

# Steps to Getting Started with a Reflections Program (Recommendations from National PTA)

Appoint an arts in education chair and committee to administer the program. Whether at the local, council, or district level, the arts in education chair and committee must do the following:

## 1. Enlist support

The Reflections Program offers the opportunity to showcase the importance of the arts in education. The program can also enhance a school's arts program by giving students a sense of achievement and recognition.

## 2. Encourage participation

- Involve parents by distributing program information.
- Request the most recent Reflections Program Gallery video from the state office.
- Set up an orientation/information meeting to distribute informational handouts and show the video.

## 3. Plan the budget

The following are some of the costs a program may incur:

- Prizes or certificates
- Lunches and gifts for judges
- Shrink-wrapping of visual art or photography entries

## 4. Create a timeline

Each state establishes deadlines for each level of judging. Local PTAs need to know all deadlines within their state.

## 5. Recruit judges and judge the entries

Three judges is usually an adequate number for a panel. Recruit volunteer judges with expertise and background in the arts such as local university professors, art museum educators, and non-host schoolteachers. Also consider retired teachers, librarians, private music teachers, local artists, and journalists.

## 6. Promote and publicize the program

Write press releases announcing the program's kickoff, the judging results, and donations to the program. Send releases to local newspapers, radio, and TV stations. Alert the local paper and the community affairs department of local stations about the program.

## 7. Collect and exhibit the entries

- Find a place where students can submit their entries, such as a room at the participating school.
- Check to make sure that each entry is prepared correctly.
- Do not disclose information about disqualified entries. It could discourage a student from further artistic endeavors.
- Create a list of the participants' names, age divisions, art areas, and addresses.
- Organize the entries for judges.
- Try to display the entries in a location where parents can view them after regular working hours.
- Locate a safe place to store the entries.
- Establish a return policy.

## 8. Prepare entries for next level of judging

Carefully pack selected entries, making them as immobile as possible. Newspaper is not recommended as a packing material because it flattens and crushes easily.

- Literature: Make sure pages are secure before packing.
- Musical Composition: Place each score and cassette tape or CD in an envelope labeled with the student's name, grade division, and state.
- Photography: Mount or mat each photography entry.

- Visual Art: Shrink-wrap the visual artwork or cover it in paper for packing. Laminating artwork is discouraged, as lamination is almost impossible to remove. Mount or mat the entries and shrink-wrap if possible.
- Complete the Reflections Program participation form and forward it along with the selected entries to the next Reflections Program chair.
- Find a courier who tracks the package. Remember to include paperwork. If entries are sent in more than one package, specify that on the boxes, e.g., 1 of 2 boxes, 2 of 2 boxes.

### **9. Provide recognition**

Make sure that all participants are recognized, including those with entries advancing to another level. Consider a ceremony at a school assembly, an in-class presentation, or recognition at a PTA function. This encourages future participation.

### **10. Participate in the theme contest**

Each year a theme is chosen from thousands of student theme submissions. Ask the state office for information about how to participate. Previous themes have included

- “Love Is”
- “What a Family Means to Me”
- “I Have a Dream”
- “Exploring New Beginnings”

### **Creation of Artwork**

Make sure students have a copy of and understand the rules of the program. Parents, friends, and teachers may not assist a student in the creation of the work. Entries must be the original creation of one student. Check with the local and state PTAs to find out if there are a restricted number of entries a student can submit.

### **Eligibility of Participants**

***Students must participate in the Reflections Program through a PTA in good standing.*** Local PTAs may operate in schools, community centers, or businesses. It is the responsibility of each local PTA to determine students' eligibility for the program. State PTAs may have additional participation requirements or restrictions.

### **Entries from students who use English as a second language**

Students for whom English is not their first language may submit a literature entry in their own language:

- An interpretive translation must accompany the entry.

### **Reflections**

Designed to enhance rather than replace a quality arts education, it provides opportunities for students to express themselves and to receive positive recognition for their artistic efforts.

National PTA believes all children deserve a quality arts education and encourages students to pursue artistic expression through participation in its annual arts Reflections Program. The program offers students the opportunity to create works of art for fun and recognition. Students in preschool through grade 12 are encouraged to create and submit works of art in four areas: literature, musical composition, photography, and the visual arts (which includes art forms such as drawing, painting, print making, and collage). In its more than 30-year history, the program has encouraged millions of students across the nation and in American schools overseas to create works of art. The Reflections Program was started in 1969 by then Colorado PTA President Mary Lou Anderson.

Students participate in the Reflections Program by submitting entries to their local PTA or PTSA. Any PTA/PTSA in good standing is eligible to sponsor a Reflections Program.

Rules and deadlines are not the same for all PTAs. Contact your state PTA for specific guidelines.

