

Contest 01: Newswriting

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Write your news story using any word processing program you choose.
- Next, convert the file to a PDF for submission.
- Entries must be uploaded by 6 p.m. CDT Oct. 18, 2021.
- **DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME OR SCHOOL NAME ON YOUR ENTRY.**

WHAT JUDGES LOOK FOR

- Informative lead that hooks reader
- Use of facts rather than generalizations
- Good use of colorful detail, quotes, attribution, description and transitions
- Concise writing
- Few convention errors
- Consistent use of journalistic style
- Accuracy, completeness and elimination of extraneous material

ASSIGNMENT:

Using any of the information provided on this prompt sheet, write a story of no more than 350 words. You may NOT make up additional facts or quotes or do any additional research to find more information.

TOPIC: First Day of School

Central High School
1700 W. Olney Ave.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19141
Newspaper: The Independent, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Sept. 3, 2021)

- Aug. 23, 2021, was first official day of school.
- Last year started all-virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students were able to return to in-person schooling in March 2021 on a hybrid schedule that limited the number of students in the building.
- The 2021-2022 return marked the first day since March 19, 2020, that all students were in the building together.
- Some protocols in place included:
 - contact tracing/quarantining for positive cases of coronavirus
 - vaccinated individuals wearing masks were NOT required to quarantine in close contact cases
 - additional cleaning procedures including the application of BIOPROTECT, which works for 90 days on surfaces to prevent SARS-CoV-2 growth
 - mandatory mask wearing for all students/staff
 - voluntary reporting of vaccination status for all students and staff
- Before the first day, students had two days to come to CHS to pick up their class schedules and make any changes, get parking passes, walk through their daily schedules to find their classrooms, set up lockers, get yearbook/ID photos taken and purchase spirit wear from the school store.
- On the first day during homeroom, each grade level had a meeting with its principal to review school policies and get information about scheduled events.
- In addition to the incoming freshman class, many sophomores had also never been in the school building before as nearly 74% of that class remained in virtual learning all last year.
- Teachers spent most of the first day just working to reacclimate students to the school schedule and routine to ease everyone back into the year.
- CHS had 1,878 students enrolled for the 2021-2022 school year. Of those, 14 chose to attend the Philadelphia Virtual Academy and do all of their classes online. The rest attended in person.
- To make the first day special, Federal Donuts gave away free donuts and coffee to every staff member to show their appreciation for all the work they had done last year during virtual learning.
- Students received Buy One Get One Free coupons for Federal Donuts from Student Council on the first day.
- In the first week, there was one positive COVID-19 case reported, but no quarantine was required after it was determined all close contacts were masked and vaccinated.

Contest 01: Newswriting

QUOTES:

- “The first day of school went better than expected. There was a bit of a learning curve since I had not really been in a school building for such a long time and had to get used to the routine again, but overall it went smoothly.” — Brenden Pruitt, junior
- “My first day went pretty well. It was great to be back in school instead of stuck in my room all day on Zoom. It was nice to be able to walk around and see familiar faces in the hallways again and actually care about what I looked like for the day.” — Amisha Call, senior
- “When Aug. 23 finally hit and we were all faced with trying to make something feel normal when everyone involved knew it was far from it, that was a real epiphany for me. I had looked forward to this day all summer but when it actually hit, my thoughts were not only on my students, but on my sons at their elementary school and my wife who teaches at a middle school. We had all spent so long just the four of us together and not really around many people, and suddenly we were thrust into three different buildings with more contact than we were used to.”
— Donald Hill, science teacher
- “Our teams are continually striving to utilize the safest and most effective disinfecting practices and products available. We are making sure that our students and staff are as safe as possible in all our classrooms, offices and other spaces.”
— Chris Freund, Philadelphia School District facilities director
- “I chose to remain online all last year, so I have never been at Central as a student before. It was really strange being a sophomore, but being as lost and confused as all the freshmen were on the first day. Luckily, the teachers were all really nice, and the upperclassmen were helpful and were helping everyone in the halls with finding rooms. It also helped that I came up the two days before classes started when the building was open so I could walk through my schedule, but that was a lot easier when the halls were empty.” — Taryn Imordino, sophomore
- “On the first day of class, I really just wanted to do a bit of a mental health check on all my kids. I think coming back to school with a full building after last year was a lot to take in, and we all just needed to ease into things a bit. We just did a lot of talking and getting re-acquainted and planning how to get back into a normal school routine.” — Dawn Pautz, language arts teacher
- “I volunteered to help Student Council greet students at the main entrance as they came into the building on the first day. We handed out donut coupons and had music playing. We wanted it to feel like a celebration because it really was. I was so happy to see everyone’s faces. No one seemed scared or sad to be coming back to Central.” — Ravi Singh, senior
- “It seems like such a silly thing, but just coming into the building and putting my folders and other school supplies in my locker and hanging up a little mirror and photos of my friends and stuff was amazing. It used to be such a normal thing that I never thought about, but now I really appreciate all of those little routine things so much more.” — Arianna Heppe, junior
- “Usually at our first class meeting of the year, people are pretty restless, and it takes a lot to keep their attention when we have to go over all of the rules and policies. This year was different. There was such a positive buzz in the gym when the Class of 2022 came in, and they were so respectful to every speaker. You could just tell they were grateful to be here and experience all the parts of senior year that the past two graduating classes had missed out on.” — Michael Fields, assistant principal
- “When I walked into my first class and saw all the desks moved back into groups and not spread out all over the room it was such an amazing feeling. Everything feels pretty normal again except for the masks, and if we have to wear masks all year just to stay in school like this, it is completely worth it.” — Angelo Ramirez, senior