



The Colorado Association for Bilingual Education, Kathy and Manuel Escamilla Orgulloso(a) de ser bilingüe/Proud to be Bilingual 2026 Student Essay Contest

Deadline for submission of Essays is 5:00 P.M. February 15, 2026

The essays should be written on personal experiences that relate to learning two languages and being proud to be bilingual. We are looking for essays that are original and personal. (Not the general benefits of being bilingual.) We encourage the use of personal examples and anecdotes to support the main ideas in the essay.

Limitation on Entries

- Elementary Category (grades 3-5) is limited to 6 entries per school.
- Middle School Category (grades 6-8) is limited to 8 entries per school.
- High School Category (grades 9-12) is limited to 10 entries per school.

Eligibility

- Participation in the contest is limited to Colorado students.
- Participation in the contest is prioritized for Colorado students who are enrolled in a bilingual or dual language program in which academic instruction is provided in both English and Spanish or in English and another language or for secondary students who are pursuing the Seal of Biliteracy.
- If the student's school or district does not offer bilingual or dual language education, they must describe how they are developing their bilingualism.
- Previous winners are not eligible.
- If you have questions regarding eligibility, please contact Jorge García at jgarcia@cocabe.org

Essay Rules

- Language: Essays must be submitted both in English and in the student's other language. The original essay may be written in English or the other language however, the original essay should be labeled "original" and the translated version should be labeled "translated".
- If a student wishes, both languages may be used in writing the original essay. If writing in both languages simultaneously, the student may submit only the original essay ONLY if the languages are distributed between 60%-40% and 50%-50%. If less than 40% of the essay is in one language, then the student must submit both an original and a translated version.
- **Essays that exceed the word limit will be disqualified.**
- The use of artificial intelligence (AI) applications or programs to help write the essay is strictly prohibited. **If we determine that AI was used, the essay will be disqualified.**
- The use of translation programs to translate an original essay is strictly prohibited. **If we determine that a translation program was used to translate an original essay the essay will be disqualified.**
- Subject: All essays must address learning two languages, learning in two languages, and being proud to be bilingual, be original and describe the author's personal story and feelings.
- First, second, and third place winners MUST be present at the awards ceremony to collect the monetary prize. Contest winners who are not present will still be awarded their corresponding place but will not receive a cash prize.
- First place winners must be prepared to present their essays in both English and the second language in an awards ceremony with an audience present. Details will be provided to the contest winners.



Length of essays (Essays over the word limit will be disqualified)

- Elementary, grades 3-5, 300-word limit
- Middle School, grades 6-8, 500-word limit
- High School, grades 9-12, 750-word limit

Format & Submission

The information page, original essay, and translated essay should be included in the same Word document.

One Word document per student that includes:

- Page 1 must include the following information:
 1. Student's full name
 2. Student's grade level
 3. School name & School District name
 4. Teacher/sponsor's name. (The person who worked with the student to facilitate their participation in this essay contest. This is the person who will be notified of the results and who will be responsible to inform the student and facilitate participation in the awards ceremony.)
 5. E-mail address of Teacher/sponsor in #4 above.
 6. Telephone number of the Teacher/sponsor in #4 above.
- Page 2: Essay cover page that includes the title of the essay and the student's name plus the word "Original". Example: "I am quien soy by Juan Jesús García (Original)."
- Page 3: The original essay
- Page?: Begin the translated essay on a new page that includes the title of the essay and the student's name plus the word "Translated". Example: "I am quien soy by Juan Jesús García. (Translated)"
- Submit one Word document per student entry and email to: info@cocabe.org
- In the Subject line of the email include: Bilingual Essay Entry
- If you submit 6 entries, you will send six separate emails.
- Don't forget to attach the Word document.

Copyright

All essays become the property of CO-CABE.

Criteria

Each essay will be judged on:

- Development of theme (10%)
- Originality (45%)
- Content and clarity of expression (35%)
- Grammar and mechanics (10%)

Awards Ceremony

- Prizes will be awarded to first (\$200), second (\$100) and third (\$50) place winners in each category.
- Winners will be announced by March 6, 2026
- An Awards Ceremony will be held for award winners and families and sponsoring teachers on March 28, 2026. Details will be provided to contest winners and sponsoring teachers.