



ILLINOIS PTA LOCAL LEADER'S GUIDE 2023-2024

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The Local PTA Leader's Guide to Reflections

Five Steps to Program Success

The information on the following pages will help you better understand the National PTA Reflections program as well as your responsibilities as a Local PTA Reflections Leader. Specifically, this guide will show you how to:

- [Prepare for Your Reflections Program](#)
- [Promote Your Reflections Program](#)
- [Coordinate the Review of Student Submissions](#)
- [Celebrate Your Student Participants](#)
- [Wrap Up and Report Your Program Success](#)

At the end of this guide, you will find [supplemental tools](#) that you can customize to suit your school community's unique needs. These tools (along with the resources provided to you by your state PTA), will enhance and support your Reflections program. They include:

- Getting Started Tools
 - [Reflections Program Leader's Checklist](#)
 - [Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet](#)
- Reflections Judge Welcome Packet
 - [Instructions and Criteria](#)
- Program Evaluation
 - [Sample Survey Questions](#)
- PTA Reflections Celebration Event
 - [Planning Guide and Timeline](#)

1. Prepare for Your Reflections Program

First, some key background info. In 1969, Colorado State PTA President and arts educator Mary Lou Anderson introduced a student art contest that would eventually become Reflections, National PTA's cornerstone arts program. In the 50+ years since the program's founding, millions of students have been inspired to participate by reflecting on a specific, student-selected theme to create original artwork.

By hosting a Reflections program, you join a celebration of the importance of arts education that spans nationwide and in American schools overseas. Let's get started.

Where to Find Training and Key Information

- Visit [PTA.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram](https://pta.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram) and review the **Local PTA Leader E-learning Course**. You'll become a Reflections expert in no time!
- **Register Your Program** at [PTA.org/Reflections](https://pta.org/Reflections) to let National PTA know you are participating in Reflections—we can't wait to see your student entries!
- **Coordinate with Illinois PTA** to access to state-specific program materials, submission deadlines and instructions! The Reflections program is largely managed by our state PTAs. [Illinois PTA Reflections Resources](#) are password protected for units in Good Standing – contact your PTA president for details.
- **Be sure to understand available arts categories and divisions.** All student entrants must follow official guidelines and arts category submission requirements, including a signed entry form (*Please note: National PTA will accept typed signatures*).
 - **Offer 1 or more arts categories.** The National PTA Reflections program offers recognition in [the following categories](#): dance choreography, film production, literature, music composition, photography and visual arts. Students may enter artworks in one or more arts categories.
 - **Offer 1 or more division.** Divisions include Primary (Pre-K through grade 2), Intermediate (grades 3-5), Middle School (grades 6-8), High School (grades 9-12), and Special Artist (All grades welcome—review the [special artist division rules](#) to learn more about opportunities and accommodations for students with disabilities).



Building Your Volunteer and Judging Teams

Recruit a Reflections Committee. We recommend finding four to six parent and teacher volunteers—they will enrich your program by bringing a variety of ideas, talents and skills.

Volunteer support will also make your job easier and more enjoyable by ensuring that program tasks don't fall on your shoulders alone. Assigning project leaders and dividing tasks will save time and energy. Use the [volunteer sign-up sheet](#) to help recruit volunteers with specific skills/interests.

Recruit a Team of Arts Experts to Review Student Submissions. Inviting professionals in the arts community to participate as reviewers will increase the credibility of your program and exposure for PTA.

Reach out to your school's art teachers to help you identify working professionals in your local arts community. You can also consider contacting local arts agencies, arts and cultural organizations, colleges, community leaders and prominent artists. Use the program flyer at [PTA.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram](https://pta.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram) to help introduce your Reflections program to local arts professionals.

To ensure equitable judging, your team of art experts should include six or more people. All reviewers must have a working knowledge of their assigned arts area.

- *Please note:* It may take up to five minutes to review dance, film, music and writing submissions whereas photography and visual arts may take only two minutes

Be mindful of your reviewer's time and recruit additional judges for each category where needed.

