Minnesota Charter Public Schools
Essay Writing Contest
2009

Winning Entries

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National Charter Schools Week

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- The many educators, family members, and friends who support and encourage these emerging young scholars, artists, and writers

With Gratitude,

Naima Bashir, Laura Bloomberg, Joe Nathan, and Sheena Thao
Center for School Change
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

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Grades K-2

FIRST PLACE

Maggie McGurran
(St Croix Preparatory Academy)

SECOND PLACE

Samantha Jeutter (Seven Hills Classical Academy)
Adan Haji (New Visions School)
Ava Severts (Nova Classical Academy)
Abigail Terry (Beacon Academy)

THIRD PLACE

Nathan Harbinson (St Croix Preparatory Academy)
Penelope Yang (Concordia Creative Learning Academy)
Clarice Vrambout (St Croix Preparatory Academy)
Isabelle VanHatten (Beacon Academy)
Kevin Werner (Concordia Creative Learning Academy)
Maggie McGurran  
(St Croix Preparatory Academy)

Dear Mr. President Obama,

Before you come to SCPA, I would like to tell you a few things. First of all, I really like our school because I think our teachers do a great job at teaching by making things fun to learn. Like in one of history units we got to pretend that we were pioneers traveling out west. We got journals and fake money to buy things with. Then also in a science unit, we got to make a simple machine, bring it into school and we had a simple machine fair. Second of all, I think we should improve on more time outside. I do not mean more recess, I mean having more learning time outside. Like on really hot days when you feel like you’re going to melt, or just days when it would be nice to get a little fresh air. I think it will be cool to meet you!

Sincerely,
Maggie McGurran
Samantha Jeutter  
(Seven Hills Classical Academy)

If President Obama came to Seven Hills Classical Academy, I would tell him we do reading and math groups well. In reading groups, you read independently or sometimes you read with a buddy. I like reading with a buddy because you take turns reading to each other. In math groups, my favorite thing is the giant math ball. It has lots of math problems on it, so when you throw the ball to someone they catch it and you pick a finger that lands next to a problem and the person has to say the math problem out loud and has to answer it. It’s like “Hot Potato”, you have to answer as fast as you can, then throw it to someone new.

I think Seven Hills Classical Academy could improve on more time at lunch. We only have twenty minutes to eat lunch. Not everyone gets to eat all their food. Then the food gets wasted and thrown away. It makes me sad because there are a lot of people in this world that are hungry. It is also hard to think and learn when you are hungry.

So if President Obama came to Seven Hills Classical Academy, I would read to him, I’d throw him the math ball and tell him to try to eat as much lunch as he can without shoving it in his mouth.

Samantha Jeutter, 1st grade
Adan Haji
(New Visions School)

My name is Adan Haji. I am in first grade. New Visions Academy is a great school because New Visions School has a Boost Up Class. If President Obama came to my school; I would take a trip with him and tell him about my school. We do a good job at Boost Up. It helps my biceps, my upper body, my lower body and my arms, legs, brain, back, finders, balance and shoulders.

We could work on Boost Up because some of us need muscles and exercising. We need to make good choices.

I would ask Obama’s children to come to New Visions Academy.
Ava Severts
(Nova Classical Academy)

What I like about Nova

I like Nova because, every month they make one class stands up and does a performance and you will need to do that a lot of times in your life. What I think first grade needs to do better is to have longer history time because it is fun and we only get ten or fifteen minutes.

Ava Severts
3-18-09
Abigail Terry
(Beacon Academy)

I go to Beacon Academy. Here are some things I want you to know.

Something we do well is caring for others. For example, every year the school buys toys and we pack them up in birthday bags and send them to children whose parents don’t have enough money to buy them birthday presents. We also raise money for kids with leukemia by having a contest to see which grade can raise the most money. The grade that raised the most money gets an ice cream party and a non-uniform day!

But nothing is perfect, so there are things we could improve. One thing that we could improve is that we need more space for the lunchroom and more playground equipment. It would be much easier for the lunch ladies if they didn’t have to clean the whole gymnasium in a short time before gym class. If I were the lunch lady, I would always come home tired and grumpy.

We also need more playground equipment. It gets pretty boring out there after a short time. If we could raise more money as a school, we could probably get some more playground equipment. Thank you, President Obama, for listening to me about my school.
Name: Nathan Harbinson

Kindergartners love St. Croix Preparatory Academy

One thing SCA does well is teach us respect and perseverance.
One thing SepA should improve is having a sports field.
Penelope Yang
(Concordia Creative Learning Academy)

I would tell President Obama to be nice to others. I can read and how I enjoy music and science class. And we have gym every day!

Penelope Yang,
Kindergarten
Age 5
Clarice Vrambout
(St Croix Preparatory Academy)

Dear Mr. President,

I want to tell you all about our school since I only have a little of lines to write on, I’ll tell you about this much. First, we are very good at showing good character. Like when my friend Lauren helped me. I was running very fast when I ran into a boy! Ouch! My knee was bleeding so hard it dripped onto the pavement. Then Lauren came along and she helped me walk to the doctor’s office. Boy was it hard to walk! So Mr. President as you can see our school shows a lot of character.

Now, the part we need to improve on. We’re not every good at cleaning up the hallways. Once I was walking down the hallway, there were a bunch of paper towels, so I picked them up all by myself. Boy was that hard work! As you can see, we lions have a lot of academics, character and leadership.
Isabelle VanHatten  
(Beacon Academy)

If President Obama came to our school I would tell him that Beacon Academy students are good listeners in Spanish and also other schools don’t have Spanish.

I would also like to tell President Obama that our school could improve on having more time for subjects. When we start a subject then we end a subject the time goes so fast. Or maybe I am having so much fun because I love Beacon Academy!
Kevin Werner
(Concordia Creative Learning Academy)

Dear President Obama,

CCLA does many things well. I like my school because you get to have lunch, recess, science and music. And we have gym, we read, we snack and write. We play outside, we sit on the rug and do math. We also have a gold fish and they are good. We have games in the gym and they are so much fun. We read books in reading and do science stuff. In music we sing and we play games in science and hang fish at CCLA.

I don’t like it when people push because you can get hurt or hurt somebody when you fall and get hurt too.

Kevin,
CCLA
Grades 3-5

FIRST PLACE
Jaleh Shambayati (Laura Jeffrey Academy)

SECOND PLACE
Haven Elwell (Community of Peace Academy)
  McKenzie Hodge (Beacon Academy)
  Kathleen Klinzing (St. Croix Preparatory Academy)
  Simon Olmstead (Seven Hills Classical Academy)
  Nushena Yang (Community School of Excellence)

THIRD PLACE
  Tiffany Anderson (Metro Deaf)
  Rachel Forseen (Yinghua Academy)
  Yasmin Omar Ismail (Minnesota International Middle School)
  Lydia Light (Laura Jeffrey Academy)
  Sonja Romportl (Beacon Academy)
  Lita Schollmeier (St. Croix Preparatory Academy)
  Kyle Swing (New Visions)
  Ramha Tramble-Johnson (Concordia Creative Learning Academy)
Revolutionary Change

People say I’m resistant to change, and I can’t say I disagree with them. Yet I made a big change when I decided to switch schools last year. I currently go to Laura Jeffrey Academy (LJA) in St. Paul. LJA is a revolutionary charter school because it is the first girl focused public charter school in Minnesota. It’s also a year round school. Both of the ideas are relatively new, especially in charter schools. It’s good to have a year round school because we don’t have a big break in the summer so we don’t forget the things we learned over the school year. I think it’s kind of cool that my school is year round because it seems like we get more breaks than other schools, even though we don’t. Sometimes it’s nice to have a girl focused (all girls) school because it makes it easier to learn. Supposedly girls and boys have different ways of learning things, so at an all girl’s or all boy’s school, you can focus more on that specific gender’s way of learning so that they can learn more than if they were in a mixed gender class.

Like everything else, LJA isn’t perfect. Since this is the first year that LJA is open, we can still improve many things, like being more organized, improving the lunches, and getting another bike rack for the kids that bike to school. We (the students) are already trying to improve the lunches by forming a group (led by Ms. Matrika, a teacher) that researches other lunch vendors our school could order from. We’ve already had the Operations manager from our current lunch vendor come in to answer questions. We are trying to think of fundraisers to raise money for a bike rack. The students are trying to keep things neater and more organized
by practicing individual accountability and mutual responsibility, one of the 7 principles at LJA.

In this situation, practicing individual accountability and mutual responsibility means getting to class on time, coming prepared and ready to learn, and following the rules and directions (although getting into a little mischief is much more fun!)

In all of the classes at LJA we have an essential question. Essential questions are questions that we try to answer by taking all we’ve learned so far and incorporating that with other people’s ideas. In Language arts and Social studies class, our essential question for last quarter was “Why is revolution inevitable”. I think revolution is inevitable because it’s human nature to change things so that we are happy and when a situation becomes intolerable for somebody, they automatically try to change it so that it is tolerable.

Not that making a big change is fun or easy. For example, the American Revolution wasn’t fun or easy for anybody, but it was necessary. Because the patriots had the courage and bravery to stand up for what they thought was right, we have our own country and are allowed to be independent. Whenever I think of the patriots, I think of the song that goes “this land is your land, this land is my land” and because a few people decided to stand up for what they believed in, those lyrics ring true in the ears of all Americans today, and I hope they always will.
What Obama Would See

If President Obama came to CPA (Community of Peace Academy) would he think it was a good school; would he like it? Yes, but he might want to change some things. There are many things students do well, but there are some things that could use work. I believe if all of us work together we can make CPA a better school. If you want to find out more information about CPA, please take the time to keep reading.

