

# MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

## PREPARE 2026 Art Showcase Guidelines

**This year's Conference Theme is: "School Safety: A Layered Approach."**

**The theme for your Showcase entry is: "Future Ready Schools."**

We want your imagination to lead the way!

This year's theme, "Future Ready Schools," invites young artists to dream big about what schools, culture, and security will look like in the future.

Use your artwork to depict futuristic classrooms, innovative safety tools, redesigned school spaces, new collaborative methods for students and teachers, or creative technologies that promote safety and support for everyone. You can also explore the evolution of human connection and how trusted adults help to shape strong school communities.

When creating your artwork, think about questions like:

- What do you think schools and school safety will look like in the future?
- What kinds of new tools or technologies help keep students connected, creative, and safe?
- Do school buildings look the same, or have they transformed into something new?
- How has technology changed how we move, learn, or communicate?
- What does a positive school culture look like in the future?
- Who are the trusted adults in future schools, and how do they support students?

Be bold, curious, and inventive as you show us what a Future Ready School looks like through your eyes.

**What to Do:** Create an 8.5" x 11" piece of art that represents what schools, culture, and security will look like in the future. Also, give your piece a name and write a brief, 25-word or less description of your piece to be included with your submission.

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All entries must be original, unpublished pieces of work that do not contain any logos, copyrighted imagery, or information (such as clipart). They cannot contain any human nudes, religious or political imagery, or symbols. Artwork must be created manually by hand, whether on physical paper or digitally. Photography (digital or analog) is not eligible. Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in your entry being disqualified.

Entries must be the work of the student submitting the entry. By submitting an entry, you are attesting that the piece submitted is the sole work of the student.

How do I submit my entry? When you are ready to submit your entry, complete the [entry form](#) on our website, upload your submission, and name/description of your piece. The [Parent/Guardian authorization](#) for submission is required for all entries.

Electronic submissions are encouraged; however, you can also mail your entry and forms to The Maryland Center for School Safety, Attn: Art Showcase Committee, 7125 Ambassador Road, Suite 130, Windsor Mill, MD 21244. All mailed entries must be received within seven (7) days of the due date to be displayed at the conference and entered into the Showcase. Please plan accordingly.

If you provide a picture of your entry, please ensure it is a high-resolution photograph that captures the essence of your art.

All entries will be displayed at the MCSS Annual School Safety Conference, PREPARE 2026, on July 22nd-23rd, 2026, and on the MCSS website following the conference.

Are there any material requirements? No, the student artists can create their art pieces from any materials they see fit to express themselves, from popsicle sticks to macaroni to oil paint. Digital art is also acceptable. The submitted artwork must be static, such as traditional paintings (on paper or digital) or manually created digital art, without the use of automated or AI technology. Note that photography entries will not be accepted.

Is there a size limit for my entry? Yes, entries cannot be larger than 8.5" x 11" in size; however, photographs can be 8" x 10" or resized to fit within 8.5" x 11" dimensions.

How many entries can I make? There is a limit of one entry per student. Only the first received entry will be considered if multiple entries are received.

Who is eligible to enter? All Maryland students in grades 3 through 12 who attend any Public, Non-Public, Private, or Homeschool. There will be three categories.

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Elementary School (3rd, 4th and 5th grade), Middle School (6th, 7th and 8th grade) and High School (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade).

Is anyone excluded from entering? No, as long as you meet the grade criteria and are a student at a Maryland school in any of the 24 jurisdictions (including Baltimore City), you are eligible to submit an entry.

What's the Contest Period? The contest will begin at 12:00 a.m. on December 1, 2025 and end at 11:59 p.m. on May 31, 2026.

Who will be judging my submission? The conference attendees will submit anonymous votes for each grade group. Attendees are only allowed to vote once for each Showcase grade group.

All MCSS staff members and Student Advocates for School Safety members are excluded from voting for any art pieces submitted to the Showcase.

What criteria will the judging be based upon?

- Level of creativity.
- How well the theme is represented in the piece submitted.
- Level of skill for your grade group.

When will I find out if I won? All votes will be tallied, and the winners will be announced on the last day of the conference, with notification by email following the conference.

How many winners will there be? There will be three winners in each Showcase grade group– first, second, and third place.

How will my art be used? All submissions will be showcased on the MCSS website and may be used in promotional materials and postings by MCSS. If this is the case, the artist will be properly identified with the piece. MCSS will also work with local organizations throughout the state to schedule exhibits throughout the year.

What are the Prizes?

- First Place Winners
  - Elementary School - TBD
  - Middle School - TBD
  - High School - TBD
- Second Place Winners
  - Elementary School - TBD
  - Middle School - TBD

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- High School - TBD
- Third Place Winners
  - Elementary School - TBD
  - Middle School - TBD
  - High School - TBD

MCSS reserves the right to add or substitute prizes at its discretion.