2. Promote Your Program

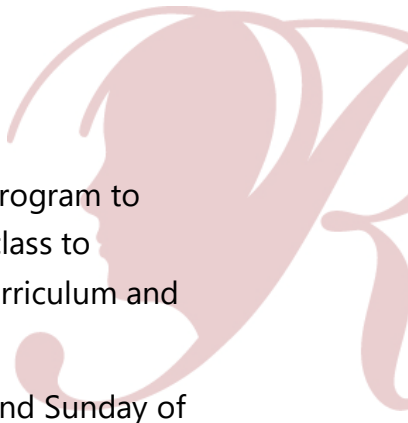
The goal of the Reflections program is to encourage all students to participate in the arts, regardless of their previous experience. Take time to introduce the program to your families and school personnel to gain further support and interest in the program.

Visit **Illinois PTA's** website to download important materials you'll need to share with students and their families, including the **official guidelines** and **entry form**. Please review Illinois PTA's official rules and ensure your PTA/PTSA is in "good standing" status of affiliation with Illinois PTA. It is the responsibility of the state and local PTA/PTSA to determine each student's eligibility in the National PTA Reflections program.

- **Sample Announcement:** Do you enjoy art, music and dance or have an interest in writing, producing films and taking photos? Then join us and have fun unleashing your inner artist with PTA Reflections! Pick up submission guidelines and an entry form today from <INSERT CONTACT/CONTACT INFORMATION>. For inspiration, visit the Reflections virtual art gallery and learn more about prizes and scholarships at [PTA.org/Reflections/Awards](https://pta.org/Reflections/Awards) and check out the highlights of [Illinois PTA's Spotlight Celebration](#) held at Millikin University in May.

Be innovative in promoting your Reflections program and use all the communication avenues available to you. Consider the following ideas:

- Send program flyers and materials home to parents. Be sure to include everything a student would need to know to participate in the program.
- Regularly post your call for entries on school and/or PTA website and social media as well as newsletters, blogs and bulletin boards.
- Ask student leaders or past participants to act as program advocates and encourage their peers over morning announcements. Willing students might be found in classes, programs and afterschool clubs that involve the creative, literary, media and performing arts.
- Host a PTA table or student arts showcase at schoolwide assemblies and back to school nights. Have flyers, participation guidelines and entry forms available.

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- Request time at a staff meeting to present the Reflections program to teachers. Gather ideas on how they might encourage their class to participate. Ask how this year's theme might be linked to curriculum and other learning objectives.
 - Use **National Arts in Education Week** (beginning the second Sunday of each September) or **National Arts and Humanities Month** (each October) to encourage participation in the program. Reserve time, space and materials for students to participate in the arts and the program.

3. Coordinate the Review of Student Submissions

The program theme and review criteria are what make Reflections stand out among other arts contests.

Reflections Artwork Review Process

Your Reflections review and judging process will involve collecting, qualifying and reviewing submissions.

- **Collecting Submissions:** Coordinate with your state PTA to ensure you are collecting entries and entry information by their standards and requirements.
- **Qualifying Submissions:** Submissions are reviewed by arts category and division. Ask your Reflections Committee to scan and flag incomplete entry forms and submissions that do not follow program guidelines and submission requirements.
- **Reviewing Submissions:** Reviewers should use their professional experience to consider each entry completely and assign scores based on the provided review criteria and process.

You are encouraged to set your Reflections submission deadline approximately one month before your selected submissions are due to advance to the next level (either your district/council/region PTA or your state PTA). This will allow ample time for organizing, qualifying and scoring submissions, as well as preparing for the next round.

Reflections Artwork Review Criteria

National PTA provides the following criteria for reviewing Reflections submissions:

- **Interpretation of Theme (40 pts.)** How closely the piece relates to the theme, based on the artwork itself and the artist statement.
- **Creativity (30 pts.)** How creative and original the piece is in its conception of the theme and its presentation.
- **Technical Skill (30 pts.)** The level of skill demonstrated in the basic principles/techniques of the arts area.

Notice that **“interpretation of theme” is weighed more heavily than the other considerations**. A well-developed concept is more important than technique. Entries should be judged primarily on how well the student uses their artistic vision to portray the theme, rather than their technical skill or creative process.

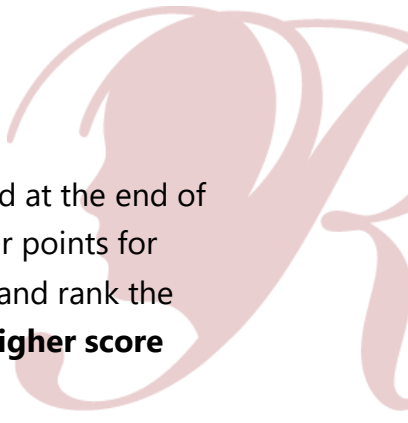
How to Conduct “Blind Judging”

“Blind judging” is a standard practice for art competitions, where reviewers do not see student information to reduce the possibility of bias. Although you should omit the students’ name and other personal information, you *should* share with your judges the complete artwork, the title and artist statement for each entry they are assigned.

