DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., ESSAY AND POSTER CONTEST THEME FOR 2026-2027:

"OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE. THEY MUST BE TAUGHT THAT THEY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD." MLK, JR

The St. Johns Education Association is pleased to present the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. essay and poster contest in collaboration with the Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration Committee of St. Johns County, to celebrate the life and works of this American hero.

☞ Essays and posters are due on ~~**January 29th, by 5:00pm** to the SJEA office~~ January 27th to JCE Media Center:
1260 N. Ponce De Leon Blvd., Suite E, St. Augustine, 32084.
Late essays and posters will not be accepted. We'll deliver to our winners to this office.

- Essay and poster judging will take place the first week of February. SJEA and the MLK Celebration Committee will choose three essay finalists in each grade category and three poster finalists in each grade category.
- SJEA will notify all contest winners through their submitting teacher by February 10th.
- We will be hosting our annual awards ceremony in the St. Augustine High School auditorium on February 23, 2027.

Essay Contest Eligibility

There are three categories for essay entries:
Grades 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12

Essay Criteria

- **A cover sheet** must include the name of the participant, complete home address, school, grade, teacher, and telephone number. Please also include the word count on your cover sheet.
- The essay must be **typed or handwritten in ink** by the student (exception: students with special accommodations).
- Length of Essay:
  Grades 4 – 5: 200 - 400 words with bibliography (if applicable)
  Grades 6 – 8: 400 - 600 words with bibliography (if applicable)
  Grades 9 – 12: 600 - 800 words with bibliography (if applicable)
- Writing should **focus on the contest theme**, follow a clear and logical organization, and demonstrate appropriate development of ideas and command of the language for the student's grade level.
- **The essay must be the student's original work**. This is not a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King; the writing MUST reflect the contest theme or it will not be judged.

Teacher Submission Guidelines Essay Contest

- Teachers, to ensure fair and manageable judging, please pre-select your strongest essays before submitting them to SJEA.
  - **Grades 4-5:** Submit up to three top essays per class.
  - **Grades 6-8 and 9-12:** Submit up to three top essays per teacher.
- Please send your selected essays to the SJEA office (address above) by **January 29, 2027**.

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THEME FOR 2026-2027:

"OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE. THEY MUST BE TAUGHT THAT THEY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD." MLK, JR

Poster Contest Eligibility

There are three categories for poster entries:
Grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12

Poster Criteria

- All poster entries must be the **student's original work** – created directly and personally by the student, not copied or imitated.
- Posters must not exceed **16 inches x 20 inches.**
- Acceptable mediums:
    - Grades K-5: painting, drawing, printmaking, mixed media, or photography (using original photos).
    - Grades 6-8 and 9-12: painting, drawing, printmaking, mixed media (using original materials), photography (using original photos), or digital art (using original photos).
- Please do not attach lights or 3-D decorations to posters.
- All entries should be able to provide a digital copy if requested.
- Each poster must include the ***student's full name, grade, teacher, and school*** clearly labeled on the back.

School Submission Guidelines

- To ensure fair and manageable judging, posters must first be judged at the school level.
- Each participating school may submit up to four semifinalist posters per category (Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12).
- Please submit semifinalist posters to the SJEA office (address above) by **January 29, 2027**.

Individual Essay and Poster Submissions

- If a student wishes to participate but their teacher or class is not participating, the student may submit an individual entry directly to SJEA.
    - The entry must meet all the criteria listed.
    - Students should indicate on the entry that they are submitting independently.
    - Parents or guardians may assist with submission, but the entry must be entirely the student's original work.

Contest Awards

- SJEA and the Community MLK Celebration Committee will award overall winners for first, second, and third place. First, second, and third-place winners in each contest category will receive Barnes & Noble gift cards.
- Our annual awards ceremony is scheduled for February 23, 2027, in the St. Augustine High School auditorium.

Questions? Contest Contacts:
Marty Westall, SJEA 2nd Vice President (martin.westall@stjohns.k12.fl.us)