



2025-26

ESSAY CONTEST



ABOUT THE CONTEST

In October, West Virginia State Treasurer Larry Pack will kick off the 19th annual When I Grow Up Essay Contest. Sponsored by the SMART529 college savings program, the essay contest is a highly successful initiative to encourage West Virginia students in grades K-5 to dream about their future, award them for doing so and educate them on the importance of higher education.

YOUR STUDENT COULD WIN UP TO \$5,000 FOR COLLEGE!

Contest entry forms and rules will be mailed to all West Virginia schools with K-5 students. Students simply write a 200 word or less essay that begins "When I Grow Up, I want to be..."

Regional winners will be selected from five regions by a panel of judges. Each of the five regions will have one winner from each of three grade levels: Kindergarten – 1st; 2nd – 3rd; and 4th – 5th. Each regional winner is awarded \$500 in a SMART529 College Savings account. Each student winner's school will receive a \$500 cash prize. The fifteen regional winners are entered into a random grand prize drawing for an additional \$4,500 in a SMART529 College Savings account.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to help younger children as needed. (Students can include a drawing/picture if they desire.) Student must have parent's permission to enter.

TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND LIBRARIANS CAN WIN UP TO \$2,500!

Teachers, counselors and librarians can enter the contest by responding to the essay question: How have you/will you use the SMART529 When I Grow Up Essay Contest to emphasize the importance of higher education to your students? Answers must be 500 words or less.

Teacher contest prize is \$2,500 cash. See official rules and enter at SMART529.com/teacherentry.

SAME CONTEST. NEW TIMELINE.

OCTOBER 6, 2025

Student and teacher entry forms mailed to schools this week.



DECEMBER 12, 2025

Student and teacher essay contest deadlines.

EARLY FEBRUARY 2026

Entries narrowed and sent to judges.

LATE FEBRUARY 2026

Winners notified.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Amy Hamilton, WV Treasurer's Office:
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A PROGRAM OF THE
WEST VIRGINIA STATE
TREASURER'S OFFICE