



Arizona Families for Home Education

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SENIOR HIGH GRADUATE SPEECH, MUSIC & NATIONAL ANTHEM INFORMATION

35th Annual AFHE Senior High Graduation Ceremony

Friday, May 28, 2027

7:00 – 9:00 PM

Dream City Church

13613 N. Cave Creek Road, Phoenix, AZ 85022

At AFHE, we are thrilled to celebrate the talents and achievements of our graduates! We love giving seniors the opportunity to audition for the honor of delivering a speech, performing a musical piece, or singing the National Anthem at graduation, showcasing their unique gifts and inspiring the audience on this special day.

SPEECH CONTEST: SENIOR CLASS ADDRESS

Submissions for the Senior Class Address will be accepted from participating graduates who have been homeschooled for **all four years** of high school.

SPEECH CONTEST SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Must be received by **March 15**. No late submissions accepted.

MUSIC AUDITIONS

Musical performance auditions will be accepted from participating graduates who have been homeschooled **all four years** of high school.

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AUDITION SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Must be received by **March 15**. No late submissions accepted.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AUDITIONS

National Anthem auditions will be accepted from participating graduates who have been homeschooled **all four years** of high school.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AUDITION SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Must be received by **March 15**. No late submissions accepted.

SPEECH CONTEST INFORMATION

Submissions for the Senior Class Address will be accepted from graduates participating in the AFHE senior grad ceremony who have been homeschooled for all four years of high school. The speech should be 3-5 minutes long, must be the student's original work, and should reflect how being homeschooled through high school has impacted his/her life or helped shape who he/she is. Speeches will be judged on content (please be careful to highlight homeschooling without criticizing other methods of education), structure, presentation, and overall effectiveness.

Send a cover letter with your name, address, phone number, a written version of your speech, and a video recording of your presentation via electronic file (.wav, MP4) or online video sharing such as YouTube or Vimeo. The decision of the judges is final. Winners will receive a monetary gift.

SPEECH SUBMISSION

Email to Srgrad@afhe.org with the subject line AFHE Sr. Grad Speech Contest

SPEECH CONTEST SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Must be received by **March 15**.

SUGGESTIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SPEECH

You are writing a 3- to 5-minute speech about your experiences being homeschooled through high school and how this has affected your life. You will be speaking before over 3,000 people, most of whom are relatives and friends of a fellow graduate.

CONTENT

What you choose to write about will be the most important decision because it will affect every aspect of your speech. Consider first your audience. Take into consideration the parents in the audience who have sacrificed greatly to reach this point with their children. Be sure to recognize their efforts and thank them on behalf of all the graduates.

Have something original to say. This is a reflective point in your life and in the lives of those listening to you. What have you learned about life? How will you make your mark on the world? Who are people from the past or present who inspire you? Is there a historical event that helps you put life in perspective? Feel free to share something about the centrality of your faith to your future goals and direction, but keep in mind there will be a diverse audience with varying views. Also avoid mentioning specific branches of faith and/or presenting specific political figures or parties.

Be humorous! Find a way to lighten the moment with a funny observation or a transparent moment. This doesn't mean you have to search through joke books, but as you have others read your speech, ask them where you could add some lighthearted words to put others at ease—and yourself at the same time!

DELIVERY

Videotape your speech in good light, standing up facing the camera, and looking at the camera. Memorize your speech, but feel free to use a few note cards, if needed, to remember your outline and next point. Use gestures where they are natural to do so. Be sure to make eye contact with different sections of the audience, rather than focusing your attention in one spot the entire time. Keep in mind you are trying to connect with your audience in a meaningful way. Don't forget to smile occasionally!

SPEECH CONTEST JUDGING CRITERIA

Speech contest participants will be judged in the following areas:

SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

Structured around purpose, organization (opening, body, conclusion), support material, engages audience, relevant examples, unified whole

EFFECTIVENESS

Achievement of purpose, thanks parents, holds interest

SPEECH VALUE

Important ideas, logic, original and meaningful thought

PHYSICAL

Appearance, body language (gestures, expressions, and body positioning), eye contact

VOICE

Variation, movement in volume and rate, clearly spoken, easily understood

MANNER

Directness, enthusiasm, confidence

APPROPRIATENESS

Choice of words, humorous or engaging, precisely fits the occasion, states how homeschooling impacted or helped shape student, avoids disparaging other faiths, political affiliations, and education choices

CORRECTNESS

Grammar, pronunciation, word selection, directs attention to thoughts rather than words

RESULTS ANNOUNCED

All applicants will be notified of the results by **April 8**. The decision of the Sr. Grad Music Committee is final.

MUSIC AUDITION INFORMATION

Senior high graduates who are registered for the current AFHE Graduation are invited to audition to perform a musical selection at the ceremony.

Please submit an online application and a video recording of your presentation to be considered as one of the performers.

Up to three students will be chosen to perform during the ceremony.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- The audition selection should be no longer than four (4) minutes in length.
- Videotape your audition in good light, facing the camera as much as possible.
- Music should be memorized, but feel free to use sheet music if needed for the audition or during the ceremony.
- Please submit the written text of the lyrics for a vocal performance.
- If performing only part of a song, please specify the specific movement or section being performed.
- You may submit up to two selections. Please submit a separate application for each selection.
- Duets are welcomed provided the graduate is the prominent performer.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Auditions will be chosen based on the following areas:

- Appropriateness of the lyrics (if any) and the selection's theme or origin
- Performance standard
- Professionalism
- Participant's presentation

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Both application and video recording must be received no later than **March 15**.

Video recordings should be submitted electronically (as an MP4 file or a link to your video posted on a hosting site such as YouTube or Vimeo) via email to srgrad@afhe.org.

RESULTS ANNOUNCED

All applicants will be notified of the results by **April 8**. The decision of the Sr. Grad Music Committee is final.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit the online application form at afhe.org/graduation after **January 2**.

For a vocal performance, you may upload the lyrics as part of the application process or email them. The video recording can be sent electronically by email to srgrad@afhe.org no later than **March 15**.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AUDITION INFORMATION

We are honored to offer a student the opportunity to perform the National Anthem at our upcoming Graduation Ceremony. To ensure a respectful and successful performance, please review the following audition guidelines:

AUDITION REQUIREMENTS

- Submit a video recording of yourself singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" in its entirety.
- Videos should be recorded in a quiet location with minimal background noise.
- Please do not use vocal enhancement, auto-tune, or excessive editing.
- Accompaniment is optional; however, performances should demonstrate the singer's ability to maintain proper pitch and timing.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Auditions will be evaluated based on:

- Vocal quality and tone
- Pitch accuracy
- Confidence and stage presence
- Clarity of diction
- Overall ability to perform the National Anthem respectfully and professionally

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Both application and video recording must be received no later than **March 15**.

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