MINNESOTA
Charter Public Schools
Essay Writing Contest
2013

Winning Entries

Presented at the Minnesota
State Capitol Building

MAY 9, 2013

Sponsored by
the TCF Foundation
and
the Center for School Change

In conjunction with National Charter Schools Week
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INTRODUCTION AND THANKS

Describe the best day you’ve had at school.
What made it the best day?

That’s the question that more than 2,200 Minnesota charter school students wrote about this spring. We deeply appreciate their insights. We also appreciate the faculty of almost 50 Minnesota charter public schools whose students submitted essays. We take a little space here to explain this booklet and the annual Minnesota Charter Public School Writing Contest.

This is the ninth year that the Center for School Change has run this writing contest, and the seventh year that TCF has been a co-sponsor. We deeply appreciate the support and encouragement from TCF, including Bill Cooper and Beth Topoluk.

We run the contest because we believe in the value of writing, and believe that students need more opportunities to share their work. We also believe it’s vital to honor strong student work.

In February we sent the “prompt” listed above to all of Minnesota’s charter public schools. As noted above, almost 50 schools responded, with more essays than we’ve ever received before. (About 1,800 essays were submitted in 2012).

Macalester college student volunteers, led by Kelsey Austin-King, herself a California charter public school graduate, reviewed these essays. They were divided into four major categories, students in grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. After the Macalester students review, a second review was conducted by GSC staff Marisa Gustafson, Kabo Yang and Joe Nathan. We selected what we considered the best. They are published here.

During National Charter Schools week in May, we gather at the Minnesota State Capitol to hear from and honor the winners. We’ve learned a great deal from reading these essays. We hope you will too.

Again, our thanks to TCF, the volunteer Macalester students, and to all participating schools, educators, families and most importantly, the students. Congratulations to the winners.

-Center for School Change Staff
May, 2013
K-2 WINNING ESSAYS

-1ST PLACE-
Vincent Smith Jr., Urban Academy, Grade 2

-2ND PLACE-
Cy Alexander, Paideia Academy, Grade 1
Taniya Bills, St. Paul City School, Grade 1
Pachia Lee, College Prep Elementary, Kindergarten
Caleb Lighe, Noble Academy, Grade 2

-3RD PLACE-
Aiden Beresford, Cologne Academy, Grade 1
Kevin Lema, Stonebridge Community School, Grade 2
Maya Morgan, Seven Hills Classical Academy, Grade 1
Tarek Selim, Paideia Academy, Grade 1
Tina Xiong, Noble Academy, Grade 2
Sabrin Yusuf, Hennepin Elementary School, Grade 1
Name of Student: Vincent Smith Jr.
Grade: 2
Date: April 4, 2013
Title: My Best Day at School

My best day in school was when I got suspended for punching a classmate. I have not been behaving well in school. I have been rude. I have been talking and fighting instead of working. I even stole candy. When my friends were bad, I would follow.

Getting suspended got me thinking. My Dad is in prison but he often calls me. He is good but he did something bad. I figured I was the same. I am good but I do bad things. Being bad is not cool.

The day I got suspended was the best day because it helped me change. Now, I stay away from trouble. I have become a role model. It feels great to be a leader and not a follower.
Our school is being fun!

I noticed that all the teachers had longer fingernails.

One day my friend Max and

By Alexander Rider, 5th
I first learned something different about
the principal before you probably
morning meeting room.

School gathered in the
before the last bell, the whole
for recess the school
And recess we determined

7
April Fool's

All of the teachers

Then something strange happened.
The Best Day of School

I am in 1st grade and when I learned about space I felt like I was really in space. I got to learn with my friends and my teacher named Mrs. Weiland. She helped me learn about planets and astronauts. I even got to make a project. It was fun and I really like going to St. Paul City School. That day was the best day of school and I hope I can really go to space one day.
I cleaned my room. Then we cleared the trap.

I like ourler happy and

I helped. Help. I dressed

My best day at CP

Name: Pallab Lee
We are sleeping.

We went to the beach and swam.

And so on...
The best day at school is when we had culture day. People dressed up in Hmong clothes, African dresses, and other clothes. My older and younger sisters dressed in African culture. So did I. Most of my friends dressed in a Hmong culture. Culture day is fun. I even learned about the culture of Japan. I also learned about other kinds of cultures like Laos, China, Mongolia, Thailand, and more. I even learned about my own culture. I have lots of friends with other cultures.

