2011 Minnesota Charter Public Schools Essay Writing Contest: 

Winning Entries

Presented at the Minnesota State Capitol Building 
May 4, 2011

Sponsored by
The Center for School Change, Macalester College
and
The TCF Foundation

In conjunction with
National Charter Schools Week
"Describe the best day you've had at school. What made it the best day?"

(2011 essay prompt)

Students need more opportunities to share their writing, to compete and to be published. We also need more opportunities to share what’s happening in Minnesota charter public schools. Those are the two major reasons why the Center for School Change (CSC), now at Macalester College, created the Minnesota Charter Public School Essay Contest in 2007.

Early each year, the CSC sends a story prompt to all of Minnesota’s public charter school directors. Students are given until mid-March to write and submit their essay. Center for School Change staff and community volunteers read, and re-read each essay looking for writing that address the prompt, is interesting, creative, funny, dramatic, or compelling. We choose essays that are thoughtful and exhibit excellence. In addition, essays must be within an age-level word count maximum.

During National Charter Schools Week in May, we gather at the steps of Minnesota’s state capitol and honor the winners. Students, teachers, administrators and family members from all across the state gather to honor and support of these outstanding writers. Thanks to TCF Foundation, which provides gift cards to the winners.

Each year we are amazed by the variety and thoughtfulness of the essays submitted. This book is only an example of the amazing work of Minnesota’s young writers. We invite you to read the winning essays and enjoy learning about what made their day “the best.” Congratulations to the winners. To all others, enjoy. And to students - perhaps next year your essay will be included in our collection.
Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to:

- the two thousand Minnesota charter public school student writers who submitted essays and shared their ideas and insights. You’ve reminded us that we can all learn by listening more closely to the voices of young people.

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

- Beth Topoluk and the TCF Foundation for providing financial support for the 2011 Minnesota Charter Public School Writing Contest. This event would not be possible without their assistance.

- Macalester College students Kelsey Austin-King, Kevin Finnegan, Shawn Greene, Hannah Johnson, Harry Kent and Elizabeth Watson and community volunteers Bob Callahan, Carol Jordan, Dick Olson and Sabina Stern for their help reading the many essay submissions and providing us with helpful insight.

- Anne Johnson, Facilities Support Manager, and the staff members at the Minnesota State Capitol for their assistance in planning for this event.

- the faculty and staff members at more than forty charter public schools who encouraged students to participate in this contest.

With gratitude,
Center for School Change staff
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Cinco de Mayo is the best day at school because we didn't need to wear uniforms. When I saw people doing the limbo and some people hitting a piñata in another classroom I heard music in the other room. I smelled and tasted nachos.
and tomato sauce. I had so much fun because I got to hit a piñata and eat nachos. I wanted to go because I was excited I had the most pesos so I got the most toys. I wore a green shirt because I saw papers in the hall way that said you could wear green, white and red. You can wear
Those because they are the Mexican Colors. Cinco de Mayo was the best day of my life.
My best day at school was my first day at school. I love this school. I want to work here.
The best day I've ever had at school was when we did the three layers of the earth. We also made something. The crust was some pie crust. The mantle was some whip cream. And the core was some mashmetlos. We had a lot of fun.
Actually I really think it was my favorite core kneeling unit. I think it was the third core kneeling unit. I felt rilly asem once I lernd about it. On the frist day we were lernding abo ut it I was rilly excit ed. It was just like I was aobut to read a new book. Lerning about the crust mantel and the core was actually rilly
rilly fun! I rilly like the word mantel a lot. Because it surruf reminds me about tin. When I was little, I always wondered what was inside the ear. When we started learning about it, Mrs. Langins told us that whenever
could go into the three layers of the earth,
My Best School Day

The best day in school was February 8th, 2011. This is my day: In Reading I got a new reading practice book and we learned pronouns. In Art we got our heart art back and we started landscapes. In math we learned square roots. In Core Knowledge we learned about the food pyramid and after that we had library. That's what made it the best.
Hannah

Beacon Academy

2nd Grade

I love learning something new

I have four frogs. I have a new froggy now

day ever at school. And because I
Mrs. Johnson  
Kindergarten CCLA  
Alyzhanay  
My favorite day at CCLA was the time we brought in pajamas to give to sick children at the hospital and had a school assembly and Santa gave the pajamas to the lady from the hospital. We all wore pajamas to school that day. This was special because it was nice of us to do that. I like helping people and at CCLA we help people.
My best day was the day of school we had Jump Rope for Heart. You get to save somebody's life. You get donations to help somebody's life and be a hero. In gym we will jump rope for 20 minutes and I feel happy when I help somebody's life.

By Nathaniel
Grade 2
Kenwood Edison Charter School
Duluth, Minnesota
My Best Day at School

My best day at school was when I first got the presentation of the World Map. I like it because we learn about every continent. That is good because if I am from Europe and I don’t know other continents I learn about other people, and how other people talk.

Wynton
Wynton's essay
Look at Quesa are legen about it somewhere that is a fate in the leaves.
Zane  
Riverway Learning Community  
1st Grade  

Reading 8 Chapters

My name is Zane and I am in 1st grade at Riverway Learning Community. When I was in kindergarten I read kindergarten books. Then I moved to 1st grade and read really hard chapter books. Imagine how hard it would be for you to read chapter books? My best day ever was when I read 8 chapters of the Magic Tree House, number 29, The Giant Squid. I really love to read and I am glad I’m in 1st grade now so I can read chapter books.
My best day at school
My best day I’ve had at school was the 100th day of school. It was the best day of school because it was full of fun and exciting projects. We colored a lot of pictures with markers, we made fun arts and had a great time with our teacher, our lunch break and play time were terrific. The weather was good outside.

