

HOW TO CONDUCT A REFLECTIONS PROGRAM

What is "Reflections"?

- a cultural arts program of the National PTA which encourages students in grades K-12 to express their thoughts and feelings through the creative arts.
- new theme each year
- six categories: dance choreography, film production, literature, musical composition, photography, and visual arts
- students create artwork at home or school
- four grade divisions: K-2, 3-5,6-8,9-12; special ed students may compete where developmentally appropriate

Why Reflections?

Reflections was developed to interest children, parents, teachers, and communities in the arts. The arts are an important part of every child's education, not just those that have a unique talent. The arts allow children to express their feelings and ideas. They are an important creative release that can help children develop self-esteem. And, just as importantly, Reflections is a fun project.

How to get started

A local PTA unit interested in participating in the Reflections program should contact its State office to find out the name and address of their State cultural arts chair, who can give specific State rules, deadlines, information and recommendations on how to set up a program in your area. Then appoint a local Reflections chair and a committee to administer the program. The committee should:

1. Enlist support from school staff and parents. Contact and confer with your school principal and teachers about starting the program. Talk with parents at a PTA meeting and publicize the program in your newsletter or a flyer.
2. Determine the amount of funds to be budgeted for Reflections - if no funds are budgeted, send estimated expenses to treasurer for board approval. Although it is not a large expense, there should be money budgeted for press releases, judging, mounting and displaying as part of the general PTA budget.
3. Develop a Reflections project planning calendar which identifies the key steps and sets the pace for completion by suggesting dates by which each step should be completed.
 - Set deadline dates (the last page of this packet contains Region Deadlines).
Contact your Region Reflections Chair or Region Director if you need further information. Allow ample time for the submission and judging process.
4. Select judges and determine judging criteria. (See attached judging sheets).
5. Get the word out.
 - Develop a plan to promote the Reflections program.
 - Prepare information for teachers - especially art teachers - students, parents and principals, regarding Category Rules including number of entries that can be submitted and deadlines.
6. Establish making, collecting, storing, and exhibiting guidelines beforehand.
 - Decide where children can complete their projects.
 - Determine how artwork will be collected and stored.
 - Arrange to exhibit entries for students, parents, teachers and community residents to enjoy.
 - Decide how winning entries will be delivered to the next level of judging.
7. Establish recognition/awards for participants/winner

Enlisting Support

Principal and Teacher Support. Staff support is important to a successful program. Meet with your principal to show the value of the Reflections program and how it can involve teachers, students, parents and the community. Describe how the program also enhances the school's art program and gives recognition to talented students. Request an opportunity to speak to the staff at their regularly scheduled meetings. Assure the staff that this program will not infringe on their time or detract from the students' regular studies. Ask teachers and other school staff their views on whether Reflections should be conducted as an at home or in school project; what level of involvement they would like and whether they would like to use it as part of a class project. Suggest that they may wish to use Reflections by relating the Reflections theme to field trips, classroom discussions or other happenings in the school and community. Encourage teacher and volunteer Involvement but emphasize that the PTA will do the work of the program.

Parental Support. Give parents written Information about the program such as newsletters and special flyers. Talk about Reflections at your PTA meeting and let them know:

- Reflections can be a fun project - tell them about some of the things you plan such as an exhibit or awards.
- Children find the opportunity to express themselves rewarding.
- Some children discover new interests or talents.
- The Reflections Program supplements your school's art program.
- It recognizes outstanding students.

For more Ideas see below.

Developing a Reflections Project Planning Calendar

Include on your calendar:

- Entry deadlines
- Judging locations and dates
- Deadline to receive judging results
- School exhibit date
- Awards event/announcement date
- Deadline for sending thank you letters
- Date to send a press release to local paper
- Deadline for sending entries to the next level of judging.

Judging

Your Reflections committee should set the judging criteria but conform to National PTA's criteria so that each outstanding entry can be forwarded. National entries are judged on:

1. Interpretation of the theme 2. Creative ability 3. The student's work must be original

- Parents, friends, and teachers may not assist student

The committee should also consider the following:

- Do you need to limit the number of entries per student?
- Do you want judges to write comments to students? Judges should not write on entries.
- They should use a "comment card".
- Will you allow a tie? How many Honorable Mention places do you want awarded? 5? 10?
- How many Judges will be required? (Suggestion: Three judges for each division. An odd number of judges will help avoid tie votes.)

Judges should be selected for their expertise in the subject matter and their knowledge of students' abilities at the various grade levels they will be judging. Look for judges through local universities/community colleges, art institutes and museums or other schools in your school district. Consider asking retired teachers, librarians, private music teachers, local artists, writers and magazine/newspaper editors. **As soon as possible, phone prospective judges to explain the Reflections program.** Make certain the judges understand the purpose of the program and the judging criteria. Give the approximate number of entries each will judge, the tentative date, time and location of judging. Follow-up with a letter confirming the information given over the phone and include your judging criteria. If entries are to be judged at the school, make appropriate arrangements with the schools staff. Music and literature entries could be delivered to the judges and picked up later. If possible, allow each judge two weeks to keep entries. State how you want each judge to identify winning entries. Judges are volunteers and have other commitments. Don't forget to send "thank you" notes to the judges.

- The judges should not be teaching in the school in which the contest is being held.
- They should not have the name of the students visible to them while judging. (Note cards can be used to cover identifying information during judging.)