The artwork title and artist statement are important to the review process and will help reviewers understand each student’s inspiration for their work and how it relates to the theme.

Consider both online and in-person review session options:

- **To host an online review session**, assign numbers to each submission and provide reviewers with a list of submission titles and artist statements by assigned number. Share digital copies of student works using cloud-based file sharing platforms, CDs, and/or USB drives.
- **To host an in-person review session**, display works on tables around the room. Place the title of work and artist statement in front of the student’s work. Trifold the student entry form to show only the judging information section. Instruct reviewers to rotate around the room and score each entry.



Provide reviewers with [the directions and the Review Packet](#) found at the end of this guide to support their review process. Have judges record their points for each student work, then add together the points from each judge and rank the artwork accordingly. **If two entries are tied, the entry with the higher score for interpretation of theme receives more recognition.**

List Student Winners and Gather Awards

Now that you have your list of winners, you'll need to assign awards! Create an outline of awardees based on your rankings by student's division and arts category (e.g., Award of Excellence; Award of Merit; Honorable Mention).

Consider purchasing or creating certificates, medallions and prizes to present to students during your awards ceremony. Visit Illinois PTA's ShopPTA.com and click on "Reflections" to see options.

Provide Opportunities for State and National Recognition

The PTA Reflections program is multi-level, which means your local PTA's winning student artists have the opportunity to be recognized at the district/council/region, state and National PTA levels!

You are encouraged to advance your finalists to the next available level for another round of review. For more details and instructions, please contact reflections@illinoispta.org or the program leader of the next available level. They will offer additional guidance regarding the number of awards and/or number of submissions that may advance to the next level.

Thank Your Reflections Reviewers

It is important to show appreciation to your team of art experts for their time. You may choose to publicly recognize volunteer reviewers to inspire students and raise the credibility of your program.

However, if a question is raised about the status or score of an entry, it is the responsibility of the PTA Reflections Committee to address it. Under no conditions may a reviewer be contacted and/or respond to disputes regarding the status and score of an entry.

4. Celebrate Your Student Artists!

Once your review is complete, it's time to celebrate! Recognizing your students' participation and accomplishments will help your school community create memories that will last a lifetime. You will grow students' confidence by hosting opportunities for family members, school personnel and community leaders to value their artistic skills, creative vision and unique interpretation of the Reflections theme.

Ways to Spread the Word About Your Student Artists

There are many ways to announce winners, distribute awards and showcase works for the whole school and community to enjoy.

- Announce winners on PTA/school website and in newsletters and social media
- Award certificates, ribbons and/or prizes donated by local businesses.
- Showcase student works at PTA and school board meetings and display student works throughout school and community venues (e.g., school lobby, local library, community arts centre).
- Invite school leaders, policy makers and community leaders to celebration events to meet families and learn more about PTA's support for arts education.

Use the [PTA Reflections Celebration Event Planning Guide](#) at the end of this document for planning tips and visit [PTA.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram](https://pta.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram) for other celebration tools.

5. Wrap Up and Report Your Reflections Program Success

After your Reflections program concludes for the year, one of the most important tasks is to thank those who helped make it a success. Use the **Thank you letter** at [PTA.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram](https://pta.org/Reflections/StartYourProgram) to thank student and parent leaders, school personnel, submission reviewers and community businesses for their support.

Next Steps for Student Artworks

Be sure to return non-advancing works to the student artists immediately following judging and/or exhibition and no later than the last day of the school year. Electronic submissions (video, music, pdf., and digital photos) are typically not returned. Please be sensitive to secondary students needing their artwork for college admission.

Communicate with advancing student artists regarding their artworks. If student artwork advances, it will be returned according to your state PTA's policies.

Plan for Next Year

Meet with your Reflections Committee and other team members to reflect on the program, gather feedback from your school community, and document successes and areas needing improvement.

Sharing this information with next year's team will provide a smooth transition from one Reflections Chair to the next. Use the [Program Evaluation](#) at the end of this guide to collect feedback from your community.