Overall, the day was fantastic and I enjoyed the half day I spent at school on the 100th day! Thanks to my teacher for helping give us a great start to our future.
My Favorite Day of School

On May 1st, 2010, my whole class went to Bauer’s Market. We got to pick out all different types of flowers for our neighbors, we also each got to pick out a ceramic pot and decorate it with a partner. I decorated my pot with Bella; she’s very quiet and nice. We also gave an invitation to our musical “Willy Wonka.”

Two days later we got a letter from one of the neighbors. It said,” I love the pot that you guys gave me, you guys are very nice.” After that everybody felt good about what we did.

Lily
2nd grade
La Crescent Montessori Academy
Grades 3-5

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Lydia, 5th grade (Community of Peace Academy)
The Greatest Day I Had At School

Hey you there!!! Yeah you there don't play with me, I want to tell you about the greatest day I had at school. What? You want to know more? Okay, but today I'm writing only 150 words.

It all began in science with my favorite teacher Ms. Nicholson!!! She taught us about solutions and saturated solutions. A saturated solution is when a solid material is added to a solution or liquid until no more will dissolve. Is that cool or what? Science rocks!!

Then, we had reading with this reading program called Reading Mastery. What? You want more, I wish I could tell you more about the reading program. Reading is really fun, it is so fun and that when you do good you get starts. This was an honor to tell you about my day. Thank you for reading my essay, I hoped you enjoyed it.
The best day I had at school was Africa day. Africa day is when you have all kinds of cool African stuff. But they are really cool African stuff. Like getting to dress up like Africans, eating like Africans, and playing African games. How awesome is that! Pretty awesome right!? It was pretty hard to get used to it. Except for games I can totally get used to games. Now let me tell you a little bit about the activities we did on Africa day. We got to look at some African videos. Now let me tell you about my favorite part. It was when Mr. Randal (our principal) showed us some pictures of African animals. Sheesh, those pictures gave me goose bumps, I mean creeps, no I mean goose bumps. Well you get the picture. Bye!
Magnificent Magnets

By: Owen

My favorite day of school was the day I learned to design mini maglev trains. Our teacher Ms. Mueller told the class that we had to make little trains that hovered and moved by magnetism using four different kinds of magnets and different kinds of materials. The first step was to make your first design and to write down the materials needed. I started making the train and track in a shoebox. My first design didn't work at all; it just tipped over, so I had to make a second design. When I did that it worked partly. It would levitate for a second and fall over. I took what I had learned from that and made a train that levitated and held fifteen weights. I was so excited; I had finally made the perfect train! So this is why I chose the maglev day as my favorite.
My best day at school

I could tell you a lot of my favorite days at school, but there's one that stands out, the day we shared our stories with our reading buddies. I'll tell you why.

First of all we go every Wednesday. All the kids in my class have reading buddies. My reading buddy is Jasmine. My first reason is, After I shared my story with her, Jasmine's face lit up.

She was really happy that she got to read something new. Second reason, I like reading buddies because Jasmine learns how to be a better reader, and be confident one too.
Last reason, I like reading buddies because Jasmine is really sweet and nice. Like how she always says "Bye see you next Wednesday." This is why I like the day we shared our stories with our reading buddies.

By:

Kali

4th grade, Ms. Shermer, Beacon Academy
“Yikes!” I thought as Ms. Burris announced who was going to play Balloon Pop. I took a deep breath. Ready...set...GO! Yelled another teacher. I didn’t know who it was because I was so focused on the game.

“Okay”, I thought, “if the object of the game is to be the last one standing in your grade, I’d be better off just hopping on one foot.” Because I can hop on a single foot for long periods of time, I thought it was a good idea.

I hopped as fast as a jackrabbit. I felt as if I was flying! I was concentrating so hard on protecting my balloon, I hardly noticed I was one of the last of the four people standing! Because I was so stunned, someone popped my balloon.

Finally, everyone’s balloon was popped. Then, someone said: “The winner for 3rd grade is...Noor!”

By: Noor
4th Grade Tiz Blaine
Ms. Burris
Name: Mikea

I want to tell you about the best day ever. A good day is going to help me and my family make something out of ourselves. It will give us education.

I love science because in science we almost blew our fingers off with excitement. Just kidding, but we do cool experiments in science. The best one was the kool-aid mixture.

Library is the best! I liked a book so much that it became overdue. Library could carry me to another level to become a famous singer!

I stay in school for education so I can go to college. I wonder if I'm going to become a famous singer, change lives. My family means everything to me and I want to make things better. I want to pass fifth grade, middle school, high school. I love school so much it helped me have a good rockin' day! Wow!
My best day of school was a awesome day. We went on a field trip to the Bakken Museum for many reasons. First, all of the exhibits were awesome! Especially the Frankenstein one about how his monster got zapped by electricity by a mad scientist. Also a game called "Mind Ball" was fun and interesting because you had to get the ball to the other side of the table by relaxing!

Second, the class was fun because we got to make electricity generators and Leyden jars and touch them and then touch them and get a shock! The person who did it was nice and we did a lot of cool experiments. It was fun!

Third, Alondra and Zoe, my BFFs, were in my group! We had a lot of fun together. I couldn't believe it when my teacher called out the groups! That's how I decided that exciting day to be my best day. I thought it was so cool!
My Best Day at School

My best day at school would be Saturday School when I was in 2nd or 3rd grade. Saturday School is when we go to school on Saturday then on Monday we don’t have school. We have a Saturday school 3 times a year. Our families are also welcome to join us at Saturday school. The reason why it would be my best day at school is because I got to bring my lizards in to school and got to give a presentation on lizards and people got to learn about them. It was very exciting. My mom and I got to take them out. We put one on the table and then the other one. When one of them ran off the table the other one followed. When my mom and I were done we went to the other stations and we made things and talked to people. I love Saturday school. Many schools do not have Saturday school, but I think more schools should have Saturday school because its fun. You do learn things from going to Saturday school just in a different way!
My fabulous day at school

My fabulous day was when I found out that Ms. Hostner was my fifth grade teacher. She wants us to do our best and go to college. She wants us to work hard and believe in our self. Never give up on our work. Ms. Hostner believes in us all that way. I like my teacher, Ms. Hostner. My teacher, Ms. Hostner, knows that I can do my work in school so I am going to do my best. I know that I can do it if I try my best and believe in my self and trust my heart.
My Best School Day

I have had lots of terrific school days. The best one was when we did Pennies for Peace, which was inspired by Greg Mortenson.

