



August 23, 2017

Dear Local Official,

Congratulations! Your community is one of 90 communities to participate in the MMA's Statewide 8th Grade Essay Contest and 3rd Grade Poster Contest. We appreciate your signed commitment to these contests.

Earlier this week the principal of each grade-level school in your community was sent essay contest materials to distribute to the 3rd and 8th grade teachers. We hope by now those materials have been distributed to the appropriate teachers.

Enclosed are the contest materials. **You can also find these materials at www.mma.org.** Below are some suggestions to help promote the contest in your community.

- Publicize the contest by working with your superintendent, principals and teachers. Alert the PTA, school committee, and community groups.
- Promote the contest on your community's website.
- Visit the 3rd and 8th grade classrooms in your school district to help them understand the role of local government. You can talk about community service, local government's commitment to citizens and the importance of good leadership. A visit from public leaders has a profound impact on the quality of information students and teachers possess about local government.
- Announce the community's participation in the essay contest to local newspapers to raise awareness of the important services local government provides to its citizens. Enclosed, please find a sample press release.

We are excited by the opportunity to engage students to think creatively about local government and civic leadership. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Contest Coordinators Vanessa Calaban or Devon Williams at 617-426-7272. We appreciate your efforts to make the MMA's 8th Grade Essay Contest and 3rd Grade Poster Contest a great success. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Beckwith
Executive Director & CEO
Massachusetts Municipal Association

Melvin Kleckner
President
Massachusetts Municipal Association

*P.S. Don't forget to remind the kids to go to www.mma.org for contest materials.
The contest deadline is November 10!*

Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact: *(name of local official and phone number)*

(Name of city/town) TO PARTICIPATE IN STATEWIDE ESSAY & POSTER CONTESTS

(Name of city/town) was recently chosen by the Massachusetts Municipal Association as one of over 100 communities to participate in its annual statewide contests for third and eighth grade students attending public school. The eighth-graders will participate in an essay contest designed to raise public awareness and promote the qualities of good local government. Third-graders will participate in a poster contest to encourage future Massachusetts leaders to take an active interest in their community's activities.

(Name of city/town)'s eighth-graders are asked to share their hometown visions by choosing a political or community issue affecting young people and deciding what they would do to bring positive change to the issue. Third-grade students are asked to design a poster highlighting the municipal service of their choice.

"We are truly excited by this opportunity to learn how our young people would lead our community," said *(name of local official and title)*. "We are pleased to be partnering with our schools to encourage our students to take part and learn more about what local government does every day to make our community a better place."

"We applaud the leaders and students of *(name of city/town)* for participating in the essay and poster contests. We hope this process encourages students to think creatively about local government and civic leadership," said Geoff Beckwith, MMA Executive Director and CEO. "In just a decade, our third-graders will be voting, and our eighth-graders will be out of college and perhaps running for public office themselves. Our goal is to get them thinking about the importance, value and impact of local government as early as possible," he said.

Winning posters and essays will be recognized during the MMA's Annual Meeting & Trade Show in Boston on January 19-20. The first place winner of the essay contest will receive a \$500 cash prize and be invited to read their essay at the opening dinner.

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Quick Tips

Students like to be involved, not lectured to.

Ask for their ideas on real issues in the community.

Control the discussion by:

- **Limiting the topic**
- **Explain boundaries clearly before beginning**
- **Listen respectfully and honor their opinions while expressing yours**
- **Be yourself and relax; students respond best to "real" people**

Adapted from "Back to the Classroom" by the North Carolina City and County Management Association

Tips for speaking with older students

- Assess the students' familiarity with your subject by checking with the teacher to find out what the students have already covered in class. Don't bore them by dwelling on basic information they already know, or talk over their heads with technical information they're not ready to absorb.
- Honor the time limit given by the teacher, even if you have to narrow the focus of your presentation.
- Bring displays and handouts that illustrate your comments.
- Make your message personal for students, something they can relate to. Ask them questions to help them put the information into perspective. If possible, relate it to something going on in their community.
- Use examples from the real world to make your point. List some *real* citizen complaints, explain how the alignment of a *real* road was selected, detail the real concerns of a business relocating to your community.
- Try not to let one or two students dominate the discussion. Ask "Does someone else have an answer (or question)?"
- Give the students your address so they can contact you if they have a concern or need. Bring business cards or write the information on the board at the end of your presentation.
- Have fun! Enjoy yourself! Let the students see that local government officials are real people, and not just names in the newspaper.

Quick Tips

**Be calm and don't panic!
Students like to be
involved, not lectured to.**

**The younger the students
the more movement and
activities are needed.**

**Discuss activity ideas with
the teacher before the visit
and enlist his/her help in
control and
implementation.**

**Get them involved in the
visit by:**

- **Having them touch
or hold objects that
are part of your visit**
- **Have students play
roles in the activities
you are speaking
about**

**Be yourself and relax;
students respond best to
"real" people**

*Adapted from "Back to the
Classroom" by the North
Carolina City and County
Management Association*

Tips for speaking with younger students

- Keep in mind the age and experience of the students and try not to talk "above their heads." It's a good idea to ask the teacher what the students have already learned about the subject.
- Honor the time limit given by the teacher. He or she knows the length of the students' attention span.
- Bring items the students can see and touch, especially when meeting with very young children. Good attention *grabbers* include hats, gavels, flags, library cards, street signs, traffic cones, and other objects that relate to municipal government.
- Take a memento to hand out to each of the students (at the end of your presentation) so they will remember your visit to school that day. The memento may remind them to talk to their parents about what they learned from you. Pencils, buttons, stickers, pamphlets, etc. are appropriate.
- Make your message personal for students, something they can relate to. Ask them questions about their parents or themselves that relate to your topic.
- When you ask questions, say, "Raise your hand . . ." so the students will not all start talking and shouting at once. And it is okay to say, "I think I will wait until it is quiet before I go on (or before I call on someone)." Then be *sure to wait* for quiet, so the students will know you expect them to listen to you and to their classmates.
- Try not to let one or two students dominate the discussion. Say "I think I will call on someone who hasn't had a turn (or is sitting quietly, or is remembering to raise his or her hand)."
- Give the students your address so they can contact you if they have a concern or need. Write it on the board at the end of your presentation.
- Have fun! Enjoy yourself! Children will usually follow suit.