



# PitchIt! Florida

## The News Literacy Student Essay Contest

April 2023

Student voice is a catalyst for positive change in schools and communities. For this reason, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, in partnership with the News Literacy Project, is hosting a writing contest to empower students to be civically informed and engaged.

### Learning Task and Essay Topic

News literacy is the ability to determine the credibility of news and other content. Think about a widely reported current event and how news literacy skills could have been applied.

Now, write a 500-1000 word article about a local, national or international story where having news literacy skills would have prevented misinformation from being spread. Use reputable sources to support your claim. Articles will be judged by a panel of journalists for accuracy, readability and creativity. Choose a prompt from the list.

### Eligibility

Only students in grades 6-8, and 9-12 may participate with the support from a teacher.

**EXTENDED CONTEST DEADLINE**  
Monday, April 24,  
5 p.m. ET

### To Enter

Schools/teachers should submit their top five winning essays per grade with cover letter via email to:

Monica Valdes, Miami news literacy ambassador,  
[mdvaldes@dadeschools.net](mailto:mdvaldes@dadeschools.net)

### Prompts

- The First Amendment has five freedoms, and in many ways they are dependent on one another. Explain how other freedoms of the First Amendment are required to protect the freedom of the press.
- What steps should someone take to fact-check false statements by a well-known figure and what problems might arise as a result?
- People have responsibilities – things that they should do but are not required to by law. Why would providing reliable information be a responsibility?
- Imagine you heard a rumor about public figure, but you're not sure if it is true or not. What are the potential consequences if you share it online?



### AWARDS

for each grade band 6-8, and 9-12

#### GRAND PRIZE

\$100 gift card (teacher and student)

#### FIRST PLACE

\$75 gift card (teacher and student)

#### SECOND PLACE

\$50 gift card (teacher and student)

#### THIRD PLACE

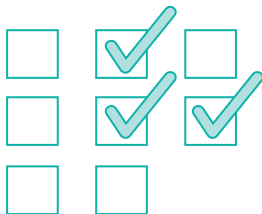
\$25 gift card (teacher and student)



Finalists will participate in the PitchIt! Grand Prize event on Zoom on May 25, where they will share their essays and receive feedback from the journalists. The winners will be chosen at this time.

## Criteria

- Essays must be the original, unpublished work of one student.
- Essays must be 500-1000 words, clearly addressing one of the prompts.
- All essays must have a title.
- Proper citation of sources is required.
- Only three essays from each grade may be submitted per school.
- Essays must be proofread and should follow the rules for standard English (grammar, punctuation, mechanics) in writing.
- A cover page **MUST** be included with the following information: student name, student ID, grade level, student's complete address, best phone number for student, school's name, principal's name, teacher's name, best phone number and email address for teacher and title of essay.
- Entries must be submitted via email to Monica Valdes, Florida news literacy ambassador, [mdvaldes@dadeschools.net](mailto:mdvaldes@dadeschools.net).
- Finalists must be able to virtually participate in the PitchIt! Grand Prize event **in May (TBA)**.



Consult the [complete contest rules](#) and student tips before entering.

## Teaching and Learning Goals

- Teachers have an authentic and engaging writing assignment that amplifies student voices and explores issues aligned to district curricula, standards and required topics, such as the First Amendment.
- Students analyze different types of misinformation and show the ability to think critically about what is and is not verifiable information.
- Students apply their news and media literacy skills to solve the misinformation problem.
- Finalists receive real-time feedback from journalists in the field who report on these issues every day.

### Process

**Step 1.** Teacher introduces the writing assignment to students and the process by which the top essays will advance. News literacy topics are explored with students as they relate to the curriculum.

Teachers can explore the free educator resources on [NewsLitNation®](#) or the [Checkology®](#) virtual classroom on topics like the First Amendment. More resources are at the M-DCPS library, which includes access to The New York Times, articles on [ProQuest](#) or any other available sources.

**Step 2.** Students work with their teacher to select a news article/topic, picking one of the prompts below to follow in writing the essay.

**Step 3.** Teachers encourage students to review the article formatting requirements before submitting their essays.

**Step 4.** Teachers select up to five student essays per grade, per school, and submit.

**Step 5.** An NLP ambassador selects six essays per grade band (6-8 and 9-12) to advance to the finalist stage.

**Step 6.** All finalists pitch their stories to a panel of journalists during the PitchIt! Grand Prize event on Zoom and receive personalized feedback and a certificate. Panelists choose the Grand Prize winners, who receive prizes awarded during the event.

