

# 2012 ESSAY COMPETITION



**ELIGIBLE STUDENTS:** Middle School Students and High School Students

## Contest Purpose

Being able to express one's thoughts clearly in written form is critical to success in almost any field, including education. The purpose of the Essay Competition is to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills, as well as express their views on a current topic in education.

The topic for the 2012 Essay Competition focuses on the future of education and what tomorrow's teachers must be ready for when they enter their first classrooms.

**Start by reading "Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers Today" by Melissa A. Rasberry from the August/September issue of *Go Teach*, the official FEA magazine (Article included at the end of this PDF document.), and then seek out some other resources on this topic to further your understanding.**

The author encourages future educators to imagine their role in the future of teaching and learning and to start preparing to realize that vision. On page 21, she lists six ideas to help you plan for working in the schools of tomorrow:

- Prepare for a transformed learning ecology.
- Build your own personal learning networks.
- Work with students in diverse settings.
- Pursue leadership opportunities.
- Pay attention to exciting developments in multiple fields.
- Exercise your creativity.

In essay format, select two or three of the six ideas and describe what you will do now, as a future educator, to become an effective teacher of tomorrow.

This competition is cross-walked with the following Education and Training Career Cluster Knowledge and Skill Statements: ESS01, ESS02, and EDC02.

## Eligibility for Entry

- A. This competition is open to good-standing FEA members in middle school and high school. (Students may or may not be affiliated with an FEA chapter.)
- B. If you are affiliated with an FEA chapter, entries are limited to one student per FEA chapter. Each chapter may have a local run-off competition to select the winning entry. However, a local competition is not required.
- C. The entry form and essay must be submitted online by 11:59:59 PM (Eastern) on December 19, 2011.
- D. Students must be registered for the FEA National Conference by January 20, 2012, and be present at the conference.
- E. Entrants grant PDK International, the sponsoring organization of FEA, the right to use and publish the submission in print, online, or in any other media without compensation.

## Competition Guidelines

- A. Essays must range from 300 to 500 words. Other than the title of the essay, every word of the essay is counted.
- B. Essays must be written in English.
- C. Essay responses must be based on the *Go Teach* article included at the end of this PDF document.
- D. Contestants must include references and cite all their sources of information in a Works Cited list. Please use care to avoid plagiarism; plagiarized essays will be disqualified. Essays without a Works Cited section will also be disqualified.

## Judging and Scoring

- A. The judges' decisions are final.
- B. Scoring is based on the Essay Competition rubric.
- C. Entries will be scored by categories: Middle School and High School.
- D. The top three winners in each category will be awarded and recognized at the FEA National Conference.

## How to Enter

- A. All competition materials must be submitted online by 11:59:59 PM (Eastern) on December 19, 2011.
- B. Print the confirmation page for your records after completing the online submission form.



The National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed this program on the NASSP National Advisory List of Student Contests and Activities for 2011-2012.

## 2012 ESSAY COMPETITION • Judge's Rating Sheet

Contestant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contestant's School \_\_\_\_\_

Circle Category:      Middle School      High School

*(Points awarded may range between zero and maximum number indicated.)*

Is the essay on the stated topic?      YES      NO

***If yes, continue with the scoring process. If no, do not continue with the scoring process.***

### A. GUIDELINES

The essay must be between 300 to 500 words. *(Score 5 if within limits; score 0 if not within limits.)*      5 pts.  
The essay must cite sources of information, including a Works Cited list.      10 pts.

### B. TOPIC ORGANIZATION

The essay has a clear thesis.      10 pts.  
The body of the essay is on topic and has supporting details.      10 pts.  
The essay has a clear conclusion that restates the thesis  
and gives the reader something to remember about the text.      10 pts.

### C. ESSAY CONTENT

The ideas expressed are meaningful and important.      10 pts.  
The content is clear and convincing.      15 pts.  
There are elements of reflection or creativity on the topic.      10 pts.

### D. MECHANICS/GRAMMAR

Sentence structure is accurate.      5 pts.  
Punctuation is used correctly.      5 pts.  
Spelling is error free.      5 pts.  
Grammar is used correctly.      5 pts.

**TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 100**

# Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers Today

*by* Melissa A. Rasberry

**IT SEEMS LIKE JUST YESTERDAY** that I first stepped into my own classroom as a new teacher, carefully arranging construction paper, scissors, books, and other basic supplies. But today's classrooms look very different than my 3rd-grade room did in 1998.

Interactive white boards have replaced dry erase boards. No longer do students have to share one or two desktop computers — instead, laptop carts containing enough computers for the entire class can be moved from room to room. Test scores and assignments are entered online for parents to access at home, rather than being written down in a traditional grade book. And in some schools, students don't raise their hands to answer questions. Instead, they click on personal response devices, which allow teachers to monitor individual students' selections and examine classwide trends.

Classroom technology will surely continue to evolve, but the future promises even more widespread changes for education.

