



ZPS Scholarship & Awards Essay Contest

Theme: Leadership, Community, and Service in Action

Submission Deadline: March 14, 2026

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The Zeta Pi Sigma Alumnae Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, invites elementary, middle, and high school students to participate in an essay contest that celebrates the organization's core principles of leadership, community uplift, and service. This contest encourages students to reflect on their own experiences and aspirations as they consider how individuals can positively impact their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

Through age-appropriate prompts, students will explore what it means to lead with integrity, serve others with purpose, and contribute to the collective good. Essays should highlight personal stories, role models, or community experiences that demonstrate responsibility, compassion, and a commitment to making a difference.

Elementary School (Grades 4th & 5th)

Focus: Understanding Service and Helping Others

Students are encouraged to write about a time they helped someone, worked together with others, or saw kindness and leadership in action. Essays may include stories about helping at home, school, or in the community, and should reflect what it means to be a good helper and community member.

Guiding ideas:

- What does helping others look like to you?
- Who is someone you think is a leader, and why?
- How can kids make their community a better place?

Middle School (Grades 6–8)

Focus: Growing as a Leader and Serving the Community

Students will reflect on leadership as responsibility and service. Essays may describe personal leadership experiences, participation in community or school activities, or how young people can contribute to positive change.

Guiding ideas:

- What does leadership mean beyond being "in charge"?
- How have you served your school or community?
- Why is service important for building strong communities?

High School (Grades 9–12)

Focus: Leadership, Service, and Community Impact

High school students are invited to write thoughtfully about leadership as action rooted in service. Essays should demonstrate reflection, purpose, and vision, connecting personal experiences to broader community needs and future goals.

Guiding ideas:

- How do leadership and service work together to create change?
- Describe a time you led or served in a meaningful way.
- How do you see yourself contributing to your community now and in the future?

Purpose of the Contest

This essay contest seeks to uplift student voices while reinforcing the values of Sigma Gamma Rho: educational excellence, leadership development, and community service. Through reflection and storytelling, students are encouraged to see themselves as capable leaders and active contributors to their communities.

Submission Guidelines

Eligibility:

- Open to students in elementary, middle, and high school
- Students must attend a public, private, or charter school within the designated service area (North Carolina)

Format Requirements:

- Typed 1-2 page essays preferred
- Standard font (12-point), double-spaced
- Student name, grade level, and school name on the cover page only

Submission Method:

Essays must be submitted electronically (PDF or Word).

Deadline:

All essays must be submitted by March 14, 2026 11:59 PM.

Awards:

Awards will be given for each grade band

Elementary School (\$75)

Middle School(\$150)

High School (\$300)

All winners will receive certificates of recognition in person at our Youth Symposium on March 28, 2026 and our Pearls and Rubies Banquet on April 18, 2026.

Judging:

- Essays will be reviewed by the Sigma Gamma Rho Scholarship and Awards Committee
- Winners will be selected based on rubric scores and grade-level criteria