If Obama walks down the halls of our school and peeks in the classrooms he would notice that most students at CPA encourage kids that struggle and help them when they don't understand. Also, when we are having trouble we go to a teacher or a wise person around us to help us work through things. We work quietly on our work, most of the time anyway. There are a lot of teachers that make learning fun at CPA, like Ms. Rosa, Ms. Harris and Mr. Kong.

CPA is a great school, but there are some things that need to be fixed. Like working quietly, we could change it so that we could work quietly all the time. We should also work on not swearing and not turning in our homework. Not talking in the halls is a big one. Passing notes should stop too and not talking in class when we are not supposed to. Also sometimes a teacher breaks a rule for the kids like in our school we can't eat junk food, but sometimes we do anyway. At CPA there is some bullying. The people that bully know they are not supposed to, but there's only like one to three people that bully in each class most time there's just one.
Although there are some bad things that go on in our school students can fix them. When a bully is being mean #1 try to ignore it, #2 say “please stop!”, #3 tell a wise person. If you're scared to tell a wise person because you think they will say to the bully “_________ told me that you have been swearing in class.” because the bully would just be mean you more. Instead ask whoever you tell to not say that you said it. Maybe that will fix the problem. It did for me. Students, can fix these problems if they try harder and that goes for me too! I could help by setting a good example especially when I walk by other classes, younger than 5th grade. We can all try harder. 

Thank you for reading this paper about what Obama would see if he came to CPA. There are many things we do great at CPA. There are things we could change. Like I said the things we do that are not so good we can fix. People just need to work for it. Many people are working really hard to make a change. We can make CPA a better school.
Mackenzie Hodge

Beacon Academy

4th Grade

I am Mackenzie Hodge, and I am going to tell you a few things about Beacon Academy. I think Beacon has good education because I come home knowing 20 different things that my mother doesn’t know. Beacon Academy also helps children behave better with our teachers and school motto, “Like the light of a beacon our schools is a guide to knowledge, and friendship, character, and pride. I love to learn, I do my best, I care about others with kindness and respect. Beacon Academy leads the way to be smart and simpatico every day, hurray.” Another thing is the Beacon Academy delivers May baskets. What we do is we make baskets on the first day of May and we fill it with stuff and we deliver them to the neighborhood near us.

I am going to tell you some things Beacon could improve on. In the winter and from summer changing to fall there is mud. They don’t’ do anything about the mud either. All they do is block it off but kids still step in it. Also in the winter, it is super icy. One child went to the hospital with a concussion.

Now I am going to tell you some things the students can help make improvements on. I think the students should at least try not to break school property because some of the students tip backwards on the chairs. That just makes the chairs break sometimes then costs the school money. We as students also have to try not to stress out our teachers and principals. Because they go to their trouble to try to teach us 5 days a week. That’s all I have about my school.
Fun Learning Found in a Minnesota Charter School

Minnesota Charter School Essay

By Kathleen Klinzing, Grade 4, Mrs. Nelson

St. Croix Preparatory Academy, Oak Park Heights, Minnesota

March 10, 2009

St. Croix Preparatory Academy is a wonderful school to attend. I started going to St. Croix Preparatory because I was bored at my old school. SCPA encourages us to learn with great teachers, character education, many fun subjects, and student activities. SCPA is even working to become a better school.

The teachers are not boring at SCPA. The teachers are kind, creative and always trying to find ways to make things fun and ways to make us stretch our brains. They group you with kids at the same level as you. There are educational assistants who help your class like grading papers, taking your class to specialists, and hanging projects in the hallway. The teachers always have the lessons ready and are willing to help and explain.

Teachers are great models of good character at SCPA. In character Ed we learn about different character traits such as perseverance. In the hallways and on doors there are posters that have stories of people who showed good character, and even one of their famous quotes! We have character Ed lessons and the school also recognizes good character. They also encourage you to keep showing good character, for example, we have golden tickets to show that you showed good character.

We learn about all of the subjects and they are presented in exciting ways at SCPA. At St. Croix Prep there are fun subjects and even Spanish class! We even learn history which I did not get to learn in my previous school. To learn about history we created a Middle Age Banquet to feel what it was like to go to a Banquet in the Middle Ages. In 4th grade science we made a telegraph!

Being a student leader is not boring. St. Croix Preparatory Academy encourages students to be leaders by providing them many ways to get involved. Students can help by helping raise money to get more materials, and pay attention in class. Students can also be kind and tell people about our school so we can expand. We can donate things like books we don’t read anymore, or even batteries for science. St. Croix Prep has several exciting, educational after school activities like archery.

Always looking to do better is not boring. This is a very good school but there is always something to improve, even for St. Croix Prep. Our school can improve by getting a bigger building and getting lockers, as we will next year. It would also be nice to have computer lab twice a week. Mostly, we need a better building!

Once when my class came in from recess and we were hanging up our coats, one of the sets of coat hooks suddenly fell down! We all stood there giggling and locking it into our mind so we could tell it another time! Most people would be not so happy, we thought of it as a funny thing because the learning is more important than the building. Seeing the fun in the problems, makes our days less boring at SCPA.
Simon Olstead
Seven Hills Classical Academy

When President Obama comes to Seven Hills I would tell him and show him that we do a good job at learning. Last week we dissected a sheep’s heart. We cut it open to see the right and left ventricle and other stuff. We are also learning about African kingdoms. In the African kingdoms there are a lot more famous tribes than just Egypt.

One thing I think we should improve on is having more experiments because I like experiments. They help me learn more about the subject we are studying. We could get more parents to help with the experiments. This would be lots of fun. That is what I would tell President Obama.
Nushena Yang
Community School of Excellence
Age 11, grade 5

Charter School Essay Contest

Did you know my school is a very interesting school? My school is called Community School of Excellence. We shorten to CSE. This is my first year at a Hmong Language and Culture focus school. So far, it has been a very fun school year. I notice something special about my school; it is not just about having a lot of Hmong students here, because I have never been to a school where all the students in my class are Hmong. I moved to Minnesota from North Carolina and I am glad I found this school. I know all the students in my class and befriended all of them. We get to learn about our Language and culture. We learn about traditional Hmong music, sing traditional Hmong songs and even learn to dance. Sometimes, the students don’t always work well together. They argue and yell at each other, but there is a solution. We should just make up and be friend and stop the fighting because we are all Hmong. We need to work together.

My school is a Hmong Language and Culture focus school which is very interesting. The Hmong students in my school are always listening when it comes to learning about Hmong. We always do our best at keeping our Hmong Language alive. I believe that we Hmong are very special because we can speak two languages. Our language is a very pretty language. The school teaches us both Hmong and English.

Since it is my first year here, I didn’t know that the school will celebrate the Hmong New Year like the way we did. I was very surprise that the school celebrate this type of occasion at the school too. My whole class did a skit about what the New Year celebration means to each of us and how Hmong people get ready for the New Year. I had a part where I thought it was pretty embarrassing at first. I had to sing a traditional Hmong song. I was scared and was very nervous. Ms. Her, my 5th grade teacher at CSE told
me to be calm and concentrate on the clock on the wall, so I did that. After I did the singing I felt relieved. That was the scariest thing I could have ever done. Everyone cheered and clapped after I sang. I felt proud of myself, of my school and of my teacher for letting me sing the traditional Hmong song. Ms. Her did a good job of teaching me the song.

One thing that we need to work on is working together to make this school a better place to be for all of us. Most of the students here are Hmong and sometimes we the students get too comfortable with each other. We talk too much in class and teachers get mad but we can improve it by not talking so much and not being so rude to each other. The students here need to know that this is a special school for us Hmong kids to learn about our language and culture and we need to take it seriously. For example, I used to dislike someone in my class, but now everyone is my friend because I have learned that we are all Hmong and I can’t dislike anyone. We really need to work together to make this school a better school for all of us.

As you can see from my essay the students from CSE are the best when it comes to learning our Hmong culture and learn our languages. We learn to sing traditional Hmong songs, play traditional Hmong instruments and learn how to read and write in Hmong. Students sometimes argue which is not good because when you don’t listen you don’t learn as much. The students should just get along with each other and be respectful towards each other. I hope that everyone in my school can work together on improving the school and making this school a better place to be and learn.
Metro Deaf School (MDS) is a good education school. We have cool technology! MDS is a very safe school. I will explain about our great teachers. There are some things that should improve in MDS. Do you know MDS well? (I bet you will learn something new about MDS.😊)

Now I will explain about our great technology. We have new flat screen monitors in our computer lab. We have cool SMART boards! You can use them for learning or fun. They have special pens to write on it, but you can’t use marker, pencil or pen! It is important to remember you can’t use permanent marker because it will be stuck forever.

MDS is a very safe school! If a tornado is coming directly to MDS or if there is a fire in MDS, they will know and turn on the alarm; it is bright like a camera that just flashes a picture. MDS is always locked during the day and after school, so a robber can’t come in.

Now, I will explain about our great teachers. All teachers have taught us very much, and my teacher taught me very much, too. One of the middle school teachers is teaching an after school activity “Latino”. It is a Mexican theme. Our teacher lets us use “fidget things”. Fidget things are little toys that help you calm down and pay attention in class. Some smell good, some you can tangle and my favorite is almost like gum but not for chewing.

