

2024-25 MSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST



PURPOSE

This contest is designed to provide an opportunity for 11th and 12th grade students in the public schools of Mississippi to express creative ideas and concepts, conduct research, think critically, and practice public speaking skills. It is also an opportunity for conference attendees to observe examples of the quality of students in the school districts across the state.

RULES & GUIDELINES – Please print and distribute as needed

The Mississippi School Boards Association (MSBA) is sponsoring a personal essay and speaking contest which will result in a cash prize for one student in each of the four Mississippi Congressional Districts. The winning students will present their speeches to an audience of school board members and administrators at the 2025 MSBA Annual Conference on **February 25-26, 2025**, at the Sheraton Flowood Refuge Hotel.

Specific Rules and Guidelines begin on page 3.

TOPIC

Future-Focused Education: What Will It Look Like?

RECOGNITION

- The contest offers a \$1000 cash prize for the student with the best essay and speech from each Congressional District.
- The speech of each winner will be presented **in-person** at the 2025 MSBA Annual Conference.
- The winners will be recognized on the MSBA website and in an issue of the MSBA quarterly publication, *Update*.
- Specific times for the speeches will be scheduled after winners are determined.

MSBA reserves the right not to award a prize in a Congressional District if the “best student essay and speech” does not meet the criteria set forth below.

SELECTION AND PREPARATION

Only one student per MSBA member high school may submit a contest application.

Each school may select their one applicant by whatever method it considers most appropriate.

ENTERING THE CONTEST & REGISTRATION DEADLINE

This contest is **open now until 4:00 p.m. on December 9, 2024**, to all 2024-2025 school year juniors and seniors who are enrolled in school districts which are current members of the Mississippi School Boards Association. The application and all materials must be **emailed** to:

Dr. (Mrs.) Tommye Henderson (thenderson@msbaonline.org)

Receipt of applications will be time-stamped by MSBA. Confirmation will be sent to the applicant within 3 business days of receipt.

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HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR PRESENTATION TO MSBA

Applicants must submit ALL of the following to be included in the contest:

- ☆ An application form (**with link to video**)
 - ☆ A 600 -750 word personal essay
 - ☆ A video of the essay presented as a speech
 - ☆ A completed and signed Parental Release Form (see page 5 of this document)
- All of the required materials must be emailed to Dr. (Mrs.) Tommye Henderson (thenderson@msbaonline.org) no later than **4:00 p.m. Monday, December 9, 2024.**
 - **The video portion of the submission must be uploaded to YouTube with the link provided on the application form.**
 - Partial submissions will not be considered for participation in the contest.
 - **All required items must be submitted at the same time through the same email.**

For Questions or Additional Information:

Dr. (Mrs.) Tommye Henderson, Superintendent Search Manager
Mississippi School Boards Association
P.O. Box 203
Clinton, MS 39060
Cell Phone: 601-331-2874

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RULES AND GUIDELINES

- ☆ All entrants must be classified as a public high school junior or senior during the 2024-2025 school year. MSBA staff and immediate family members are not eligible.
- ☆ The school district in which each participant is enrolled must be a member of the Mississippi School Boards Association. (All public school districts in Mississippi are members.)
- ☆ By entering, the student is agreeing to present his/her essay as a speech at the MSBA Annual Conference if chosen as a winner. The speech will be presented **in-person**.
- ☆ Although this is meant to be a personal, rather than an academic essay, attention should be given to content, organization, style, and correctness. Poorly written materials or materials containing inappropriate language may be disqualified.
- ☆ Essays/presentations must be original. However, consultation with teachers, or other resources is encouraged. Plagiarism is not acceptable and will result in disqualification.
- ☆ Credit must be given to any source if borrowed material is directly used or quoted.
- ☆ Essays should be approximately 600-750 words in length (appropriate for 4-5 minutes of speaking).
- ☆ A video of the presentation in its entirety must be uploaded to YouTube and a link must be provided with this application.

Be aware of background scenery and background noises when preparing the video.

- ☆ Presentations should be memorized, but students may use 3x5 note cards as references during their presentations. **Presentations may not be read in the entirety from a manuscript or notes.**
- ☆ Presentations must be approximately **four to five minutes** in duration. **Presentations longer than 5 minutes or shorter than 4 minutes will be disqualified.**

JUDGING

The winner in each Congressional District will be determined by a panel of judges selected by the Mississippi School Boards Association. Criteria for judging the essays and the presentations include: quality of the written essay both in form and content and student delivery qualities as demonstrated in the video. Accuracy of facts, demonstrated mastery of the topic, effective communication of concepts, thoughts, and ideas, proper use of voice and articulation, and originality are all important. A sample of the judging worksheet is shown below. The decisions of the judges are final.

Winners will be announced on [January 27, 2025.](#)

(Sample of Judges Worksheet follows this page)

2024-25 MSBA STUDENT ESSAY/SPEAKING CONTEST

Mississippi School Boards Association Contest Judging Worksheet

For MSBA
Use Only

Student Name _____

Congressional District: (circle one) 1 2 3 4

Essay/Speech Title: _____

Link to YouTube video: _____

CRITERIA

NOTES

Essay Qualities (_____/30 points)

- No plagiarism in evidence
- Well-organized information
- Accuracy of material
- Informative
- Original & creative thinking
- Resources credited appropriately

Speech Presentation (Video) (_____/35 points)

- Captures attention of audience
- Organizes ideas (presents a specific point of view)
- Introduces and uses research effectively
- Interprets and understands subject
- Uses resources and references appropriately

Student Delivery Qualities (_____/35 points)

- Shows poise, confidence, and passion
- Speaks fluently and with clarity
- Uses satisfactory pronunciation
- Has control of filters (“ums”/ “you knows”/ “like”, etc.)
- Effectively uses voice quality and volume
- Delivery is smooth and natural
- Develops rapport with audience
- Uses body movements appropriately (gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, posture)

Observed Time Limit

Yes No

Time Used: _____

Total Points Awarded: _____/100 points

Judge's Name _____

Additional Comments may be written on back.

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Parent/Legal Guardian Media Release for Students

I, _____, Parent/Legal Guardian of
_____ (student's name), hereby grant permission to the Mississippi School Boards Association (MSBA) to use the above-named student's video, photo, and likeness for promotional purposes by MSBA in all manner, including, but not limited to: news releases, photographs, video, audio, website, and other electronic or printed published media. I understand that these videos, photos, and/or voice recordings may be used for a variety of purposes without further notifying me. MSBA has my permission for this use until I submit written revocation of my permission to MSBA at P.O. Box 203, Clinton, MS, 39060, or to thenderson@msbaonline.org. I understand that MSBA does not have control over a third party who retrieves my student's information published by the MSBA and uses it without my permission. I agree to hold the MSBA harmless for such misuse of my student's information.

Parent/Legal Guardian Printed Name

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date:

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APPLICATION

Neatly print or type all information

Name: _____

Grade: (circle one): 11th 12th

Congressional District: (circle one): 1 2 3 4

School: _____

School District: _____

Principal's Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian: _____

Link to YouTube Video: _____

(Additional information, including social security number to be used in processing the winner's check, may be required of contest winners.)