

2006 Minnesota Charter Public Schools Essay Writing Contest

2006 Most Inspiring Essay

Community of Peace Academy- Nicole, Age 14

My name is Nicole. I go to a charter/public school called CPA (Community of Peace Academy).

My school has changed my life by saving my life.

In fifth grade, my parents divorced, my beloved dog was killed, and I was forced to deal with an alcoholic father. I was so stressed out about friends, grades, and the situation at home that I was contemplating suicide.

My teacher at the time, Ms. DeMunck, was the only thing that saved me. One afternoon, she noticed a book I was reading. All I can remember is it was about suicide and death. Ms. DeMunck took me into the hallway and talked to me. I can still remember what she said.

Ms. DeMunck made me realize that I actually had many friends, all who cared and were worried for me. She told me that I was a beautiful, smart girl who has so much to look forward to. After that day, I put away the pills I had been planning on taking.

My school has changed me. Since then, my parents have tried to get me to change schools. I refuse. CPA is less like a school, and more like a family. A second home. The teachers actually care about us. We are not a student number; we are people.

CPA changed my life by saving my life. If it was not for Ms. DeMunck and a few other teachers like her, I know I would be dead. Every day I am thankful that I choose to go to my school. I would not change it for anything.

====

2006 First Place Charter School Essays

Elementary Division

Community of Peace Academy

Kimberly Xiong

Age 10

"What's so special about me?" "I would say. All I do is guess and never think. I never pay attention." I thought I stopped believing in myself and stop succeeding in school. I even wonder why I was born to be so dumb. But then I went to CPA. I realize that I didn't stop believing in myself and stop succeeding in school. I hated myself for no reason. I would realize I hadn't learn it yet. CPA changed me alot. It change the way I act and many ways I would feel ashamed of myself. CPA helped me to build peace and many more. When I was in other schools I never learned how to praise people or other things. After I cam to CPA I had more

confidants in me. I try my best to succeed and be strong in everything I do. CPA has supporting grownups that will help you. If you were a kid like me just be yourself and try everything I did. Go to CPA. Don't worry, It will change your life.

Middle School Division

The Best of St. Croix Preparatory Academy
Drew Elizabeth Maakestad
Age 12

How would it feel to get up in the morning with a pit in your stomach because you don't want to go to school? Well, I sure don't know how that feels, because when I wake up in the morning, I can't wait to go to school! I usually ride the bus in the morning and talk with my friend Ollie. When I get off the bus I am happily greeted by the executive director, Mr. Gutierrez, and my middle school principal Mr. Kees. I usually get either a high five, a nice big hug, or a meaningful personal question about my life. There aren't many directors I know who stand outside until every student has been greeted as they walk into school. After a warm welcome from Mr. Gutierrez, and Mr. Kees I can look forward to seeing my friends when I walk through St. Croix Preparatory Academy's doors and around the corner to my cubbie.

This is my first year at St. Croix Prep, and for a new student it is usually hard to make friends easily. When I came to this school everyone welcomed me into the community and I felt as if I had known them forever.

I would encourage my friends to go to Saint Croix Prep because the teachers give each student individual attention so that they can learn to their greatest ability. The teachers make everyone feel smart and capable of achieving anything one wishes. I feel comfortable around the teachers, and know they are open to new ideas. They are there for students to come to with open arms and a kind word.

Another thing that makes St. Croix Prep the great place that it is, is I feel there aren't any problems with cliques or mean children. All the students are nice to one another and are interested in learning and becoming as bright as they can be. One thing that stands out to me as a student at Saint Croix Prep is that it doesn't matter if you aren't the smartest kid in your grade, the teachers make you feel bright and capable no matter what!

I wouldn't wish to be at any other school than St. Croix Prep. It's the place for me and every day I learn something new. Being a new student can be hard, not at St. Croix Prep, the teachers and classmates make it easy and enjoyable.

I will never have to be a student who can't wait until school is over and is counting the hours, minutes, and seconds until it is time to go. When I leave school every day, I can look forward to coming back to a great learning environment, the next day.

High School Division

New Century Charter School
Kayla Bailey
Age 16

If I were to encourage a friend to attend my school, I would do so because my school is comfortable, personal, and up-to-date.