I think some things should improve: add more books for our library, add doors in the empty door frames, better cafeteria foods, longer recess, longer lunch tables, and add special effects for our green room. The green room is a room we can use for videos or playing with cool background effects like I’m a news woman and standing in a jungle.
Do you know MDS well? Let see, MDS started with eight students in downtown St. Paul and is successful growing because we now have 70-75 students. MDS has moved three times. Metro Deaf School was the first Deaf charter school in United States. MDS is bi-cultural and bi-lingual because we use English and ASL everyday. Can you imagine 4 women that started work at MDS as teachers and paraprofessional, and they still work here now. WOW! My grandmother did work here as paraprofessional for few years. Now Metro Deaf School will destroy our old gym and build a new big gym. We will add Pre-K – 8th grade to Pre-K – 12th grades next year.

MDS is a good school and come see for yourself. 😊
Rachel Forseen

Yinghua Academy

3rd Grade

If Obama Came to Our School

If President Obama came to our school, I would tell him how Yinghua Academy helps their students prepare for big tests. They give us practice work sheets and workbooks. We go on computers and take trial tests. My teacher encourages us by telling us that, “You can do it” and “Goodluck.”

My school could improve by offering the students the opportunity to show school spirit. One example is having a school spirit week. During this week we could have a pajama day, crazy hat day, switch teacher day, and no uniform days.

We could elect students to form a student council. I think students in second grade and up should have a change to be nominated. We could hold an election by having the students vote. A student council gives students at Yinghua Academy an opportunity to have a voice and leadership skills.

In conclusion, Yinghua Academy offers the best education in two languages. Our school rules are be safe, speak Chinese, learn, and have fun! I like our school because the number rule is being safe. This rule not only refers to the being safe to people, but keeping others hearts safe.
Yasmin Omar Ismail

Minnesota International Middle School

Grade 5

Picture this, a big school with a lot of multicultural kids. Minnesota International Middle School is the best place to learn.

What is so great about MIMS? The great thing about MIMS is the teachers. They are the ones to help you. Another thing is the education. You will have a very good education at MIMS. The teacher assistants are also great. They classroom are where we learn. They have helpful signs all over the room.

There are some things to improve. I believe that the school lunch needs to change. Most of the students agree. We should not have the same thing over and over again. I think that once in a while we could have some different lunch. I also think that maybe there would be a variety of lunches and we could choose our favorite one.

What could students do to help? Students could ask the principal. They could also bring their own lunches if they would like. But some could still the school lunches if they want.

In conclusion, Minnesota International Middle School is a great place to learn. I am honored to be one of the students that learn at this school.
Essay on Revolution—By Lydia Light, 5th grade, Laura Jeffrey Academy

The Revolutionary War. The Declaration of Independence. President Washington. Our country would not be independent if it weren’t for the patriots. These people were strong and persistent; they didn’t give up until we had freedom. The King of Britain was being unfair to the people in the colonies, and they didn’t like it. So they got together and did something about it.

Revolution is change. It is inevitable (unstoppable, bound to happen) because you can’t always make everyone happy at the same time. Someone is bound to be unhappy, and eventually they are going to do something about it. And even if everyone was happy, there is always something that could be improved.

Laura Jeffrey Academy (my school) is very revolutionary. Our founders decided to make a public, girl-focused charter school because middle school is the time when girls are the most vulnerable to teasing, and they are the least focused on school. Girls start to think that they are limited in ways that would affect their schoolwork. LJA is fighting against this. Our school is also year-round. This helps us learn more because we don’t forget so much over the summer.

But, like everything else in the world, we are still not perfect. There are a lot of things that need improving; like the need of art supplies, or better/more after school activities. In fact, we are thinking of having some sort of fundraiser (a carnival, yard
sale, etc.) to get money for more art things. The lunches are another great example of
this. A lot of kids do not like what we are getting served, so we formed a group to do
something about it. We have talked to our venders once, and they took our ideas into
consideration.

I love my school, and I thank you for supporting charter schools, Mr. President!
Please keep helping this world become better and better. Don't try to stop it from
changing, because, as we know, revolution is inevitable!
We raised $2,600 in one week. One week! There are only about 370 kids in our school! We kids raised that much out of our own money for Pennies for Patients in just one week. Beacon Academy is very unique because of the fun activities and projects and fundraisers.

What I like about Beacon Academy is Pennies for Patients, the Sock Hop, D.A.R.E., projects in class, the third and fourth grade plays, and all the other fun activities.

First, in Pennies for Patients, we raised $2,600 for kids with cancer—kids that take chemotherapy, kids that have to take all that medicine and feel sick all the time. I feel really kind and caring that the rest of the school and I are helping these kids get better! We got to do fun things everyday of the week, like wacky hair day, backwards day, pajama day, and some other cool days, as long as we paid. (The money went to Pennies for Patients.) We also put in money whenever we wanted, in jars outside the school office.

Second, I like the Sock Hop. You get to dress up in the 50’s kind of clothes. There’s dancing, snacks, and lots of fun. You get to be with friends and family.

Third, I like D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). In fifth grade, we take D.A.R.E. and learn about drugs and their dangers. Officer Gotwald taught us all about how to protect ourselves from using drugs in a bad way.

I’ve also done some really fun projects in school like making volcanoes, castles (fourth grade); making and singing songs about matter and atoms and making posters and models (fifth grade). I’ve done two plays at Beacon. When I was in third grade, we did one about Rome. In fourth grade, we did a play about the American Revolution.
With all the awesome things about Beacon, there are also some things I don’t like. We need a bigger school and longer recesses.

We need a bigger school because the lunchroom and gym should be apart. We need more rooms, and the rooms should also be bigger. The lunchroom and gym are together, and that makes it hard when they have to clean it after lunch, and it’s still a little wet on the floor when it’s our P.E. time. We also need more rooms. Right now, there are portables outside that the third graders use. The rooms are also small. The gym is not a full-sized basketball court, and when we have our assemblies in there it gets very crowded. The regular classrooms aren’t that small but they could be bigger. There’s room for the thing you really need but if you have a lot of extra things, then there’s no room. The art room is very small. All the tables are close together, and there’s not a lot of place to move around.

With recess, I might get a group of friends and ask the teachers for an extension of recess by about ten minutes. My friends and I could also maybe take a survey of people, asking if they think we should have more recess and why.

I think we should fix the problems so Beacon will be a fun school for everyone. Beacon is going to move to a different location next year. Next year the school will have more space and more classrooms—hopefully, a gym and lunchroom that are separate.

Beacon Academy is a really great school because of all the fun activities, projects, plays, and all the other great things. I really like Beacon Academy. Go Beacon!!
St. Croix Preparatory Academy is a school of academics, character, and leadership. Our school encourages all three! Each student is expected to show leadership in some way and character traits are emphasized and encouraged.

Although SCPA teaches the basics like landforms, verbs, fractions, and The Civil War they teach it in a way that is interesting and that students will remember. In third grade we learned about the fifty states we learned a song about them and created posters on two different states. Once everybody was finished we had a Poster Fair. Anybody could come. We shared our posters and the experience helped us share about our states and our speaking skills. In fourth grade we studied Ancient Greece. After our unit we had an Ancient Greek banquet. We wore costumes, ate Greek food, were entertained by jokers, and we got our hands washed before and after the banquet. It was just like spending a day in Ancient Greece.

After The Civil War Unit in fifth grade we all created a poster, wrote a story, did a skit, and wrote an obituary about someone in the Civil War. One person even made a website. The teachers teach in a way that almost everyone can understand. They also make sure everyone knows the material that we are learning.

Character helps make school enjoyable because the students are kind and don’t bully. Leadership goes along with character. The students at our school are leaders and that is a very important skill to have during life. Our school also
focuses on building community. This year we went from one fourth grade class to three fifth grade classes. The school helped organize buddy groups and somebody that had been at the school the year before was the leader. We got together with our groups and went to places during the summer, like the library and parks. They also organized days where all the students that were going to be in fifth grade or other grades got together played games like battleship and kickball. Even though we went from 25 students to about 70 students we still feel like a small school where everyone gets along. Our school helps us build community and make new friends.

Because our students come from many different places, something I think our school could improve on is having more fun activities after school, on weekends, or over breaks that we could get to know our classmates. A way that students could help with this is by volunteering to organize these activities or show ideas that they have for these activities to their teachers or the student council.
Dear President Obama,

My name is Kyle Swing. I am a third grader at New Visions Academy. I think that our school is good at teaching kids how to read because we do reading for 2 hours a day. The teachers also pull us for small reading groups called Power Hour. We read to the teacher when he pulls us for timed readings. The bad thing about our school is that we don’t have a music class with a music teacher. I could help out at my school by studying harder so I can get a better grade on my tests and I could help by helping grade papers for the kindergarten and first grade.

Your friend,

Kyle Swing
My name is Ramya and I am 9 years old. The school I go to is CCLA. If president Obama visited CCLA I would tell him how our school is good at math. All of the kids at CCLA love to do math! Most of all we learn how to divide in 3rd grade. We will show President Obama how good we are at math, reading, and language.

The staff are all good role models for the students. Our principal is super nice. On her birthday we gave her a card and teddy bear. She gives us hot cheetos, treats, lets us go on lots of fieldtrips, & lets us go out to lunch with the teachers.

