

# American Dental Association Health Literacy Writing Contest for Third Year Dental Students

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American Dental Association  
Council on Advocacy for Access and Prevention

ADA American Dental Association®  
America's leading advocate for oral health

## Description

The American Dental Association (ADA) supports the premise that clear, accurate and effective communication between a patient and provider are necessary skills for effective dental practice and contributes to making patients better stewards of their own health. Providing educational opportunities for current and future dental professionals about health literacy including principles of good communication and plain language helps build these skills. To encourage student engagement, the ADA sponsored a health literacy essay contest for third-year dental students.

## Objectives

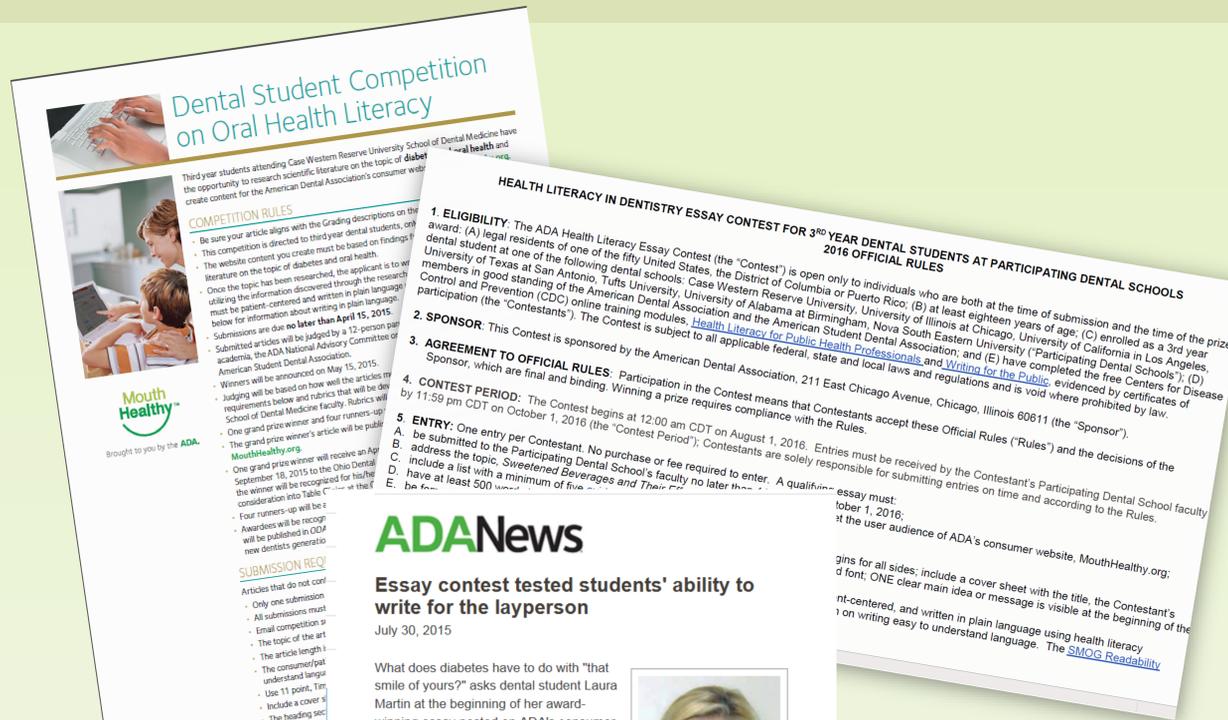
1. Increase student awareness about the importance of health literacy.
2. Provide third-year dental students the opportunity to research and write patient information on a specified topic, using plain language and health literacy principles.
3. Provide dental schools an opportunity to engage students in a health literacy learning opportunity.

## Outcomes/Impacts

Seven dental schools, from various geographic regions of the U.S participated in the pilot contest. Faculty from the participating schools were excited to be part of this pilot contest and acknowledged that the contest was an excellent learning tool for students to engage in health literacy activities. Of the seven schools, four schools submitted essays to the ADA for judging. While the schools were excited to offer the contest opportunity to their students, for future contests, consideration is needed to determine strategies/incentives to increase student participation.

## Implications for Policy, Delivery or Practice

The enthusiasm expressed by faculty and participating students suggests that the ADA should continue sponsoring the contest on an annual basis, with plans to expand the contest to a greater number of dental schools. The contest provides students an excellent learning opportunity about the principles of health literacy and the use of plain language that faculty can easily implement.



## ADA News

### Essay contest tested students' ability to write for the layperson

July 30, 2015

What does diabetes have to do with "that smile of yours?" asks dental student Laura Martin at the beginning of her award-winning essay posted on ADA's consumer website, [MouthHealthy.org](http://MouthHealthy.org).



Writing effectively about oral health awareness for the public was the goal of the contest that Ms. Martin won, sponsored by the ADA and the Ohio Dental Association at Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine.

Third year dental students at the Cleveland, Ohio, school were asked to write 500 to 700 words about diabetes and oral health in the contest that wrapped up in June with the announcement of winners.

Ms. Martin, now a fourth year student, was named the winner with her

