me to give kids time to reflect on their lives for an audience other than just their teacher. Every year, I get the opportunity to work with a group of young people on essays that dig deep into their lives, some of which are less than ideal, and reflect on what they want to become. This contest enables me to connect with students in personal ways that help me to better know them and it is always very meaningful." *Mr. John Casper, English Teacher, Rittman High School*

"Character building, reflective and appreciative. The LOL essay contest encourages students to reflect on the big picture of life to improve their writing skills." *Mr. Aaron Hiddo, Dean of Students, Theodore Roosevelt High School*

"I think the Laws of Life essay is a good opportunity to think about their ethics and morals about them without specific instructions. I love that the students can earn money by sharing their stories. As a teacher, I learn so much about my students by reading what they share. Some things I may already know but it helps me to understand where they are coming from." *Ms. Julie Kenner, Business Entrepreneurship Instructor, Wayne County Career Center*





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## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Gives schools an **effective, easy-to-implement** character based program and an authentic purpose for writing.
- Provides teachers with the opportunity to get to know their students better, **improving classroom climate** and relationships.
- Provides an opportunity for **writing a personal narrative**, a component of academic standards.
- Provides practice for **state, SAT and ACT writing tests** as well as college entrance essays.
- Building stronger community - school ties by enabling educators and community members to work side by side on a **positive and affirming activity**.
- Writing about life events can be **cathartic and confidence building**.
- Unlike other essay contest, the Laws of Life Contest winners can be from **all ability levels**, including **students with special needs** and/or **at-risk students**.
- Self-reflection required to write an essay **contributes to academic success**.

### ENTERING THE CONTEST

All entries must be submitted by email to [kickes@akronbbb.org](mailto:kickes@akronbbb.org) or mailed to:

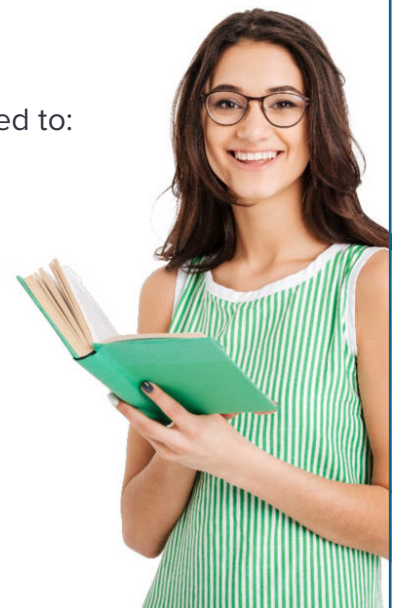
**Better Business Bureau  
Laws of Life Essay Contest  
388 S. Main Street, Suite 302  
Akron, OH 44311**

### DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES

All entries must be emailed or postmarked by:

**March 14, 2025**

*Winners will be notified by the end of May 2025.*



# UncommonSense® FRAMEWORK

*Ethical principles to help students develop leadership character*

**While I will never be perfect, I will...**

## **BE PRINCIPLED & GENUINE:**

### **1. SEEK WISDOM**

I will seek something greater than intelligence (knowing information), I seek wisdom, knowing what is *right or true*.

### **2. TRUSTWORTHINESS**

I will strive to stay true to my beliefs and be who I say I am.

### **3. INTEGRITY**

I will strive to *do* what I say I will do.

### **4. HONESTY**

I will strive to tell the truth, with compassion for the feelings of others.

## **VALUE OTHERS:**

### **5. RESPECT**

I will strive to treat others as I would want to be treated.

### **6. COMPASSION FOR OTHERS**

I will strive to extend kindness to others, even if not earned.

### **7. FORGIVENESS**

I will strive to forgive others, even when undeserved, and ask humbly for others to forgive me.

### **8. UNITY**

I will strive to build relationships that foster harmony and collaboration.

### **9. LEARNING & MENTORING**

I will strive to be a life long learner and pass it on to others.

### **10. SERVING-LEADERSHIP**

I will strive to put the success of others and the group ahead of my own.

### **11. HONORING AUTHORITY**

I will strive to respect legitimate boundaries for behavior.

## **SEEK RESULTS:**

### **12. JUSTICE**

I will strive to uphold the truth, expose error and correct wrongs.

### **13. COURAGE**

I will strive to act on my principles, and persevere through difficulties.

### **14. ACCOUNTABILITY**

I will strive to self-evaluate and welcome feedback from others.

### **15. STEWARDSHIP**

I will strive to act responsibly toward the world and all resources.

### **16. SEEK COUNSEL**

I will seek advice from others who have wisdom, especially when confronted with ethically ambiguous situations.

### **17. RESPONSIBILITY**

I will strive to fulfill my obligations as a family member and citizen.

### **18. EXCELLENCE**

I will strive to *be* my very best as I *do* my very best everyday.

## **DISPLAY GROWTH:**

### **19. MATURATION**

I will strive to learn from experience and improve over time.

### **20. TRANSFORMATION**

I will strive to be committed to consistent, positive character.

*For a deeper discussion of these principles, go to [centerforcharacterethics.org](http://centerforcharacterethics.org)*



Persevering as a character-builder is the only thing that is truly 100% within everyone's personal control, and is not dependent on change in others or in circumstances. Our conscience drives our convictions, which drive our conduct, regardless of our past or current situations.