All the kids at CCLA can show President Obama that we love math because we do math everyday, and learn new things every day. Thank you! Ramya
Grades 6-8

Special Award
Shavaughnata Carter (Concordia Creative Learning Academy)

FIRST PLACE
Haleigh Gulden (North Lakes Academy)

SECOND PLACE
Abdirashid Fowsi Mohamed (Minnesota International Middle School)
Gabby Groath (Eagle Ridge Academy)
Laura Mulcahy (Great River Academy)
John Paul Wheaton (Eagle Ridge Academy)

THIRD PLACE
Lindsay Concepcion (St. Croix Preparatory Academy)
Kevin Peacock (Metro Deaf)
Raheel Qureshi (Global Academy)
Elizabeth Weimholt (Laura Jeffrey Academy)
Kyle Wendorf (Beacon Academy)
Sharrod Wills (New Visions School)
Shavaughta Carter – 6th Grade

March 5, 2009

Dear President Obama:

Here at Concordia Creative Learning Academy we learn and have fun.
I really want you to come to my school. I will tell you all about our school.
Well, let’s get started on my First Block, Ms. Mary Lou is my First Block teacher.
We can learn, play, eat snacks and have fun all at the same time. We also like to
read a book called “Touching Spirit Bear”. I would like to tell you that some people
and I want charter schools to be able town their own school. I also want to let you
know that my 5th Block teacher, Mr. A. took me and another good student to you
campaign before you were elected. A lot of people said “yes” because you were a
black person, some said “no” because you were a black person, I’m thinking you
are a “good” person.

I want you to know that our school should get a football team and more activities for
our school. I need to also let you know that I am scared to go to war. I’ve had a good
life behind and in front of me. I have never failed in school and never been suspended
and I will never be involved in a gang. I love to play football and basketball.

“Preparing children for a life of learning.”
Shavaughnta Carter – 6th Grade
2nd. Page

I just had a house fire last year and that took everything from me. I have one sister and my mom that live with me. I have a dog named Champ.

The reason why I am writing to you is for my school. I want to play football for CCLA. Our school is renting space in this building. If you and our state of Minnesota would let us own our own school we will take care of this school.

I want for you to come to my school so you could meet Ms. Mary Lou and Mr. A.

I love my school and I want you to do the right thing and help us own our school.

If you come, all you have to do is go to the office and announce my name on the loud speaker and I will come down and congratulate you and we could take a trip all around the school.

Please come or the best thing you can do is invite me to the White House, that would be so cool.

I forgot to tell you, can you stop the war? I will thank you a lot for that.

Sincerely,

Shavaughnta Carter
North Lakes Academy

If our president Barack Obama were to visit my school, North Lakes Academy, there would be many things I would want to tell him about my school. The first thing I would do would be to thank him for supporting charter schools. I would also thank him for setting up Students for Barack Obama, founded in the summer of 2006, and letting us kids have an active part in his campaign and presidency. One thing that president Obama and I have in common is we both like to play basketball, so I would challenge him to a basketball game. Then I would tell him all about my school and what the teachers do well, what my school could improve on, and what students in my school could do to help make the necessary improvements.

After giving president Obama a tour and introducing him to all of my teachers, I would go on to tell him what my school does an awesome job of. My school does a phenomenal job of making every student feel important and of value to our
learning environment. The teachers and staff are always asking students opinion on new ideas. North Lakes Academy also does an awesome job at encouraging students to do the best they possibly can. Also, since our school is collage prepatory, students who are in accelerated classes will have the opportunity to be in collage courses in high school and receive college credits.

Our small classes create one on one help that large schools would never be able to accommodate because of the size.

Next I would go on to tell president Obama about what my school could improve on. I think my school could improve on the kids who refuse to do their work and don't care about their grades. Also I think my school could use improvement on kids who cause a lot of trouble. I think students could go about the necessary improvements in many ways. I think the best way would be to encourage our friends to do their best and to discourage bad behavior.

Afterwards I would thank Barack Obama again for everything he has done for charter schools. I would tell him to keep the good work for schools like mine. Also I would tell him
how cool it is that he was the first African American president of Harvard Law review and the first African American president of the United States. Last of all I would tell him how I admire his work as president and I think he is doing a great job.
Eagle Ridge Academy

Eagle Ridge Academy is a charter school in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. We have about two hundred and fifty students in our school. Eagle Ridge Academy is based strongly on preparation for college. Charter schools stand for one main reason. They want to provide the future voters and citizens of the United States of America with the best possible education. Because I came from a homeschooling family, school was a completely new thing when I entered sixth grade. I’m very grateful that I go to a school as rigorous as this. I want as excellent of an education for myself as I can get. When I entered this school, I immediately observed all of the great things that were here. For example, small classes, friendly teachers, and the school uniforms. After a while, though, I discerned some things that could be improved. Such as the bullying that sometimes occurs. Immediately, I wanted to take action, so I ran for student senate. I’m a proud student of Eagle Ridge Academy, and a proud citizen of The United States of America.

One of this school’s strengths is its curriculum. We are taught important note-taking skills, and we take finals. We can even get college credits in high school. We have classical curriculum, we learn writing skills, take logic and Latin, and we read the “classics.” Many students complain about the homework, but I perceive it from a different perspective. I see that when they assign us challenging homework, they are preparing us academically so we can be good citizens of our great and noble country. When they are teaching us note-taking skills, many complain. I see it as preparation for college, where the professors don’t summarize a paper for you. We need to know how to follow what the teacher is saying and not expect them to do all the
work for us. In college, the teachers don’t take you step-by-step. They follow their own speed, and it is up to you to follow and pick out the important facts. Truly, I appreciate the rigorous learning program, yet there are some things about Eagle Ridge Academy that could be improved.

One way Eagle Ridge Academy could be improved is the elimination of disrespect and bullying. If a student, especially a friend is bullying or being bullied, it makes me very sad indeed. Sometimes we can’t get through all of the material in class due to a teacher having to deal with a disrespectful student. As in most schools, there are the nice, the not so nice, and the down right mean students. If teachers, because of recent bullying, are watching a student carefully, it is never acceptable for the student to pay somebody else to bully a student for him just because he’d get in trouble if he directly did it. If a student can’t, or doesn’t have the courage to stand up to the bully, they should go to a teacher or nearby adult right away. Sometimes if a bullied student tells on a bully, he or she gets bullied even worse for “tattling,” or “snitching.”

Having a safe atmosphere in the school is important, for if a student is being bullied enough, they may not want to return again. Also, bullying may dissuade prospective students from coming to Eagle Ridge Academy. Our ambassador program is designed to make prospective and new students feel comfortable and safe. It is a good way to insure that students who are responsible and diligent are available to encourage students to come here and work hard to have a bright future. About three or four students from each grade are suggested by their teachers to be in the ambassador program. They greet prospective students and guide them through the classes and school. The ambassadors also help out new students if they need help getting their locker open or are lost and can’t find their next class. In order to stop the bullying, we could have the director or teachers talk to all the students about bullying. Hallway and locker-area supervision could be increased, with the use of security cameras to provide proof, as well as deterrence. Also, the
penalties for bullying should increase. The students should get two detentions, then one suspension, and then they should be expelled. Bullying is a major problem, but can be solved.

Eagle Ridge Academy has both strengths and weaknesses. Preparing students for college is the most important part of this school. Eagle Ridge Academy also tries to turn out well-rounded people. If this school can stop the bullying problem, that may even help the school and students’ dreams come true. When college turns individuals out into the world, they have tried very hard to give them the most knowledge possible. My school is the same. They are trying to send well-educated people into the world of college. My school, like all schools, has great and not so great things. I am a proud part of my school, and I believe we will be able to end the problems and strengthen the school.
My Educational Playground, By Abdirashid Fowusi Mohamed.

Dear president obama, my school’s extra curricular activities are kind of on the LAME side. I mean seriously, We don’t even have any sports teams, no mascots. WE(The boys) ONLY HAVE A BASKET INNERMURALS PROGRAM AND GIRLS ONLY HAVE A RUNNING CLUB!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.

What if I don’t like those sports? Like really. Where’s the freedom? Where’s the individuality?

WHERE’S THE FAIRNESS? I mean basketball is an OK sport, but I’m more of a soccer type of guy. My needs are totally ignored to meet the demands of the majority of students. I’m a big supporter of majority rules but still there should be more options besides basketball and running, and I mean we don’t do much in gym so what am I supposed to do? Mr. Obama I hope you understand my TRAGIC problem. And when I complain, people just call me selfish. And looking back on it now, I voted no on basketball and voted yes on soccer but was outnumbered in that “Majority rules” scenario. I’m such a hypocrite sometimes. And right now, here I am, focused on my own narcissistic ideals. What about the kids who like basketball. They’d be in my shoes, typing out this whole Fiasco of an essay.

But there are good things about my school, for example. Here at MIMS we get a lot of new people that are new to this WHOLE COUNTRY. So they deal with the whole drama of a new school, neighborhood, country, town, house, friends, And language. So here we tend to help the new kids out, no matter what country they’re from. Because well, Most of us here know the feeling of coming to a new country. We know and understand it. So we try and help make it less difficult for others. And also the teachers here are quite understanding, even though I feel I’ve been treated un fairly at times, but hey that’s just me. So I guess this school isn’t that bad, I guess I’m just overreacting, Right? WRONG! no.

Another problem we have here is that we have no student government. Our voices can’t be heard. Our needs AREN’T MET. So we come to school everyday(Possibly forced by parents)And we feel empty inside. We feel like we have no say here. Like we need an Abraham Lincoln to free us of our enslavement, because this is really no better.

