

Writing Festival Entry Guidelines



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Dear Teachers:

Please read over the Writing Festival Entry Guidelines carefully. We attempt to align the Writing Festival closely with the standards you are following in the classroom. Our goal is to support you and your classroom instruction. The hope is that with the changes we have made the past few years, the event will better align within the context of your instruction and serve as a way to showcase the exemplary student work resulting from the classroom writing experiences you provide all year.

Be sure to discard forms/copies of all Writing Festival Materials from previous years. Some of the category provisions have changed in response to teacher feedback. Therefore, it is necessary for you to also review the Writing Festival Reference Handbook for the current year, as well as Entry Forms that are now online including the teacher submission page. Failure to do so may cause misfiling and/or misjudging of entries submitted and force them to be disqualified.

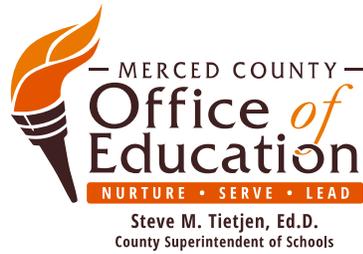
Your feedback is always appreciated and valued. If you have any comments or questions regarding the Writing Festival, contact me at 381-5910 or sarancibia@mcoe.org.

Information on all Student Events and all pertinent documents are available at the student events website: www.mcoe.org/StudentEvents

Sincerely,

Stacie Arancibia

Stacie Arancibia, Events and Community Engagement
Merced County Office of Education



Writing Festival Guidelines and Date

Important DATES to Remember:

- Writing Festival Intent to Participate:** Friday, February 6, 2026
- Deadline to submit Writing Festival entries:** Friday, February 27, 2026
Entries are to be submitted to via online form
- Writing Festival Judging Week:** March 9-10, & 16-18, 2026
Minimum of 1 judge of a *full day*
from each participating school
- School Notification/Awards Scheduling:** April 2, 2026
Schools will be notified of Writing Festival Winners and date scheduled for Awards if attending in person or requesting MCOE staff.
- Writing Festival Awards:** May 4-8, 2026
Awards Mailed or Delivered to sites

Entry Guidelines:

1. Only one Intent to Participate per school needed.
2. Teachers can request a copy to print or save entries to share with families, when submitting entry.
3. Deadline for submitting entries is Friday, February 27, 2026. Entries must be submitted to the online system by 4:30 p.m. This is the deadline that entries must be received by, but the system is open to accept entries in advance.
4. Submit teacher entry submission cover page via google form

Form must have the name and contact information of the **teacher** submitting the entries (not the school contact)

5. Each class (or grade within a combination class) may submit up to, but no more than, three (3) entries for each of the contest categories in each of the divisions, Prose or Poetry.
6. All entries must be reproducible and submitted on the 2026 Online Writing Festival Entry Form
7. Along with the WF Entry Forms, all Writing Festival forms and booklets are available at the MCOE, Student Events website at www.mcoe.org/studentevents
8. Winners of the Writing Festival will be recognized, and awards will be delivered during Awards Week unless previously discussed.

Important Information Regarding Entries:

1. EL Students at ELPAC Levels 1-2, writing in English will be counted, judged and awarded separately from the general class entries. This information must be indicated on the entry as an EL student entry at ELPAC Levels 1-2. Please use the most recent scores to determine student placement in this category.
2. ELPAC Levels 3-4 will be submitted and judged with general class entries, do not chose EL on the submission entry.
3. Students writing in another language (other than English) may submit 3 per the Division Categories and will be counted, judged and awarded separately from the general class entries.
4. Special Education students enrolled in Special Day Classes (SDC) are allowed to submit 3 entries per the Division/Categories. These entries are judged and awarded separately from the general class entries.
5. Resource Specialist Program (RSP) student entries are included with the general class entries (3 per category/per class counts).
6. TK/K – 2nd grades may submit 3 per the Division Categories as a SMALL GROUP (2-6 students) or as a Preschool – 2nd grades may submit a WHOLE CLASS entry.
 - Be sure to indicate how many students are in the small group or whole class entry.
 - Small Group (2-6 students) winners will each receive a ribbon. Please be sure to list all student names on the entry form.
 - Whole Class winners receive a class ribbon (one ribbon) and each student will receive a certificate. Do not list each student.
 - The number of students participating in the whole class entry must be indicated in order to receive the certificate award.
 - If there are no numbers indicated, a ribbon award will only be given if there is a whole class winning entry.

7. **All entries must be the original composition of the student under whose name the work is submitted and written as part of the regular classroom instruction.** Students should edit their own work, under the guidance of the instructor. Use of language must be acceptable and appropriate. Spelling/punctuation errors *may be* unacceptable. Grade level will be considered.
8. Please remember winning entries will be displayed for public viewing. When an entry requires an address, please do not use a person's real address. For safety reasons please use school address or a generic address. This includes addresses of references.
9. Each original student composition may be entered into only one category. Multiple entries of the same composition are not allowed.
10. Judging will be based on quality, with length standards taken into consideration. The length of the entries should be grade level appropriate.
11. Judging will also be based on adherence to the Writing Festival Reference Handbook. Mislabeled entries may be disqualified from judging.
12. Entries from individual teachers or classes must also include a completed Writing Festival Entry Submission Cover Pag. If this form does not contain all the requested information, proper filing of an entry for judging cannot be guaranteed. Entries may become misfiled due to lack of improper information and risk being judged in the wrong category and could be disqualified from judging.

Entries may be submitted from students in grades Pre-12, including all special schools, private schools and programs. *In 18-19 preschool was added and may submit entries in Whole Class and Small Group. No individual entries are allowed for preschool.

Entry Form:

1. There is one link for the Entry Form (formerly called Front and Back). Please complete all the information requested that is pertinent to the student entry. Be sure to enter and spell student names correctly, as this is what is used for display and awards.
2. When entering information on the form, please be sure to check the correct boxes for EL or SDC. The entry will be judged according to the entry.
3. By not following the guidelines or entering an entry in the wrong category, entries submitted may be subjected to discard. Due to very tight timelines and high volume of entries we cannot make exceptions to the guidelines. These guidelines are intended to make the Writing Festival fair to everyone who enters.
4. Copies of entries can be sent to you via email. You must request this when completing the form and google will automatically send.
5. If an error is made, please email events@mcoe.org immediately for correction or deletion. We cannot correct the piece but can correct basic entry information/data. Duplicates will be deleted.

Judging:

1. Each participating school agrees to provide a minimum of one (1) judge for a full day of judging.
2. Each school will indicate on their Intent to Participate form the name of their judge. There is a place to indicate which date during judging week they will be available to serve as a judge.
3. Judges will be able to:
 - Determine first, second and third place winners from each grade level, Pre through 12 in the Prose/Poetry Division in each of the contest categories. The Writing Festival Reference Handbook will be available for referencing.
 - All awards will be based on quality of work. Awards will not be given just to fill place.
 - Choose ONE gold medal winner each from Prose and Poetry at each grade level. The Gold Medal winner is the *best of the best*. There are no ties for this award. If there is not an entry at a particular grade level that does not warrant a Gold Medal – there will be no Gold Medal awarded in that grade level.