
The Special Artist Division of the National PTA Reflections® Program is optional at state and local levels. Please check with your State PTA regarding availability in your state of residence.

Student Eligibility:

The National PTA Special Artist Division is an option for students with a disability as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Generally, rules and guidelines within the Special Artists Division are intended to ensure accessibility to the National PTA Reflections® Program and are modeled after the guidelines outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Who qualifies as a disabled individual under the law?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines an individual with a disability as a person who:

- (1) Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of that person;
- (2) Has a record of such an impairment; or
- (3) Is regarded as having such an impairment.

Student Entry Process:

Students who identify as having a disability have two ways to enter the National PTA Reflections® Program.

- **Option 1. Enter in Traditional Grade Divisions:** Qualifying students follow all arts category rules, and may not receive assistance other than that which is allowed for all children, but do receive accommodation to submit Reflections entries in the grade division most closely aligned to their functional abilities. They are recognized and awarded prizes as part of the general student population without regard to special needs or challenges.
 - **Grade Divisions:** Regardless of age, students with special needs may enter the National PTA Reflections® Program in the grade division most closely aligned to their functional abilities. The divisions are as follows:
 - **Primary:** preschool – grade 2
 - **Intermediate:** grades 3 – 5
 - **Middle School:** grades 6 – 8
 - **High School:** grades 9 – 12
- **Option 2. Enter in Special Artist Division:** Qualifying students entering this non-graded division create their own artwork, but may receive non-artistic accommodation and assistance from an adult. At the national level, one Special Artist from across all arts categories will be selected to receive an Outstanding Interpretation Award. Up to five additional Special Artists may be selected to receive national Awards of Excellence.
 - **Parent or Guardian Signature:** If a student's artwork that is submitted locally is selected to move on to the next level of the National PTA Reflections Program, the student and family will complete and sign a student entry form. A parent or guardian signature will be required for all students entering the program in the Special Artist Division, regardless of the student's age.
 - **Judging Procedure and Awards:** At the national level, Special Artist entries will be judged by expert judges in each arts category. The top Special Artist entry from each of the six arts categories will then be reviewed by Very Special Arts (VSA). One Special Artist from across all arts categories will be selected to receive an Outstanding Interpretation Award and will be recognized at National PTA's Annual Convention. Up to five additional Special Artists may be selected to receive national Awards of Excellence.

Special Artist Accommodations and Guidelines:

Special Artists should follow the general rules and guidelines outlined in the Arts Category Student Rules specific to their submissions, modified only by accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The accommodation, in general, should be both specific and limited to the student's disability.

- **Allowable Accommodations:** Given the diverse range of physical and mental disabilities that exist, it would be impossible to outline specific accommodations for each and every disability, but the following provides a non-exhaustive list of allowable accommodations:
 - The Special Artist Division will not be divided by age or traditional school grade level
 - Use of adaptive technology is allowed
 - All submissions must be solely created by the Special Artist. However, a parent, teacher or other adult may assist the Special Artist with typing, holding a camera, etc.
- **Accommodations that are Not Allowed:** Individuals providing assistance to Special Artists may not, in any way, involve themselves in the actual artistic process by:
 - Personally selecting a title for artwork
 - Writing, editing or interpreting a student's artist statement, story, poetry, or script
 - Choreographing a dance, composing music or writing lyrics
 - Drawing, painting or personally creating a visual arts submission; choosing a camera angle, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If a child's disabilities are such that his or her needs are handled in a therapeutic off-site school or via home schooling, can the child participate in the National PTA Reflections Program?

A. All students must participate in the National PTA Reflections® Program through a local PTA/PTSA in good standing. Parent groups not affiliated with National PTA are not eligible to sponsor this program. It is the responsibility of the state and local PTA/PTSA to determine each student's eligibility in the National PTA Reflections® Program. A student may develop an entry in or outside of school.

Children who attend therapeutic or special needs schools, as well as students who are home-schooled, often remain assigned to a local "home" school. If their assigned "home" school PTA or PTSA program participates in Reflections, students assigned to but not attending these schools may submit Reflections entries through their local "home" school PTA or PTSA Reflections program.

Q. Can a student with special needs enter the Reflections Program as both a Special Artist and also in one of the traditional Grade Divisions?

A. No. A student can enter in more than one arts category, but may only enter in one grade division.

Q. What is VSA?

A. VSA, the international organization on arts and disability, was founded more than 35 years ago by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith to provide arts and education opportunities for people with disabilities and increase access to the arts for all. When founded in 1974, the organization was named the National Committee - Arts for the Handicapped. In 1985 the name changed to Very Special Arts, and in 2010 it became VSA. In 2011, VSA merged with the Kennedy Center's Office on Accessibility to become the Department of VSA and Accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Q. Do Special Artist rules and guidelines apply to students who are gifted and talented?

A. No, Special Artist rules and guidelines apply only to students with physical, cognitive and mental health disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).