



NEWS RELEASE

Utah State Board of Education

250 EAST 500 SOUTH P.O. BOX 144200 SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84114-4200
www.schools.utah.gov

May 4, 2026

For Immediate Release

Contact: Ryan Bartlett, director of communications

605-201-7950 · ryan.bartlett@schools.utah.gov

Utah State Board of Education Recognizes 2026 “Do the Write Thing” Finalists

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) hosted the 26th annual “Do the Write Thing” (DtWT) luncheon in Salt Lake City last Friday. The ceremony celebrated the voices of middle school students from across the state who are utilizing the power of the written word to take a stand against youth violence.

Andre Ramos of Roy Junior High was named Utah’s distinguished finalist and will serve as the 2026 “Ambassador for Peace.” As Utah’s top honoree, Andre will represent the state at the National Recognition Ceremony in Washington, D.C., this summer. During the trip, he will meet with members of Utah’s congressional delegation and attend a national reception. In a permanent tribute to his contribution, Andre’s essay will be published in a book housed in the Library of Congress.

Malachi Murrah and Adele Noorda of Roy Junior High, and Amanada Mariano of Summit Academy Independence were recognized as runners-up for their outstanding essays. Each runner-up received a \$400 scholarship in recognition of their work.

Twenty additional students were named state finalists, each receiving a \$300 scholarship.

- Miranda Austin, Mount Nebo Middle School
- Matthew Bakker, Mount Nebo Middle School
- Leah Batchelor, Summit Academy Independence
- Brooklyn Billman, Fort Herriman Middle School
- Miles Bohorquez, Summit Academy Independence
- Natalaine Burnett, Lehi Junior High
- Annabelle Cox, Bennion Junior High
- Eliza Johnson, Diamond Fork Middle School

- Acelynn Louangsithideth, Freedom Preparatory Academy
- Brielle McOmie, Clarke N. Johnsen Junior High School
- Brooklyn Mills, South Ogden Jr. High
- Olivia Mutchler, Butler Middle School
- Leo Nugent, Butler Middle School
- Maaheen Osman, Summit Academy Draper
- Jack (John) Parry, Fort Herriman Middle School
- Tristan Penrod, Sand Ridge Jr. High
- Mayreen Pinto, Sand Ridge Jr. High
- Noah Ransom, Summit Academy Draper
- Quinn Ryskamp, Diamond Fork Middle School
- Harper Spencer, Roy Jr. High

Do the Write Thing is a program that reinforces a sense of community and makes students feel safe and heard. At the beginning of an academic year, educators facilitate middle school students in alleviating violence in their communities through classroom discussion and introspection, asking students three important questions:

- What are the causes of youth violence?
- How has violence affected your life?
- What can you do to reduce youth violence?

This year, nearly 2,000 students participated in these classroom dialogues. From those discussions, more than 1,200 students moved forward to prepare written entries, with 261 final submissions sent to the state level for review.

“The ‘Do the Write Thing’ challenge proves that our students have the insight and the courage to lead the way toward a safer future,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Molly Hart. “By sharing their experiences and proposing solutions, they demonstrate the leadership and empathy we strive to cultivate in every Utah classroom.”

Sponsored by the USBE Prevention team in collaboration with the National Campaign to Stop Violence, DtWT invites 7th and 8th-grade students to reflect on how youth violence affects their daily lives and to propose actionable solutions for prevention. The initiative encourages a culture of personal responsibility and empowers youth to create safer, more supportive school environments.

For more information on the program or to read the [student essays](#), please visit the [Do the Write Thing Challenge](#).

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