For one thing, the job market is uncertain. Teaching has long been viewed as a safe profession, with frequent shortages in certain subjects and geographic areas. Since the mid-1980s, positions have outnumbered qualified candidates, especially in math, science, and special education. Increased graduation requirements, rising student enrollment, and record-breaking numbers of retiring teachers resulted in high demand for teachers



in these fields. But as Richard Ingersoll points out, the recent economic downturn may at least temporarily solve such shortages (Ingersoll, 2011).

With the volatile economy and changing job market, it is difficult to predict which teaching specialties will be most needed in five to 10 years. So what is an aspiring teacher to do?

All future employers — regardless of their field — will expect job candidates to think critically and work collaboratively to solve problems in the global marketplace (Metropolitan Life, 2011). Cultivating these skills will provide you with a competitive advantage, no matter what. But what else should you know? What conditions can you expect in the schools of the future, and what skills should you be developing now?

In a recently published book, Barnett Berry (founder and president of my organization, the Center for Teaching Quality) joined forces with 12 expert teachers to forecast how teaching and learning will develop over the next couple of decades. Their book, *Teaching 2030: What We Must Do for Our Students and*

*Our Public Schools ... Now and in the Future*, outlines four emergent realities, conditions likely to affect teachers and students in the future.

### Transformed learning ecologies

Tomorrow's schools will tap into new technologies to provide sophisticated, personalized learning opportunities for both students and teachers. We'll see less construction paper and notebooks on school supply lists, with mobile smart devices becoming classroom staples. Students will be able to explore concepts and skills even more quickly, retrieving digital replicas of primary documents and video archives with the touch of a button. Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUEs), similar to Second Life, will offer opportunities for students to apply their new knowledge and skills to real-world problems in safe, simulated settings (Dede, Nelson, Ketelhut, Clarke, & Bowman, 2004). Teachers will use new software and handheld devices to measure student learning on a daily basis and adjust their teaching in response.

In addition to learning about the old basics (reading, writing, and mathematics), instruction will focus on specific skills demanded by the 21st-century global marketplace: creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Students, or the "Google learners" who have grown up with the Internet, will need to learn to navigate the web and filter information for quality and accuracy.

Of course, the abundance of information and resources will

require teachers to quickly learn the skills of quality control, as *Teaching 2030* co-author Emily Vickery explains:

The creation of personalized learning experiences will grow more sophisticated, challenging current and future teachers to redefine what should be learned and what learning is. ... Teachers will be sought after for their expertise in editing and filtering digital content as they customize learning experiences. (p. 40)

Technological advances will revolutionize how students learn and how teachers approach their jobs. School culture will move away from an isolating egg-carton model that discourages teacher collaboration and toward a model that helps colleagues work together in small teams (Wise, 2004). Teachers will review data about their students' performance, brainstorm strategies to meet students' individual needs, and create ways to better measure learning. Teachers will have regular, structured time within the school day to collaborate and to adjust their teaching, all with the end goal of improving student learning (McLaughlin, 2011).

Teachers will be able to boost their own knowledge by connecting with content experts across the globe. As lifelong learners, they will "use hundreds of different tools to get the information and skills [they] need, and know how and when to ask for help" (Olson, 2011). When they have questions, the best teachers will be able to tap into up-to-date information and innovative resources.

### Seamless connections in and out of cyberspace

Technological advances will transform classrooms, but computers will not take the place of teachers. Actually, brick-and-mortar schools — and the teachers who lead them — will become even more important as students' academic, social, and emotional needs continue to multiply.

The image shows the word "JURE" in large, bold, 3D yellow letters with a dark outline. The letters are positioned on a dark, reflective surface that creates a clear reflection of the letters below them. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly water or a polished floor, with some light reflecting off it.

Our increasingly diverse student population will need greater access to specialized services. And while computers will help customize lessons, they cannot and will not replace the care and concern of a high-quality teacher. “Students will need learning environments that are safe, promote discipline and expect and insist on high levels of engagement,” writes *Teaching 2030* co-author Carrie J. Kamm. “Teachers will need to advocate for students ... many of whom will require a full-service brick-and-mortar school to gain the knowledge, skills and self-efficacy needed” (p. 88).

Expanded learning time will require teachers to work more closely than ever with before- and after-school providers. Schools will transform into 24/7 community hubs, with resources for health services, gyms, employment centers, and higher education. There is an urgency to revolutionize the concept of schools and schooling in this way, as the *Teaching 2030* team describes:

One critical step in this transformation will be to tear down the traditional barriers that make too many schools appear detached from their distressed communities. Adults inside and outside these schools need opportunities to discover that many solutions to entrenched problems will only be found by working together. (p. 90)

Teamwork and collaboration will become critical skills for effective classroom teachers. Building strong partnerships within schools and communities will be a necessity, and teachers will play significant roles in ensuring these partnerships’ success.

### Differentiated professional pathways

According to the *Teaching 2030* team, the future structure of the teaching profession will help teachers identify their strengths and develop specialized knowledge. Teaching assignments will be made based on the needs of a school and the strengths of its teachers, and positions will be more flexible than ever before.