Share Your Success

Visibility of award announcements, attendance at your celebration event, and personal quotes from families and community partners will help capture your program's reach and impact as well as your PTA's ability to support student success, engage families and build community partnerships.

Don't hide your light under a basket! After your program concludes, we encourage you to **share your Reflections program's success** with your state PTA and National PTA to assist Reflections leaders in improving the program for future students. We also encourage you to share your success with your PTA board and school administrators to reinforce the joy the program brings to your community.



Supplemental Tools

The Local PTA Leader Reflections Program Checklist

Step 1. Getting Started

- ☐ Register your participation in the national Reflections program at PTA.org/Reflections.
- ☐ Visit [Illinois PTA's Reflections Resources](#) to confirm student eligibility and gather important deadlines and materials.
- ☐ Determine which arts categories and grade divisions your PTA will offer. New program leaders may consider getting started with one or more arts category and division.
- ☐ Plan and budget for your awards, prizes and recognition activities.
- ☐ Recruit a Committee to help you promote participation, coordinate judging and host events.
- ☐ Recruit experienced artists to review student works.
- ☐ Share your program plans with your PTA and school leaders.

Step 2. Promote Your Program

- ☐ Distribute program rules and entry forms to students and teachers.
- ☐ Promote your submission deadline and instructions on how to enter. Don't forget to include any available awards, scholarships and prizes!
- ☐ Use **#PTAReflections** to share how your school participates in Reflections during National Arts & Humanities Month this **October**.

Step 3. Review Submissions

- ☐ Collect and organize submissions by category and division.
- ☐ Qualify entries according to each arts category rules.
- ☐ Share judging materials and submissions with your volunteer judges.
- ☐ Collect scores from judges and rank submissions.
- ☐ Gather awards and prizes and prepare works for exhibition.

Step 4. Celebrate Participants

- ☐ Announce awardees to the whole school community.
- ☐ Host a Reflections Celebration Event to showcase student work and distribute certificates/awards.
- ☐ Offer state and national opportunities for student recognition by sending your finalists to the next judging round.

Step 5. Wrap Up

- ☐ Return non-advancing submissions to students.
- ☐ Recognize volunteers, community partners, and judges.
- ☐ Evaluate your program to consider future improvements.

Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet



Publicist

To promote Reflections to school leaders and teachers, post flyers in school and around the community, share celebration event invitations with participating families, share announcements with local media outlets.

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

Judging Coordinator

To recruit volunteer judges, organize artwork for judging, support judges and calculate their scores.

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

Computer Wiz

To organize student entry information for award announcements, printed programs, certificates/awards and provide a list of students advancing to the next round of judging.

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

Celebration Coordinator

To exhibit artwork, prepare student awards and lead on site event activities (program, refreshments, decorations, etc.)

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

Reflections Program Judge Review Packet and Criteria

Welcome Reflections Judge!

Thank you for supporting the artistic and cultural exploration of our students by serving as a volunteer reviewer for the PTA Reflections program! Your artistic expertise and enthusiasm contribute to the vibrancy and creativity of our school community. Before you begin, please familiarize yourself with the following criteria, theme and scoring materials.

Criteria

All PTA Reflections program entries are judged on three criteria:

- **Interpretation of Theme (40 pts.)** How closely the piece relates to the theme, based on the artwork itself and the artist statement.
- **Creativity (30 pts.)** How creative and original the piece is in its conception of the theme and its presentation.
- **Technical Skill (30 pts.)** The level of skill demonstrated in the basic principles/techniques of the arts area.

Notice how heavily “Interpretation of Theme” is weighted? This is what makes the National PTA Reflections Arts Program unique. A well-developed concept is more important than technique. **If two entries are tied, the entry with the higher score for interpretation of theme receives more recognition.** Use the provided rubric within this packet to keep your scores consistent.

Materials

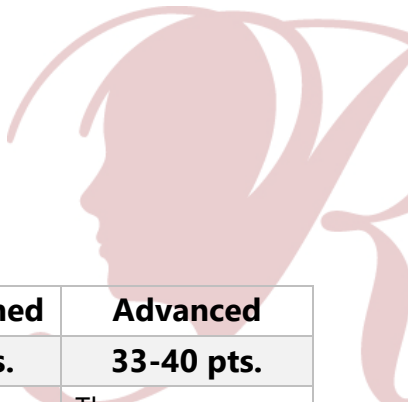
The following entry information will be provided to you during your review.

