

## 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, 2018? In each activity describe the more important features of the work, and connect your work to the NCTE Vision Statement, if applicable.

1. **List names, affiliations, and geographic region for all committee members.**  
CHAIR, Dana Maloney, Tenaflly High School, NJ and Montclair State University, NJ  
Rebecca Piazzoni Chatham, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville  
Debbie Greco, Highland High School, Pocatello, ID  
Dwan Henderson, The Lovett School, Atlanta, GA  
Elizabeth Lietz, Macomb Intermediate School District, Clinton Twp., MI  
Logan Manning, Alternatives in Action High School, Oakland, CA  
Kaci Morgan, CityLab High School, Dallas, TX  
Wendy R. Williams, Arizona State University, Mesa
2. **What actions, projects, initiatives, or studies are “in progress” at this time?**
  1. Launching the 2020 contest via release of the [2020 Themed Writing prompt](#)
  2. Collaboration with NCTE to publicize the 2020 awards (including via social media and an article in *Council Chronicle*)
  3. Using social media to engage teachers/students from across the country in the awards and to publicize best practices in teaching writing (including writing process).
    - a. The theme of this year's prompt is “Why Do I Write?” We will use hashtag #whydoiwrite.
    - b. Last year we added a calendar that delays the opening of submissions to create time for--and emphasis on--drafting, revision, and editing. This calendar remains in effect; the awards link will open on December 15 and close on February 15.
  4. Collaboration among committee members to plan for the convention meeting
  5. Preparation for committee-sponsored panel presentation at 209 convention: (P.47) “Sparking Imagination and Wonder through Authentic Forms of Writing: Spoken Word Poetry, Visual Storytelling, and Writing Contests” Sunday, November 24, 2019 10:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

6. Analyzing data from the 2019 awards (and previous awards) for trends, including:
  - a. continued (2-year) increase in number of Superior Writing Awards, following our revision to the judging evaluation criteria/ process
  - b. continued decrease, in part to understand--and to problem-solve--continued decrease in overall participation numbers
  - c. to understand other trends across time and to plan for action
7. Collaboration with NCTE headquarters staff to cull information about the 2019 awards process and to plan/troubleshoot based on this information
8. Preparation of new leadership; cultivation of new membership

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

- revising judging criteria
- revising page on NCTE site (to provide more information and guidance)
- expanding committee in size and to include more representation from across the country
- planning/ leading writing sessions at the 2017 and 2019 conventions
- analyzing judging data and the judging process
- migration to new judging platform
- increasing use of social media
- writing prompt has been drafted with input from all members
- engaging committee members and other NCTE members in spreading word about the contest through social media
- August-September 2019: finalize writing prompt
- September-October 2019: launch 2020 contest and use social media to spread the word about the contest
- September 2019: work with *Council Chronicle* staff to publicize contest via an article
- September-November 2019: plan for Convention meeting; review data and plan for continued progress; begin to plan 2021 contest theme; development of new leadership and membership
- November 2019: transition to new committee leadership

**4. 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?**

Our committee promotes effective writing instruction and NCTE's writing strand:

- We are collaborating with NCTE to encourage teachers and students to engage in writing as a process--with brainstorming and drafting before revision, editing, and (ultimately) submission. We moved the submissions deadline back last year.
- We are promoting standards for quality writing through our themed writing prompt, through our evaluation criteria, and through information we share about writing.

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**Suggestions from your group: Your good ideas help direct future NCTE actions.**

**1. What significant changes or trends in our field point to action from the Council?**

1. The submissions from some states has declined significantly in recent years. A look at [the award winners](#) shows how many states received no awards at all. We feel as if NCTE can realize the potential of the awards by engaging--and by giving awards to--more students.
2. It would be very helpful if the state affiliates could have a direct and strong role in promoting contests, including ours. We understand the challenges of this too. Perhaps NCTE can somehow incentivize the role of state leaders who do this for NCTE members in their states?

3. Otherwise, [the NCTE AAW Advisory Committee page continues to state \(erroneously\) that the contest is led by State Coordinators](#). It is not. When the contest submissions moved from paper to electronic, those roles were removed. Our committee has previously recommended that NCTE consider the feasibility of re-implementing these roles.
4. It would also be helpful if NCTE strengthens promotion of the contest through social media feeds.
5. Our committee has asked the Executive Committee to consider the feasibility of students submitting their work directly, vs. through teachers. We understand some of the challenges of this but have not received a response and would appreciate more direct feedback, if possible, on questions such as this.
6. We are seeing increased interest from NCTE regarding writing instruction. We believe strongly in the potential of this contest to structure NCTE's writing platform. We hope that NCTE will prioritize strong and continuous communication with the AAW Advisory Committee, as we know that such communication motivates our members and strengthens the collaborative force between headquarters and this committee to engage teachers and students with the contest--and to promote writing process and writing excellence.

**7. What trends need to factor into medium- to long-term NCTE planning?**

1. NCTE's writing platform can be strengthened by strong promotion of this and other writing awards. These writing awards can be linked through clear promotion and other communication.
2. We hope that NCTE will see the need for personnel dedicated to consistent, hands-on management of and communication regarding the awards. Communication has varied greatly from year to year--and we have found that strong communication strengthens the power of our work. Such collaboration/partnership is motivational and powerful.
3. Deputizing the state affiliates (as mentioned and suggested above) requires long-range planning. We feel that roles such as this could help people offer and receive recognition for their service--which we think serves NCTE's mission in ways that go well beyond writing instruction. In this new age, perhaps leadership looks different from how it was in the past, including through state and/or regional positions. Leadership roles and other recognition directed at teachers helps the organization in many ways.

**Dana Maloney, Chair**