



National PTA Reflections

Music Composition



MUSIC COMPOSITION is the process of creating a new piece of music. The composer (student submitting entry) is a person who expresses their own thoughts and ideas through the use of sound. The student composer may submit an entry performed by an individual or group and/or make use of a sound library generated performance of a composed score. Student composers are not required to perform their composition, but a recording of the composition must be included.

2026-2027 theme – What My Culture Means to Me

Consider the following musical styles and instruments to portray your original composition: A cappella, blues, choral, country, electronic, hip hop, jazz, world music, musical, orchestral, pop, R&B, religious, rock, symphonic/concert band and traditional.

All instruments, sounds, styles and combinations are accepted. Software may be used to produce an audio recording. Entries containing algorithmic composition techniques are not accepted. Digital technology and/or software can be used to develop, enhance and/or present an entry but may not provide the primary design and/or concept. Entrants must provide a brief description of the tools and method, including any generative elements.

Originality: Only new and original songs inspired by the theme may be submitted. Each entry must be the work of one student only.

Copyright: Use of copyrighted material is prohibited. Plagiarized entries will be disqualified.

Presentation: Audio must not exceed 5 minutes in length and 1GB (one gigabyte) in file size.

Suggestions for Audio Quality: Do not place the recording device on top of an instrument(s) or speakers. Turn off all noise-making devices in the room (air conditioners, fans, telephones, etc.). Record a short test and listen to it. If needed, change the record volume or microphone location. Make sure the music is audible on the recording. Allow for two seconds of silence at the beginning and end of your recording.

Notation & Score Required for Middle School & High School Divisions Only. Middle and High School grade divisions must include music score/notation, either traditional or tablature, or a written reflective statement that provides a musically technical explanation of how the music was created (100 words or less). Notation software may be used to create a score. Whether the score is hand-written or software-generated, appropriate instrumentation and voicing are required for the performance. Number each page. Print on 8.5x11 (one sided only) or save/scan score as a single PDF. Do not mount or bind the scores. If submitting a reflective statement, it does not replace the required entry artist statement. The reflective statement must be distinct from the artist statement and must provide a technical musical explanation of how the music was created. Whereas the artist statement emphasizes the Reflections theme, a reflective statement emphasizes the musical elements in the creative process.

Judging: Entries will be judged on mastery of the medium (worth 8 points), artistic merit (worth 12 points), and interpretation of the theme (worth 20 points). Mastery of the medium in the context of the national Reflections Program pertains to the level of skill the student displays, whether it be formal composition technique or a simple approach. However, a well-developed concept is more important than technique. Entries will be judged primarily on how well the student uses his or her artistic vision to portray the theme. Many times, the artist statement will make a huge difference during judging because this is where the artist can explain in their own words, their thoughts and feelings for their piece. An explanation of the origin of the music and/or the significance of the music style might be a useful addition to the statement when submitting a music composition that involves traditional, cultural or regional instruments.

Packaging:

- Accepted audio file formats include: MP3, WMA, WAV, ACC (M4A) and FLAC.
- If submitting physical entry, label audio file & CD/DVD/USB drive with your Arts Category, First & Last Name. Pack the Disk/USB drive in an envelope and use tape to secure your Student Entry Form to outside of the envelope using a sheet protector, so that it is still accessible for photocopying. Do not tape over the opening of the sheet protector.
- If submitting digitally, label audio file with your Arts Category & First & Last Name.

Submission Requirements:

- The student or at least one person from their primary household must be a current member of the Local PTA/PTSA where the student is participating. Each Local PTA/PTSA may determine a date by which the member must join.

All participants must also follow Official Rules for Participation.