Some teachers may choose only to remain in the profession a few years, but a significant number of “master teachers” will develop and share their teaching expertise throughout their careers. New “hybrid” positions will enable master teachers to keep one foot in the classroom while also taking on leadership roles. For example, they might spend part of the day in the classroom and part of the day serving as mentors to new teachers, partners to community organizations, advocates in education policy, or instructors in teacher preparation programs.

Their colleagues may work part time to develop curricula or

provide other kinds of content expertise, and some may work virtually, offering instruction in online settings. The KnowledgeWorks Foundation takes these future roles one step further by predicting the evolution of entirely new jobs, like “learning fitness instructors” who will use brain research to improve teaching and learning, or “community intelligence cartographers” who will use social networking tools to identify community needs and resources (KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2009).

Compensation will be determined by skill level and expertise, not just academic degrees and years of experience, as teachers work with administrators to negotiate their own salaries.

### Teacherpreneurs leading the way

*Teaching 2030* predicts that “teacherpreneurs” will help drive the most exciting developments in tomorrow’s schools. The concept of “teacherpreneurs” is simple: Teachers should be supported and rewarded for finding innovative solutions to education’s most vexing issues.

In today’s schools, outside experts are hired to enter schools and help “fix” them. The result is typically a short-term plan that does not accurately reflect the unique context of schools. Because these visiting experts don’t have access to “insider” knowledge about schools, they cannot guarantee real reform.



On the other hand, teachers themselves have, and will continue to have, a deep understanding of the challenges faced by teachers and students. *Teaching 2030* suggests that schools will soon begin to draw upon their best teachers to solve their most pressing problems. These teacherpreneurs will take the place of outsiders as reform experts. Teacher leaders who observe an issue in their school or community will be given the time, opportunity, and funding to explore options for addressing that problem.

For example, a teacherpreneur might help the local health department to create exercise and nutrition programs for the neighborhoods served by his or her school. Another teacherpreneur might partner with a local IT company to create virtual learning software to assist students in understanding math concepts. Still another might collaborate with the school board to educate the community about upcoming changes in the budget or school curriculum.

By the time you enter the job market, principals will be starting to embrace teacherpreneurs and share responsibility with

them for school improvement. Leadership will no longer be solely reserved for those who are administrators (principals, assistant principals, etc.). In fact, it will become increasingly more difficult to distinguish teachers from school leaders. Principals will share the teaching load, and teachers will take on more leadership responsibilities.

### So what does this mean for tomorrow's teachers?

As you enter college, we encourage you to reflect upon this vision for the future of education to guide your learning and focus your attention on building key skills. The list below will help get you started as you plan for working in the schools of tomorrow:

- **Prepare for a transformed learning ecology.** In five or 10 years when you enter the workforce, you will need not only to be proficient in specific subject areas, such as language arts or science, but also in how to apply that knowledge. You will need to be well-versed in using technology to help students learn, and that technology will change rapidly over the course of your career. Develop the habit of learning about new tools for teaching and learning and adapting those tools to support your own studies.
- **Build your own personal learning networks.** Teachers of tomorrow will need access to strong mentors and colleagues to advance their learning and development. Begin now by building your own personal learning networks. Seek out others who may possess skills that you lack. Practice collaboration by sharing what you know with your friends and classmates to encourage reciprocal relationships. Look for online communities that match your interests, and become an active participant.
- **Work with students in diverse settings.** Schools of the future may look very different than they do today, and teachers will need experience working with students in and out of the traditional classroom. Identify organizations supporting children's programs, and volunteer your time in the afternoons or on weekends. Apply for summer jobs that give you access to working with teachers or students, seeking out opportunities to work in communities where students have backgrounds different from your own.
- **Pursue leadership opportunities.** Our future educators must be problem-solvers and solution-finders who are not satisfied with the status quo but instead seek innovative

strategies for improving schools. To prepare for these dynamic roles, begin practicing your leadership skills now in your school, church, and community. Again, look for opportunities that will allow you to work with diverse people in settings different from your norm.

- **Pay attention to exciting developments in multiple fields.** Identify trustworthy news sources (blogs, newspapers, magazines, etc.) and monitor them so that you can stay on top of developments in a range of areas. Get in the practice of reflecting on how this news might affect your teaching practice and what skills you can develop now to meet new challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.
- **Exercise your creativity.** Get ready to think differently. Tomorrow's schools will need teacher leaders who can foresee not just how things are, but how conditions can change for the benefit of all students. Look for opportunities to plan and carry out projects that solve problems creatively, whether by developing an app, convincing groups to collaborate, or creating a campaign to educate others in your community about an issue.

Tomorrow's students will need committed, competent educators to lead

**Get ready  
to think  
differently.**

Find schools, scholarships, and subject areas in which teachers are needed. Check out the map at the *Go Teach* web site ([www.goteachmag.org](http://www.goteachmag.org)) and click on a state to get started!



them. Cultivating the knowledge and skills described in this article will help prepare you to enter the classroom with the confidence and competence to meet your students' needs. As the *Teaching 2030* team warns, "We cannot create what we cannot imagine" (p.xiii). We encourage you to begin now: Imagine your role in the future of teaching and learning and start preparing to realize that vision. ●●

## References

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**Imagine  
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