- **Title of Artwork and student’s Artist Statement:** These may provide insight on the student’s artistic style/genre and the materials the student used. Look for personal meaning and reflection on the theme to help you decide the student’s Interpretation of Theme score.
- **Grade Division:** The student’s division may provide insight on student’s range of technical skill, ability and competencies displayed in their submission.
- **Additional Artwork Details:** If noted, artwork details will offer information related to cited material, submission size/length, etc.

Please record points for each entry on the provided score card. To flag questionable entries, contact your PTA Reflections Chair.

After scoring your assigned entries, please turn in your scores to the PTA Reflections Chair.

Reflections Reviewer Criteria



Criteria / Level	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Advanced
Interpretation	1-8 pts.	9-16 pts.	17-24 pts.	25-32 pts.	33-40 pts.
How closely the piece relates to the theme, based on the Work itself and the artist statement.	The interpretation lacks clarity and does not communicate the student's concept.	The interpretation lacks clarity and does not fully communicate the student's concept based on the theme.	The interpretation communicates the student's concept based on the theme.	The interpretation clearly communicates the student's concept based on the theme but lacks meaning, purpose, and integrity.	The interpretation clearly communicates the student's whole concept based on the theme with meaning, purpose and integrity.
Creativity	1-6 pts.	7-12 pts.	13-18 pts.	19-24 pts.	25-30 pts.
How creative and original the piece is in its conception of the theme and its presentation.	Work is somewhat original and reflects the theme using very conventional ways.	Work is somewhat original and reflects the theme using conventional ways.	Work is original and reflects the theme using conventional ways.	Work is primarily original and reflects the theme using imaginative ways.	Work is highly original and reflects the theme using unconventional, interesting, imaginative and new ways.
Technique	1-6 pts.	7-12 pts.	13-18 pts.	19-24 pts.	25-30 pts.
The level of skill demonstrated in the basic principles/ techniques of the arts area.	Work demonstrates very limited skill of the arts area.	Work demonstrates limited skill of the arts area.	Work demonstrates capable skill of the arts area.	Work demonstrates expertise of skill of the arts area.	Work demonstrates mastery of skill and knowledge of the arts area.

Reflections Reviewer Score Card

Entry #	Interpretation (40 pts)	Creativity (30 pts)	Technique (30 pts)	Total Score	Notes
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
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25					



Reflections Program Evaluation

As a part of your program wrap-up, be sure to include program evaluation. Begin with a survey to your school community (i.e., parents, students, teachers) about their experience with the Reflections program. Use the survey responses you gather to start a conversation with your Reflections Committee and/or school leaders about improvements for next year!

Sample School Community Survey Questions

1. First and Last Name
2. Please check which best describes you:
 - a. Student
 - b. Parent/Guardian
 - c. Teacher
 - d. Other:
3. How did you hear about the Reflections program?
 - a. Note/Information from teacher
 - b. PTA newsletters
 - c. School social media
 - d. PTA social media
 - e. Posters
 - f. Other:
4. Overall, how satisfied are you with our PTA/School's Reflections program?
5. Overall, do you feel like you understood how to participate and/or be involved in the Reflections program?
6. Do you have any suggestions/comments that will help us make our PTA/School's Reflections program better?

Sample General Feedback Discussion Questions

1. What worked?
2. What didn't?
3. Would you revise program promotion in the future? If yes, why and how?
4. Would you revise your program timeline? If yes, why and how?
5. Would you revise judge training and/or the review process? If yes, why and how?

Sample Feedback Discussion Topics

1. How can we better track and archive important information (contact lists/tips/student participation, etc) from year to year?
2. What community partners (e.g., donors/judges/student council/news stations, etc.) did we work with this year? What other partners can we consider next year?



PTA Reflections Celebration Event Planning Guide

Hosting a PTA Reflections Celebration is a powerful way to encourage students to explore and be involved in the arts. This event is a great tool for school leaders and families to showcase the importance of arts education and offer positive reinforcement for participation in the National PTA Reflections program.

At a Reflections Celebration event, parents and community leaders are welcomed into the school to discover the rich cultures and artistic skills presented by your student artists. Generally, the event features an art exhibit with live student performances as well as an awards ceremony. During the PTA Reflections Celebration, families will:

- Recognize their child's participation and achievement in the arts.
- Discover new opportunities to stay involved in their child's learning through the arts.
- Understand how arts programs provide necessary educational benefits and share their positive experiences with school and community leaders.