In my school, you can be friends with people that you wouldn't normally associate with in the regular public school. The people here all know each other, even if they're not close friends. To have this at a district high school is close to impossible; Even if they did know each other, not everyone would be treated with the amount of respect that other kids are shown at New Century. At NCCS, there's no worry about not fitting in with certain people. There is always a place where you feel safe and comfortable.

The teachers that I currently have are probably the best that I've had yet. You never have to worry about asking questions about a class or even wanting to get an update on your transcript. Students don't need to wait until the end of the trimester, or even mid-terms to find out how well they are doing overall.

Teachers talk with you about how you can excel, and what classes will bring you to your goal. I'm speaking in terms of in-school, or even out of school. One of our social studies teachers goes exercising with a couple of her students to help keep themselves in shape. However, she wasn't the one who established the event, the student was. The student felt so at-ease with the teacher and had a feeling of personal well-being that she wanted to be with her teacher outside of the regular class room. In any other school, I haven't heard of something like this. I try explaining this to my friends who attend District #423, but they just can't grasp why any student would actually be willing to spend free time with a staff member of their school. It's truly so unique and fun here that it inspires students to do better in and out of school. I believe it's because of all the personal attention that each student gets that really helps them to thrive.

At New Century Charter School, every student has access to a computer. Since many of our projects, and even homework, are done on the computers, this is exceedingly important. There are two desktops to use in each room, and several laptops available. Once finished with a project, there are multiple ways which you can present it. One way, if it is a power point or anything shown on the screen of the computer, we have up-to-date projectors to show the picture on the electronic drop-down projector screen. All of our lights and doors are electronic, and each teacher gets their own desktops to use.

There are several reasons as to why New Century Charter School is a school you would want to attend, but seeing as how there are limitations to my writing, these are the main ones that I want to be let known.

2006 Second Place Essays

Elementary Division

Why I Think My Friend Should Attend PACT Charter School

Noah Jacobson

Age 9

I think my friends should go to my school because the teachers always put in a great effort to make learning fun.

I like how our school has communications sheets to share what we learned each day. I also like that our school has creative writing contests. I have written stories about The Amazon Rain Forest, My Father, and The Roman Empire. I think it's awesome how our school does a symposium each year. Every year for one week, we turn our school into whatever our subject is about, such as The Roman Empire, and The Amazon Rain Forest. I always learn a lot from it. It's cool how our school has a for day school week. We also have Spanish class. That's always fun! The parents can volunteer as much as they want at our school. We can go above our grade level if we are doing well in math and writing, which is good because students are challenged.

I have given several reasons why I think PACT is such a great school. You'll get a good education.

CCLA

Quenikki Ternoir

Age 10

C.C.L.A. has changed my life at my other school I used to say mean things to other students. Now, I learned that saying mean things are wrong. I like this school a lot better because at M.I.T. it was creep walking around that school. At this school, I get welcomed from kids that have been here at C.C.L.A. Plus we have more field trips here, and there are nice children. I have a wonderful teacher, and a lot of cool friends. There are no uniforms. You can wear anything you want to wear. And we are about to move into another huge school. I like C.C.L.A. because There are so many things you can do. They don't just give you a worksheet they do activites. I really Think CCLA is the Best place to be. The kids don't judge you on how you dress, and we get to have every single day. The Adults treat you as their children. If you get in trouble, you go to the front office or you write why you do what you did wrong. There is a lot of cool kids here. If you get hurt five kids come to help you. Most schools some kids don't come to help you. They just sit there looking at you.

Now, about Ms. O, our principal. She's a nice lady, makes you laugh, takes you places, and most of all she invites you to her house. Ms. Ryan, our teacher, she nice too, although we do not do cursive it's still okay. Ms. Ryan is a nice lady she helps me do my work.

Middle School Division

Northern Lights Community School
Austin Koppelman
7th grade

I would encourage a friend to come to this school because it is different from any other school I have attended. There are three things I really like about this school: physical recreation time, taking trips, and the learning environment. My favorite part of the day is recreation time, which is our physical education time. We have a variety of options to choose from during recreation time. Some of these include the YMCA, playing dodgeball in the gym, and softball outside. My favorite is going to the YMCA to play with our basketball team. We have played basketball against a Duluth team, and we lost, but it was fun going to their school and meeting new people.

