

2006–2007 National PTA Reflections Program

LOCAL, COUNCIL, AND DISTRICT PTA INFORMATION: FAQS AND THE JUDGING PROCESS

National PTA receives many inquiries about eligibility, specific arts areas, student information protection, and the judging process. The following information addresses these concerns.

Frequently Asked Questions

Participation

Who is eligible to participate? Participation in the Reflections Program is open to any student through a local PTA/PTSA in good standing. It is the responsibility of the local unit to determine each student's eligibility in the Reflections Program.

May students participate through a local PTA not affiliated with their school? State PTAs may adopt policies regarding this situation. National PTA requires only that national entries come from local PTAs in good standing.

May students no longer attending a PTA school still enter the Reflections Program through their former school? State PTAs establish their own policies regarding this situation. Some states restrict this practice, so it is important to contact the state PTA about its participation policy.

May home-schooled students participate in the Reflections Program? State PTAs may adopt policies regarding this situation. National PTA requires only that national entries come from local PTAs in good standing.

Under what division should developmentally challenged students participate? National PTA believes that each child with a disability should be provided a free and appropriate public education. Therefore, the Reflections Program at the national level does not have a special division for students with disabilities. National PTA believes it is the right of parents to place their child in the Reflections Program grade division that best reflects the child's developmental age. However, guidelines for state and local Reflections Programs vary. Check with your state PTA for its guidelines.

May developmentally or physically challenged students receive help from a parent or teacher? Rules or policies regarding developmentally or physically challenged students are left up to the discretion of each state PTA and may be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Use of copyrighted material

May students use copyrighted material as a source for their artwork? Use of copyrighted material is not acceptable in visual arts collages. Photo renderings must be from non-copyrighted material.

Literature

May a student use unacceptable language in an entry? The Reflections Program makes no restriction on content or subject in the literature area. Students who are submitting entries created in a school setting should be mindful of school and/or local or state PTA standards for writing. Judges should be reminded that entries are to be reviewed for creativity, artistic merit, and interpretation of the theme.

Musical composition

May students use notation software for creating musical composition scores? A student may use notation software. Imported MIDI files or files from other sources are not acceptable.

Photography

May students submit computer-manipulated photos? National PTA accepts electronic as well as film photos.

Visual arts

May students submit computer-generated visual artworks? National PTA accepts visual arts pieces generated on a computer.

Dance choreography

Does the choreographer (the student submitting the entry) have to be one of the performers? The choreography must be the work of one student and must demonstrate both creativity and interpretation of the theme. There may be up to three dancers. The choreographer need not be one of the dancers.

Film/video production

Does the student submitting the entry have to appear in the video? The student must be the director, screenwriter, and cameraperson. He or she does not have to appear in the video.

Protection of student information

How does a PTA protect student information on artwork? When artwork is on display, label the back of the piece only with the student's name, school, and town. Do not attach the Official Entry Form to the

back of the artwork in a display setting. No one outside of PTA should have access to student information. Develop a system to easily match and reattach Official Entry Forms to artwork for returning to the artist or sending on to the next judging level.

Judging Process

Finding judges

You may already have a judging system in place that works well for your program. However, if you are having difficulty recruiting qualified judges, here are some ideas of others to invite to participate:

- Art, literature, dance, film, journalism, and music educators or college/university professors
- Teachers from other schools participating in the Reflections Program
- Art museum directors, docents, curators, or historians
- Professional photographers and local artisans
- Local symphony orchestra or choral directors, musicians, conductors, or composers
- Local dance conservatories, dance studios, ballets, or theaters
- Local multimedia/video production companies
- Newspaper journalists, editors, or photographers
- Local television stations
- Arts advocacy organization presidents or directors

Inviting professionals in the arts or influential community leaders to participate in Reflections Program judging increases the exposure of the PTA, its work, and the wonderful benefits students derive from participating in the arts.

If a judge knows a student participant, the judge should remove himself or herself from the judging process for that particular arts area to prevent a conflict of interest. Teachers from the host school serving as judges would also have a conflict of interest, so it is better to invite teachers from another school that offers the Reflections Program.

Remember to recognize judges in promotions and thank them for their participation. Some PTAs provide each judge with a small gift or certificate of appreciation.

National PTA judging

All national entries are judged on artistic merit, creativity, and interpretation of the theme. A local, council, or district PTA might want to use a similar process.

- **Literature, musical composition, dance choreography, and film/video production:** The four judges in the arts area each receive entries from one grade division to review. Each judge selects 10 entries from his or her assigned grade division for presentation to the full panel. After the presentation, the judges assign awards of excellence and awards of merit.
- **Photography and visual arts:** Entries are judged from electronic files of the original artwork. The judges view all of the artwork for one grade division and select the pieces that they would like to see in a second round of viewing. In the second round, they pick the top eight and assign awards of excellence and awards of merit. They then repeat the process for the other grade divisions. A state-level judging system could have a similar design.
- **Tiebreakers:** If two entries are judged as equal in all areas, the entry that best interprets the theme receives more recognition.
- **Outstanding Interpretation selection:** All of the award of excellence recipients in each arts area are reviewed together. The one piece that best interprets the theme is selected for the Outstanding Interpretation Award.

Blind judging

It is important to conduct *blind judging*—where judges do not see artists' names—in situations or settings where judges may know the student or the work.

- **Literature:** Distribute photocopies of *only* the front side of each literature entry. However, send the *original* manuscript of each winning entry on to the next level of judging.
- **Musical composition, dance choreography, and film/video production:** For each arts area, prepare a master audiocassette, CD, videotape, or DVD of all of the entries, as well as a list of the entries, using a code for the students' names. Include the grade division, title of work, playing time, and artist statement (if one is submitted) in the list of the entries.
- **Photography and visual arts:** Cover the personal information attached to the artwork.

Beyond the local PTA level, blind judging will need to occur only if there is a chance that the judges will recognize a student's entry. In most situations, judges at the council, district, and state PTA levels should be able to use the original materials for literature, musical composition, dance choreography, and film/video production.