

Achievement Awards in Writing Advisory Committee

Charge: The NCTE [Achievement Awards in Writing](#) program makes use of an advisory committee and state coordinators.

Achievement Awards 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 non-white 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 development of English Language Learners in writing in their first language as well as English composition; that recognize remarkable improvement or growth in writing; that recognize multi-modal 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 your 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 for 11th grade students, [click here](#).

What major actions or projects have been completed by your group pursuant to your charge since July 1, 2010?

The Achievement Awards in Writing procedures are going green!

The submission process for the 2112 Achievement will be totally re-designed to enable submissions to the 2012 Awards to take place online through each school's designated contact teacher. Nominees will continue to be selected by local stakeholders whose eligible entrants will continue to be based on the school's enrollment (grades 10 through 12). The contest will continue to be open only to students in grade 11.

Students will submit a collection of their best work as well as a response to a specific prompt. Judges will view submissions electronically. Winning submissions will be published on the NCTE website.

What projects, initiatives, or studies are "in progress" at this time?

Members of the Achievement Awards in Writing Advisory Committee will examine implications of the replacement of an impromptu prompt with a published prompt. The committee is attempting to partner with other committees to increase more wide spread participation.

December 2010 Annual Report after the Orlando Convention

What projects, initiatives, or studies are "in progress" at this time?

1. Investigation of an online submission process.

To date the following has been achieved:

- A survey of state coordinators regarding a change to electronic submissions was completed and the results submitted.
 - State coordinators provided thoughtful responses, expressed some concerns, but were overwhelmingly in favor of the idea.
 - State coordinators were invited to attend a session which examined the rubrics as well as other Achievement Awards in Writing procedures.
 - No state coordinator was able to attend. Stu Boyd from Colorado sent the following comments:

- JSBOYD47@AOL.COM; I'm not attending the convention but will be interested in the outcome of your discussion. Stu Boyd Colorado
- I'm a committee of one for the Achievement Awards in CO, so we won't be represented at the meeting.
- I have a few comments or questions related to the topics you'll discuss...
- 1. We need to be careful that the trait-specific scoring isn't too time-consuming for the judges. My judges usually each score 10-12 submissions, so each one already invests several hours in scoring. I've not found it easy to replace judges in recent years, so I don't want to scare anyone off and have to replace her!
- 2. Judges sometimes read and reread (and reread!) submissions; will electronic submissions make doing so difficult/uncomfortable? Probably 1/3 of the impromptu essays I receive are handwritten; will we be eliminating schools/students if we go to electronic submissions? Also, what about those students who don't compose well at the keyboard or who haven't had experience doing that? (Granted, in this day and age that's unlikely but thought I'd raise the point.)
- 3. Also, if anyone has any ideas how to promote this fine contest, I'd love to hear them. I've even written an article for our publication which goes out to members; number of submissions **declined!**
- A pilot program was tested to assess the feasibility of the process.
 - NJCTE piloted an online submission process using the National Gallery of Writing to collect and display submissions.
 - Judges viewed submissions online and submitted results in an e-mail, making the entire process a green endeavor.
 - A problem of data collection about each student while keeping submissions anonymous has been solved using GoogleDocs.
 - The online submission process requires that judges have some computer skills and follow directions. NJCTE encountered some problems here.
 - Michele Marotta, the Director of Judging for the NJCTE, created a training session that requires judges to access the submission and submit the score online for 12 different samples. Dana Maloney created a new online submission form to capture all necessary information.

What projects, initiatives, or studies are planned for the future?

2. **The development of a specific plan for involving more public schools in the awards, especially those with large non-white populations.**
 - A scheduled session entitled *Daring to Change the Rubric* featured writing trends and hands on experiences of Dr. Barbara Rahal and Dr. Linda Irby as we examined current practices.
 - The impromptu prompt
Members of the committee, especially Linda Irby, were quite vocal about the need to replace the impromptu prompt with one or more published prompts.
 - The timed element
Although the ability to organize and compose quickly is a desirable skill, classroom teachers emphasize the need for revision and contemplation in good writing. This requirement seems to be diametrically opposed to good classroom practices.
 - If neither of these adjustments can be made this year, Dr. Barbara Rahal suggested the need to adjust the weight given to the impromptu. She suggested 25% for the impromptu and 75% for the portfolio.
 - Following the practices of NJCTE, we might decide to post a specific essay prompt, provide writing pointers, supply models, and encourage several drafts before a final submission.