One exciting part of our school is that we get to take a lot of trips. One trip I went on was the Audubon Center in Sandstone, MN. It was so much fun there. I learned how to survive in the woods and how to use a compass. We also had a low-ropes course that helped me trust other people from our school. They had very good food there, too. How I see it, on every trip you go on you learn something new. That's why I go on trips. I plan on taking more trips with my school as they are offered.

My favorite thing about my school is the learning environment. This school is project-based, so we do not have to learn right out of books all of the time. We get to choose what we learn and when we want to learn it. It is more hands-on and not so much pen-and-paper. It is a better way for me to learn than going over worksheets again and again. We are not expected to sit still and be quiet all day long. We get to talk to other people if we need help while we are working. Everyone in this school pretty much knows everyone else. Everyone has his own advisory that is kind of like a homeroom. During advisory time, we talk about what we are doing for rec. time, we journal, and talk about what is going on during the day and/or week. My advisor checks in with us every day, and if I need help he helps me. In this learning environment, I feel less stressed than my old school.

In conclusion, I would encourage a friend to come to this school. All the kids here are nice. It does not matter what you do, you are still accepted at this school. My school is fun, but you also have to try hard and participate in order to make it fun. I am going to be at this school for the rest of my school days, and I am happy that my mom found it and let me come here.

PA School
Ana Lopez
Age 12

Are you mad at your teachers because they say they are going to teach you the right way? Well, if you go to P.A. your life will change for ever. The third reason is that you will learn math. The second reason is you will now do social studies. The third reason is that P.A. is a fun school. Here are more details.

The first reason is how you learn math you can learn your multiplication you can also learn your division and you also learn prime factorization.

The second reason you can learn social studies. You will learn that Crispus Attucks was the first man to get killed in the Revolutionary War. I learn that Sumnerians lived in small mud brick house at the edge of the city.

The last reason is why P.A. is fun. I have more fun because the kids in the School are nice they are also good friends to you. You can have fun because you will feel more safe.

So that is how I learn in P.A. I learned math and social studies also a learned to have friends. So if you went to learn more you should go to P.A. School.

Partnership Academy
Kevin Zanudo
Age 11

Are you tired of your school because it's boring, dirty and no one will help you with your problems? Well, I will give you three reasons why you should send your child to a charter school. The first reason is its fun, second it's clean, and finally you can tell our teachers if your having a problem. Read my essay and it will tell you why you should send your child to a charter school.

The first reason why you should send your child to Partnership Academy is because they will enjoy themselves. At the end of the month PA has a raffle and they raffle prizes like folders. In math we play math games like multiplication baseball. In SFA we play vocabulary charades where you have to act out the words. On our free time if we pass all our tests we get to play on the computers.

The second reason why you should send your child to PA is because it's clean. The bathrooms are cleaner than others by not having paper towels all over the floor. The hallways are so quiet you could hear a pin drop. The classrooms are neat and organized. The uniforms are neat and tidy.

Finally, the last reason why you should send your child to PA is because if your having a problem you can tell one of our teachers. If your having problems at home you can tell one of our teachers and they will help you immediately. If someone is picking on or bugging your child the teachers will make sure that it stops. Finally our teachers will do their best to help you with any problems, just like your part of their family.

These are my three reasons why you should send your child to PA. The first reason is because your child will enjoy themselves, second is it's clean and finally if your having a problem you can tell one of teachers. I think the choice is clear that PA is the way to go.

High School Division

Northern Lights Community School
Nathaniel Hassell
Age 15

Hi, my name is Nathaniel Hassell and I attend Northern Lights Community School in Warba, Minnesota. I am starting my high school years at Northern Lights as a ninth grader. I wanted to participate in this essay contest because I wanted to share how my first year at a charter school has changed my life.

In fall of 2005 Northern Lights opened and has given students a new opportunity to be educated in a non traditional school environment. I am excited to be one of the students involved in the first year at Northern Lights. My school is a project based charter school in which I have a big part in how I want to learn and still meet all the high school graduation standards.

