



50 YEARS OF NYSABE:

**BREAKING
BARRIERS** *Through*

BILINGUAL EDUCATION



March 19 - 21, 2026 | Sonesta White Plains Downtown | www.nysabe.net/2026conference

2026 NYSABE STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST GRADES 3-12 ESSAY CONTEST FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

An online application and essay written by a Multilingual Learner / English Language Learner, must be uploaded and submitted by **October 31, 2025**.

To submit the online application and essay, go to: <https://forms.gle/t6e3ygdykLJKMPALA>

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This contest is limited to MLLs/ELLs currently enrolled in bilingual and/or ENL/multilingual programs in New York State. Participants must write in English and another language.

ESSAY PROMPT FOR GRADES 3-8

Speaking, reading, and writing in two or more languages are important for our future. Write an essay about being bilingual and biliterate. Please address the following questions:

- What does being bilingual/multilingual and biliterate mean to you today and in the future?
- How does being bilingual/multilingual and biliterate benefit your community?
- How does being bilingual/multilingual and biliterate benefit our world?

ESSAY PROMPT FOR GRADES 9-12

In the 21st century, being able to effectively communicate in two or more languages is essential to being successful. Write an essay about the importance of being biliterate. Please address the following questions:

- Why is being biliterate a valuable asset to our society?
- What are the advantages of being biliterate for you personally?
- How will these skills open new doors and provide opportunities for you as a member of our global society?

ESSAY CRITERIA

Essay must address the prompt to be eligible for consideration. The student's name **MUST NOT** appear on the essay. Teachers should assist students to ensure that essay submissions meet the following criteria:

- A. Development of the theme: originality and creativity
- B. Content and clarity of expression: standard grammar and mechanics

Entries may be submitted in the student's preferred language with a brief summary in the other language. Either the essay or the summary must be in English. Through the essay and summary, students will demonstrate their bilingualism and biliteracy practices.



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- The essays must be within the following word limits:
 - Elementary Grades 3 – 5: 200 – 250 words
 - Intermediate Grades 6 – 8: 250 – 350 words
 - High School Grades 9 – 12: 350 – 500 words
- Record the word count total at the end of the essay and on the submission form.
- The essay should be typed and double-spaced; handwritten submissions must be legible, in ink, and doubled spaced.
- Only work done by an individual student will be accepted. No group entries will be considered.

PRIZES/AWARDS

Winning entries may be published in NYSABE's *The Bilingual Times Newsletter*. First, second, and third place winners at each of the following grade clusters will be chosen: 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12.

- 1st PLACE WINNER: medal and gift of \$150.00
- 2nd PLACE WINNER: medal and gift of \$100.00
- 3rd PLACE WINNER: medal and a gift of \$50.00

The awards will be presented on **March 21, 2026**, at the Student Awards Session during **NYSABE's 50th Anniversary Conference** held in person **at The Sonesta White Plains Downtown Hotel, White Plains, NY**. Winners are strongly encouraged to be present at NYSABE's conference. Winners will be given the opportunity to read their essays during the conference.

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

JUDGING

Once the submissions are received, a committee of judges will rate the entries based on a rubric. This committee will determine winners in each grade cluster. The committee's decisions are final. Winners will be notified by **November 21, 2025**.

QUESTIONS

For further information please contact Denise Góñez-Santos and Ruthie Casillas at Conference@NYSABE.net.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eliezer Hernández
NYSABE President

NYSABE Student Essay and Arts Contest Committee