

Achievement Awards in Writing Advisory Committee

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

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.

*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, 2019? 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.

CO-CHAIR, Wendy Williams, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ
CO-CHAIR, Debbie Greco, Highland High School, Pocatello, ID
Gavin Boehm, Tiger Ventures, Owego, NY
Amy Brooks, Indian Hills High School, Ringwood, NJ
Rebecca Chatham, Arizona State University, Chandler, AZ
Jennifer Curl, Tucker High School, Tucker, GA
Michael Hall, Arizona State University, Chandler, AZ
Elizabeth Lietz, Macomb Intermediate School District, Macomb, MI
Kaci Morgan, CityLab High School, Dallas, TX
Carly O'Hagan, Ridgewood High School, Verona, NJ
Adam Wolfsdorf, New York University, Brooklyn, NY

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

- We are keeping diversity and inclusion in mind as we craft prompts for this contest. Last year's prompt was based on a quote by Gloria Anzaldúa, and this year's prompt is focused on community.
- We have launched the themed writing prompt for 2021:
“Sharing who we are connects us to one another and furthers understanding. In this piece, take readers inside a community that is important to you. Convey the beauty you see there. Compose a piece of writing in a genre and format that best expresses what you would like others to know about your community. Writing options include—but are not limited to—poetry, short story, personal narrative, essay, or graphic storytelling. (*There are many kinds of communities. For example, some communities are based on shared culture, location, practices, interests, beliefs, or circumstances.)”*

- We are working with NCTE to publicize the 2021 awards. Since the theme of this year's prompt is "My Community," we will use the hashtag, "#mycommunity."
- We are maintaining a contest calendar that sets aside time for drafting, revising, and editing. The awards link will open on November 15 and close on February 15.
- We have scheduled our November meeting, which will take place virtually.

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

- Presented writing sessions at the 2017 and 2019 conventions.
- Analyzed judging data and the judging process.
- Revised judging criteria.
- Migrated to a new judging platform.
- Revised page on NCTE site (to provide more information and guidance).
- Increased use of social media.
- Transitioned to new committee leadership.
- Contacted NCTE affiliates to ask them to help us spread the word about the contest.
- Invited caucuses to recommend new members for this committee.
- Expanded the committee.
- Drafted the 2021 writing prompt with input from all members.
- November 2020: We will meet to discuss possible writing prompts for the 2022 contest.
- May 2021: We will submit the revised prompt to NCTE.

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.
- We are promoting standards for quality writing through our themed writing prompt, our evaluation criteria, and information we share about writing.
- This contest is starting to welcome multimodal writing (e.g., graphic storytelling).

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?

- We suggest that students should be able to submit writing directly to the contest instead of having to involve a teacher in the submission process. This would make the contest more accessible to all students and increase the number of entries (which has been decreasing over time).
- We would like NCTE to adopt a submission platform and judging criteria that are more supportive of multimodal forms of writing (e.g., animated works, short live-action films, spoken word poetry videos, songs). Accepting a broader range of writing forms would make this contest more inclusive and tap into students' interests. These changes would also make the contest better aligned to ideas about what counts as "writing" in the field of English education. Other contests, such as the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, and publications, such as *Teen Ink*, already accept a wide range of multimodal writing from young people.
- Submissions from some states have 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 giving awards to more students.

- It would be very helpful if the state affiliates could have a direct and strong role in promoting contests like ours. Perhaps NCTE can send information about the contest to these affiliates to share with local members.
- It would also be helpful if NCTE strengthens promotion of the contest through social media feeds.
- 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?

- 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.
- 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.

Wendy Williams and Debbie Greco, Co-Chairs