At my old school I was tested for learning disabilities and my parents realized with the results I was going to struggle in my learning. Being placed in special classes made me feel dislocated from my friends and fellow classmates. I managed the adjustment but in either grade I was retested and passed by only just barely. They placed me back into mainstream and I was lost easily and struggled once again. My mom fought the system to get help for me in high school but lost the battle. Now it was my decision on where to go when we heard about the new charter school opening. All she asked me to do is give it my best and she would back me up. I chose Northern Lights.

I now have a say in how I learn and what I learn. I can take my time and I do not feel lost. I am comfortable in my learning. Classes are smaller and Advisors are very supportive. My grades have greatly improved and I am succeeding in being the best I can be. I feel good about myself. I am not being compared to my brother and sister who succeeded in their ways, I am me and the staff appreciates me for who I am and are there to help me succeed in my ways. I am glad I made this choice because I am succeeding I ways I did not see myself before.

2006 Third Place Charter School Essays

Elementary Division

Kenwood Edison Charter School
Mari Clanaugh
Age 10

My name is Mari Clanaugh and I'm ten years old. I'm in 5th grade and I go to Kenwood Edison Charter School. This school has changed my lif because of Math, Working together and more hands on stuff.

The first reason why it changed my life is math. At other schools I went to, you would just learn how to do a math unit (such as didviding) and never review it again. At Kenwood we learn how to do a unit and review it as part of other units.

The second reason why Kenwood changed my life is working together. I have been to four schools and never work together with my teacher as much as do at Kenwood. My parents also work with my teachers.

The last reason why Kenwood changed my life is more hands on stuff. In science at other schools we would talk about the unit and do a worksheet. But at Kenwood we talk about it and then did an experiment on it.

As you can see this school changed my life.

North Shore Community School

Taylor Clement

Are you tired of the school you learn in every day? Do you want a more fun learning experience? Well, now you have read the right piece of paper! North Shore Community School is right for you! I'll tell you a couple of interesting things that our school has. Trust me, you'll be surprised!

First of all do you like to go outside? Well, we have many learning things outside. One is a greenhouse with a pond and fans and plant areas for each class. We also have a Nature Trail made by a sixth grade class and our old principal. The Nature Trail has two shelters, benches and a creek. We also have a fully equipped playground with three slides, two swingsets, a tire swing, a teeter-totter and monkey bars.

Alas but not least, are you far from your school? Do your parents have to drive you from Duluth to Two Harbors or farther? Well this will make you happy. North Shore Community School is between Two Harbors and Duluth and closer to Knife River. Also, it has all of the basic routes to Homestead Road, McQuade Road, Highway 61 and Derquist Road. It's a great spot.

I hope that you are excited to come to our school now. Are you surprised at all? You should be! Our school is the best school that I have ever been to that keeps you safe and has great teachers. You'll have a great learning experience here.

Come Grow and Learn at My Charter School

David McLaughlin

Age 10

I would encourage a friend to attend my charter school because we have opportunities to move up levels in certain subjects for example our math classes are all at the same time throughout the school. So if you need a little help or need to be challenged you can make these changes without it affecting your class schedule. We also mix grades together so if you do need help or you do advance, nobody thinks anything about it and we all just accept it. I like how our school mixes grades because it lets us help kids who are younger and be helped by kids who are older. I know

what it feels like to be helped by older kids, so that helps me to remember to be kind and patient with the younger kids.

I like how our school gives character awards for things like honesty, kindness, respect, and trustworthiness. It makes me feel really good about myself when I get one of these.

I love our charter school. It's a great place to grow and learn and I've learned alot about myself too.

Why a Friend Should Come to CPA

Selam Tesfatsion

Age 9

Why a friend should come to CPA? (Community of Peace Academy). Well I could answer that for. First of all CPA is a big school and it has a matching church called St. Patrick Church so CPA is blessed. I've been in CPA for five years and nothing has changed since then. The best thing about our school is students especially the basketball players because if they don't win they say good job! and they don't walk away mad. Because of CPA I will pass 4th grade and up even college and get a fantastick job! All you kids out there might think school is boring but not CPA! So get your backpacks and books and get ready to learn! Parnets should be happy because in no time your kids will be in college! Thank you for listening! BYE!

