



National Patriotic School of the Year Contest

The Catholic War Veterans are sponsoring a National Contest to determine the “National Patriotic School of the Year” through our various Posts. Winning schools will be chosen based upon the number of effective programs/events that they sponsor prior to May 2. Below, you will find a list of ideas that you may consider but you are by no means limited to these items. The theme of each program must clearly relate to patriotism and be instructive in nature to the students. If you choose a program not listed below, please provide as much detail as possible so that a proper assessment can be made and allow us to consider placing it specifically in next year’s program. To encourage school wide participation, you may consider making the effort competitive among the grade levels. The awards (1st, 2nd and 3rd) are school awards and will include a certificate and a monetary prize. Each program may be large, small, short or long in duration and will count toward the total participation. More extensive programs will get greater weighting. Catholic War Veteran’s Posts will submit the best program from their participating schools to their Department who will forward their top 3 to the National 3rd Vice Commander for selection of the best in the Nation.

Christianbook.com and other educational resource outlets offer activity books and guides to assist in patriotic activities for a modest price. Posts and Teachers should investigate to determine if any of these educational aids would be helpful.

1. The following patriotic holidays occur within the contest timeframe and provide excellent opportunities for patriotic events:
 - a. Constitution Day is celebrated on September 17th, memorializing the date that the Constitution was signed in 1787. Previously known as "Citizenship Day", it became an official federal holiday called "Constitution Day" in 2004. On this day, students learn about the constitution, the rights it ensures, and related issues in American government and history.
 - b. The Tuesday following the first Monday of November is Election Day, when ballots are cast for elected officials. The first presidential election to occur simultaneously on this day took place in 1848, and the House of Representatives election was moved to take place on the same date in 1872. Voting that takes place on the same date throughout the country prevents earlier elections from affecting later ones.
 - c. Veterans Day is celebrated on November 11th and commemorates all veterans of the US military. A federal holiday, it occurs on November 11th to memorialize the Armistice which ended World War I on that date in 1918. It was proclaimed a holiday by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954.

- d. December 15th is Bill of Rights Day, celebrating the addition of the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution on that day in 1791. This holiday celebrates the freedoms and rights that the Bills of Rights preserve for Americans. In 1941, on the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the date a federal holiday.
 - e. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day takes place on third Monday of January each year, near the time of Dr. King's birthday on January 15th. It commemorates the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a reverend and civil rights activist who lead the African-American civil rights movement in the United States. He is best known for his inspirational "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered at the March on Washington in 1963. His birthday was established as a national holiday in 1986, but was not celebrated in all 50 states until 2000.
 - f. Washington's Birthday was established as a federal holiday in 1885. It celebrates the life and contributions of George Washington, first president of the United States and general of the American Revolution. In some states, the holiday is expanded to also commemorate President Abraham Lincoln's birthday, and is thus referred to as "President's Day". It occurs on the third Monday of February, near both presidents' birthdays.
 - g. Although June 14th is Flag Day, commemorating the official adoption of the US flag by the Second Continental Congress in 1777, and falls outside of the contest timeframe you are encouraged to have your own Flag Day so that students may truly understand the importance. It celebrates the history and symbolic meaning of the American flag, and is also an opportunity to remember those who fight to protect it and the nation for which it stands. Although it has been celebrated since the Civil War, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that it would be celebrated on June 14th in 1916. However, it is not officially a federal holiday, and only Pennsylvania has adopted it as a state holiday.
 - h. Other potential days include:
 - i. Air Force Birthday on September 18th
 - ii. Navy Birthday on October 13th
 - iii. Marine Corps Day on November 10th
 - iv. National Guard Day on December 13th
 - v. Other US Armed Forces Days fall outside the contest dates
2. Invite Military Active Duty Persons and Veterans to speak at classrooms at every opportunity (Veteran's Day, Career Day, Catholic School's Week, etc.).
 3. Write letters to deployed servicemen and servicewomen particularly at special times like Christmas and Easter when they miss their families even more.
 4. Make Valentine's Day cards and send them to the local VA hospital for distribution to the patients.
 5. Organize a field trip to a local VA hospital, military facility, National Guard Armory, Reserve Unit, National Cemetery or Memorial Park.
 6. Conduct a weekend veteran's collection of toiletries, socks, underwear or money at your church for the nearest Veteran's Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS) group. These items/funds will go to support general patient needs at a VA hospital.
 7. Choose a whole school assembly to share a patriotic teaching moment. Have the local CWV Post or a color guard perform for the school.
 8. Have students collect worn out flags and arrange a flag disposal ceremony at your school. Local Veteran's organizations will assist.
 9. Participate in all of the CWV Youth contests (posters and essays)

I am sure that you can think of many other programs/events to teach students about patriotism. A recent survey showed that the youth of today are sadly ignorant of basic civics. Consider finding out what is on the Citizenship Examination that people entering our country must pass to become a citizen and see if it offers any teaching opportunities.
Good Luck!

Note to Teachers regarding Patriotism:

Patriotism is defined as a devotion to one's country. It is the act of expressing, sharing and enjoying love and pride of this great country with a mission to foster better awareness among our citizens and to develop a more keen understanding by citizens of other countries.

Depending upon the grade level of your student, their ability to comprehend this varies. Choose topics and teaching moments that will make it real for them. Choose a patriotic person or persons, time period or event that may have meaning to them and allow them to express themselves in the best way they are able. You know your students and inspire them regularly. Encourage them to ask their parents about patriotism and discuss in class what they learn. Even a stick figure of a child saying thank you to a soldier or a drawing of the flag and what it means to them can be very powerful.

For a bit of inspiration even if you don't know him, put <http://www.redskelton.com/PLEDGE.htm> into your browser and listen to the great comedian Red Skelton speak of his inspirational teacher.

You and your student's parents are the tip of the spear. Our society's unfortunate direction away from prayer and patriotism can only be truly thwarted by teaching the next generation the importance of both.

I look forward to enjoying the fruits of your inspiration and your student's talent.