3. **The revision of the structure of the award to mitigate the negative effects of competition on student identity and learning.**
 - The proposed change in the approach will enable the classroom teacher to embrace the contest as a writing unit which in turn may result in more public school participation and should mitigate the negative effects of competition.
 - The names of all participants in the process should be listed locally by each participating teacher who then (following the guidelines for submissions based on school population) helps the selected student to submit to the gallery.
 - All students who enter should receive a handsome certificate of participation.
4. **The consideration and development of diversified awards.**
 - The committee considered an award for poetry, an award for fiction, and an award for essay with the elimination of the portfolio as an aspect of the submission. No decision was made.
 - While the essay will have a specific prompt (much like those we now use) the call for poetry and short story submissions may be made to be reflective of the theme of the previous year's convention. No decision was made.
 - Multi-modal compositions may best be served, recognized, and awarded in a separate category.
5. **There are no plans at this time to recognize the development of English Language Learners in writing in their first language as well as English composition or that recognize the remarkable improvement or growth in writing.**
 - Although the committee feels that this is indeed a worthwhile endeavor, the initial response was that this goal can best be achieved by a separate group, perhaps ELL teachers.

What significant changes or trends in our field require action from the Council soon?

We would like the Council to embrace the online submission process for the Achievement Awards in Writing.

What research or action is needed to fill gaps you see in information currently available from NCTE?

The Achievement Awards in Writing Program could benefit from more state affiliate involvement and from more involvement from state coordinators before the nomination process begins. We would also like to partner with other groups that promote writing such as The National Writing Project.

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

Long-term plans need to maximize the use of electronic processes.

Jennifer Beach suggested that we identify ways to reward teachers who take on the labor of love that is needed to organize the writing contest at the school level, find nominees, help them develop their portfolios, proctor the timed writing, and contact the state coordinator with submissions. We discussed ideas like sending press releases to principals, making teachers eligible for a prize drawing (perhaps NCTE books or free conference registration), and forming an online community so that they can share ideas. If one goal is to expand the number of schools involved, it seems that the teachers at the school level are a crucial building block.

The members that now comprise the Achievement Awards in Writing Advisory Committee are indeed an extraordinary group of people. I would like to add 5 to 10 new members with this level of commitment for next year.

I find that attendance of committee members at the convention is crucial in achieving our goals.

Those in attendance at the 2010 NCTE Convention:

CHAIR, Susan Reese (2011)

(Ocean Township High School, Oakhurst, NJ)

Jennifer Beach (2012)

(West Springfield High School, MA)

Tom Beach (2012)

(St. Ignatius High School, Cleveland, OH)

Linda R. Irby (2012)
(Mississippi State University, MS)
Dana Maloney (2012)
(Tenafly High School, NJ)
Barbara Rahal (2012)
(Edinboro University of Pennsylvania)
Duane Roen (2012)
(Arizona State University, Tempe)

Those unable to attend the AAW Advisory Committee Meeting

Elizabeth Claytor (2012) (Chatham University/Community College of Allegheny County, PA)	Death of a family member
Carol L. Hopson (2012) (Timber Creek High School, Ft. Worth, TX)	Medical emergency
Reva Sias (2012) (Syracuse University, NY)	Academic commitment re Ph.D.
Executive Committee Liaison, Kylene Beers (Teachers College, New York, NY)	Other NCTE meetings scheduled at the same time

Strategic Governance: Over the past few years, the NCTE Executive Committee has established outcomes and priorities relating to these key topics in our field Documenting Professional Learning, Assessment, [Closing the Achievement Gap](#), [NCTE and International Involvement](#), [Reading Research](#), [21st Century Literacies](#), and [Attracting, Supporting, and Advancing Early Career Educators](#). Currently, they are working on performance assessment of teachers and student learning. Does your group have research findings or suggestions to contribute that are relevant to on-going work on these strategic governance topics?

This change will enable the Achievement Awards in Writing to advance the strategic Policy Goals of NCTE most importantly 21st Century Literacies which calls for the development of proficiency with the tools of technology, and Multi-modal Literacies which is defined as “Integration of multiple modes of communication and expression [to] enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration.”

As Kent Williams stated in 4/14/11 email, [NCTE has] budgeted for a new software system, similar to the Mailer awards system, that could really simplify, expedite, and make friendlier the whole Achievement Awards process.

Susan Reese, Chair