



2023-24 Walker's Rising Stars

Background

The Walker's Rising Stars Scholarship Competition is funded by the Pinellas Education Foundation and noted Bay Area neurosurgeon, Dr. Jeffrey Walker. Through this program, scholarships are awarded to the top arts students in Pinellas County Schools (as determined by the competition.) The competition and awards show are administered and produced by the Pinellas Education Foundation in partnership with Pinellas County Schools. The Ryan Wells Foundation will present Rising Stars' scholarships in the Culinary Arts category.

There are 6 categories of the Walker's Rising Stars program:

- Dance
- Theatre
- Instrumental Music
- Vocal
- Visual Arts
- Culinary

Applications

- **Students in all fields (other than culinary arts) will apply online at www.pinellaseducation.org. All applications must be submitted in their entirety by **October 15, 2023 at midnight**.**
- The application process will be available to all Pinellas County Public School juniors and seniors.
- The application process will be publicized by the Pinellas Education Foundation and Pinellas County Schools through print and social media as well as school announcements.
- The culinary aspect of the program is directed by the Ryan Wells Foundation and all inquiries about the culinary competition should be directed to them.

Scholarships

Walker's Rising Stars is an arts scholarship competition. **ALL** performing and visual arts finalists will receive scholarships, based on the scoring of their final work. Four scholarships will be awarded in each category with the total scholarship amount awarded in excess of \$40,000.

Scholarships for the winners in the culinary competition will be determined by the Ryan Wells Foundation.

Judges

- Judges for all phases of the adjudication process in the fields of dance, vocal, instrumental, theater, and visual arts will be selected based on their ability to fairly and professionally represent and judge all genres in each category.
- To ensure impartiality, the top and bottom score for each competitor will be eliminated in the preliminary round, with the final score being the total of the middle 3 scores for each competitor (sometimes referred to as Olympic judging).
- Every effort will be made to secure judges for the semi-final and final rounds who do not have a current affiliation with the students being judged. Judges cannot be a current private instructor of a contestant.
- For the semi-final and final competition there will be a minimum of 3 judges in each performing category, with the final score for each competitor being the total of the combined judges' scores. Judges will deliberate to determine placements in the event of ties.

Preliminary Performing Arts Auditions

Preliminary auditions will be held for the performing arts categories (instrumental, theatre, vocal and dance) via a student-submitted YouTube video, a link to which must be included in the student's initial application. Judges' scores will determine which students advance to the semi-final round of the competition. Visual arts students will be invited to submit their portfolios to an online application for adjudication by a panel of expert judges.

- All performing arts competitors are asked to perform 2 contrasting pieces.
- **Each piece should be no more than three minutes in length, the total being no more than 6 minutes in length for the two contrasting pieces. Failure to submit 2 contrasting pieces will result in disqualification.**
- Students applying in the fields of vocal, instrumental, dance, and theatre must submit their YouTube video audition link with the online application.
 - If using a cell phone to record, please record horizontally.
 - If possible, record your audition in front of a plain, solid background.
 - Make sure you have good lighting to record your video.
 - Video framing should be appropriate to your performance (close up for stationary monologue, wide shot for dance, etc.)
 - At the beginning of your video introduce yourself, give the name of your school and the name of your performance piece or pieces.
 - **Please submit only one video containing both pieces along with introductions. Do not submit separate videos for each piece.**
 - Upload your YouTube video as UNLISTED before cutting and pasting the link into your Walker's Rising Stars application in the box provided.
 - The link to your YouTube audition video must remain active until after the Walker's Rising Stars final competition and the end of the 2024 school year.
- Competitors will be judged on their overall skill, creativity and artistic expression.
- Students are encouraged to choose their best work. Do not choose works that are more difficult than your current level of proficiency to impress the judges.
- Auditions are open to **SOLOISTS ONLY**.

- Participants must be in good standing with Pinellas County Schools and in compliance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Semifinal Performing Arts Auditions

Following the judging of the preliminary audition videos, semi-finalists will be notified and judges' critiques provided to the advancing semi-finalists.

Based on scoring of the preliminary auditions, a maximum of **20 students from each performance category** will move on to the semifinal round.

- Based on preliminary audition scores, **the top student from each Pinellas County public high school that is represented among the preliminary competitors in each category, will automatically be included for judging in the semi-final round (total of up to 18).**
- **The remaining slots in each category (up to a maximum of 20) will be filled with the remaining top competitors in each category based on individual scores, regardless of school.**
- **If competitors are not available from each high school, the top student from each competing school will advance to the semifinals and the remaining available semi-finals audition slots will be filled with the top scoring competitors from the remaining pool.**
- Same rules from the preliminary auditions will apply to the competitors for each discipline.
- Following notification of the semi-finalists in each category, the semi-finalists will receive instructions on the submission of their semi-final audition videos and the deadline for submission.

Visual Arts Applications and Judging

- Students will be judged in one round.
- Students will need to submit an application by **October 15, 2023 at midnight.**
- Instructions for the submission of your portfolios will be sent to visual arts competitors following the application deadline.
- Students will submit their art work no later than January 19, 2024 to the Pinellas Education Foundation online site.
- **Students must submit a total of 5 unique pieces to be adjudicated (no more and no fewer). Failure to submit a complete portfolio of 5 unique works will result in disqualification.**
- Judging will take place in February of 2024.
- A minimum of 3 judges with one alternate will be needed to complete judging.
 - Every effort will be made to have judges who do not have a current affiliation with Pinellas County Schools
 - Judges cannot be a current private instructor of a contestant

Final Judging

The final judging for Walker's Rising Stars has **tentatively** been scheduled for April 23, 2024 at the Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg.

- Based on the semifinal audition scores, the top students in each category will advance to the final live performance round of competition.
- There will be no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 finalists in each category for the final round of competition.
- **No Pinellas County public high school may be represented by more than 2 students in each category in the final round.**
- **If the scores of more than 2 students from a single school would place them among the finalists, the lowest scoring students will be eliminated from competition and the next highest scoring student from the remaining schools will advance into the final position in each category.**