

## Teaching Tips – continued

### Helping your students decide on their topics

- Explain clearly the meaning behind the phrase *laws of life*. Some students may confuse legislative laws (e.g., seat belt laws) with the *laws of life* that are found in many cultures, religions, and traditions (e.g., the respect for human life).
- Before students begin to write their essays, use warm-up activities to generate ideas or topics. Activities that teachers often use include journal entries, famous quotations, short inspirational essays, and surveys/questionnaires. (See page 20 for a sample questionnaire.)
- Avoid reading essays written by previous winners. Students may be tempted to copy the style and content of these essays. Hearing or reading prizewinning essays may also discourage less confident students. However, teachers can describe general topics and experiences that have been discussed in previous essays.
- Encourage students to use their personal experiences (either positive or negative) to generate ideas for their essays. Role models and historical or literary figures are also frequently used by students to personify their *laws of life*.
- Discourage students from writing about their personal romantic relationships. These essays are frequently viewed by contest judges as trite and full of hyperbole. (Furthermore, the “couple” usually breaks up before the winning essays are announced!)
- Encourage your students to discuss their essays with others throughout the writing process. Family members and peers can be a valuable resource.

