



## Essay Contest Checklist

### Tell students what the contest is all about.

- The *Blueprint Communities* Essay Contest is one component of the *Blueprint Communities* initiative, a statewide effort to help revitalize older cities, towns and neighborhoods throughout Pennsylvania.
- The contest asks students to write a 500-word essay on the following topic:

*A "blueprint" is a plan for the best way to build something – a car, a house, a career, a future.  
What would be your blueprint for making your community a better place to live?*

- We hope the contest can help generate ideas for our Blueprint Community to develop a long-term vision, identify specific plans for revitalization and set up a timeline to put those plans into action.

### Mention the prizes.

- One local winner from each of the 22 *Blueprint Communities* will be awarded **\$100**. Winners will be notified in mid-November.
- Two grand prizewinners, one from the Eastern and one from the Western *Blueprint Communities*, will be awarded **\$500** each. Winners will be announced in mid-December.

### Acknowledge the contest sponsor.

- The contest is being sponsored by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh – the same Bank that is spearheading the *Blueprint Communities* initiative across the state. (*Optional*: The FHLBank is a bank that lends money to other banks to help build houses, small businesses and other community development in Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia.)

### Explain that contest procedures protect confidentiality.

- The *Blueprint Communities* Essay Contest asks only for the most necessary information. The entry forms require **ONLY** the following information:
  - student's first and last names (for identification)
  - student's city, state and ZIP code (to verify residence in the Blueprint Community)
  - optional phone number/e-mail address (to contact about contest results)
- The FHLBank will dispose of all entry forms and information records obtained from those forms.

### Give students the essay contest deadline date: **MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2005**

### Announce any award or recognition ceremonies.

- If one of our students' essays wins the local prize, the school plans to [fill in the blank].
- Winners' names and their essays will be published on [www.blueprintcommunities.com](http://www.blueprintcommunities.com) (*Blueprint Communities* Web site). (*Optional*: We will work with the FHLBank to get coverage (newspaper, radio, TV) if we have a local essay contest winner.)

### Offer help to students interested in entering the contest.

- See ideas on the following page.

# Helping Students With Their Essays

Remind students to stick to the topic:

*A "blueprint" is a plan for the best way to build something – a car, a house, a career, a future.  
What would be your blueprint for making your community a better place to live?*

Help students "brainstorm" to generate ideas for their essays. Sample questions might be:

- What does "better" mean to you—"more"? "New"? "Improved"?
- What must you consider for your "blueprint" to work—people? Money? Schools? Transportation? Businesses? Government?
- How can you make sure your "blueprint" is effective?
- What other cities, towns or neighborhoods can you think of that seem like they have a good "blueprint"?

Suggest ways to get the essay "started." Some approaches might be:

- Direct Statement of Topic  
*This essay is about my "blueprint" for making my Blueprint Community a better place to live.*
- Model or Example  
*My "blueprint" for my Blueprint Community would look very similar to (name of another city, town or neighborhood).*
- Analogy  
*Having a "blueprint" for my Blueprint Community is like building a strong foundation for a new house.*
- Use of a Maxim, Proverb or Quotation  
*Life in my Blueprint Community is like getting lemons and making lemonade.*
- Parallel with a Well-known Story or Parable  
*(The Little Engine That Could, The Grasshopper and the Ant)*

Encourage students to discuss and review their essays with others (you, parents, siblings, classmates, etc.).

Use writing guidelines used in the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment Domain Scoring Guide. (The scoring guide is available online at <http://www.pascd.org/Schol2.16.05a/PENNSYLVANIA%20WRITING%20ASSESSMENT%20DOMAIN%20SCORING%20GUIDE.pdf>.)