



Educator FAQs:

Updated December 9, 2019

Did the Department of Education approve this program?

CSDE has reviewed our program and stated "As Connecticut is a local control state, we do not have jurisdiction over with whom districts partner. You are able to work with any school/district that would like to partner."

Who can participate in The Verge Awards® CT State Championships?

Participation is open to students age 13 to 19 enrolled in grades 9-12 for the 2019/2020 school year in *publicly funded* high schools, magnet schools, community schools, charter schools and programs affiliated with those schools and/or supporting their students.

Is there any cost to enter?

There's absolutely no cost to participate! Our mission is to discover and support amazing talent and potential, and to bring funding *to* schools, not make money *from* schools. We will even cover all costs for music licensing.

What contests are being offered?

VERGE AWARDS CONTESTS

PRIZES: \$10k across all 6 categories for winning students, additional \$(TBD) for their schools!

1. Singing - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members (any genre)
2. Music - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members (any genre and instrument)
3. Dance - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members (any genre and format)
4. Comedy & novelty acts - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members
5. Visual & media arts – any medium or combination of media
6. Technology & innovation – finalists qualify through partner competitions (CIC, CSEF, Expo Fest, etc.)

All submissions will need to pass an initial screening to ensure content is appropriate, and then they'll go through adjudication *and* public voting. The top ten in each category will advance to the finals where a pool of judges in the audience will submit evaluations and constructive feedback.

ENTRY DEADLINE: Sunday March 15, 2020 at midnight! Students upload entries (for FREE!) to <https://verge.awardsplatform.com/>. Then,

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| March 20-29 | Public voting and adjudication to determine finalists in each category |
| March 29 | State finalists announced |
| April 6-22 | Public voting from among finalists for Statewide People's Choice |
| April 23 | Live Statewide Championships at The Toyota Oakdale Theatre |

LIVE EVENT PERFORMERS for April 23rd at The Oakdale Theatre

PRIZES: Money-can't-buy experience to perform at The Oakdale Theatre

7. Hunter Hayes' bandmates and background singers – these can be an existing student band or individual guitar, bass, keyboard or drum musicians and background vocalists
8. Two (2) drum ensembles to open the main event – any percussion format including vocal (beatboxing)

9. Opening acts - Mariachi, garage, jazz and other small student bands, DJ's, comedians/skits, spoken word artists, etc. to perform in the Dome at Oakdale between 3-5 PM
10. Event emcee or duo to host Dome performances and co-host main event

ENTRY DEADLINE: Varies from February 16 to March 8, 2020; these performers will be selected by The Verge Awards from uploaded video auditions (no public voting)

BEHIND THE SCENES CREATIVE WORK

PRIZES: Most will receive remuneration appropriate to the final product; resume builder

11. Visual & media artists to produce The Verge Awards visual assets (trophy, stage backdrop, posters, explainer videos, etc.)
12. Musicians, composers, music producers –work with music director of Broadway shows and Amateur Night at the Apollo to produce The Verge Awards theme song

ENTRY DEADLINE: Varies from January 31 to March 8, 2020; these winners will be selected by The Verge Awards

“PEP SQUAD” Positions offering community service or Capstone credit

We're forming a pep squad of student leaders and creatives to help us build a statewide movement to celebrate all kinds of teen on the verge of greatness!

This *statewide pep squad* will create and implement marketing and communications tools that encourage students to participate in Verge Awards contests, rally schools and communities to cheer for their hometown contestants, ensure the Oakdale Theatre is filled with supportive and encouraging fans for all finalists, and discover, capture and share heartwarming and inspirational stories of student achievement.

Students who would thrive in this creative, uplifting, high energy environment must [apply by January 5th using this form](#)

We already have too much to do, will this be time consuming?

It's very important to note that your students– *not your school* - are submitting entries to our contests. This means you have no official role in the contests themselves. No permission forms. No fundraising. No monitoring of content.

We will, however, ask you to simply review a list of *contestants* that state they are actively attending your school and verify enrollment. That's because if one of your students wins, they may not only win prizes and eventually scholarships for themselves, but they may also win funding for your school for STEAM programming!

That being said, *we encourage you to make the most out of this uplifting program and really get your students into it!* Get teachers and parents involved, host talent shows, pep rallies, sign-making parties, communicate regularly to your students and parents, reach out to local media and so on. And we'll provide all the tools you need to do this as efficiently as possible.

The more engaged you can be, the better the experience for all your students!

Will we be required to recognize contest sponsors on school premises or in our communications to students, parents or the community?

Never! Our business partners understand that The Verge Fund™ will distribute grants to schools, and whole-heartedly agree to and support the policy that our sponsor recognition will occur entirely off school premises –on The Verge Awards® website, in the media, and at our live championships.

That said, since many schools already have sponsor signage on fields and in gyms, and logo recognition in programs for theater, concerts, marching bands, awards banquets, school clubs, and so on, you may wish to raise additional funds for your STEAM programs by partnering with The Verge Awards® sponsors and offering recognition on school property.

You may also wish to invite businesses to underwrite the costs of supplies/equipment for students to prepare entries for The Verge Awards®, talent shows, pep rallies, remote viewing parties, and so on; and we would be happy to invite our partners to participate!

Our school does not offer music, dance, visual & media arts and/or technology programs or host talent shows. Should we still participate?

Absolutely! We have intentionally selected contest categories that are accessible by all – whether they are naturally gifted or even self-taught, you probably have incredible singers, musicians, dancers, artists and more in your midst. This will give them the opportunity to shine! And your students will actually rally around each other and create a memorable experience, win or lose.

