FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PRESS RELEASE
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Florida Department of Education and Volunteer Florida Invite Students and Educators to Participate in the 2026 Black History Month Contests

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., January 26, 2026 – Today, the Florida Department of Education and Volunteer Florida invited students to participate in the 2026 Black History Month student art and essay contests with the theme, "Celebrating Black History." Black history Month is recognized and celebrated during the month of February.

"Black History Month is a time to celebrate the profound contributions of African Americans to Florida's rich history and culture," **said Commissioner of Education Anastasios Kamoutsas.** "I hope every student takes this opportunity to learn about the ways Florida has been shaped and strengthened by these contributions."

"Black History Month contests provide an opportunity to celebrate excellence while honoring the lasting contributions of African Americans across our state," **said Josie Tamayo, CEO of Volunteer Florida**. "We are proud to recognize students and educators whose efforts bring history to life and inspire learning beyond the classroom."

All Florida students are invited to participate in contests based on this year's theme. Students in grades K-3 are invited to participate in an art contest, while students in grades 4-12 are invited to participate in an essay contest. Additionally, students, parents, teachers and principals are invited to nominate full-time educators of all student grades for the Black History Month Excellence in Education Award.

About the Student Art Contest
The 2026 Black History Month art contest is open to all Kindergarten through grade three students in Florida. Each student should submit one original, two-dimensional artwork based on this year's theme. Four statewide winners will be selected, and each winner will receive a $200 gift card for school supplies and a 1-year pass to Florida State Parks.

About the Student Essay Contest
The 2026 Black History Month essay contest is open to all students attending any Florida school in grades 4-12. Six winners will be selected: two elementary school students (grades 4-5), two middle school students (grades 6-8), and two high school students (grades 9-12). Each winner will receive a 2-year Florida College Plan scholarship provided by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation and a $200 gift card for school supplies.

Contestants must be Florida residents, attend school in Florida in grades 4-12 (including public, charter, private, home or virtual) and be able to provide a Social Security Number. Each student may enter only one essay, written in English, no longer than 500 words.

About the Excellence in Education Award

Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis' Black History Month Excellence in Education Award Contest is open to all full-time educators in an elementary, middle, or high school in Florida. Four winners will be selected, and nominations may be submitted by a principal, teacher, parent/guardian, or student. Excellence in Education award winners will receive $2,500 from Volunteer Florida.

Contest Entries and Nominating Forms and Guidelines

Student contest forms and educator nomination forms must be mailed to Volunteer Florida or submitted online at www.floridablackhistory.com.

Volunteer Florida
Black History Month Committee
1545 Raymond Diehl Road, Suite 250
Tallahassee, Florida 32308

All entries must be received by 5:00 pm Eastern Time on Monday, February 9, 2026.

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For more information about the Florida Department of Education, visit www.fldoe.org.