

Mosaic 2021-2022
Celebrating Diversity through Creative Writing
Program Overview

What is Mosaic?

Mosaic is an annual language arts program for middle school students to showcase their creative talents and express their cultural identities. The program is held in partnership with MCPS; Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (FOLMC); and Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL). The theme for the program is "My Culture." Due to the ongoing COVID-19, students may also incorporate how their culture or tradition have adapted due to the pandemic.

Why middle school students?

Middle school students are at an age of heightened self-awareness as they consider their identity as individuals and where they fit in with their peers. Research has shown that middle school students respond best to projects that stimulate their curiosity, permit them to express creativity, and foster positive relationships with others.

What are the goals and outcomes of the program?

Students engage in creative writing while exploring their unique cultural backgrounds. The program is designed to facilitate communication between students and their teachers, parents, and peers about their personal identities and allow them to articulate their experiences through creative discourse. A panel of esteemed judges scores each submission and a winner is selected in each of the three entry categories for each grade level. An anthology of the winners' works is professionally published and added to MCPL collections as well as the collections at each middle school.

How do I participate?

The English Resource Teacher (RT) will identify a contact person from his/her school who will facilitate the program. Either the RT or contact person will complete the School Participation Form online at <https://www.folmc.org/events-calendar/mosaic/teachers/>

What does the contest contact person need to do?

The contest contact is responsible for promoting, supporting, and organizing the program within the school. This involves communicating program rules, guidelines, and deadlines to teachers, parents, and students. Contest contacts help recruit students to participate in the program and organize an internal selection process to determine the student works chosen for final submission (maximum five (5) per grade level and one (1) per individual student). Contest contacts are responsible for submitting the entries for the students selected on behalf of their school. Contest contacts should directly communicate with MCPS contest coordinators and FOLMC staff with any questions that may arise during the course of the program. In appreciation for all the work the contest contact engages in, they will receive a stipend at the end of the school year from FOLMC.

What do classroom teachers need to do?

Classroom teachers help identify and encourage students to participate and look for opportunities within the curriculum to support the program. Assignments may be tailored to meet the criteria for the program. Teachers should refer to the **Curriculum Tie-ins** for suggestions of how to incorporate the program with the middle school common tasks.

What kinds of subjects should the students write about?

Students may submit entries in one of three categories: essay, short story, or poem/spoken word. Students should focus on personal reflections and experiences related to their cultural/ethnic background under the COVID-19 pandemic. They may write about special traditions, food, clothing, holidays, and how the pandemic changed or affected them. Students may also write about how their backgrounds impact them daily, for example, what it is like to speak two languages at home, how they may struggle with their peers, the differences they have with their parents or families, their family structure, or values that impact them. Each student has a unique story to tell.

How can I get the students to reflect on their cultural/ethnic background?

The best way to get students to talk about themselves is to model what you would like them to think about. Tell a story about your own background and how that has impacted or shaped you before asking the students to do the same. Encourage students to talk to their parents and family members. Keep in mind the theme does not have to be positive. Many students have had meaningful experiences that are not positive and they should be encouraged to use this as a forum to express those feelings as well.

What happens after the student entries are submitted?

The submissions are formatted anonymously for judging, and are scored by a selected panel of judges according to the standard rubric. The judges submit the scores to FOLMC, where they are compiled to determine the winners and possible honorable mentions. In April, after Spring Break, the winners and honorable mentions are announced to the schools, whereby contest contacts and teachers should notify the students. Letters and invitations are mailed to the selected students' addresses provided with their entries. These students, along with their families, teachers, and school administrators, are invited to attend the Award Ceremony and Reception held at the end of May.