One reason why this was the best day of school is because I helped people. I learned how Greg Mortenson helped people so I was willing to help also. I thought giving is better than receiving. By donating small coins I helped kids in Afghanistan get a school.

Another reason why this day was fantastic is because I learned more about the kids in Afghanistan. They had to do their lessons outside before a school was built. They had lots of courage to stick to what they said they would do.

On this day, I learned how lucky I am. I have food to eat, a warm bed to sleep in, family and friends, and a wonderful school to attend.
THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Once in our school we had the Greatest Show on Earth! We have an all school meeting every month at my school, and we recognize the people that have had good behavior and good test scores. This month we recognized the children by showing skits and giving them medals for math and reading scores. There were bronze, silver, and gold in the subjects of math and reading. It was circus-themed, so it was under a colorful circus tent that the teachers made in the gym! It was a wonderland filled with all of my zany teachers. My school does this to tell everyone that we can do anything that we try, and nothing is impossible if you actually work hard! Also you should never say never to anything that is possible, and don't give up! Do your best! The teachers dressed up like circus members. They had noses that were red, and some dressed up like mimes and clowns! It was a really weird but cool so that was THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!
February 22, 2011

Adeola

Excell Academy
Mrs. Pawelec
3rd Grade

In third grade I went to the Como Planetarium. We rode the bus to St. Paul. It was inside of a school. We saw lots of exciting things. When we first got there we painted the sky. Mr. Brinkman was the name of the guy who showed us the Planetarium. He showed us the moon, he showed us all the constellations and showed us all the galaxies. We went back to earth. We said bye to Mr. Brinkman. We went to the bus, and went back to school. This is why going to the Como Planetarium is my best day of school. We learned about science.
and had fun! I felt so happy, and I really want to thank Mr. Brinkman for inviting us to the Como Planetarium. I would like to go there again, and the reason I would like to go there again is because I saw space up there and it was so cool to look. Maybe one day I could work at the Como Planetarium.
Angie
Grade 3
Partnership Academy

When I went to the Nursing home
It was the best day of school. I
saw a lot of elderly People. It was
a good day because I got to
meet new friends. They needed kids
to see them and to make happy. Also
we ate heart shaped cookies and they
tasted like vanilla and we drank Punch
and the Punch tasted like pineapple and
orange. They were as delicious as candy.
I felt good inside because I got to
help someone who needed help.
I got to help them by pushing someone in a wheelchair and helping them play Bingo. That's why the nursing home was the best day ever.
The Best Day of School

by Erik

My best day of school was most definitely the day when I learned about Magellan. I had always wondered, “Who was the first person to go around the world?”

And then I found out! It was fascinating to learn about the man who first circumnavigated the world. Even though Magellan never made it fully around the world, he still was the first person to try.

All summer I had looked at maps and was interested in geography, so it was delightful to learn about someone who saw most of the world first and was one of the major contributors to geography. I think it’s so cool to be able to learn about someone who made so many sacrifices to make the world maps what they are today.

That day I got to learn about many things, so out of all the days of school, that one would be my favorite.
Lydia
Community of Peace Academy
Ms. Baker's Class – 5B

The Best Day I Have Ever Had was

One normal morning my teacher said we were going to have a debate. At first we had no idea what a debate was, but then my teacher told us about it. I was one of the actors. I was Benjamin Franklin. I talked in a deep, deep, deep man voice. I dressed like a man too!

At first I was embarrassed, but I got over it. Some of my other friends were actors too! In case you don’t know, I was a patriot. I was fighting against the loyalists. All of the girls were patriots and all of the boys were loyalists. We had a really funny argument! (Fake)

At first I thought the debate was going to be very boring, but it turned out to be very fun! After the debate was over I was so proud of myself! That’s why it was my best day ever at school!
Grades 6-8

FIRST PLACE

Daniel, 8th grade (Beacon Academy)
Katya, 8th grade (Beacon Academy)

SECOND PLACE

Mai Nhia, 7th grade (Community School of Excellence)
Paloma, 7th grade (Concordia Creative Learning Academy)
Ashley, 6th grade (Green Isle Community School)
Koussy, 6th grade (Hmong College Prep Academy)
Aiyama, 6th grade (KIPP Stand Academy)
Kaylah, 8th grade (Metro Deaf School)
Muhammed, 6th grade (Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy, Blaine)
Sumaya, 8th grade (Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy, Inver Grove Heights)

THIRD PLACE

Sawyer, 6th grade (Cologne Academy)
Drew, 6th grade (Glacial Hills Elementary)
Molly, 7th grade (Great River School)
Loura, 7th grade (Laura Jeffrey Academy)
Lexie, 8th grade (New Heights School)
Bee, 6th grade (Noble Academy)
Emily, 7th grade (Riverway Learning Community)
Nathan, 7th grade (Sojourner Truth Academy)
Myra, 8th grade (Carter G. Woodson Institute for Student Excellence)
The first day at my new school, I had to follow a student around to all my classes, meet students and teachers, and find my locker. In my old school, I was in sixth grade, and I could go a whole day without talking and no one would care, even the teachers. There were over 700 kids in sixth grade alone; you could just blend into the crowd. One day I was walking down the hall with my friend when this big kid suddenly slammed us against the wall. He was choking us and saying, “I’m going to kill you.” In order to get him to stop, I had to fight back. During all of this, no one came to help us at all until I walked into the locker rooms and screamed at the teacher who had earphones on while reading a newspaper! Now walking through this new school I realize that it’s a safe place where students are connected and care about each other. I feel safe here and without worry can walk around asking questions and being social. The day I went to school without worry was the best day of school for me.

