



Winners of 2021 VML “If I Were Mayor” state essay contest announced

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The Virginia Municipal League (VML) announced today the statewide winner and five regional winners of the “If I Were Mayor” Essay Contest. The contest, hosted by VML, drew hundreds of entries from seventh graders throughout the state. The challenge to the students was to describe what worked (and did not work) for them during the past year of schooling during a pandemic. They were also asked to explain how they would, as mayor of their community, make the lessons they have learned work for everyone.

The winners* are:

Statewide winner: Laila Beck-Covington of Spratley Gifted Center in Hampton

Region 2: Marjorie Davis of Martinsville Middle School in Martinsville

Region 5: Claire Weatherly of Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Falls Church

Region 6: Matthew Ezrre of Culpeper Middle School in Culpeper

Region 7: Erin Moore of Liberty Middle School in Ashland

Region 8: Dallas Barringer of Montross Middle School in Montross

*VML did not receive any entries from students in Regions 1, 3, or 4 this year.

All the regional winners used their essays to clearly identify the issues they faced with schooling during this difficult year. However, they were also able to find things that worked well for them. Moreover, they used their personal experience to craft thoughtful suggestions to help their fellow students and community members.

Of the statewide winning entry from Laila Beck-Covington, VML President and Mayor of Galax Willie Greene said: “Laila identified two major issues and came up with some particularly good solutions to solve them. She has her priorities in order. And a genuine concern for all the students in her community. So, congratulations to Laila for a very well written essay!”

In addition to a plaque, each regional winner will receive \$150. The statewide winner will receive a plaque and \$250.

Plans for presentation of the plaques and checks are forthcoming.

All winning essays can be read at <https://vml.org/education/essay-contest/>

About VML’s “If I Were Mayor” Essay Contest

The annual “If I were Mayor Contest” invites seventh graders from throughout Virginia to submit essays describing what they would do if they were mayor of their hometown. The essay contest is a key component of VML’s civic education programming, which seeks to teach school children and adults how local government works and how they can become involved in making their communities better places to live, work and play.