Middle School Division

Why Do I Encourage Friends to Attend St. Croix Preparatory

Anne Gutierrez

Age 14

I can remember walking through the vacant building, which in two months would soon become my school. The idea seemed too obscure and unbelievable. Only six months before it had been a thought floating around our kitchen table. But now, in my second year participating as a student in St. Croix Preparatory Academy I find that the once vacant grocery store was where I met an amazing group of friends and outstanding teachers. It is the place where I have had the opportunity to learn new and interesting subjects, and where we as a class have created our memories. There are many reasons I would encourage a friend to attend St. Croix Preparatory Academy. Here at St. Croix Prep it isn't your usual school, which makes students so endeared to it. The experience of walking through our compact little hallways greeting fellow students, kindergarten through eighth grade, allows you to feel the secure feeling of our little community created at St. Croix Prep. It is the perfect way to start out the day. When most students, including myself, were first informed about the dress code of wearing uniforms they were bummed! But the uniforms add another reason why the atmosphere of our little school is great to be in. The equality we are given by wearing uniforms causes

you to become a stronger and more confident person. We don't recognize people by their clothing, but by their personality. It allows us to create a healthier and more focused learning environment. There are numerous things that are taught at St. Croix Prep. Now only is there a lot to learn, but there are an awesome group of teachers. The teachers give you a reason to be excited to learn! The teachers and the atmosphere at St. Croix Preparatory Academy allow students to enjoy their selves, meet and be with many friends, and teach the students the love of learning! St. Croix Preparatory is a school students feel comfortable in and is highly recommended on my behalf.

Northern Lights Community School
Katie Stangel
Age 14

Attending my charter school has changed my life a lot! I am not the type of person who likes deadlines and having no fun. The teachers here understand that I have many activities going on at home, school, and in the community. So, assigning homework is not a priority. One of my advisors at my charter school, Julie, is the best. She will listen to any problems that I have, or just have a conversation with me. Just about anything I need - except money - she'll try to help me out.

Before I came to the charter school, I was overwhelmed with too much homework, and was falling behind in most classes. I feel I am learning more now because the teachers have time for me, unlike other schools I've attended. The teachers and advisors understand that kids learn and do schoolwork at different paces. I can still get things done, but I don't feel rushed or put-down.

It is way easier to get along with other kids here, too. We are mostly like a small town. At any other school, no matter what, I would get in trouble even if someone else started it. With only a little help, I can take care of issues on my own here.

My mom says that she has never seen me so happy. Everyday I want to go to school and am excited about it! There are surprise speakers with new stuff to do and learn on a lot of the days. Our recreation choices are different everyday. Also, new people are always volunteering their time to come in and work with us. For example, today, two people from a paper making company came in and talked about logging and planting trees. We made recycled paper. Last week there was a puppet-maker who taught us how to make awesome character puppets. Another day, a guy showed us how his car runs on vegetable oil. It was really interesting because his son is in Iraq, and he wants to be done with war - so he saves on gas.

I think this charter school is great for people who struggle with school-work, like me, and for people who can do schoolwork easily, too. I am almost positive that a charter school could change a person's mind about how fun and interesting school can be - with less deadlines.

High School School Division

New Century Charter School
Brittany Eckstein
Age 17

I have been going to New Century Charter School since the start of my eighth grade year, and I have seen many changes in myself since then. I was first introduced to the Charter School when my cousin told me about project based learning. She told me about the fun atmosphere at the school. I was really interested because I wasn't happy with the school I had been going to, and I wanted to try a new method of learning.

In January 2003, my cousin brought me to the charter school as a visitor, so I could see firsthand if the charter school was really for me. I loved the school. I loved the people. I loved the idea of project based learning. My school is not like a traditional high school although we do have core classes. These classes are like traditional classes that other schools have. We also have 'project times' throughout our day. By doing projects, students have the opportunity to learn about anything, and while the process definitely isn't easy, it's always rewarding in the end when we earn project credit.

