

2019 Contest Rules

United We Learn: Innovative Communication Challenge

Purpose

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) celebrates its diversity while being committed to ensuring that every student has access to the opportunities and resources needed to be successful in their futures. Superintendent of Schools Jack Smith has stated that “we will celebrate diversity and a commitment to equity making sure that All Means All when it comes to equity and excellence in learning, progress, achievement and opportunity.”

Montgomery County Public Schools is launching the fourth year of its student contest, United We Learn. This year’s contest, **United We Learn: Innovative Communication Challenge**, encourages students to think about how communication affects their daily lives, and how technology can be used to enhance communication.

Middle and high school students are challenged to conceptualize an [Amazon Alexa Skill](#) (or series of skills) that shares information of importance about the school district, addresses communication barriers, strengthens the home-school connection and positively impacts the MCPS community. Alexa skills use voice to access and share information. MCPS will publish the winning Skill(s) and make it available for use. Winners will have the opportunity to participate in the development process.

Elementary school students are challenged to develop a web page that shares information of importance about their school, addresses communication barriers, strengthens the home-school connection and positively impacts the MCPS community. The winning proposals will be developed into web pages by MCPS Web Services on the students’ schools’ websites. Winners will have the opportunity to participate in the development process.

Eligibility of Participants

All participants must be students currently enrolled in Montgomery County Public Schools.

Eligibility of Entries

- Items for submission must be completed by a group of two to four students.
- Entries must be submitted by the school’s designated point person for the contest.
- The deadline for submissions is 5 p.m. on Friday, December 20, 2019. Submissions must be received through the [online portal](#).
- The work must follow the MCPS guidelines regarding the appropriateness of language and subject matter found in the [2019-2020 A Student’s Guide to Rights and Responsibilities in Montgomery County Public Schools](#). Submissions may not include terms or images that could be described as offensive, harassing, or targeting of any specific group. Submissions may not include the use of any copyrighted materials unless express written permission has been provided by the copyright holder. Submissions received without written permission will be disregarded.

- Entries cannot be in violation of the guidance found in [MCPS Regulation KBA-RB Educational Purposes and Administration of the MCPS Web](#) and should reflect the best practices found on the [Regulations of the MCPS Web website](#) and the [Standards, Regulations and Best Practices for the MCPS web website](#).
- Entries will be prescreened as they are received.
- Entries will be disqualified if they point to false information and/or inappropriate content.
- Finalists and winners will be chosen by the full Submission Review Committee. The Submission Review Committee retains the right to refuse to critique any entry not complying with contest rules.
- MCPS will assume ownership of the code and project resources following the contest.

Grade Level Groups:

- Entries will be accepted in these grade level groups: Elementary and Secondary.
- If students from more than one grade level work together, entries must be submitted in the grade level of the oldest member of the group.
- Elementary students may not participate in a secondary-level group.
- Secondary students may not participate in an elementary-level group.

Categories:

The following are the categories for submission:

Elementary School Students

Phase One

Students should work in groups of two to four to develop a written proposal and [wireframe \(drawing\)](#) of a web page that celebrates your school.

Students should consider the following:

- What are the best things about your school that you think people should know about? Please provide up to 10 examples.
- Are there pages on the [montgomeryschoolsmd.org](#) district website that should be links on your page? Please provide up to 10 examples.
- How will your page help students see the value of the opportunities your school offers?
- How do you and your family get important information about your school and MCPS?
- How can your web page address communication challenges or barriers?
- Can visitors easily find what they are looking for on your page?

Write your proposal in Microsoft Word or similar software. Design your wireframe in Microsoft Word or similar software, or draw it on 8½"x11" paper. A good web page includes images, text and links, and is easy to read and navigate.

Have your school's designated point person upload your written proposal and wireframe as one .doc (or similar) file, or if you drew your wireframe, take a picture of it and submit it in jpeg

format (.jpg), along with your proposal, using the [Online Submission Portal](#). Keep your original project until winning entries are announced. (Ask your teacher for the name of your school's designated point person.)

The project title entered on the submission form must match the file name of the files submitted through the portal.

