

Media Contact:

Marty Berkowitz
614-644-8608 (desk)
614-314-8102 (mobile)
Marty.Berkowitz@das.ohio.gov

Winners named at statewide MLK oratorical contest

COLUMBUS (April 27, 2018) — Ohio students inspired by the lessons and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. presented original speeches on his teachings during the 19th Annual Statewide MLK Oratorical Contest held today in Columbus.

Twenty-nine regional contest winners from grades kindergarten through 12 spoke before judges and others at the King Arts Complex.

Speakers were judged on performance, originality and composition.

“The passion for justice eloquently voiced by these young Ohio voices teaches us that the timeless words and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. still ring true today, 50 years after his passing. Dr. King would be proud to see and hear his dream of nonviolent change echoed by the words of these students,” said Rev. Joel L. King, vice chair of the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, sponsor of the contest, and a first cousin to Dr. King.

The following speakers placed in the top of their respective divisions:

- **Senior Division (grades nine through 12)** First place – Quinica Garrett, 17, 11th-grade, St. Martin DePorres High School, Cleveland. Runners-up – Demeshia Darmond, 16, 11th grade, St. Martin DePorres High School, Cleveland; and Bre’Anna Walker, 16, 10th-grade, Columbus Alternative High School, Columbus.
- **Junior Division (grades six through eight)** First place – Mackenzie Lewis, 11, sixth-grade, St. Catharine School, Columbus. Runners-up – Alexis Cunningham, 12, seventh-grade, Columbus Academy, Westerville; and Amaira Cochran, 12, sixth-grade, Charity Adams Earley Girls Academy, Dayton.
- **Intermediate Division (grades three through five)**– Adonia Balqis, 9, fourth-grade, Clinton Elementary School, Columbus; Runners-up – Nathan Edwards, 10, fifth-grade, Emmanuel Christian Academy, Akron; and Elena Earley, 9, fourth-grade, Clinton Elementary School, Columbus.
- **Primary Division (grades kindergarten through two)** First place – Jackson Edwards, 7, second-grade, Emmanuel Christian Academy, Akron. Runners-up – Kaia Pax Lee, 8, second-grade, Clinton Elementary School, Columbus; and Zavier Earley, 6, kindergarten, Clinton Elementary School, Columbus.

First-place finishers are invited to speak at the 2019 Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration on Jan. 17, 2019, in downtown Columbus.

The celebration also is sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission. The commission is housed in the Equal Opportunity Division of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services.