But then again my narcissistic ideals might be taking over again. But no they are not, Because I’m not just speaking about myself. I’m speaking for all those who feel they have been wronged and misjudged for a few tiny incidents. For those who feel that they have been branded for life for just one simple “Talking while the teachers talking” and People call me lazy when I don’t show up for Gym days but I just don’t want to go. Don’t get me wrong, I’m a relatively athletic person. I play soccer, I run, I play football, heck I even play basketball at times when I’m bored. But here I am spilling my guts to you, And this story might not even make it to Washington, Whoop-Dee-doo.
So I guess I'll just start with the sugar-coating. Shall we? I'll name all good things about my school. My school rarely does meet the demand of its students but when it does, it comes at you full force. I remember asking an administrator if I could go to after-school. She then replied by asking where I live and what bus I normally ride, AND gave me an after-school permission slip ALL in the blink of a second. So I guess besides the detainment of creativity every now and then, I guess my school isn't all that bad. But still I can think of a few THOUSAND improvements it can use. I also think I've been exaggerating a few key points.

Let's just get back on topic. I believe it was you, Barack Hussein Obama, Who said in Quote “Though we all take separate paths, we all walk towards the same goal.” In these words I make my friends, and in this great idealism of Change, I live my life. President Barack Hussein Obama, I come to you with this strange predicament Of my creativity not being expressed, So I ask of you to please try and CHANGE Charter school extra-curricular activities, So my Artistic, Musical, and imaginative mind can come out, and start socializing with the world. Thank you for listening; this is my wish to you Mr. Barack Hussein Obama, Because I say not this only for myself, because sadly I am leaving 8th grade in three months, but I ask this for future generations. If this letter gets to you, I thank you for reading it.
Dear Mister President Barack Obama,

Let me begin by saying how unbelievably, overwhelmingly amazing it is to be writing to you, the actual president of the entire United States of America. I have been attending the Montessori Great River School in Saint Paul for almost two years, and applauded at your inauguration with the rest of the school, as we watched the ceremony together. So imagine my surprise and delight when I found out that you are coming to our school to speak.

Our school does many things well; that only becomes more apparent to me as I get older and understand more about how the school works. But I think that what Great River School is best at is upholding our strong community. A bond exists between the staff and students. We our bound by our diligence and longing to make this work: to succeed as a Montessori charter junior high and high school, which is a very odd combination of things. Our community is small, and consequentially tight. We are a community of friends, and if not friends, then people willing to accept or be accepted as friends. Like a group of friends, we have entire school inside jokes: our obsession with ultimate Frisbee, our obsession with bike safety, our several other weird obsessions. The way that no one's lunch is their own, the antics and passions and actions of our students. There is a certain energy when you walk in, a Great River style, a Great River flavor. People who go there will be the first to admit to outsiders that Great River is a “weird school”, unlike any other school.

However, despite our tight-knit community, we do have problems. I feel that the biggest of these issues is our relationship to the environment. We have recycling bins in some classes, and one in the cafeteria that no one ever uses. We have a compost bucket that we feed to decomposer worms that live in worm bins in the science room. Still, I do not think we do enough or are aware enough of the world around us.

Daily at lunch I see plastic bottles, containers, fruit peels, and extra food thrown in the trash. The students neither know or care about their impact on the environment. This is not for lack of trying on the part of the teachers. Every year, our school has what we call the three key experiences: an odyssey (a ten-day trip where we ride a bus out to a different part of the country, camping every night), a J-term (a month when the entire junior high drops regular classes to perform a play), and a bike trip (a five-day trip on
bikes, again, we camp out at night). On the two trips, we leave nothing behind at camp sites, leaving the environment better than the way we found it. This J-term, a group performed an original play about solid waste reduction. None of this knowledge seems to be rubbing off on the students, and it is becoming a bigger and bigger issue.
Fortunately, this is an issue the community can resolve. Every week, the Great River junior high meets to discuss the week and the school, their issues and concerns and ideas. This issue could be brought up and discussed there. We could make signs reminding people about recycling. We could set up a rain barrel, or a compost heap. But I think that the most effective solution would be to have you yourself, Barack Obama, come and speak at Great River. To hear words about the environment coming from your own mouth would be beyond inspiring. Please think it over.

Sincerely,
Laura Mulcahy

[Signature]

Great River School
Grade: 8

MAR 16 2009
By [Signature]
A+ in Education, D- in Gym

I am a seventh grader at Eagle Ridge Academy in Eden Prairie, which is a small charter school that gives students a classical education. The best thing about the school is that it teaches Latin and Greek mythology, but the thing it needs most is a gym and physical education classes.

Eagle Ridge gives its students a great classical education. It teaches Latin and Greek mythology, which will help us in college and in life. In college, many people take language classes, and multiple languages of the world are derived from Latin, so knowing Latin will help us learn those languages more quickly. In life, Latin is also used a lot in government and law. They use Latin words such as *corpus delicti* which means “body of evidence”, *habeas corpus* which means “you have the body”, *versus* which means “against”, etc. (Even the word “etc.” that I just used is an abbreviation of the Latin words *et cetera* which means “and so forth”!) Greek mythology is also important because the myths teach a lot of important lessons about life. For example, the story of Narcissus teaches people not to be self-centered.

While Eagle Ridge has a great education, it needs one important thing: a gym and some physical education classes. I heard on the news that sixty percent of people around the Twin Cities are obese. A gym and phys ed. classes will help prevent obesity at our school and help us develop good physical habits. It will also make us want to listen and study better because we will get our energy out from sitting all day. Maybe President Obama could give some money to help build a new gym at Eagle Ridge and even hire some physical education teachers.
In conclusion, I think Eagle Ridge gives a great classical education, but it needs some physical activities for the kids. I might try to influence the school board to consider getting a gym sometime soon. I've heard they may already be planning this, but if they aren't, I'll make sure that they put it at the top of their list.
St. Croix Preparatory Academy
Lindsay Concepcion
6th grade
March 13, 2009

Wonderful times at St. Croix Prep

My school, St. Croix Prep (also known as SCPA), provides many opportunities that I think President Obama would support. St. Croix Prep is the perfect place for me and everyone else. I love it! St. Croix Prep is located in Stillwater, and it gets many students from many places. I moved to this school because of many things that it provides that normal, public schools may not.

For instance, SCPA really encourages character, academics, and leadership. An example of this was on my first day there. I met many new friends and everyone was kind and inviting. Also, test scores there are much higher than the Minnesota State average. Kids work really hard at SCPA and are serious about grades. In conclusion, there are many kids who stand out because of their kindness towards others and their willingness to help a classmate or lead a team.

At St. Croix Prep, kids are eager to help, which brings me to my next topic: volunteer work and service projects. Since students like to help, SCPA should provide the kids with more service project opportunities as a form of building on leadership and character skills. Also, it would help other Stillwater citizens if we cleaned up for them or entertained them. Finally, students would feel great knowing that now, somebody will have a clean house for the rest of the month or a brand-new pen pal to talk to, and everyone knows that a friend in need is a friend indeed!

Still, adults alone can't make this adjustment; kids need to have their share, too. To make this possible, kids could take turns fundraising for busing money or donating to a needy child. For starters, students could be chosen to start a silent auction or garage sale and use the funds for busing money. Students could also sell/donate used books, toys, and games (not to mention food for the food shelf). Another way to solve this dilemma is to hold a party in which adults or other students could pay for admission. It is in these ways that St. Croix Prep could earn money to pay for busing and other fees that would make the volunteer experience enjoyable.

Above all, St. Croix Prep is an awesome school, and I would be honored to have President Obama come and see what goes on there, and just how neat the learning experience is. St. Croix Prep rocks!

(402 words)
What I Would Tell Barack Obama about My Charter School

If Barack Obama went to my school, I would be thrilled that he could discover about our school. I would tell him about my school's curriculum, and my worry about the AR (Accelerated Reader) program. But, we do have a solution for the AR program, which I will explain later.

I like my school's curriculum, because I feel that I am in the right class. My teachers are knowledgeable about teaching a specific class. For instance, my school has a teacher who is trained to teach students who have autism, who need a slower pace for learning. But as well, they have teachers who are trained for students that take on a faster pace of learning. I like that, because my teachers are more trained for different levels of education, so I feel that my class is always right for me. That makes me feel comfortable, having teachers who are prepared for students like me.

I like my school's A.R. program—it gives me time to relax and just read. However, it is a little difficult to find books that fit my level. I feel the reason behind this is that most of the school reads at one level. There are only a few books at the higher level. I am a fast reader, so I have read many of the books, but now I feel stuck with no options. I would like to have books for EACH grade level, no matter how much people who read it. I have difficulty finding books, so I have to read books below my grade level, but I want to read better and read harder books, so I'm stuck.
Oh! President Obama, sir! You’ve answered my message to visit my school. Just let me say that I am honored, sir, of how you generously took time of your busy schedule to come to Minnesota. I know how busy you are in the White House.

Oh! Well I’ll be honored to tour you around my school. My school is very strong in its fun-educational teachings. For starters, the principle has incentives. If we’re good on the bus, we get ice-cream. If we’re bad, we miss gym and recess. If we’re the most behaved bus for the month, we get a day without uniform.

The buses are a free program that the school is trying to improve. An example is how the routes are too long, and because of bus shortage, everybody is crammed into their seats. We are also currently looking for more space to expand our school for a proper gym, mess hall, assembly room, and a computer room. Fortunately, our neighboring school (New-Horizon Academy) is willing to move for the expansion. As for the computer lab, I sent 10 questions to Are You Smarter than a 5th-Grader and hoping they reply.