To avoid duplicate titles, it is strongly suggested that the last name of one participant is added to the END of the file names (Ex: MyGreatWebpageProposal-SMITH.doc)

Criteria

- Collaboration
 - The entry follows established rules and guidelines.
 - The entry is free of errors and omissions.
 - The entry was created collaboratively in groups of 2 to 4 students.
- Relevance and Impact
 - The entry offers value.
 - The entry can be used by a broad audience.
- Innovation
 - The entry is original and creative.
 - The entry is engaging.
- User Experience
 - The entry is user-friendly.
 - The entry is well-designed.

Phase Two

Up to three confirmed groups of finalists will have the opportunity to develop a web page for their elementary school. Each group will work with a member of MCPS' Web Services.

In addition to developing their page, participants must provide a written or video reflection on their experience. What worked well? What didn't? What would you do differently next time?

A Submission Review Committee will judge entries between April 4, 2020 and April 17, 2020.

Participants will be judged on:

- Collaboration
 - The entry follows established rules and guidelines.
 - The entry is free of errors and omissions.
 - The entry was created collaboratively in groups of 2 to 4 students.
- Relevance and Impact
 - The webpage offers value.
 - The webpage can be used by a broad audience.
- Innovation

- The webpage idea is original and creative.
- The webpage idea has potential for engagement.
- User Experience
 - The webpage idea is user-friendly.
 - Design
 - Execution

Middle and High School Students

Phase One

Students should work in groups of two to four to develop a written proposal regarding the concept of an Alexa Skill that would share information of importance about Montgomery County Public Schools, address communication barriers, and strengthen the home-school connection.

Think about the information that's most important to you on a daily basis. What do you need to know to have a successful experience at school? How do you and your family get important information about your school and MCPS?

Students should include the following:

- What will the skill do and what makes it unique?
- How will the skill engage the MCPS community?
- How will the skill help students and families understand the value of programs that MCPS offers?
- How does the skill strengthen the home-school connection?
- How can the skill address communication challenges or barriers?
- What types of questions will you ask and where is the information currently available?
Please provide up to 10 examples.

Skills should be intended for use at home, not in the classroom.

A Submission Review Committee will judge proposals between Dec. 21, 2019 through Jan. 15, 2020.

Participants will be judged on:

- Collaboration
 - The entry follows established rules and guidelines.
 - The entry is free of errors and omissions.
 - The entry was created collaboratively in groups of 2 to 4 students.
- Relevance and Impact
 - The skill offers value.
 - The skill can be used by a broad audience.
- Innovation

- The skill idea is original and creative.
 - The skill idea has potential for engagement.
- User Experience
 - The skill idea is user-friendly.

Phase Two

Up to five confirmed groups of finalists will have the opportunity to build an Alexa skill to be published by MCPS.

Students must provide a signed parent/guardian consent form in order to participate.

Students will work with an MCPS mentor at their school to access an MCPS designated AWS Educate account. **Students should not create their own AWS Educate account; nor should they share personal information through the MCPS designated AWS Educate account.**

In addition to building their skill, participants should provide a written or video reflection on their experience. What worked well? What didn't? What would you do differently next time?

Participants should also provide written documentation detailing the questions that users can ask Alexa and the source of the answers.

Details about how to submit work will be provided during this phase.

A Submission Review Committee will judge entries between April 4, 2020 and April 17, 2020.

Participants will be judged on:

- Collaboration
 - The entry follows established rules and guidelines.
 - The entry is free of errors and omissions.
 - The entry was created collaboratively in groups of 2 to 4 students.
- Relevance and Impact
 - The skill offers value.
 - The skill can be used by a broad audience.
 - The skill shares relevant information about Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland.
- Innovation
 - The skill idea is original and creative.
 - The skill idea has potential for engagement.
- User Experience
 - The skill idea is user-friendly.
 - Design.
 - Execution.

Submitting Work:

- Each Phase One submission must be labeled with each participating student's name, grade level and school, and submitted through the [online submission portal](#). Incomplete entries will be discarded.
- Phase Two submissions will be tested by the submission review committee for collaboration, relevance and impact, innovation, and user experience.

**All submissions become the property of Montgomery County Public Schools.
Submissions will not be returned to the schools or participants.**

Judging

- A first, second and third place entry will be named for Phase two at each level. The first-place entry will be published by MCPS and made available to the MCPS community.
- Winners will be announced on April 20, 2020.
 - Winners will be posted on the MCPS website after the announcement.
 - Non-winning entries will not be individually notified of the results. Participants for all winning entries will receive a certificate of appreciation for their participation.