We like to have talent shows, will these performances be admissible?

Absolutely! In fact, we're encouraging schools to host shows if they don't already because many students will be able to feed off of live audiences and perform at a higher level than singing into webcams or mobile devices. We'll even likely have a contest for the "Best novelty act in a HS Talent Show!" We may be able to help secure financial support for you to be able to do so.

We don't have the proper licenses to post music or theater copyrighted performances. Will we need to pay more?

No, you will not. We will pay any required licensing fees associated with online broadcasting of performances. Schools are not responsible for copyright reviews or fees.

We don't have A/V equipment to support our students. Will these contests require high-quality video or audio production?

No! We want everyone to be able to enter, regardless of the technology they have access to. Our judges look past that to the raw talent, so mobile device and webcam videos will be sufficient!

Where will the winning funds come from?

Our nonprofit (501c3) Verge Fund™ will distribute grants to schools, boards or districts whose students win our contests, which means sponsoring companies will not write checks directly to schools. Any school publicity around the grants can specifically credit The Verge Fund™.

May we incorporate The Verge Awards® contests into our curriculum?

That's entirely up to you! In fact, we think it's a great idea to allow one classroom assignment to be used for multiple purposes. However, you should never *require* students to participate in our contests as part of their grade.

Is it safe for our students?

We are committed to COPPA compliance and the online safety of our contestants and fans and have retained an internet safety expert from Nickelodeon to ensure we always err on the side of caution. Personal contact information will never be displayed to the public, and any user-generated content will be closely monitored *before publishing* to prevent cyber bullying. All contest entries (visual, audible, written) will be screened for appropriateness before being published, as will all user names and profile pictures for contestants and fans.

Will parents or guardians need to give permission for their kids to participate?

No, according to The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA), permission is not required to enter online contests as long as contestants are at least 13 years old. Thus, our minimum age to enter contests is 13 years old.

Will you provide templates and tools to make it as easy as possible for us to spread the word to students and families?

Absolutely! We encourage you to rally your entire student population, parents, families and broader community members to support your contestants and will provide you with a communications toolkit with lots of ideas and templates to help you do so.

This will include morning announcements, teacher encouragement, voicemail messages to parents, newsletter and website announcements and even flyers and posters for your schools. And we will update the information throughout the contest period to keep it exciting and engaging, so you may wish to assign a point person to manage these communications.

We encourage you to dedicate a page on your school's website to promote your contestants, rally community support, post announcements, raise funds for talent shows and more!

Who will be able to attend the live championships?

The bulk of the 4,300 tickets will be distributed to the 60 finalists and their schools so they can build pep squads to come cheer for them! There will be limited general admission tickets available for approved attendees.

If your school would like to facilitate *bus transportation* to the live state championships directly from your school, we encourage working with your PTO's to reserve buses and coordinate required permissions. We MAY be able to help cover the costs, depending on sponsorship engagement!

What are the benefits of participating for schools, besides the potential to win prize money?

230 high school principals, teachers, counselors indicated they were *even more excited* about their ability to:

- Provide an enriching and memorable HS experience for all students and ignite school pride as they rally students, parents and communities around their creative and technical students, just as they do their athletes!
- Improve student self-esteem, increase mutual respect/reduce bullying and improve school climate/connectedness by celebrating the diversity of teen talent, passions, cultures, dreams
- Provide a path to success for students with limited resources or emotional support as they win/earn life-changing scholarships, prizes that enable further learning, and opt-in to our Talent Registry™ to be discoverable by pre-screened college recruiters and more.
- Light a spark for disengaged students, improve school attendance and academic achievement with The Verge Awards® and resulting increased access to arts programming
- Engage teachers in highly rewarding programming, enable collaboration on cross-discipline contests, school talent shows, etc.
- Improve community awareness of and increase audience size at school events, resulting in more ticket revenue and self-funding of events
- Increase voter awareness of the benefits of STEAM education programs and the need for local/federal funding

- Access need-based funding for STEAM programs and related professional development for teachers
- Establish relationships with partner businesses and youth organizations
- Win awards and enhance their school's public image

Teachers also expressed their excitement for increasing their ability to:

- Spark creativity and lively, collaborative classroom discussions around contest themes
- Engage, empower and inspire low performing students, help them discover and pursue their passions
- Celebrate creative and technical students often overshadowed by athletic counterparts, improving their self-esteem and confidence
- Access optional professional development in Arts and STEM integration and create an innovative classroom learning experience that aligns to new national standards
- Access financial support and donations of equipment, supplies and volunteers from partner businesses through The Verge Fund™, and to
- Collaborate with teachers in other disciplines on multi-skill contests, e.g.: A product invention and entrepreneurship challenge requires collaborative idea generation and problem solving, makers, website development, graphic design, video production, marketing, etc. A music video requires songwriting, musicians, singers, sound engineers, film makers, media artists, actors, dancers, choreographers, set designers, etc.

Why are private schools not eligible to participate?

In our first few years, we are focused solely on bridging the gap in federal and local government funding of STEAM programs in public schools. Additionally, many private schools offer arts and technology programs that public schools do not, and thus, their students would have an advantage. We'd like to shine a spotlight on teens that otherwise may never be discovered by college and other recruiters. In future years, we plan to create a separate division for private schools so that their students can participate.

*If you have additional questions, please send an email to ineaton@thevergeawards.com.
We will update this document regularly.*

December 9, 2019