



Center of Excellence Essay Contest Spring 2017

Purpose

This contest is sponsored by the *Francis Marion University Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty*. It is designed to give current undergraduate and graduate students at Francis Marion University, as well as in-service P-12 teachers in South Carolina school districts the opportunity to write about the challenges and opportunities associated with their work with children of poverty. The topics are intended to encourage participants to develop their own views about a central idea while concurrently substantiating these views with references to current research. In addition to the opportunity for written expression, participants have the opportunity to win **cash awards**.

Awards

Cash awards will be given to the authors of the four best essays **that meet all contest criteria** and receive the **highest scores** on the scoring rubric.

AWARDS

Non Education Majors	Education Students K-12	Teachers
First Place- \$200	First Place- \$200	First Place- \$200
Second Place- \$150	Second Place- \$150	Second Place- \$150

Announcement

FMU students, FMU faculty and school districts will receive the announcement via email. It will also be posted under the “*News and Announcements*” section on the FMU School of Education Webpage.

Official Topics

I. Education Majors/P-12 Teachers

“IMPORTANT WORK: TEACHING CHILDREN OF POVERTY”

The purpose of this topic is to address the reasons that education majors (undergraduate and graduate students) and P-12 teachers think that teaching children of poverty is important work. Special consideration shall be given to concepts relating to the following:

- The needs and abilities of under-resourced students.
- Views on poverty and the importance of resources for school and life success--identifying the associated challenges.
- An explanation of the writer’s interest in teaching children of poverty.

The writer should support his or her ideas with findings from at least two current research articles.

II. Non Education Majors

“WHY POVERTY MATTERS IN SCHOOLS AND IN LIFE”

The purpose of this topic is to allow non education majors (undergraduate and graduate students) to communicate how poverty impacts society. Special consideration shall be given to concepts related to the following:

- The needs and abilities of under-resourced individuals or groups.
- Views on poverty and the importance of resources in education and life success—identifying the associated challenges.
- An explanation of the writer’s interest in working with individuals or groups in poverty.

The writer should support his or her ideas with findings from at least two current research articles.

Essay Contest Rules

Section I – General Rules

- A contestant must compose an original essay. Webster’s dictionary defines an essay as an analytic or interpretive literary composition. Works of fiction or poetry will not be accepted.
- Essays must be written by one author. Essays with **co-authors** will **not** be considered.
- A contestant may not confer or collaborate with others regarding the content of their essay.
- A contestant may use the FMU Writing Center for grammar, punctuation, and other writing style assistance.
- The FMU Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty will have the right to edit, publish or otherwise duplicate any essay entered into the contest without payment or notification to the author.

Section II – Qualifications for Contestants

- The Francis Marion University Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty Essay Contest is open to all undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled at FMU. P-12 teachers from Center Partner Districts are also invited to compete.
- Contestants are eligible for the essay contest every year.
- Previous winners are eligible to participate.

Section III – Title Page

- Essays must have a proper title page (see specific instructions below).
- Each essay must include a title page, not considered text, with the following information:
 - Title
 - Author’s full name (*The author’s identifying information must not appear on any other page of the essay.*)
 - Status (P-12 Teacher, Graduate or Undergraduate Student)
 - Mailing address
 - Phone number
 - E-mail address
 - Word Count
 - Name of school
- The title of the essay must also appear on the top of the first page of the essay text.

Section IV – Contest Rules

- The essay must be written in English.
- Only one (1) essay may be submitted by each contestant.
- Participants are responsible for complying with all contest rules.
- Participants must write on the official topic.
- No literary form other than an essay will be accepted.
- Each essay must be based on your ideas and/or personal experiences, and supported by current research. Essays must contain a minimum of two current research references. All references and any quotations and copyrighted material used in the essay must be identified properly, using either MLA or APA format. Failure to identify non-original material will result in disqualification.
- Each essay must reflect the contestant’s own writing and original thinking.
- Essays must be typed and double-spaced, using 12 point Arial font, and one inch margins.
- Essays must contain at least 800 words but no more than 1600 words. The Microsoft “word count” tool should be used for calculating number of words. **Word count should not include the title or reference pages.**
- Each page of the essay must be numbered starting with the first page of the essay (not the title page). The numbers must be centered at the bottom of each page.
- **The Center of Excellence Essay Checklist must be submitted electronically with the essay.**
- **The essay must be submitted by email to COE@fmarion.edu as a Microsoft WORD attachment.** Participants must type Center of Excellence Essay Contest and her/his name in the subject line of the email.
- **The electronic essay must be submitted and received by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 17, 2017.**
- The decision of the contest judges is final, and no higher appeals will be recognized.