Daniel
Grade 8
Beacon Academy
The Day I Discovered My Dream Career

Throughout my school years, there was one day that was my best day of school: the day I discovered my dream career. It was a day that I had immensely feared. It was the day of my debate. I began to panic. My preparations seemed incomplete. The debate wasn’t until the end of the day. This, above everything else, gave me a sense of foreboding. The day became a drudgery to endure. Study hall became something I dreaded, an hour of practicing and stress before the debate. I knew that my quick reasoning and my natural talent of improvisation would be a huge asset, but I was still worried. I thought that I would fail it, and that this would be the worst day of school ever. When the time came for me to stand up and begin the debate, I found that my panic had been unfounded. My nervousness disappeared, and I rose to the occasion. After the debate, I walked to the teacher to receive my paper. I realized that I had aced the debate. I knew that this day was my best day. This was the day I began to discover my aspiration to become a politician.
Community School of Excellence
Mai Nhia
7th

Does your school celebrate Hmong New Year? My school Community School of Excellent, celebrates Hmong New Year. I believe celebrating Hmong New Year will help us remember our culture. The Hmong New Year celebration is the biggest celebration for our Hmong people. Some American teachers in my school really like Hmong New Year celebration and they like eating Hmong foods.

When our school celebrates the Hmong New Year, all the students have to eat Hmong foods like papaya, sticky rice, pepper, chickens wings and more. These foods are very delicious, papaya is my favorite food. It’s hard to make papaya but the most important for papaya is the taste.

On the day of the Hmong New Year at my school all the kids and the teachers have to wear Hmong clothes because we want to show that we are Hmong. Wearing Hmong clothes is very heavy because you are wearing coins all over your body, but the coins make nice jingling sounds. Hmong clothes have lot of colors especially black. Every Hmong clothes have the color black with blue, red, and green. But now Hmong cloth has much more decoration to the color.

Each year when we celebrate the Hmong New Year, every class has to perform something about the New Year. Every class has to perform to see to the whole entire school for friends and families. Such 8th Graders, they will perform a show like modeling with all type of Hmong clothes. Many people have a choice of singing or dancing. There are many different kinds of things you could do or perform. Our school Community School of Excellence has a dance group called Nkauj Hmoob CSE, in English it just means CSE Hmong girls in Hmong. They are excellent at dancing it was really fascinating.

After all the information about our celebration of Hmong New Year is like at CSE, we have fun. It’s a special thing that we do at our school and it’s very big and important to our Hmong people. We eat Hmong food, wear Hmong clothes with beautiful coins and colors and we also perform dancers and most of all we enjoy the fun. On the day of the Hmong New Year I believe that it is a special day school for me that I will always remember.
Gaining a new perspective

My favorite day at school was when I got to build a model of the Plains Indian’s Village in Social Studies. We had to pick 1 out of 3 choices to build a landscape for the Indians. I picked the 1st one which was about the Indian Village. We only had time to work in class, and we had 3 weeks to complete it. I was very excited to start because I already knew it was going to give me a better perspective on the lifestyle they lived. It also gave me more respect for what they did, how they handled everything with so little. They had to make their own houses and everything. They didn’t have anything we have now.

As the weeks went by, more and more got done of my project. It started to look better and better as I worked harder on it each and every day. There were many steps to this project.

When the final project was finished, it looked very good. There was a lot of detail in it. With doing this, it helped me learn in a new way. Instead of just reading about it, I could actually see it with my own eyes.

I love C.C.L.A because I’m always learning in new ways. After this project, we got to go on a Field Trip relating to this. It really did give me a better perspective.
My favorite day of school is...

Ashley  
6th Grade, G.I.C.S

My favorite day of school ever was track and field in fifth grade.

That was the first time I ever got first place in any kind of competition.

I got second and third in the racing events before and that was when I decided to become more sporty than what I was. I love sports, especially my favorite, track. Track and field can be a serious competition, Track and Field day is once every year for G.I.C.S. You would love it and should try to compete in at least two races. Even if you’re not that athletic you should still try. It took me a few years to get a third place ribbon, crazy right?

I went from not really into sports to a pretty sporty person. I think it’s a huge change and you can too. It’s even better when family helps. That will be my favorite day of school for a long time. Just remember, even if you lose, as long as you did your best and had fun, you won. “Play hard and have fun!” That’s what my Mom told me. If you follow that, then you already won!
The Best Day at School
By Koussy
6th grade, Hmong College Prep Academy
March 10, 2011

The best day at school was when we were selling raffle tickets to help Haiti. The reason why we wanted to help was on January 12th, there was a big earthquake in Haiti and it has been a year now, and Haiti hasn’t even been fixed up yet. They have no food and are very poor. That is why we wanted to help. We came up with the idea of selling raffle tickets because we thought that it was the easiest way to raise money. We actually made a lot of money. We thought about only making about $70-$100 but we actually made $164. We were so happy. We went online and thought about what we wanted to get the Haitians. We looked at them first, and then we talked to our groups about what we wanted. After listing what we wanted on the board, we voted. Then we decided to get a fruit tree, a goat, 20 chicks, and food for a year for a child. We had about $3 left which we donated with the stuff. Raising money to help Haiti was really fun and I hope that they enjoy our gifts!!
KIPP Stand Academy

Aiyama

6th Grade

The best day at school that I’ve had was when I started at KIPP Stand Academy. This was the best day because I felt very special and everyone was friendly. This was the best day at school because I felt like I could be myself with the people in my homeroom and the people in it made me and others feel welcomed and comfortable. One of the ways I felt a part of the school was learning KIPP chants. All of us learned and memorized the 9s chant – 9, 18, 27, 36, 45…108!