Why is Student Recognition Important?

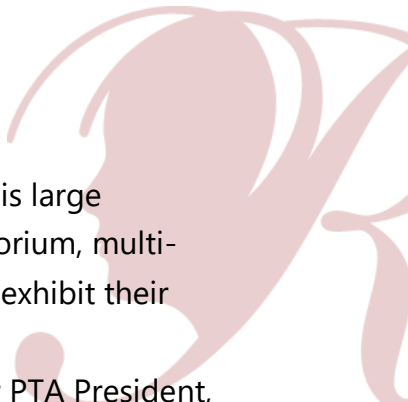
Celebrating student achievement provides an opportunity for schools and families to connect with each other and to their community.

When PTAs and schools celebrate the arts together, all families feel welcomed into the school community and are encouraged to take an active role in their child's learning. And the benefits go beyond the arts—research shows positive recognition and strong family engagement result in higher rates of student success in school and in life.

Celebration events also serve as a platform for communicating the importance of arts education in your school. Use this opportunity to ensure school leaders, policy makers and community leaders recognize the value of learning through the arts.

How to Plan Your PTA Reflections Celebration

1. **Build your event team.** Discuss the objectives for your event and event logistics (i.e., select the event space, time and date, and sketch out plans for promotion).
2. **Decorate the school with student artwork.** Prior to the event, recruit parent and student volunteers to assist teachers with displays of student art in the classrooms and hallways. Place your Reflections exhibit in a prominent location in the school such as the lobby, cafeteria, library or hallway.

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3. **Plan your awards ceremony.** Secure a location in the school that is large enough for all attendees, as well as performances (e.g., gym, auditorium, multi-purpose room, library or cafeteria). Then identify student artists to exhibit their art or perform during the awards ceremony.
 - a. Consider including welcoming or closing remarks from your PTA President, PTA Reflections Chair and/or school principal. You could also invite special guests to deliver remarks.
 - b. Create a program listing the names of student performers and featured presenters. Also include names of students whose artwork is exhibited.
 4. **Gather event supplies for your awards ceremony and art exhibit.** Consider certificates, medallions and prizes to present during your awards ceremony. Visit [ShopPTA.com](https://www.shoppta.com) and click on "Reflections" to see options.
 - a. *Other supplies may include:* Small gifts to recognize guest speakers, tablecloths, signage for reserved seats, decorations, audio visual needs and/or a microphone.
 - b. *Art exhibit materials may include:* name cards, a welcome sign and refreshments.
 5. **Promote your event.** Ensure that your school community knows that all families are welcome to celebrate the arts together! Use all of your PTA and school communications tools.
 - a. Send personalized invitations to school leaders, community arts advocates and policymakers.
 - b. Feature your award-winning entries in these communications.
 - c. Invite local media to attend and generate visibility for your school and PTA.
 6. **Host your PTA Reflections Celebration.** Revise the schedule below to best fit the needs of your school community. Below, you will find an example for a two-hour event with 30 minutes of celebration in the beginning as families congregate, 60 minutes of awards ceremony featuring student performances and guest speakers, and 30 minutes of celebration at the end.
 7. **Say Thank You:** After your celebration concludes, thank those who helped make it a success. Be sure to include all of the following groups in your recognition plan: student leaders, volunteers, school personnel and community partners.



Sample Celebration Outline

1. Setup (At Least One Hour Prior to Official Event Start)

- Decorate the reception room and prepare the refreshments, exhibits and awards ceremony space.
- Prepare the welcome table to include program information, marked school maps of the exhibit space and PTA membership information.
- Hang directional signage where appropriate (including parking areas).

2. Families Arrive (Event Start)

- Welcome families with a program, encourage them to visit the exhibit and take a membership card if new to PTA.

3. Opening Reception (30 minutes)

- Families visit the PTA Reflections Exhibit and enjoy live student performances.

4. Awards Ceremony (60 minutes)

- Welcoming remarks by school principal and/or PTA President.
- Keynote speaker such as arts teacher, community arts professional or public official.
- Presentation of awards.
- Closing remarks by PTA Reflections Chair, PTA President or student leader.

5. Closing Reception (30 minutes)

- Families visit the PTA Reflections Exhibit and enjoy live student performances.