Section V – Judging and Timing

- Essays that do not meet all stated criteria will be disqualified. No exceptions will be considered.
- Judging will be completed by a panel of qualified judges that may include FMU Faculty, Center of Excellence staff and professional educators from the Pee Dee region.
- In an effort to conceal the identity of each participant, each entry will be assigned a number by a Center of Excellence contest staff person. The assigned number will be placed on the title page and first page of the essay. The title page will then be detached and retained by a Center of Excellence Essay Contest staff person. The judges will be given the essay bearing only the assigned number.
- Judges will not discuss or compare essays being judged.

Section VI – Scoring of Essays

Essays will be scored in six areas:

- **Content Development**
The essay reflects thorough understanding of the essay topic
- **Organization**
*Argument follows a logical and easily understood progression
Corroborating evidence supports the essay's main points*
- **Research**
The contestant's thoughts are woven within current research findings to proficiently elucidate connections
- **Development**
Concepts are clearly developed through critical analysis
- **Style/Creativity**
*Diverse resources(i.e. interviews) are used
Creative angles on the issue are used*
- **Mechanics**
Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and concise language are used throughout

Essay Contest Contact:

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Essay Contest Rubric

Contestant Essay Number _____

Performance Areas	Excellent 4pts.	Good 3pts.	Acceptable 2pts.	Needs Improvement 1pt.
Content/Development	Essay has a specific central idea that is clearly stated in the opening paragraph; appropriate, concrete details support the central idea and show originality and focus.	Central idea is vague, somewhat sketchy, and non-supportive to the topic; lacks focus.	Unable to find specific supporting details; more than 4 errors in information.	Essay has no central idea or supporting details.
Organization	Essay is logically organized and well-structured displaying a beginning, a body, and a conclusion. Critical thinking skills are evident.	Essay somewhat digresses from the central idea; ideas do not logically follow each other.	Central point and flow of essay is lost; lacks organization and continuity.	Ideas are unorganized and vague; no particular flow was followed.
Research	Required research is cited; introduced personal ideas to enhance essay cohesiveness.	Some required research of the topic was done but was inconclusive with central idea, vocabulary, and word choices.	Little to no gathering of information on the topic; did not cite information.	No research on the topic was done.
Style/Creativity	Writing is smooth, coherent, and consistent with central idea. Sentences are strong and expressive with varied structure. Diction is consistent and words are well chosen. Creative narrative is used to convey examples and the central idea.	Sentences are varied and inconsistent with central idea, vocabulary and word choices. Creative narrative is sometimes used to convey examples and the central idea.	Lacks creativity and focus. Unrelated word choice to central idea. Diction is inconsistent.	Writing is confusing, hard to follow. Contains fragments and/or run-on sentences. Inappropriate diction.
Mechanics	Written work has no errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	Written work is relatively free of errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (1-2 errors).	Written work has several errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization (3-4 errors).	Written work has serious and persistent errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.

Points x 5= _____

Total Score: _____ / 100

Note: To be considered for a first or second place award, a contestant's essay must score a minimum of 90 points.

Center of Excellence Essay Contest Checklist

(Please check ✓ all items as they are completed)

	Essay has a proper title page which includes the following:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Title (“Important Work: Teaching Children of Poverty” <u>or</u> “Why poverty matters in school and in life”)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Author’s Full Name (<i>appears only on the title page</i>)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Status (P-12 Teacher, Graduate or Undergraduate Student)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mailing Address
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Phone number
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">E-mail address
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Word count
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Name of school
	The title of the essay also appears on the top of the first page of the essay text.
	Essay contains a minimum of two current research references.
	All references and any quotations and copyrighted material used in the essay are identified properly, using either MLA or APA format.
	Essay is double-spaced, using 12 point Arial font, and one inch margins.
	Essay contains at least 800 words but no more than 1600 words.
	The Microsoft “word count” tool is used for calculating number of words.
	Word count does not include the title or reference pages.
	Each page of the essay is numbered starting with the first page of the essay (not the title page). The numbers are centered at the bottom of each page.
	The essay is submitted by email to COE@fmarion.edu as a Microsoft WORD attachment.
	Center of Excellence Essay Contest and your name appear in the subject line of the email.
	The electronic essay is submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 17, 2017.

Contest Rule:

The Center of Excellence Essay Contest Checklist must be submitted electronically with the essay.