Now, off to the classrooms. As you can see, we have four kindergarten rooms, two 1st grade rooms, two 2nd grade rooms, two 3rd grade rooms, two 4th grade rooms, one 5th grade room, and one 6th grade room for a total of fourteen classrooms. And they help us better by teaching us at our own pace so we can build up knowledge quicker and easier. We even have special curriculums to match each student’s grade level.

Another problem is overcrowding. I mean sharing the playground for different recess periods is tolerable because it’s outside, but the overcrowding makes everything that we all have to share dirty, especially the bathrooms! About 350 students have to share 1 playground (which is actually the school garage because we don’t have a playground) with 14 balls and 2 jump ropes, so it’s lucky each class has its own recess time.

During lunch though, there are 2 periods. The first for kindergarten-2nd grade, the second is 3rd-6th grade. And there are only 4 bathrooms; 2 for boys’ and 2 for girls’. 1 boys’ and 1 girls’ bathroom for kindergarten and staff (I think), and one boys’ and 1 girls’ bathroom for 1st-6th grade. The reason the school has so many problems is because it’s fairly new. It just opened up at the beginning of the school year, so this is this school’s first year of teaching.

I think what the students can do is suck it up until the school gets more money. I hope you succeed in fixing the economy so we can do just that. Also they can try to help clean the school, have fundraisers, keep the school neat (which might either encourage or cancel out the first solution), and share and play in a nice way. Well, I hope you had a great tour (and please try to help us improve it) and have a safe trip back to Washington D.C. Bye!
Elizabeth Weimholt
Laura Jeffrey Academy
6th grade

1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama,
I know that this really doesn’t sound like a letter written to somebody, because it seems like an essay, (but I wrote it like that since that’s what I was supposed to do), and so please excuse the very un-letterish beginning.

Change is inevitable. Bound to happen, unstoppable. Sure, you could slow it down, but sooner or later the winds of change will blow you over. Revolution is an extreme form of change, and sometimes it gets around to getting a colonel British king out of our hair. (King George tax-a-lot wasn’t too happy about that, let me tell you, since that was a tornado of change.)

Kids grow up, light bulbs die out, and eventually fluorescent bulbs do too. Change is happening before our very eyes, (or above them, in a chandelier), even if we don’t notice. Some you can’t not notice, like a new president, (may I congratulate you on a spectacular landslide!) and some can just be moderate news in a small place, and here is a snippet of my writing about my moderate news.

Here at my school, Laura Jeffrey Academy we have just turned the page of Minnesota herstory. We are the first girl-focused charter school in Minnesota. The school rose from a fantasy, as most things do. Technology, math, science, and engineering are emphasized here, as it was made for girls at the middle school age, where most scientist say that girls stop thinking about math and science and start thinking about other things.

My school is pretty great, but it could use some change, too. Bullying is a problem here, but it’s pretty much the only problem with students. Bullying can provide a sort of revolution by the people in the receiving end of meanness. Either by some brave bystander standing up to face the bully, or a more discrete way of getting adult involvement. In the American Revolution, the patriots stood up to a big bully. The problem was that the bully had his won country and army to boot. But that didn’t stop them. They rebelled against him (hence the name “Rebels”) and eventually won, and in triumph rose to create a new country.

Change is always happening. Change will always happen, for better or for worse. There is really no use trying to stop it in its tracks, so it’s better to make change itself. Which is exactly what you did, Mr. President Obama. Precisely what my school did and exactly what independent people will be doing until we humans cease to exist.
Sincerely, Elizabeth Weimholt,
Age 12, 6th grade
Kyle Wendorf/Charter School Essay

My name is Kyle Wendorf and I am a sixth grade student at Beacon Preparatory School in Minnesota. If President Obama came to my school I would be excited to share with him what my school does well. I thing our Core Knowledge Curriculum is both challenging and interesting. I have a unique classroom setting with only sixteen students in each class. This makes it easy for teachers to help students understand what is being taught. We have opened up a library faster than most other charter schools around the state of Minnesota. I am excited to say that our school is growing because of it's success. There are plans to expand and make our building bigger next year. Of course there are always other ways to improve and become an even better school and better learners. I would like to see our school become more aware of how to recycle both inside and outside of school. Students could take their personal time either after school or on weekends to give the place a "face-lift." We could set up groups of students to accomplish the following tasks: picking up garbage around the school and playground, help take out papers and recyclables from the classrooms and bring them to a recycling center, (with adult help of course) and see that there are specific garbage cans for recyclables throughout school. If we achieve our goal maybe all of the students could create a wall mural that would represent the work that we did to remind students that come after us that we all have jobs to do as students and as life long learners. I think President Obama would be proud of our school's progress.
Hello my name is Sharrod wills, I am a student at new visions academy. I’m going to tell you about my school and the things we do here, I’m also going to tell you what I think of this school.

At my school we do many things that most other schools can’t, I’ll give you some examples of the interesting we do here. During the year students work hard to make the honor role and when you do you get an award, but that’s not all, you get to go to a ceremony and later on they take you out to dinner on the school. That’s one of my favorite things here, they don’t just give you a piece of paper that says congratulations, they give you more than that. This school has much to offer to you indeed.

We do a lot of things very well here as well, here are some of the things we do. At my school we have more of a hands on grasp of learning so the teachers here can actually help a lot more than at any other school. We have smaller classes so we actually get the attention we need. We are also very advanced or at least we are becoming very advanced in our learning skills, we use smart boards in our classrooms, with these we can learn a lot better and excel in class, they link to the teachers computer and with that we can work together on more group assignments. We can watch educational videos. We also use the new Mac book laptop computers. Each student gets an assigned laptop. With these we can type up our assignments and send them directly to our teacher’s computer, within seconds we can instantly get our grade.

Although we do all these great things we also have things we can improve on.
Many students complain about the lunches we are served here, the lunches are healthy but they don’t taste good. I think that the food we eat should be a combination of both if you ask me. Even though the classes are small, they are getting bigger, so I think we they should hire more staff to help out the teachers and to help us. I also think we should have a little break time at least once a day so we can relax a little and stretch our legs, if we relax a little we can think a lot better.

At my school we do many things well and we may need improvement on some things but to tell you the truth if I could pick any other school in Minneapolis I would pick any other school than this one.
Grades 9-12

FIRST PLACE
Ashton Loehr (Spectrum Academy)

SECOND PLACE
Lily Stone (St. Paul Conservatory)
Molly Murphy (Blue Sky Academy)

THIRD PLACE
Noah Anderson (Eagle Ridge Academy)
Suzie Cheng (St. Paul Conservatory)
Kerry Honan (St. Paul Conservatory)
Tom Noeske (Riverway Academy)
Katie Haase (Riverway Academy)
Brittney Story (River Heights Academy)
Ashton Loehr
Spectrum High School
10th Grade

At eight-fifteen on the dot, my first year at Spectrum High School began. I trudged from class to class, hating every minute of it. Having come from an awesome school prior to Spectrum, I was really skeptical of this new charter school in my area. However, throughout the last two years, Spectrum has exceeded almost all of my expectations. Spectrum’s teachers are absolutely amazing, and I love that community outreach is a huge deal at our school. One thing that Spectrum could improve on is getting a real building; it’s a total downer that we don’t have our own gym or fields.

When asked what my favorite thing about Spectrum is, I immediately reply with, “The teachers.” All of my teachers truly care about my fellow classmates and me. Although they are there to teach us biology or English, they also want us to succeed outside of the classroom. One of my favorite teachers, Mr. Bubna, teaches biology. Almost every day, he has a different “life lesson” for us. On topics such as stem cell research and abortion, he opens up discussion and makes us back up our opinion with more than “That’s just what I think.” Now, I have never liked any kind of science class, but when it’s time to grab my stuff for biology, I get excited because I know that I will learn more than just the structure of a root. My teachers are constantly challenging me to go past the surface and care more about others around my school and the world. Community outreach (C.O.) is another big reason I like Spectrum. At the beginning of the year every student had to choose a C.O. group in which to participate. I chose the health awareness group. We are working on putting together a fitness day for the community. I think it’s awesome to be able to inspire people like that; encouraging them to live a healthy lifestyle. The ability to help others out is a responsibility, and I’m glad that Spectrum requires us to get out of our little boxes to show the community that we care.

One of the big things that I don’t like about Spectrum is that we don’t have our own building. Sports are a huge part of any high school, and it’s disappointing to not have a gym or fields. I play soccer for Spectrum, and it was so sad to not be
able to have any real home games. Our school lives and breathes basketball, and it's really awesome to see everyone come together to cheer for the Sting, but I wish we had our own home gym. I think one thing students could do to solve this problem is to get the word out about our school to the community. If we could get sponsors or investors, money wouldn't be such an issue, and we could have our building. Another thing we could do is show that we truly love our school and want to support it no matter what. I hope that in the future, Spectrum will have a building and we will be able to attend every game and match to cheer on our team.

