



CABE Strong: United for Equity & Empowered by Our Cultures and Multiplicity of Languages
MARCH 4 – 7, 2026 • SAN FRANCISCO MARRIOTT MARQUIS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

CABE 2026 Student Essay Writing Guidelines

The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) is proud to announce the Student Writing Awards for the CABE 2026 Annual Conference. This year's theme celebrates the power of being bilingual and biliterate, not only in building relationships today but also in preparing for future careers, leadership, and making a difference in the world.

Theme: "Bilingualism Opens Doors—Now and For The Future"

Grades TK-2 Prompt:

How does speaking more than one language help you make new friends and talk with family members? Why do you think learning more than one language will help you when you grow up? Tell a story or give an example that shows how being bilingual helps you today and how it might help you in your future job or travels.

Grades 3-5 Prompt:

How has being bilingual and bicultural helped you connect with people from different places and backgrounds? What does it feel like to speak more than one language at school, at home, or in your community? Describe how your ability to speak another language will help you in the future as a leader, helper, worker, or traveler.

Grades 6-8 Prompt:

In what ways has becoming bilingual and bicultural helped you understand yourself and others more deeply? How have your language and cultural skills helped you build relationships at school or in your community? Explain how your bilingual voice will prepare you to succeed in future careers and to connect across cultures locally, nationally, or globally.

Grades 9-12 Prompt:

Reflect on your journey as a bilingual, bicultural person. How have your linguistic and cultural assets shaped your identity, expanded your worldview, and deepened your respect for others? Explain how being bilingual will open doors for you in your future career, leadership, and participation in global society.

Writing Approach and Process

Students are encouraged to approach their writing in an imaginative and meaningful manner, expressing themselves in English and another language. Teachers can assist students with focusing on the theme by exploring how their bilingual/biliteracy skills will enhance their opportunities for learning, career, leadership, self-esteem, as well as the development of their cultural legacy in the future. The use of the writing process is encouraged (prewriting, sharing, revising, editing, and publishing) to develop a meaningful and expressive composition. Each composition should focus on the theme and demonstrate final editing quality.

Eligibility Criteria & Recognition

- The student must be a California resident.
- All students will receive a participation certificate.
- The selection committee will choose winners for each of the four grade-level categories based on the following:
 - » **Content:** How well does the writing express the theme
 - » **Language:** Use of authentic, expressive, and thoughtful language
 - » **Genre:** Creative use of form (essay, poetry, song, biography, short story, etc.)
- Students who have received the CABA Student Writing Award within the last three years are ineligible to apply.

Submission Deadline

All entries must be received via online application by **December 5, 2025, at 11:59 PM (Pacific Time)** including all required documents. *Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.*

Submission Requirements

- Compositions should be typed, double-spaced, and a maximum of 750 words.
- Compositions should be submitted in two languages —English and the student's other language.
- Students must be bilingual/biliterate or be learning another language.
- Submissions must include a head-and-shoulders photo with high resolution (at least 300 dpi) .

Award Details

- One winner will be selected in each grade-level category.
- Winners will be invited to read aloud their essay, in one language, during the CABA 2026 Annual Conference on March 4-7, 2026, in San Francisco, CA.
- Each winner will receive four banquet tickets:
 - » One (1) for the student
 - » Two (2) for a parent(s) or guardian(s)
 - » One (1) for the classroom teacher

Award Amounts by Grade Level

- TK–2: \$200
- 3–5: \$300
- 6– 8: \$500
- 9–12: \$1,000

Disqualification Criteria

Submissions will be disqualified for any of the following reasons:

- The student received the CABA Student Writing Award within the past three years.
- The submission is late.
- The writing is not the original work of the student.
- The writing includes inappropriate language or content that violates school policy.
- The submission does not meet the formatting requirements.
- The writing exceeds 750 words.