### **ABOUT REFLECTIONS** (<http://www.pta.org/reflections05/about.asp> )

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students the opportunity to create works of art for fun and recognition. Students in preschool through grade 12 are encouraged to submit works of art in four areas: literature, musical composition, photography, and the visual arts (which includes art forms such as drawing, painting, print making, and collage). In its more than 30-year history, the program has encouraged millions of students across the nation and in American schools overseas to explore their artistic talents. The Reflections Program was started in 1969 by then Colorado PTA President Mary Lou Anderson.

Each year, the Reflections Program challenges students to create art that supports a specific theme. Themes are selected from thousands of ideas submitted by students to National PTA's Reflections Program Theme Search. Past themes have included "Dare to Discover...", "If I Could Give the World A Gift...", "Imagine That...", and "Exploring New Beginnings..."

Students participate in the Reflections Program by submitting entries to a local PTA or PTSA. Any PTA/PTSA in good standing is eligible to sponsor a Reflections Program.

### **How to sponsor the Reflections Program**

Rules and deadlines differ from state to state; contact your state PTA for the rules or information on how to sponsor a Reflections Program in your area.

### **A great learning experience**

Creating art is a valuable learning process. Artistic exploration and expression enhance and develop intellectual, social, and physical skills. When children express themselves through words, pictures, music, photography, and other art forms, they grow intellectually. They learn to analyze their thoughts, feelings, and ideas; learn to look at things, people, and experiences in a fresh and exciting way; and become more interested in the ideas and works of others. National PTA's Reflections Program helps parents encourage and recognize the continuous self-discovery process of their children.

The program is designed to enhance rather than replace a quality arts education. It provides opportunities for students to express themselves and to receive positive recognition for their artistic efforts. Parents, teachers, and community members all play a critical role in fostering a positive learning environment for children. Supporting the Reflections Program is one way adults can help maintain that environment.

### **Participation**

Young artists participate in the Reflections Program through a local PTA or PTSA. A student may submit an entry in any of the four arts areas listed below. Only original works of art are accepted. Depending on state and local PTA guidelines, students may enter more than one work of art.

### **Arts areas**

- Literature
- Musical Composition
- Photography
- Visual Arts
- Dance Choreography
- Film Production

Participation in the Reflections Program is organized by school grade. Student works are critiqued against others in the same grade division. This allows recognition and judging of artwork by appropriate developmental age and skill levels.

### **Grade divisions**

- Primary (preschool–grade 2)
- Intermediate (grades 3–5)
- Middle/Junior (grades 6–8)
- Senior (grades 9–12)

The Reflections Program is structured for PTAs to recognize students at the local, council, district, state, and national levels. Entries are first judged at the local level, where selected works are chosen to represent the PTA at each subsequent level—council, district, or state—depending on each state PTA's structure. Once entries reach the state level, the state PTA may select entries to submit to

National PTA. Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit are recognized at the annual National PTA Convention and displayed in a virtual gallery on National PTA's website.

### **Possible judging levels**

Local  
District  
National  
Council  
State

### **National recognition and honors**

Professionals working in literature, musical composition, photography, and visual arts fields volunteer to judge student entries at the national level. Three Awards of Excellence and five Awards of Merit are selected in each grade division for each of the four arts areas. In addition, one national Outstanding Interpretation work is chosen from among the Awards of Excellence in each arts area.

The four recipients of national Outstanding Interpretation awards demonstrate the most creative interpretations of the theme. These students receive a trip to National PTA's Annual Convention for themselves and one adult chaperone. At the convention, the Outstanding Interpretation award recipients are recognized for their achievement and share their talents at a special awards presentation.

Commemorative gifts given by National PTA vary each year; however, all national level participants receive a letter and a certificate of participation from National PTA.

National PTA returns all national Reflections Program winning photography and visual arts entries. State PTAs determine the artwork return policy for their states.

### **Notification**

All state PTAs are notified of national award recipients in late April and National PTA sends award notification letters directly to students.

### **General rules**

- Please remember that Students may submit entries only through a PTA or PTSA in good standing.
- All entries submitted must be original works and must relate to the annual Reflections Program theme.
- Each entry must be the work of only one student. Assistance from teachers, parents, or friends is not permitted except in special cases (such as for those with visual or physical disabilities).
- Participation encourages creativity and exploration. Students should do their best; however, crooked lines, incorrect musical notes, or misspelled words do not disqualify anyone.

### **A word to parents**

As with any student activity, parent involvement and support are very important. But parents must remember that student artists need to be responsible for their own work. Children must make their own decisions about what to create and what to enter in the Reflections Program. By producing their own literature, musical compositions, photography, and visual art, children not only learn about the arts; more importantly, they learn about themselves.

Supporting the Reflections Program is one way that you can support the arts in your home, school, and community.