KIPP also changed the way I think about school and my education. I’m glad I started 6th grade at KIPP because now I’m getting straight A’s and I’m learning how to believe in myself. I’ve learned the importance of homework and doing it every night. Sometimes I help my younger sister in 5th grade at KIPP with her spelling and grammar. I also learned how to dress and act professionally as I wear a school uniform every day.

The best day at school for me was when I started school at KIPP because I felt very special and very welcomed. I still feel this way today.
The Best Day of School

Have you ever won the Science Fair? When I first knew we were going to have a Science Fair I was really excited. I really wanted to win this one. I wanted to do something cool so I picked DNA extraction of strawberries. I worked hard on the board and how to present it. So when it was the day to present to the judges, I was really excited and kind of skittish. When I was done presenting it to the judge, I sighed. But when I heard I was going to go again I almost fainted. But I got the hang of and after I presented to a few judges, there was this really tricky one. She asked me all these questions and I anticipated that I answered them correctly. As the days went I kept on thinking about it.

Then when the day came, I was so nervous that I didn’t even get a goodnight’s sleep. The room I was in was filled with decorations. Then as the announcer was announcing the winner, I couldn’t believe it, I was first place! My parents bought me a video game. So that was the best day of school.
The Best Day I Had at School

If I could choose the best day I had at school, I would have to say it was the day I got my poem published. It was an exciting and stupendous opportunity. The reason that was a major deal to me was because when I grow up, I would like to be an author or a journalist. This gave me encouragement and motivation to fulfill that dream. Just weeks before, our teacher had asked us to write a poem she would send to a publishing company. Only the best poems would be published. I thought to myself, “This is a good opportunity to show these people my creativity and the imagination I have!”

One specific teacher kept on motivating me to finish. When it was complete, I was very satisfied. Two weeks later, as my teacher was announcing the names, I thought to myself, “It’s OK. If I don’t win this one, there will be many others in the future. I am creative in my own way.”

The teacher looked at me and said, “And Sumaya.” I was so happy. Speechless, actually. To this day, I thank that teacher for her motivation. And every time I think I will not win a contest, I tell myself, “It’s OK. If I don’t win this one, there will be many others in the future. I am creative in my own way.”
The best day of school was when we went on a field trip to voyager camp. We took a bus that was huge. We went from cologne, MN to mound, MN. It took us 33 minutes because we missed our stop. When we got there we chose cabins that we were going to stay in. Then we went to the cafeteria to get our schedule and the camp rules. After that, we went to our first activity, which was navigation and how to use a compass. It was fun because we had to find Frisbees that classmates hid. It was pretty hard. Next we sang songs and played games. After awhile we had lunch. I think it was pizza, I'm not sure. But it was good. Then we went to learn about what plants you can and can't eat; you can even eat dandelions! It was so cool. We went all over the whole place and they told us what we can and can't eat in the wild. When we stopped we had a “test” (it wasn't really a test) on who could start a fire with what we know. We lost because we used too much grass instead of sticks. Then we had dinner which was macaroni and cheese. It was amazing. Next we told the camp leaders what our favorite part was today. We said good night and went to our cabin for bed. That was the best day of school.
My best day at school.

The best day I have ever had in school is when we went to Fort Snelling, the MN History Center and the State Capital. The first thing we did was go to Fort Snelling. It was really cool, because they showed us what they did in the old times.

Then we went to the MN History Center. That was also very cool. There was a Thomas Edison exhibit. There was a machine where you hold hands with others in a circle. Then the end person makes a fist while the person at the top touches a bulb and it shocks all the people in the line.

The best thing was the State Capital. The first part was amazing. The ceiling was like thirty feet high. The golden statue was so cool. The place was so amazing. We also got to see the place where the senators and representatives work. I loved this trip to the cities. I hope that we do something like this again.
Loura
Laura Jeffrey Academy
7th grade
March 10, 2011

Best Day at LJA

The best day at LJA for me was the day I met my best friend Kayla. I remember like it was yesterday.

The first day of 5th grade when LJA opened for the first year I was in Ms. Annie’s PCN (Peer Community Network). We had assigned seats for PCN, so we would get to know each other. Then MS. Annie asked, “Kayla will you go sit at the table with Loura and Laura?” Kayla came and sat down in the chair across from me. I said, “Hi my name is Loura. What’s your name?” Kayla said, “My name is Kayla.” I said, “Cool. Do you want to be my friend?” Kayla said, “Ugh? Sure?” Then Ms. Annie said, “Time for recess.”

It took me a while to get outside because I had a brace on my knee so I would not bend it. The reason why I had a brace on was because before school started I busted my knee open. When I finally got outside I went to sit on this big hill. Kayla came to sit by me because she didn’t know anybody. “What happened to your knee?” asked Kayla. I told her to story about how I cut open my knee.

Kayla said, “Oh!” I asked, “So?” Kayla said, “One time my cousin and I were rolling down a big hill in a box. Then it was my turn and I was all over the place. By the time I was down the hill I was upside down and I could not get out.” Then Kayla and I both laughed like crazy. This is how we became best friends.
Lexie
6th grade, New Heights Charter School in Stillwater
3/9/11

The Gym Relay Races

I normally am not a star in gym class, or very involved in gym, so I never have fun. I’m not athletic so I get nervous that I will embarrass myself. Because of this, when I went to gym on a typical day, I figured I wouldn’t have a good time. I was surprised to find out I would have an amazing time!

When I went to gym with my class, Mr. Nelson, the gym teacher, told us to get on one side of the gym. Then he put us in groups. I got to be with Addie, Tanner, Jose, and Teddy. We were going to do relay races. I was bummed because I’m slow. But Mr. Nelson made it fun and unique by making us do pushups, roll tires, and balance beanbags! I tripped while doing pushups and running at the same time but it wasn’t noticeable so I wasn’t embarrassed.