Spectrum High School is an awesome school! I'm really glad I came here to experience meeting new people and reaching out to even more people. Although there are still things to improve, I am glad I have the privilege to attend a charter school like this, and I hope that around America, more teenagers and families will see what charter schools, like mine, are doing, and get involved too!
Which charter school is known for successfully blending academics and art? If you answered St. Paul Conservatory For Performing Artists, nestled on top of the Landmark Center and is affiliated with the Ordway Theater and the MN Science Museum, then you are correct! First, attending this school helped me to discover my passion for Musical Theater by working on productions like Oklahoma. Secondly, SPCPA has a supportive and artistically motivating atmosphere. We are so lucky to have the opportunity to work with experienced artists, like Mr. Jon Ferguson who directed Animal Farm at the Southern Theater. Indeed, the superb faculty truly believes in our talents. They push us to thrive and take creative risks in our crafts. Thirdly, Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists could enhance their atmosphere by providing after school activities and events since we are lacking in this area. Unlike other high schools, we don’t have athletic teams, social clubs, or student councils that unite students. I believe we can come establish solidarity by building more of a community at SPCPA through after school events, clubs, and community outreach programs.

I am very proud to have chosen Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists. Last year I was undecided on whether I should pursue sports or the arts. My first calling occurred when I participated in a school Broadway Revue of Bye Bye Birdie, Sound of Music, and Annie. Dance has been my main forte, yet this musical changed my life. I shadowed the school when they were rehearsing their J-term performance and I felt an artistic connection to the dance performances and classes replete with friendly teachers and dedicated students. Next, I viewed two full-scale performances featuring traditional Indian dance, Jazz, Improvisation, ballet, and a musical theater revue. I was impressed with the amount of skill and professionalism that shined throughout the show. At that
point, I knew that this was the school for me because it blends the arts with academics while allowing flexibility in the process. For example, if a student is in a show outside of school the teachers will create a specialized contract in order to complete their work.

Secondly, our school has a friendly environment. Our mission statement at SPCPA officially states:

"The Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists provides a world-class professionally guided academic and artistic environment to train aspiring pre-professional performing artists in the areas of instrumental and vocal music, theater and dance."

If one walked into our school they would see dedicated instructors and students working hand-in-hand rehearsing lines, practicing an instrument, or learning choreography in the wonderful accommodations, such as the Wilkins, which is one of the largest dance studios in the state, the Landmark Center, a historical building shaped like a castle, the Ordway, Science Museum, and the Lowry, a dynamic music space. This atmosphere gives us freedom to express ourselves and the opportunity to act responsibly in these accommodations which reinforces the importance of supporting mature young adults in an open-campus setting. We have earned their trust since the beginning of the year.

Thirdly, Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists could enhance this atmosphere by extending the school day into after school activities and clubs. I firmly believe it could benefit the school in community building and enhancing the creative outlet. If SPCPA had clubs such as Student Council, Writing, Visual Arts, Film Club, and so forth, it would bind and connect people together socially and create more leadership opportunities. We could also have more artistic events like school dances, talent shows, or even dance competitions. These events spawn a new dawning of friendships while sparking ideas in the intuitive and creative process.
In addition, these activities would help to alleviate stress from school work and help enhance creativity and connectivity by allowing people to come together and share other skills outside of a classroom. Since we have a wealth of talent, it could be an outlet.

As performing artists, we could combine our skills and creativity to make these events happen. We can first form a student council for each grade level. The student council would conduct a survey on events and clubs that students would be interested in joining. Then, the student council would run it by the faculty and discuss the time and availability of the space. Leaders for the club would be chosen through a submission of a resume followed up with an informal interview. The student council and/or teachers could help guide the leaders of the club by giving constructive feedback. For example, a hip-hop club could work on a performance for the Hip-Hop Choreographers Evening at the Patrick’s Cabaret. A sign-up sheet would be given to each person who will participate in a club and if limited availability becomes an issue there will be auditions or first-come-first-serve trial. The clubs would also be given the opportunity to be a part of the Talent Show to display the progress they have done so far. Along with the Talent show there would be other events planned out by the student council each month. For example, there could be a movie night every other week and a spring and fall dance off chaperoned by teachers or parents. These clubs and events would foster school pride while promoting leadership in the educational and social process.

Overall, observing the wonderful atmosphere of artists and seeing the talented students in the J-term performance brought me to Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists. I am now thrilled to be part of this energetic and artistic atmosphere with finest studios, historical buildings, and places to learn what you love to do. I believe we can
apply our skills and create clubs and events outside of school to enhance our community and bring people together. With these improvements to our school we can bring smiles to many faces and pursue our artistic endeavors and academic goals simultaneously. Finally it was Victor Hugo who once remarked, “Freedom in art, freedom in society, this is the double goal towards which all consistent and logical minds must strive.” Above all, SPCPA affords this artistic body of students the freedom to express oneself freely.
2009 Charter Essay Contest

Molly Murphy

BlueSky Online Charter School, Grade 11
In the past year I've been continually impressed with my school. Nothing ceases to amaze me anymore. I had never attended a charter school before this year and I wasn't sure if I'd like it or not. But, no surprise, I've loved the experience so far and am looking forward to my senior year.

There are so many things I could boast about, but I think the one thing that my school excels at lies in the exceptional teaching staff. Right from the beginning I felt included, and well cared for. This had worried me about going to an online school. I'm in weekly contact with most of my teachers, and they're always on hand to answer any, and all of my questions. I have several health issues which have caused me to be unable to attend school for stretches of time. When this happens, they have been only accommodating to me in my classes. They trust that I'll be able to catch up on the work, and wish me only to concentrate on my healing. It's a comfort to know that they care, and that the school can be flexible for students like me. I've been lucky to find such a school.

Of course, there are areas in which my school could improve upon as well. I can think of one in particular which has frustrated me. At my previous schools I was offered Advanced Placement, or honors classes. I was disappointed when I enrolled at my current school to find out that they were not currently offered. I'm a dedicated and motivated student who enjoys being challenged in my classes. I would enjoy the opportunity to have a more stimulating class at times. One in which the lessons were created knowing the students in the class would be attentive and engaged. In addition, I
feel that having AP or honors classes on my transcripts when applying for colleges would be ideal and would more accurately allow them to gauge my academic strengths.

I think that students in my school could speak up about creating advanced classes. Perhaps if enough students show the interest and initiative the school would look into the prospect. Schools are a place where the students should come first, and one of the most important tools we as students have is our voices. Let’s get them heard.
Improving Eagle Ridge Academy

Eagle Ridge Academy is a small, college preparatory and classics-based charter school in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Though the school excels in many aspects, it can improve by providing more opportunities for its students.

Eagle Ridge delivers a solid curriculum based completely on classical literature. Students entering the school in sixth grade are immediately given a great education which builds upon itself through high school. The school is also very appropriately sized. At about 300 students ranging from sixth through twelfth grade the academic program becomes a very personal one. Being only in its fifth year, the school shows much potential. There is no doubt that in time and with proper direction Eagle Ridge will suit the needs of a greater population.

Eagle Ridge Academy can improve its academic program by creating more opportunities for its students. One part of the school which can be improved upon is the sports program. Currently, the only regular sport at the school is basketball. Eagle Ridge Academy needs to build a gym so that the students can at least have a physical education class. Also, the Academy suffers from the lack of a good art department. Myself having come from a fine arts school, I experienced firsthand the difficulty of the switch from an everyday art-infused environment to a strict classics-style curriculum. Though the art department is improving at Eagle Ridge, it is necessary that students like me are given the chance to continue their growth in the arts and that the school purchases new materials and equipment to help reach this goal. Another way that the school can improve is by
establishing a theater department. Every year, Eagle Ridge Academy puts on some sort of theatrical show, but does not have the money or a committed team of people to support these performances. With the creation of a theater/drama club, students will have even more of a chance to branch out and participate in currently non-existent areas. Fundraisers lead by a drama club will also help to bring in money to support the school’s annual theater productions.

The students of Eagle Ridge can help to make these improvements. First, classmates can join together and discover who is interested in the areas of sports, art, and theater. If a large portion of the school expresses interest, extra-curricular activities which highlight these areas can be put together. Also, students can push for the formation of clubs and/or extra-curricular activities by expressing their interest to the school board. If the board sees that enough students are interested in certain areas, the process of creating desired clubs can be sped up with its help. Eagle Ridge Academy does not exist to meet every person’s needs, but the student body would do well to attain the board’s assistance if it seeks to make changes to the school in any way. Another way that students can help to improve the school’s academic program is to hold fundraisers which benefit Eagle Ridge. For five years, students of Eagle Ridge have wished for a gym where they can spend free time, host basketball games, and have a physical education class. Fundraisers would help to push the possibility of a gym being built by providing money for the task and would also show the students’ interest in making this improvement.

Eagle Ridge Academy delivers a well planned-out curriculum. It functions well with its small population and shows great prospect for the future, but can also be improved in a few ways. By adding a drama club, improving its art department, and
building a gym, Eagle Ridge will secure areas of extra-curricular learning which currently are not available. In these ways, the school will continue to grow and flourish, providing its students with more opportunities to broaden their learning.
If President Obama were to come and visit my school, I would first thank him for being such a strong supporter for public charter schools. Without the support for charter schools like SPCPA, I don't think kids would have such an enthusiastic feeling geared towards schools like SPCPA. Since SPCPA is a charter school that has a main focus on performing arts, the kids at this school share one common passion, and that is to go out and do what you love.

One of the things that I love so much about SPCPA is the whole environment at our school. Whether it’s in the classroom, in the hallways, during lunch, or anywhere else. Everyday there are kids just strolling around our school singing, dancing, and just having a good time. And no one here judges a person by what they do, because we all know that that’s why were attending this school. So we can express ourselves in ways other than speaking, and writing. It makes me feel special to be able to come to SPCPA. If I were to go to a regular public high school and start singing and dancing, people would think I was weird. I love how the people at SPCPA don’t care, and most of the time, they'd join in. The teachers and students at this school have such a great bond also. The faculty and staff at SPCPA know why their students act the way we do during class. Sometimes we may get off task, but I think one of the reasons why we have so much fun during class is because everyone has so many opinions and are so open-minded about things. All of the students here like to speak their minds and the teachers have no problem accepting that. It’s amazing to see how students here who are my age have such an advanced mindset. It’s as if we were all far beyond our years, but I guess that’s what makes our school so special and unique.

