



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

“I Have a Dream” 60th Anniversary
Student Writing Contest Announcement

On the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, the South Carolina Department of Education is pleased to announce a student writing contest highlighting the monumental importance of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech and encouraging students to put their own dreams for the future into words.

Eligibility:	South Carolina students in grades 9-12
Submission Deadline:	September 29, 2023
Winner Announced:	October 23, 2023
Prize:	Recognition at the South Carolina African-American History Calendar event on November 27, 2023 and an invitation to the VIP reception

Prompt:

On August 28th, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and delivered his famous [“I Have a Dream” speech](#), one of the most influential speeches of the 20th century.

In this speech he appeals to the “promissory note” of America’s Founding ideals, first outlined in the “magnificent words of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence,” that all people “would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

As he stands in the “symbolic shadow” of President Lincoln, he traces that promise forward through the Emancipation Proclamation, which he calls the “great beacon light of hope” for enslaved African Americans.

And even as he unflinchingly acknowledges that this check of American promise had not yet been fully cashed, he calls for dignity, discipline, and non-violence, urging his audience to “rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force” in their pursuit of freedom and equal opportunity.

He goes on to say, “So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that once day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

You have been invited to stand at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, DC, in his “symbolic shadow,” and give your own speech highlighting your American dream for our shared future. Please write that speech as you would give it, highlighting how we can follow Dr. King’s exhortation to “walk together” to achieve the goals you outline.

Submission Method:

Essays should be saved as a PDF and e-mailed to communications@ed.sc.gov, with the subject line “Essay Submission.” In the body of the email, students should include their full name, grade, school, and school district.

Word Count: 500-600 words