



Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission
A Division of the Arkansas Department of Education

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2021 MLK Holiday Statewide Essay Contest

Presented by the Arkansas Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, Sam's Club, and Walmart

The Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, a division of the Arkansas Department of Education, works with the communities of Arkansas, encouraging them to embrace alternatives to violence and to discover their common humanity through activities that stress racial and cultural diversity. Once again, the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission implements programs that are designed to promote the tenets of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and honor his life and legacy.

A Day of Service is the official state observance of the congressionally legislated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a United States holiday that marks the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and is observed on the third Monday of January each year. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a renowned civil rights leader who fought for equality and recognized the power of service. He said, "Everyone can be great because everybody can serve." Observing the Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday through service is a way to begin each year with this in mind.

In promoting this message of service, we encourage and challenge the youth of Arkansas to demonstrate what they can do to keep Dr. King's dream alive and relevant in this 2021 King Holiday: Day of Impact Essay Contest. This experience will increase students' knowledge about Dr. King, and enhance their language and writing skills, creativity, self-esteem, and character.

There are roughly 269 school districts in the State of Arkansas and each district is asked to host an essay contest. Each school that wishes to participate is required to select their top middle school (6-8 grade) and top high school (9-12 grade) essays and shall submit those entries to their respective district office. From there, each district office is asked to select their top middle school essay and top high school essay. Submit these two entries to the Arkansas MLK Commission at Diana.Tippen@arkansas.gov by the deadline, December 15, 2020 at 3:00 pm. Essays will then be scored by committee members and the winners as well as runner up/finalists will be selected from the middle school category and the high school category.

Who can enter?

All students, grades 6-12, are invited and encouraged to enter this contest. Local school districts should submit one essay from each of the following categories:

- Middle School students, grades 6-8. 1-2 page essay
- High School students, grades 9-12. 2-3 page essay

Statewide Contest winners will receive

- Middle School
 - \$1,500 Walmart/Sam's Club Foundation grant to school of overall statewide winner
 - \$50 Walmart/Sam's Club gift card for top 10 statewide runner-up/finalists
 - \$100 Walmart/Sam's Club gift card to overall statewide winner

- High School Entry
 - \$1,500 Walmart/Sam’s Club Foundation grant to school of overall statewide winner
 - \$50 Walmart/Sam’s Club gift card for top 10 statewide runner-up/finalist students
 - \$100 Walmart/Sam’s Club gift card to overall statewide winner

Essay Guidelines

1. Entries must be written work that follows a basic grammatical structure and consists of three main parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. Poetry will not be accepted
2. Essays must be typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double spaced
3. Essays must follow MLA style if referencing other sources.
4. Only one essay per student will be accepted.
5. Essays must be original.
6. Entries received after the December 15, 2020 deadline will not be considered in the competition.

Submission Topic

Essay Prompt: What does service mean to you?

1. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a renowned civil rights leader who fought for equality and recognized the power of service. He said, "Everyone can be great because everybody can serve." Observing the Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday through service is a way to begin each year with a commitment to making your community a better place.
2. Think about what service means to you, your community, and those who may be of a different background from yourself. Write an essay explaining what service means to you, and how service is able to impact our society.
3. The content of the essay should demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King’s dream and who he was. It should include suggestions and ideas for practical ways of carrying out his dream through service.

Include a quote of Dr. King’s in the essay and use MLA style citation if drawing from other sources.

Contest Guidelines

Finalists will receive certificates from the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, and the Arkansas Department of Education for their participation. Awards will be given to the first place winners in middle school and high school. The winning essays will be announced during the 2021 King Holiday: Day of Impact activities, which will be nationally viewed.

All submitted essays become the property of the Arkansas Martin Luther King Commission and Arkansas Department of Education and may be used for promotional and/or educational purposes.

How are the winners selected?

Committee members will score essays and winners will be selected from all submitted essays sent in by local school districts throughout Arkansas.

Judging Criteria:

- **Topic (40 points):** The content of the essay should demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King’s dream and who he was. It should include suggestions and ideas for practical ways of carrying out his dream through service.

- **Organization (30 points):** The essay should exhibit clarity of thought, good sentence structure, neat appearance, correct spelling, and grammar.
- **Creativity (30 points):** The essay should express fresh, new ideas – originality of thought.

Registration:

Each applicant must complete an entry form and neatly attach it to the cover of their essay.

Dates to Remember:

- December 15, 2020, 3:00 pm – deadline to receive essays selected by local school districts
- January 5, 2020 – essay winners will be notified
- January 8, 2020 – a video of the winner reading their essay must be received at the Arkansas MLK Commission
- January 18, 2021 – winners will be announced nationwide

Local school districts should email winning essays to Diana.Tippen@arkansas.gov with the subject line: 2021 King Holiday Essay Contest

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Scoring Rubric

Criteria	Advanced	Proficient	Basic
Topic (40 points possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay demonstrates an understanding of Dr. King's dream <u>and</u> who he was. Student defines what service means to them and includes suggestions <u>and</u> ideas for practical ways of carrying out his dream through service. (30-40pts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay demonstrates an understanding of Dr. King's dream and who he was but may focus on one area more than the other (example: more information provided on his background than his dream). Student defines service but may be unclear on what service means to them. Essay includes suggestions <u>or</u> ideas for practical ways of carrying out his dream through service. (15-29pts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay demonstrates a limited understanding of Dr. King's dream and who he was and may not address both parts of the prompt. Student talks about service but does not make a clear connection on what it means to them. Essay has limited examples of how we can carry out his dream through service (0-15pts)
Organization (30 points possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay exhibits clarity of thought, excellent sentence structure, neat appearance, correct spelling and grammar. Student followed all guidelines provided (typed, Times New Roman, size 12, double-spaced). (20-30 pts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay mostly exhibits clarity of thought, good sentence structure, neat appearance, with minor errors in spelling and/or grammar. Student followed most guidelines provided (typed, Times New Roman, size 12, double-spaced). (10-19 pts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay lacks clarity of thought, good sentence structure, neat appearance, correct spelling, and grammar. Student did not follow guidelines provided (typed, Times New Roman, size 12, double-spaced). (0-9 pts)
Creativity (30 points possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay expresses fresh, new ideas and thoughtful originality (one can tell the student researched, and worked to make personal connections as they answered the question "What does service mean to you?" (20-30pts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay contains the required information with limited interpretation but makes some personal connections. (10-19pts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay lacks creativity and interpretation (reads like a book report; lacks personal connections) (0-9 pts)

Score: _____