We won races and lost some, but I had a fantastic time! I will be more involved in gym because I don’t want to miss out on a fun experience with my friends! That was one of my favorite days of school!
The Best Day

What is your best day at school you probably have a lot of days you like. It could be the first day of school, or the last day of school, or school's field trips and etc. I have a lot of best days that I don't want the day to end and some bad days that ends in tears. I believe that everyone should seize the day. 'Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero', which means 'pluck the day, trusting as little as possible in the future. Try to live each day to the best in life, try to make the best of things. I know people can have bad days but if you just try to look at the good things in the life. Look at the bright side, if you got a bad score look at what you got right.

Maybe you could learn something new, or did something you didn't know was possible, or found out something amazing, or did something that changed your life. So even if you had a fight with your friends or a bad grade, try to make the best of your life. Carpe Diem.
Our Trip to Audubon

By Emily
Riverway Learning Community
Grade 7

I would say the best day I had been when my class went up to Audubon. It was my first time. On the way up there my teacher, Kate, was chair-dancing. We were all laughing. I got to control the radio on the way to Audubon, and everybody enjoyed listening to the music.

I was so excited and curious when we first pulled up. When we got in, we went to our dorm rooms, and put everything by our bunks. We received an introduction to the place and things they do there. We were able to meet some of the employees, who were all really nice.

Some of the classes we took were rock climbing, treasure hunt, high-ropes course, nature hike, bird-watching and many more. My favorite was the high-ropes course. I liked the excitement of it and it helped to overcome my fear of heights. I really enjoyed that. One time we served dinner to everyone, which was fun. We took a hike into the woods at night, it was fun. We laid on the highway listening to the sounds of the owls and other magnificent creatures out there. We looked up to the beautiful sky and gazed at the whole other world above us. For a moment we felt like tiny creatures in a big unknown world. We felt the cool night air sweep across our lips like it was whispering to our souls. It told us to breathe in, embrace the moment, and never let go. This is why I chose Audubon.
My best day in school is the first day of school. The first day of school I met new friends. I like going to school because I can wear new clothes. On the first day of school it was my birthday. I brought new school supplies for me and the class. It's my first year and I met new teachers. I like it here.
In this paper I will be telling you about my best day at school and what made it the best day was in 5th grade the whole school went to tropics. First, the ride there was about 45 minutes long. When we got there we checked-in at the gym.

Then after we all checked-in we went to get dress to go swimming. I had just got a new swimsuit. My swimsuit was army colors. Then the lifeguards tested us to see if we can swim. I and my friends all passed so we got to swim in the deep end.

Once we got to the deep end. I swam and played “it” with my friends. Then we all got go the water slide. The line was very long. Then we finally got on water slide. The water slide went outside. Then we got dropped in the water at first I panicked but then I was okay.

Then around 2:00 we got out the pool and changed. We ate before we left. We had: sandwiches, chips, cookie, and juice. The best part was that I was with my friends. And that was the best day at school thank you very much.

March 17th 2011
8th grade
Grades 9-12

SPECIAL AWARD

Kayton, 9th grade (Riverway Learning Community)

FIRST PLACE

Sami, 10th grade (Nova Classical Academy)

SECOND PLACE

Shaleigh, 11th grade (Voyageurs Expeditionary High School)
Brooke, 10th grade (Riverway Learning Community)
Ali, 10th grade (Eagle Ridge Academy)
Michael, 10th grade (New Heights Charter School)

THIRD PLACE

Zaman, 9th grade (Eagle Ridge Academy)
Nichole, 11th grade (Rochester Off Campus Public Charter High School)
Hani, 10th grade (Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy, Inver Grove Heights)
Morgan, 11th grade (Spectrum High School)
Karielle, 11th grade (Metro Deaf School)
Sean, 12th grade (Academy for Sciences and Agriculture High School)
Kayton
Charter School Essay Contest
January 26 2011
Riverway Learning Community
Grade 9
Best Day of School Ever!

When asked the question, “What was your best day of school ever?” many answers come to my mind. While sorting through them for the best one I happened upon the idea. I haven’t had my best day yet! My best day of school will be when I graduate.

I don’t mean it as when I graduate it will be the best day because I’ll be done with school as others may. I mean it as, when I graduate my mother and my father will be so proud of me. It will also mean I can finally take that step into adulthood. I will have finished something, something important! I often have trouble finishing things but this will be something I can look back on and be truly proud of.

It is also a step closer to the job I want to have as an adult. I want to continue on to college to be a Special Education teacher. To do this I must finish high school and continue on. On the days that I have trouble at school or just don’t want to be there, I remember that I’m working toward my goal. I remember that I’ll be there to help a child someday. When I’m having a bad day and my teacher helps me through it, I hope that I can be that person for someone someday.

I will continue on working hard, knowing that if I work hard enough, my best day of school will come. I’m only in ninth grade but I know its just around the corner. With hard work, determination and the teachers, I strive to emulate pushing behind me, I know I will make it to my best day of school in no time, no time at all!
Sami

March 13th, 2011

10th grade at Nova Classical Academy

The best day I ever had at school was one day a couple of months into my first year of high school. On that day I gave a speech in front of my entire school. It wasn’t an amazing speech. I only remember the rough outline of the things I had to say. But standing up in front of all my peers and being able to deliver a speech about a topic I thought was important made a huge impact on the way I looked at school.

I had worked on the speech I gave that day for about a month. It was about four minutes long, and easily the hardest project I had worked on up to that point. I was nervous to give it, but completing that speech successfully gave me a great feeling of accomplishment. It showed me that I was learning things at school that were giving me powerful life skills. After giving that speech, I knew that learning wasn’t useless- because of the hard work I had put in at school, I had interesting things to say and I knew that I could make people listen. I was able to communicate my own ideas to people in a compelling way. Giving this speech in front of so many people taught me that I had ideas worth sharing. Not only did I find the great thoughts inside myself, but I discovered that I could communicate them to the world.