New Century has brought so many opportunities into my life. Before I came to New Century, I had completely lost interest in school, and I wasn't involved in much of anything, especially anything school related. I was an average student, but it got to the point where the longer I stayed at my old school, the less I wanted to get out of bed in the morning.

My first day at New Century felt like I started a new chapter of my life. The first week I made a lot of new friends, and I liked all my teachers. I was eager to learn new things. When I look back at myself at the days in my old school, and I look at my life now, it's like seeing a completely remodeled person. At my old school my grades were average; at New Century I am doing above average in most of my classes. Also, I am now active in extra-curriculars and clubs at school. I tried out for student council, and I was elected to represent eighth through tenth grade, and I currently serve as Treasurer of the Student Council. I taught two student-led seminars, one about Birthright, and the other one I led was a Debate Team. Forty students joined my Debate Team, and twelve girls joined my Birthright Class. I even planned a field trip for all of the girls in my class to take a trip to Birthright. I bought and donated baby clothes and baby blankets to Birthright. Also, I started writing for a charter school paper called "The Charter News". I wanted to be heard in a positive way, so when the controversy concerning the life of Terri Schiavo was put in the hands of Congress, I decided to do something about it. I was against Terri's feeding tube being removed, so I went on the internet and found phone numbers and email addresses of the Members of Congress, Jeb Bush and House Majority Leader Tom Delay.

I wanted to speak primarily for those like Terri, who cannot speak up for themselves, and I wanted to be a contender for the right to life.

Since going to the charter school, I have matured into a candid young woman. I have found my true outlet - expressing myself through words. I never realized that I wanted to be a writer, or that I would even be able to express myself to the fullest of detail through writing. I feel like New Century has showed me the best of all that I have to offer.

In 2005, I was nominated by two teachers at my school to become a Student Ambassador through a program called People to People. I was in complete awe and so honored to be nominated for such an outstanding position. After being nominated, I had to go through a process in which Delegation Leaders from the Ambassador Program interviewed anywhere from sixty to two-hundred students, to see how many kids would qualify to be Student Ambassadors. Needless to say, I was chosen out of forty kids, and from there on, I was on my way to becoming a Student Ambassador for the United States. My delegation went to the British Isles in June 2005. It was my first time being on a plane, and I was terrified. But as I sat in my seat on the plane, I kept thinking about all that I have been through, and everything that I have accomplished. I knew that I couldn't turn back. I had to see the world and all it had to offer me. I had to see what I could offer the world through all the experiences New Century has shown me.

Just getting on that plane showed bravery, but about two weeks after my delegation arrived in the British Isles, the London Bombings occurred. It was the scariest thing that has ever happened in my life. Luckily, my group was in Scotland at the time, but it was terrifying to know that just days before the bombing, my delegation had been on the London Underground. It could have been me that day, and I am so thankful I am still here.

All of the proud moments of my life have so far been because of New Century. There are so many positive changes that have surrounded my life in the past two years. I am much more outspoken. I am politically active. I love being involved in student council, and other school activities. I have found my preferred career choice. I found the best way I can express myself, I have seen parts of the world and at seventeen years old, I can say that I have been a Student Ambassador and a voice for the United States. I've even survived a bombing!

Most recently, I adopted a boy from India through a program called "Compassion International". He is nine years old, and his name is Tapan. I send him \$32.00 a month, it doesn't seem like a lot, but it pays for school supplies, clothing for him and his family, food, and church activities. We have a unique relationship, because I am able to write letters to him, and a translator translates my English into Hindi for him. His teachers in India send me his report cards and tell me how much of an impact I have made in Tapan's life. Currently, I haven't been writing for a local newspaper, and I am hoping to get my column started soon. The reason I adopted a boy in India is because I have learned to be charitable.

I speak for the right to life because I have learned to be appreciative. I found my chosen profession because I was blessed with great teachers.

I discovered that words are the outlet to my soul because of experience. I have become politically active because I need to be ready to fight for and understand common law. I learned to become brave by becoming a Student Ambassador. For all of this and more, I have to thank my principal, my teachers, my parents, my advisors and my friends. Thanks to all of the above; New Century has become my outlet.