



2026 Black History Month Student Contest Guidelines and Resources

Categories

Essays (up to 500 words)

- Essays will be judged in three categories: elementary, middle, and high school
- Judging criteria include adherence to the contest prompt, thoroughness of research, thoughtfulness and insights, organization and flow, and spelling and grammar (relative to grade level).
- All entries will be screened for AI; entries that rely primarily on AI will be disqualified.
- Entries should include the student's name, grade, school, and contact information.
- Entries should be submitted to bhm.essay@gmail.com by February 28 or mailed to NAACP Culpeper, P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA 22701, and postmarked by February 28.

Artistic Expression

- Essays will be judged in three categories: elementary, middle, and high school
- Paintings, drawings, photographs, posters, sculpture, original songs, and poems are all welcomed as entries.
- Judging criteria includes adherence to the contest prompt, research, and creativity.
- Entries should include the student's name, grade, school, and contact information. In addition, entries in this category should include a brief (25-50 words) statement regarding artistic intent.
- Entries should be submitted to bhm.essay@gmail.com by February 28 or mailed to NAACP Culpeper, P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA 22701, and postmarked by February 28.
- Paintings, drawings, and sculpture may be photographed and submitted as photos, rather than sending original artwork.
- Video statements and video entries of songs and spoken word poems are acceptable.

Prizes and Recognition

- Three winners will be selected from each of the two categories. High school winners will receive a cash prize of \$200, middle school winners will receive \$150, and elementary winners will receive \$100.
- Winning students will be invited to read their essays or present their artwork at the NAACP Culpeper Branch's March 19 meeting. This meeting will begin at 7 pm and take place at Antioch Baptist Church in Culpeper. After the presentations, students, families, teachers, and all guests are invited to a brief reception and celebration.
- The winning students will be featured in local newspapers and on the NAACP Culpeper website.
- For students in Madison County, entries may also be featured in the Madison County African American Historical Association's upcoming exhibition, *Striving for Excellence: A Century of African American Schools: 1868-1968*. Students may also be invited to present their work at an MCAAHA special event later in 2026.

NAACP Culpeper Branch #7058
P.O. Box 687, Culpeper, VA 22701
admin@naacpculpeper.org

Contest Prompt

Explore the history of segregated schools in our country or our community, and/or the fight for integration and equality in education.

Students might address one or more of the following questions or topics:

- What would it have been like to attend a segregated school? What did the concept of “separate but equal” mean and how did that impact African American students during this era?
- What happened during the era of “Massive Resistance”?
- What was the history and significance of the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*?
- Who are some champions who led the fight for integration? For example, students might consider focusing their project on civil rights leaders in Virginia who were instrumental in the fight for desegregation such as Barbara Johns, Dorothy Hamm, Betty Kilby, Spottswood Robinson, or Oliver Hill, or a national figure such as Thurgood Marshall. Or they might research local champions who fought for desegregation in our communities.
- How was integration received in our local communities during the 1960s?
- What were some of the African American schools in our tri-county area, such as George Washington Carver Regional High School in Culpeper County, the Scrabble School in Rappahannock County, or the Madison Training School in Madison County? Students might write about one or more of these schools, or photograph or draw a school building that is still standing, or paint or draw a school from an old photograph if it has been torn down.
- Students might interview a former student of a segregated school in our community, and write about their experience or interpret their story artistically. *(We especially encourage this! The organizations listed under “Resources” can help connect students if needed.)*

Resources

Many students will have grandparents, great aunts or uncles, a family friend, or a neighbor who attended school during the era of segregation, or know of the history of this era. If a student needs more information, the following organizations are available to assist and/or connect students with local residents willing to share their stories.

- African American Heritage Alliance (Culpeper)
aahaculpeper@gmail.com
- Madison County African American Historical Association
www.mcaaha.org
mcaaha@gmail.com
- African American Association of Rappahannock County
awesominsulation@aol.com
jbaltimore923@gmail.com
- Carver 4-County Museum/George Washington Carver Regional High School Alumni Association:
www.carver4cm.org
carver4cm@gmail.com

All questions may be directed to bhm.essay@gmail.com. Good luck!

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