

## Achievement Awards in Writing Advisory Committee

**Charge:** *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.*

Names, affiliations, and geographic region for members:

CHAIR, Jennifer Curl, Academy of Advanced Studies, McDonough, GA  
Parsa Choudhury, Columbia College, Chicago, IL  
Kristy Girardeau, Douglasville, GA  
April Simmons, Dorchester School District, Summerville, SC  
Shauna Wight, Utah Tech University, St. George, UT  
Rebecca Leigh, Oakland University, Rochester, MI

Actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in progress:

We submitted the 2024 writing prompt: Define Yourself

"If you don't get out there and define yourself, you'll be quickly and inaccurately defined by others." - Michelle Obama (Becoming, 2018)

As a teenager, you may feel that there is constant judgment from those around you. Your parents tell their friends about what you have been up to. Your teachers discuss your work or behavior with your parent(s) or guardian(s). Your peers post about you on social media. However, how accurate are any of these views when compared to your own perceptions of yourself?

Reflect on the many facets of your identity. Compose a personal piece that defines who you are and how you show it. Below are some ideas to help you get started; however, you are not limited to the options in this list:

1. How do you define yourself and why? How do you see your identity? What has made you the person you are today? If you are still exploring exactly who you are, then imagine the person you will become. How will you get there?
2. Evaluate different perspectives people have of you and compare those to how you see yourself. You might describe a time when someone else's ideas about you impacted or surprised you. What did you learn from the experience? Did it change how you see yourself today or how you communicate with others about your identity?
3. Rally against the need to define yourself at all. Consider the limitations of definitions, especially given the changes that happen during adolescence. Convey your ideas through a format that best represents you (e.g., a traditional essay, personal narrative, photo or graphic essay, spoken word poem, video essay, etc.).

\* Committee members will send their ideas for the 2025 writing prompt in October. We will vote on the best prompts, select one, and offer some revision suggestions over email. Those of us who attend the conference will meet to revise the prompt with these suggestions in mind

Accomplishments and timeline for future work:

- Expanded the committee.
- Will be drafting the 2024 prompt this fall and submitting it to NCTE in the summer.

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

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.

Trends 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.