The only slight issue we have here at SPCPA is the campus. At the moment we have an alright based site. But since our school is growing at such a rapid pace, the school is going to have to reject students because our school location and the size of it are so limited. Right now we own the fifth floor of the Landmark Center in downtown Saint Paul; we use the dance studios in the Roy Wilkins building, the History Museum, the Science Museum, and then the Lowry Lab. I
really wished that our school would be able to get just one more set of classrooms, or another rehearsal/arts class space. I really want other students to have an opportunity to attend a school like SPCPA, because if they don’t, they might have a change of heart on what they want to do when they’re older, and might never get to do what they really wanted to pursue. So if our school owned, or rented another base, it might be so useful so the students here can feel like SPCPA is the perfect school. Even though it’s already close to being my definition of the perfect school.

I think that maybe sometime in the near future, if the students and staff were able to hold a fundraiser in order to come up with the financial aid we need in order to support our school and the needs of possibly getting another building or place added to our campus, that it would be very helpful. Even a car wash or barbeque would help. I’m sure the other students who attend SPCPA would agree with me, because of the standards of our school at the moment. We want SPCPA to be around years and years from now, even after I graduate I might want my kids to attend SPCPA. Which is why I think it’s so important that we do anything we can in order to improve our school and change what isn’t quite satisfying everyone.

These would be the things that I tell President Obama, to let him know why charter schools like SPCPA make teenagers want to come to school, and that teenagers may be teenagers, but we have opinions and voices. We want to change our school for the better and the future.
Katie Haase
11th grade
Riverway Learning Community
March 18, 2009

If President Obama was going to visit Riverway Learning Community, I think I would make it a point to talk to him about how this school has helped me and how it has helped could use.

Since I have started at Riverway a little over a year ago my grades and my work habits have improved drastically. The teachers here really care about me as a person not just another student filling up a seat. I have also found that they will go to great lengths to help you and make sure you have your work complete and you understood it. When I went to a public school it seemed like I was in a hole and could not find my way out, because all my work would pile up and no teacher wanted to help me. Then, I fell so far behind that I was told that there was no way I could possibly graduate because I was behind so many credits. Then, I was pulled out of that school and came to Riverway and everything turned around. I had the greatest Learning Leader that bent over backwards to help me. And on top of that she really got to know who I was personally. She has helped me so much I don’t know how I could ever repay her. Without her or this school I wouldn’t have been able to graduate or make up all my credits. I now am close to making up all my credits and graduate as close to on time as possible. Being
here has also really changed my outlook, not only on my school work but about myself. I feel like I now can accomplish anything if I put my mind to it.

But on that note, our school is also in need of new technology. The computers that we have now are really slow and we have a lot of troubles with them. It is extremely hard to get any work done with them. If we got new computers we could do so much more. There could be so many more opportunities for students. There are classes you can take online, and thousands of other programs that can further out education. Like graphic design and foreign languages for example. But we can’t explore any of those opportunities because our computers can’t support their data.

Another thing our school could really use is a bigger budget. Just to be able to have more room financially to be able and go and do things. Or, just for transportation purposes, so students can go take classes outside of Riverway. All in all we would just function better and benefit so much more if we had a little more money.

I love my school and I look forward to going every morning. But, we really could use some new computers and a bit more money to spend to be able to do more. We’re still a great school and community regardless of improvements or not. But I am just saying that we really could use them to help better our education and give us a few more opportunities.
St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists

The United States of America is a country that is privileged and successful in the field of education. The U.S. is currently able and happy to offer education to any child no matter what situation he or she is in or no matter the income of his or her parents. The states within the U.S. have also been able to fund a lot of interesting charter schools for those whose goals might not be met at a normal public school. I go to St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists and so far most of my experiences here have been positive. I homeschooled until fourth grade and then went to a small Jewish school through eighth grade so I had no specific connections to any public high schools with the exception of the one in my neighborhood. This meant that when it came time to pick a high school I had a hard choice to make, choosing from almost any school in the St. Paul area. I have friends who attend different public schools within St. Paul and its suburbs and each was enthusiastic about my consideration of their own school which made the choice even harder. In the end I had to look at my core values, interests, and love for difference and upon doing so decided that St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Arts (SPCPA), was the right place for me.

The SPCPA campus is located well known buildings in downtown St. Paul including the Landmark Center, The Wilkins Auditorium, The Science Museum, The Lowry, and a few others. If you were to walk in this area at three fifty on a week day, the streets would be alive with SPCPA students from ninth to twelfth grade, joined as a community by their common interest in performing arts. SPCPA began four years ago and has since then almost quadrupled in size due to its quickly expanding amount of opportunities. Its great setting right in downtown allows SPCPA students to share their unique talents and ideas with their fellow citizens. SPCPA has done an incredible job of providing skill and technique classes for pre-professional performing artists of every kind from actors, and dancers, to vocalists and instrumentalists. These art classes are matched in intensity with the strong academic classes. This year I am taking World History, English, Biology, Algebra 2/Trigonometry, and Spanish and I am lucky to say that with SPCPA’s incredibly dedicated faculty, I go home every single day knowing more than I knew the day before.

Although SPCPA has grown and developed wonderfully over the past four years, there is still work to be done. Although the academic classes it offers are strong, I believe that SPCPA has power to and should offer more academic opportunities. For example, Spanish is the only foreign language class that is available right now and the Math program only goes up to Pre-Calculus, after which students must go to The University of Minnesota for Calculus. I think that offering more foreign languages would expand SPCPA’s cultural views. I also feel that when students excel in math, they should be encouraged by having classes they can continue on to within their own schools walls rather than have the complications of having to go to a University. There are corrections yet to be made at SPCPA but for the most part it is doing very well as a charter school and I am proud to be one of its students.

As I mentioned before, my decision about which high school to attend was not an easy one. I wanted to have unique and fun experiences, I wanted to improve my dancing
Kerry Honan
Grade 9
St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists
Age 14

skills, and I wanted to get an academic education that would ensure my ability to pursue whatever career I may choose. SPCPA provided all of those things for me. I am not an easy person to please but my first year at SPCPA has been an amazing experience full of new relationships and learning. I am proud and lucky to be a student at St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists.
If Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States of America, came into our school, the first thing I would probably do is pass out. But after I came to, I would probably have a lot questions for him. Prior to firing infinite billion questions at him however, I would want to shake his hand. As strange as it may sound, I have always been curious what kind of handshake the president of the United States must have. Anyway, there would also be some questions I would have for him. But possibly more important than the questions, would be a little bit about our school. One of the only problems we have at the Charter school I attend, Riverway Learning Community, is money, or lack there of. We of course have all the basics, functioning this, useable that, but a little bit of cash could go a long way. Like many schools, Riverway has computers that less than perfect, to say the least. With more money, we could have updated programs, and therefore more learning accessories. Updated computers could allow for newer, more advanced learning programs, better suited to our education necessities. I would also probably, given the opportunity, request money to replace our broken basketball hoop. Who better to ask for help with this than a former basketball player, who also happens to be the president of the United States? Despite a funding issue, one of my favorite things about our school is the curriculum. Our school, contrary to the average public high school, bases lessons and classes on truly important life skills, healthy, sophisticated growth and development, and preparation for higher education. One could draw the conclusion by reviewing our curriculum, that students who attend our school, as opposed to public school, are better prepared for college and life as an adult. So it is easy
to see why I feel content, and comfortable in the Charter school I am enrolled in. I am
glad a man like Barack Obama, in such a high position of political office, recognizes the
importance, and potential benefit of education in a Charter school like Riverway
Learning Community.
“Art Makes All Things A Little Better”
By Britny Story
12th grade
River Heights Charter School
March 2009
“Art Makes All Things a Little Better”
My Personal Essay, By Brittny Story

The question is what is one thing that you would tell President Obama about our school if he were to ever visit? Well first off I would thank him for making the trip all the way to West St. Paul. Then I would go on to tell him that our school is a very independent self motivating program. I would tell him about how we have a lot of wonderful students who use this time at school wisely to better their education. There are a lot of students here that are very intelligent and brilliant in many different subjects. One of the things at our school I like is that if you are having trouble with any of your class work, you can ask almost any student for help and they are willing to sit down with you and give you a hand.

One thing I think that the school could improve on is the Target system. I think that teachers should be a little more clear as to what exact targets they are giving out. I think it is very important to keep the students up to date on which targets they have and which ones they need to reach. I personally know that there is a work sheet you can fill out that has all the targets on it. So you can mark which targets you have done, and see what targets you need. I think it is important for teachers to be telling their students when they hit a target and which one they hit so they can keep track of that in their own book.
If there was going to be improvement made in the school I think that the student would really have to step it up a little more to make any necessary changes. For example if the students are complaining that they never know how many targets they have and don’t know which ones they need, then I think it is our job as a student to get our own target worksheet and keep track of are targets. I believe that if there was more serious conversations dealing with teacher to student that the student might feel a little more comfortable with what they are working on. I think that change could defiantly be good, but it is going to take the teachers and students to make it happen.