

Achievement Awards in Writing Advisory Committee

Charge: *The NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing program makes use of an advisory committee and state coordinators.*

Advisory Committee: To advise staff on the nature, policies, and procedures regarding the NCTE Achievement Awards, including the following issues: development of a specific plan for involving more public schools in the awards, especially those with large nonwhite populations; revision of the structure of the award to mitigate the negative effects of competition on student identity and learning; consideration and development of diversified awards: that recognize remarkable improvement or growth in writing; that recognize multimodal composition (digital or non-digital); and that recognize remarkable risk-taking with the process of writing, instead of the exclusive focus on the final draft; and consideration of revising the Achievement Awards procedure, to eliminate the test-like, single-draft, timed essay as part of the award criteria, since recent developments in high-stakes assessment already privilege those who write quickly; and to consider and make recommendations for ways that the work might interface with NCTE's National Day on Writing.

State Coordinators: To advise the NCTE staff liaison on any changes that should be made in the Achievement Awards program; review judging procedures; recommend judges; recommend ways of publicizing the program; investigate ways of aiding the winners; and give suggestions for the impromptu theme topic.

For information on the Achievement Awards in Writing Program, please go to:
<http://www2.ncte.org/awards/achievement-awards-in-writing>.

Major activities: What major actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in your charge have been completed by your group since July 1, 2016? In each activity describe the more important features of the work, and connect your work to the NCTE Vision Statement , if applicable.

What actions, projects, initiatives, or studies are “in progress” at this time?

Our committee continues to support the Achievement Awards in Writing through a variety of activities. Our work is driven by a shared belief that these awards can support both support and recognize secondary writing excellence.

We are currently finalizing this coming year's themed writing prompt, while also preparing ideas for the following year's prompt. This year's prompt will include our newly revised evaluation criteria (explained in answer 2).

We continue to investigate submissions and award data from the 2017 awards--and to problem-solve based on trends. The numbers have been on a steady decline following the transition from a paper judging process to a digital submission and judging process. These trends concern us, especially because we believe so much in the power of the awards to support writing instruction, to recognize excellence in writing instruction, and--especially—to celebrate students for their writing excellence.

We are attempting to problem-solve by working on the judging process to ensure that it is aligned with evaluation criteria and that judges are using these criteria to evaluate writing; and by using social media to advertise the awards. We are also working with NCTE headquarters to move forward with both of these endeavors.

Our committee members are also preparing to make a panel presentation at the 2017 Annual Convention (November 17 at 12:30PM: “Reaching Every Writer and Keeping Writers in Motion”). Our presentation is designed to support the awards, by helping educators consider and practice effective methods of teaching writing. We hope this presentation will be an effective method of advertising the contest too. Committee member Joseph Rodriguez has led our efforts here.

We have been adding members to our committee, to ensure and to enhance diversity of perspectives.

What have you accomplished so far, and what is your timeline for future work?

We are currently finalizing the 2018 themed prompt. This prompt will be released in October, and we hope that we can advertise the prompt and the awards to coincide with the National Day on Writing. We are also working on developing the 2019 themed prompt.

Across the fall months and as possible, our committee members will work with NCTE headquarters to celebrate the various stages of the writing process--including brainstorming, drafting, revision, and editing. We hope to do this through social media and possibly blog posts. We hope encourage teachers and students to develop their writing toward the goals set by the evaluation criteria; we do not want students to submit their writing until they have spent time revising and polishing it.

Our committee members successfully revised the judging criteria for the awards. These revised criteria are now posted on the AAW page of the NCTE site. As a next step, we are seeking to ensure that judges use these evaluation criteria when they evaluate entries. We want to ensure equity in the judging process. We are working to communicate with the judges before they begin their evaluations. This communication might be embedded in the judging process or might exist outside of it; we are working with NCTE headquarters to see what is possible. From there, we will take action.

We are also seeking judging data, to ensure that various perspectives are represented in the pool of judges. We want to ensure that judging is as equitable as it can be and that students are presented with the best opportunities to succeed.

We have also worked with NCTE headquarters to update the AAW page to include models of award-worthy writing from past winners of the AAW. This is part of our ongoing efforts to help student writers and teachers learn through the AAW page and to increase transparency. We want to support teachers of writing, as well as students who can use the additional support we provide on the page. We hope to continue to update the page to provide information and support.

Our committee members, led by Kate Walker, have advertised the awards through a combination of social media, email, and paper mailings. Kate reached out to every affiliation to seek help in spreading the word about the awards; she wrote an NCTE blog post about the awards; and she also worked with NCTE to develop a hashtag (#AAWcontest) and to use it on Twitter and Facebook. We are currently working with NCTE on increasing social media activity related to all the writing awards. We also hope that affiliates can help inform and encourage student participation in the awards.

We have expanded our committee and welcome new members who represent geographical and cultural diversity. We are still in the process of inviting additional members who are willing to contribute to our committee's work.

How has the work of your group contributed to NCTE's role in shaping the profession of teaching and/or the understanding of literacy in educational contexts?

The Achievement Awards in Writing supports best practices in the teaching of secondary writing. Our revised judging criteria draw inspiration from NCTE Position Statements on Writing.

Dana Maloney, Chair