If I had to think of the most impressive thing I’ve ever done, I don’t think it would be this speech. But I do know what giving this speech did for me- it made me a determined person, ready to face every challenge with confidence.
Shaleigh
Voyageurs Expeditionary High School, # 4107-07
3724 Bemidji Avenue North
Bemidji, MN 56601
218-444-3130

My name is Shaleigh, and I’m a Junior at Voyageurs Expeditionary High School in Bemidji. Before I came to Voyageurs, I went to Bemidji High School, then transferred to Red Lake. The classes were big, and I was just too shy to speak to anyone. At Red Lake, there was so much drama and conflict that I was constantly in trouble.

So in the fall of 2010, I enrolled at Voyageurs and it feels like it’s a good school for me.

The best day at school for me is the day I won first place in the Poetry Out Loud contest at our school. Even though I was nervous to speak in public, I wanted to improve my speaking skills. One of the requirements of the class was to memorize and recite a poem.

The teachers hoped that students would then enter the Poetry Out Loud contest. Out of our two classes, there were four of us who agreed to be in the contest. Even though, I was nervous to do it, I felt like I needed to do it. The poem that I memorized is called “Deliberate” By Amy U. We had to perform our poem in front of two strange judges, who were brought in to judge the contest. I was the last one to be called into the room, the longer I had to wait, the more nervous I got!

Finally I was called into the room, and I recited my poem. I could not believe that I had won, I was so shocked! But I was so happy to hear my name be called. Winning first place allowed me to compete in the regional contest. If I had been at the high school, I would have never heard of this contest or competed.
Hello, my name is Brooke. Currently I’m a 10th grade student at Riverway Learning Community. Roughly around one hundred and ten students are enrolled in this small charter school; this consists of Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade students. Riverway is sponsored by the Audubon Center of the North Woods and located in Minnesota City, Minnesota. I love Riverway because we have the opportunity to educate the community, and even better, get involved in it! It’s amazing how each student has many opportunities to help in the community. In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us. This leads to the topic, “Describe the best day you’ve had at school. What made it the best day?”

In the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, I put together a community service project to raise money and items for the Ronald McDonald House located in Rochester, Minnesota. At Riverway Learning Community a couple other students and I created an event called, “Ten Days of Giving for the Ronald McDonald House.” It was a ten day period, with an item assigned to each day. For example: Macaroni Monday. During that day, students could bring in items from home to donate to the event. There was a box located in each classroom for the collection. We collected a variety of items like food, pop tabs, cleaning supplies, movies, and toys. In total we collected over 70 pounds of food, 70 pounds of pop tabs, and 35 pounds of cleaning supplies. It was a huge success, but I didn’t give up, I felt I could help out more. Together as a group we held a bake sale...
at Wal-Mart. Each of us made many different bake goods; we also sold hats and bracelets. We made $234 in total.

My best day at Riverway so far was on October 19. That was the day we delivered all the items to the Ronald McDonald House in Rochester, MN. Not only did we get to deliver the items and money, but we also toured this wonderful place! The Ronald McDonald Staff do so much to make this house, "A home away from home."

While visiting I saw the smiles of the volunteers and employees at the Ronald McDonald House after we gave them our donations. That really made me smile; it also gave me a warm feeling inside, knowing I made a difference.

In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it. Every year I plan to hold this event, and when I graduate, I hope I can pass it down to someone, and then they can pass it down to someone else. Hopefully they will feel the same way I do about this event and maybe it will be their best day at Riverway too!
The Best Day of School Ever...
The best school day that I’ve ever had was “Husky Day!” Husky day was the last day of our senate sponsored, spirit week. Husky day was a day to show your school spirit.

I woke up feeling vibrant and creative. I knew that I had to figure out what I could wear to best reflect my Husky Pride, because I hadn’t had the extra money and honor of purchasing a Husky t-shirt, but still passionately wanted to show my school spirit. I decided to duct tape different pictures of husky dogs to an old tattered orange colored shirt. Quickly putting on the shirt, I rushed out the door.

The second I got to school, I could sense the outcome of the day. I had a feeling that something memorable would happen and that many laughs and giggles would be shared. People looked at me with smiles and funny facial expressions; some laughed, and some didn’t seem to notice or to even care.

The day was not only about showing school spirit, but more importantly helped me to discover what kind of person I want to be. The environment and pride of our school that day was energetic and refreshing. Eagle Ridge Academy created an environment where I felt free to be myself, and nobody else. Although during the high school years you don’t really know who you are and who you want to be; as of now I am almost certain that I am on the path to finding my “true self.”

Ali
Sophomore/10th grade,
Eagle Ridge Academy
The Best Day

My best day was the first day at New Heights School. I was all alone waiting for school to start, sitting at my table, and then the bell rang. Kids start rolling into class. I was afraid I would be all alone but then a lot of kids came up to me asking me my name and being nice to me! I was so surprised because my previous first days have been terrible. I feared it so much because I dislike being a new kid. I usually get picked on and made fun of. I was extremely nervous but since everyone was so nice, I felt comforted and welcomed at this school. Thankfully I was welcomed! I made a bunch of new friends and had a very great first day at my new school. Now
I have been here for about 5 months now and feel great here! It is very safe and the teachers and teaching are excellent! And most of all I'm passing my classes! This was my best day ever.
There are many ways to make a day at Eagle Ridge Academy the best of my school days. There could be no homework, a shorter school day, or awesome teachers. However, I always have homework, and ERA almost never shortens school hours.

When entering high school, I was introduced to one of many awesome teachers: Dr. Rockcastle. The combination of Dr. Rockcastle and “Spirit Week” created great school memories.

So far, the best day of school has been “Disney Day”. Each year, the student senate sponsors a week in which students can wear different clothes or accessories each day. On Disney Day, we could dress as Disney characters. Walking into school to see classmates clothed as princesses, cowboys, dwarfs, and various others, was truly hilarious. My Pocahontas outfit, which included a hand sewn dress, moccasins, and a long, dark, wavy wig, also turned out well.

