



# TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast, City of Jacksonville

PRESENTED BY  **VyStar**  
Credit Union

The City of Jacksonville's 2027 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast commemorates the 98<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. King's birth by honoring his lifelong commitment and achievements toward his dream for social change.

Tomorrow's Leaders, presented by VyStar Credit Union, is the marquee component of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast. It recognizes and awards youth in our community who exemplify Dr. King's philosophies through leadership, community volunteerism, and civic responsibility.

The City of Jacksonville is pleased to offer deserving elementary, middle, and high school students the opportunity to be nominated and submit an entry for the Tomorrow's Leaders Award. Award recipients will be recognized at the 2027 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast on Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2027.

This year students of each school level will once again be writing an essay.

- **Elementary School:** 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Graders will write a 200-word **essay**
- **Middle School:** 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Graders will write a 400-word **essay**
- **High School:** 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Graders will write a 600-word **essay**

## Tomorrow's Leaders Nomination and Submission Guidelines:

- Educators, mentors, community leaders, and youth-oriented non-profit organizations are encouraged to nominate deserving students who exemplify the ideals and principles of Dr. King, submit a Nomination Form, and encourage students to submit an essay into the competition. Nominations from commercial entities will not be accepted.
- If a child is homeschooled, nominations may be submitted by a parent.
- Nominations and essay submissions will be accepted for students in grades 4-12 in the following counties: Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns.
- Nominations and essays can be mailed or emailed to the City of Jacksonville Office of Sports & Entertainment (contact information below). Essays must be submitted as PDF or DOC files.
- Multiple students from the same school and/or group may submit entries.

**All Nominations and essay submissions are due by Sunday, October 18, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. EST (no exceptions).**

**Tomorrow's Leaders Award Information**

- After the student is nominated, he or she will be required to submit a typed essay based on a predetermined topic and word count.
- Award recipients will be chosen based on nomination information and their submitted work. Rubrics for judging are available below.
- Award categories: Elementary School, Middle School, and High School
- One (1) first-place and one (1) runner-up award recipient will be selected from each category.
- Award recipients will be notified beginning late November 2026.

### **Elementary School: Essay – 200 words**

*“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose **infinite hope**.”* - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#### **Essay Prompt:**

What does Dr. King’s quote mean to you? Describe a time when you or someone you know experienced disappointment but continued to have **hope**. What did you learn from that experience and how can **hope** help you overcome challenges in the future?

Support your response with specific examples and details.

### **Middle School: Essay – 400 Words**

*“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose **infinite hope**.”* - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#### **Essay Prompt:**

What do you believe Dr. King meant by “finite disappointment” and “infinite **hope**”? Explain how these ideas can help individuals and communities respond to challenges or setbacks. Use examples from your own experiences, history, current events, literature, or other sources to support your ideas.

Conclude your essay by explaining how you can apply Dr. King's message to your own life or community.

### **High School: Essay – 600 Words**

*“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose **infinite hope**.”* - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#### **Essay Prompt:**

To what extent do you agree with Dr. King's assertion that we must accept disappointment without losing **hope**? Develop an argument explaining how individuals and communities can respond to setbacks while continuing to pursue meaningful change. Consider Dr. King's life and work, historical or contemporary examples, and/or experiences within your own community.

Support your position with relevant evidence and explain how that evidence strengthens your argument. Address the challenges or limitations of maintaining **hope** in the face of significant disappointment and conclude by explaining what Dr. King's message means for today's generation.

**Criteria:**

- Each category must submit essays meeting the below word count criteria:
  - Elementary school students – 200 words
  - Middle school students – 400 words
  - High school students – 600 words
- Judging will be based on the writing guidelines used in the Florida Standards Assessment.
- Essays should demonstrate focus, organization and conventions of standard English grammar.
  - *Focus* refers to how clearly the paper presents and maintains a main idea, theme, or unifying point.
  - *Organization* refers to the structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and the relationship of one point to another.
  - *Conventions* refer to the punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure.

**Awards & Recognition:**

- Award recipients will receive complimentary tickets for themselves and two guests to attend the 2027 Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast on Friday, January 15, 2027.
- Award recipients will be recognized at the breakfast and present their essays as part of the official programming.
- First-place award recipients will receive a tablet and other prizes.
- Award recipients will receive the Tomorrow's Leaders Award trophy.
- Award recipients will be recognized in the official breakfast program and on the official website, JaxMLKBreakfast.com.

**Nominations, entries and essays must be submitted by Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM. Essays must be submitted as PDF or DOC files.**

**Mailing Address:**

City of Jacksonville | Office of Sports & Entertainment  
Attn: Palmer Ferguson  
214 North Hogan Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Jacksonville, FL 32202  
Phone Number: (904) 255-5431

**Electronic Submissions:**

*To: City of Jacksonville, Sports & Entertainment*

*Email: [TomorrowsLeaders@Coj.net](mailto:TomorrowsLeaders@Coj.net)*

*Subject Line: Tomorrow's Leaders Nomination **OR** Tomorrow's Leaders Contest Submission*



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## **NOMINATION FORM**

Name of Nominee (Student): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Essay:

\_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Nominator/Educator: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator/Educator's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Phone Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission to the City of Jacksonville to use my child's name, school, likeness, and entry for promotional purposes, including but not limited to photographic and videography, related to the 2027 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

If signing electronically, by typing my initials above,  
I acknowledge this is a substitute for my signature  
(*must be a parent/legal guardian*)

*For the nominator:*

**Explain how the nominee epitomizes Martin Luther King, Jr. and what he/she represents (community, leadership, and civic responsibility).** *Please make sure the information is legible.*

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