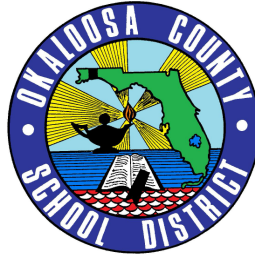


# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OKALOOSA COUNTY

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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### Okaloosa County Students Earn Top Honors in America 250 History Writing Contest

The Okaloosa County School District is proud to announce that two middle school students have earned top honors in the Plank Schlitt Middle School United States History Writing Contest, part of the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida's America 250 celebration commemorating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This year's contest invited students to explore the enduring significance of the Declaration of Independence and reflect on its impact on life in the United States today. The competition is named in honor of two longtime Okaloosa County United States History teachers who continued supporting the Heritage Museum after retiring from Niceville High School. Lilly Lopez of Destin Middle School earned first place, and Aisha Ramirez of Pryor Middle School earned second place, demonstrating exceptional writing, historical understanding, and creativity.

"We are incredibly proud of Lilly and Aisha for this outstanding achievement," said Superintendent Marcus Chambers. Their hard work, thoughtful writing, and passion for history reflect the excellence we see in our students across Okaloosa County. These young ladies represented their schools and our district exceptionally well." Destin Middle School Principal Mandy Lopez shared both professional and personal pride in Lilly's accomplishment. "At DMS, we are proud to develop students who can think critically, write with purpose, and communicate their ideas effectively. Lilly's accomplishment reflects the strong work happening in our classrooms each day and the dedication of our teachers who continue to challenge and support student learning. And while I'm incredibly proud as principal, it is a little more special that I also get to be her mom." Pryor Middle School Principal Jason McClelland also praised Aisha's achievement. "Aisha's dedication and creativity demonstrate the bright future ahead for our students. We are proud of her for using her voice and talents to honor our nation's history."

Winning essays will be featured in the Heritage Museum's "Celebrate America 250! The Revolution" exhibit on July 4 at 11:00 a.m., giving the community an opportunity to view the students' work as part of the museum's Independence Day celebration. The Okaloosa County School District extends its congratulations to Lilly Lopez and Aisha Ramirez and thanks the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida for providing meaningful opportunities for students to engage with American history.



(From Left to Right): Lilly Lopez, Destin Middle School, and Aisha Ramirez, Pryor Middle School, pictured with representatives from the Okaloosa County School District and the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida)

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