Apart from everyone’s attire, the most memorable part of that day was Dr. Rockcastle’s costume, which clearly portrayed Mr. Fredrickson, from the animated film, ‘Up’. He wore the exact same jacket, tie, glasses, and tennis ball walker. His white hair matched perfectly, and even his complexion was like Fredrickson’s. Aside from his height, Dr. Rockcastle looked exactly like him. Everyone loved his costume, along with the other teachers’. Though I must say; Dr. Rockcastle’s appearance was the best.

There wasn’t a shortened day, and students were given homework, but that didn’t matter. The childhood memories of our favorite Disney characters came to life, and combining that with
school was really enjoyable. Most students still worked diligently, while treating themselves to a less intense day. So far, Disney Day has been the best school day of my fourteen year old life.

Name: Zaman

Grade: 9

School: Eagle Ridge Academy
The Best Day of School

By Hani

Sometimes school can be a pain in the neck. You may have bad days, but I am sure that you have had many good days as well. Although I have had some dreadful days, I have had good days. There’s one I particularly loved the most and consider the best day of school.

As far I can recall I was eager and still am about going to school. There is one day which I remember vividly. That day was when my school and I went to the Festival of Nations. It wasn’t like any other fieldtrip my school and I have ever gone to. It was the day of school.

Festival of Nations is this huge building with a lot of colorful tables which every country has. Every country or culture sets up their own booth. And when people walk by to look, the people educate them about the culture and customs and things of that sort. I loved the fact that you could buy a fake passport which you could get your name written in every language.

What saddened me was not every school was there. I believe that every school and student should participate in such an event like the Festival of Nations. Students should also learn about the different cultures and countries. They should also learn that every culture, religion, and country has an impact on us. I have benefited and endeavored a lot from that day.

When you first walk into the place, you hear varieties of sounds and music. What got me excited was when I got to dance with the Irish people. Another thing that I liked was the food. The countries had a booth where they had their own booth for their food. Trying out new food was great a lot of the food was mouthwatering, especially the Indian food.

Something that catches the eyes of the people is the vibrant and colorful clothing that they are wearing. I also enjoyed when I saw my own culture. It was awkward because I learned something which I had no clue of. When you come out of the place you have a lot of things placed and glued in your head because you learned so much. And everything about that place is just so fascinating.
Unexpected Partner

The average child finds their best friend in first or second grade. Well, if you really knew me you would know that I am anything but average. It was seventh grade when I found my missing puzzle piece; my true best friend. The best day that I have ever had in school was the day that I met the person who was going to be my best friend for life.

It was just a typical day in seventh grade English class when we were assigned a partner to do a project. There was one person who I refused to work with, and her name was Tianna. Of course Murphy’s Law, Mrs. Larson put me with Tianna. Great. We sat, staring at each other and we eventually figured something out.

After class was over, I went over to her locker to get information so we could work on it over the weekend together. I remember thinking to myself, I can’t believe I didn’t like this girl we are so alike. We exchanged numbers and went on out way to our next classes.

It was lunch time; Tianna saw me in the line and told me she would save me a spot. I knew that we would be really good friends. We talked a lot about our project but we soon moved onto more fun topics like, boys, gossip, and another common interest, dance. We knew we had made a new friendship that nothing, nor anyone could ever break.

Tianna and I have been best friends, to this day we still are. We don’t let the fact that we attend different schools affect the strong, yet quirky bond that we share. She will be my best friend until the end of time. End of story.
I would say that the best day of my charter school experience would be the day that happened in November of 2009. On that day, what had happened was the very first basketball game that I played for Metro Deaf School (MDS), which was against Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD). I say that that is my best day, because it was one of the hottest games that I've ever played in my life. I am so glad that it was against MSAD because that sure had shown me a lot of experiences of what it is like to really play for a deaf team with everyone that is alike to me meaning that I get to play on a deaf team. It is important to me because then I can be able to fully understand everyone on the team and many other things. One other thing is that I finally got to play against another deaf opponent for the very first game of the season.

After the game, this resulted in a final score of 38-40, an emotional game for me. I had scored fifteen points that game that I remember of. The reason why it was very emotional is because MSAD and MDS are rivals when it comes to sports. In that game, I had broken a pair of my glasses trying to score a basket, got a bad cut between my fingers, and we tried to score a basket but some how we missed and they rebounded then did fast break and scored so we lost.

From playing this game, I had learned how it actually does feel like to be fully involved and participated in sports and not having to only play the best players for the most of the games and bench those who don't understand. I had also learned many different things and a better experience have been added to my life. Fairness is one of the most important things when it comes to sports. Thanks to MDS for this wonderful experience.
The Relay

Our team was in the fourth lane, the outside lane, and I was the fourth runner on the team. I saw the third runner grab the baton, and I readied myself, extending my arm behind me, ready to get the baton slapped into it.

That wait felt like an eternity, because our team was the All-School Relay Team, and we were representing the fastest of our elementary school, and racing against three other elementary schools. There were two things that everyone was worried about happening to them: dropping or missing the baton, or tripping and falling.

As the baton was smacked into my hand, I closed my hand; the baton firmly in my grasp. With the baton tightly gripped in my sweaty hand, I took off down my part of the track, running like I had just found the Golden Ticket in a bar of chocolate. I made it to the next runner on my team, smoothly passed on the baton, and then stood there, just now realizing that our team was in the lead.

I was so happy, because I had not failed, I did not disappoint, and I had earned my spot on the team by being one the eight fastest kids in my school.

As the racers circled the track once more, we stayed strongly in the lead, no mistakes were made: we won, and we got the best ribbons, we were the only eight people to get the ribbon with red, white, and blue on them.
I don't remember ever feeling as proud of myself as I felt that day. I represented the whole school, and I succeeded. I've won many other medals, trophies, and ribbons in my life, but none meant as much to me as that one ribbon did.