



2027 NYSABE ESSAY CONTEST FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS GRADES 3-12 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS & ELIGIBILITY

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

An online application and essay written by a Multilingual Learner / English Language Learner, must be uploaded and submitted by **December 1, 2026**.

To submit the online application and essay, go to: <https://forms.gle/d1Vvh2Sw1nr1Jzno8>

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This contest is open to Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs) currently enrolled in bilingual and/or ENL/multilingual programs in New York State. Participants must write in English and at least one other language.

Entries may be submitted in the student's preferred language accompanied by an English translation. Through the essay and translation, students will demonstrate their bilingualism and biliteracy practices.

ESSAY PROMPT - GRADES 3–8

Speaking, reading, and writing in two or more languages is a superpower for our future. Write an essay about what it means to be bilingual and biliterate in today's world. Please address the following questions:

- **Question 1 - Your Identity & Voice:** Being bilingual means you can speak, think, and dream in more than one language. How does knowing more than one language shape who you are? Think about your family, your culture, and your community. How does your language connect you to where you come from and where you are going?
- **Question 2 - Your Community & Your Future:** We live in a time when our neighborhoods are more diverse than ever. How does being bilingual or multilingual help, you make a difference in your community today? Think about how you use your languages to help others, connect with people, or solve problems around you.
- **Question 3 - Technology, AI & the Changing World:** Artificial intelligence, social media, and technology are changing how we communicate every day. Why is it more important than ever for young people to speak, read, and write in multiple languages in a world shaped by technology? How can your bilingual skills do things that technology cannot do?

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- Essays should be **2–4 paragraphs** for Grades 3–5 and **4–6 paragraphs** for Grades 6–8
- Address **at least two** of the questions above
- Write from your **own experience and perspective**
- Essays may be written in English, Spanish, or your preferred home language

ESSAY PROMPT — GRADES 9–12

Communication is powerful. In a rapidly changing world shaped by technology, global migration, and



social movements, bilingual and biliterate individuals hold a unique and vital role. Write a reflective essay exploring what it means to be bilingual and biliterate in 2027. Go beyond personal storytelling — examine, interpret, and argue about a point using evidence and reasoning from your own experience. Address the following:

- **Question 1 - Identity, Resistance & Pride:** Language is deeply tied to identity, culture, and belonging. How has your bilingual or multilingual identity shaped your sense of self, and how do you navigate spaces where your home language may be undervalued or silenced? Reflect on the relationship between language, power, and self-advocacy.
- **Question 2 - Community Impact & Social Justice:** Bilingual individuals often serve as bridges between communities, institutions, and systems. In what ways do you use your multilingual abilities to advocate for equity and justice in your school or community? Consider the role of language access in healthcare, legal systems, education, and civic participation.
- **Question 3 - Technology, AI & the Future of Language:** Artificial intelligence can now translate languages instantly - yet human bilingualism remains irreplaceable. What can a bilingual person do that AI translation cannot? How will your multilingual skills position you for leadership in a world increasingly shaped by automation and global connectivity?

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- Essays should be **5–7 paragraphs** with a clear argument, supporting evidence, and conclusion
- Address **at least three** of the questions above
- Personal narrative and analytical writing may be combined
- Essays may be written in English, Spanish, or your preferred home language

Essay Criteria & Formatting Requirements

All essays must address the prompt to be eligible. **The student's name must NOT appear anywhere on the essay.** Teachers should review all submissions to ensure they meet the following standards:

Content Criteria:

1. **Development of theme** — originality and creativity in responding to the prompt
2. **Clarity of expression** — standard grammar, mechanics, and logical organization

Word Count Limits:

Grade Level	Word Count
Elementary, Grades 3–5	200–250 words
Intermediate, Grades 6–8	250–350 words
High School, Grades 9–12	350–500 words

Formatting Requirements:

- Record the **total word count** at the end of the essay and on the submission form
- Essays must be **typed and double-spaced**; handwritten submissions must be legible, written in ink, and double-spaced



- Only **individual student work** will be accepted — no group entries

Teachers should ensure that each student's submission reflects their best efforts and biliteracy practices.

Prizes, Awards & Judging

Awards Ceremony: Winners will be announced and recognized on **March 20, 2027**, at the Student Awards Session during the **2027 NYSABE Annual Conference** at The Sonesta White Plains Downtown Hotel, White Plains, NY. Selected winners, parents, and a school representative are strongly encouraged to attend. Each winner will have the opportunity to read their essays aloud at the conference.

Prizes by Grade Cluster (3–5, 6–8, and 9–12):

Place	Award
1st Place	Medal + \$150.00 gift
2nd Place	Medal + \$100.00 gift
3rd Place	Medal + \$50.00 gift

Winning entries may also be published in NYSABE's *The Bilingual Times Newsletter*.

Judging Process: A committee of judges will evaluate all entries using a scoring rubric. Winners will be selected in each grade cluster, and the committee's decisions are final. **Winners will be notified by December 19, 2026.**

Questions? For further information, contact us at studentcontest@NYSABE.org

NYSABE Student Essay and Art Contest Committee