Love, Caleb
My best days at school were when I was really good and helpful. I got prizes than you cards. But I was shy. Mr. Smith said, 'This is getting very embarrassing, so I try to avoid it but I couldn't stop being shy. Sometimes I thought I should be more confident and try to keep trying but it was too hard for me. Maybe one day I will be good at it.'

The next day I was late for school, so I got my party slip. Then I walked back to class. Mr. Smith said hello. I said, 'Good morning.' Mr. Smith said, 'Today was a great day.' I said to myself, 'This is kind of weird.'

At the end of school, I heard a few voices. I said, 'It was a great day.'

I tried to hide, but they were too good at finding me. I wanted to get off the bus and go home by foot but couldn't. One reason every one on the bus was blocking all of the ways to escape and another reason the bus doors were already closed. By the time I got home, I was thankful. I was safe but not in a good mood. My mom said, 'I have a surprise at Isaac's house. He begged me not to send me there but he needed to send me.' Isaac thought I would be excited but I looked sad. I had a good idea. I wanted to cheer me up but all I said was, 'I'm not sure.'
ok I said please listen good he said ok sure. And so we talked for a while until it was time for lunch. Mr. good stuff stop. Thank you aiden. he said I felt like the choice we were planning on embarrassing me but my friends were never planning on such a thing. It's just crazy but then the next day EVERYTHING was just CRAZIER then yesterday but all that's just nonsense nonsense so Isaac and me just played the X-box until step and jugs wake up because then we would have breakfast and then my crazy and not too crazy man will pick me up so I could go home. )
My best day in school

I like to learn in gym. I run faster than anyone. I enjoy running faster but sometimes Mr. Hutchinson says to walk.

Kevin Lema
Second 2nd Grade
5x0 Hebride Community School
3-26-13
Maya Morgan

My best day at school was today. Because we had a field trip. We went to the works. I like the works because we made glow-dow. I went to the works for Teddy's birthday. I already made glow-dowed at Teddy's.
birthday. So I have
tow glow-dows.
was nerves when we
went there. But I'm
not nerves any more
I made a big
tour of blocs.
pet it might be a drakel which is a
human being. If you have a class
creastaire! Well most of the time
never knew if your teacher might be
because you get a new teacher. And you
day of any grade. I like the first day
My favorite day of school is the first

Tarae Selina 1st Grade Padilla Academy
supplies.

exciting because you get new school

with your friends. The first day is also

because you get to talk and be silly

On the first day lunch is fun

combination of a dragon and a gerbil

Tarek Selim
1st grade
Paideia Academy
Making Friends

My best day at school was when I made a new friend. I was lonely and a friend came over to me. She asked if I would like to play so I said yes. We played tag at recess and it was my best day. I met another friend he was sad so I told the teacher and the teacher said to him why are you sad. He said I have no friends so I want to be his friend. It made him happy. So he was not sad no more.
Sabrin Yusuf
Grade 1
Hennepin Elementary School

My best day at Hennepin Elementary School was the 100th day of school. It was my best day in school because we made paper glasses with the number 100 on them and made necklaces out of one hundred pieces of fruit loops. We also got to play with one hundred red plastic cups. My friend and I made a really tall tower with the cups and then knocked it over. It was also my best day in school because we celebrated Alondra’s birthday. She brought in treats and we all sang happy birthday! All day we acted crazy and it was funny. Celebrating the 100th day of school was my best day at Hennepin Elementary School.
3-5 Winning Essays

~1st Place~

De'Shawnte Taylor, Excell Academy, Grade 5

~2nd Place~

Donnell Bratton Jr., Concordia Creative Learning Academy, Grade 5
Mia Kraker, North Shore Academy, Grade 4
Evan Nguyen, Eagle Ridge Academy, Grade 3
Leigh, Sojourner Truth Academy, Grade 5

~3rd Place~

Ilhan Abdullahi, Higher Ground Academy, Grade 5
Caden Bry, Beacon Academy, Grade 4
Tristan, Glacial Hills Elementary, Grade 5
Maddie Moeller, Cologne Academy, Grade 5
Aviael Sanchez Chavira, Partnership Academy, Grade 5
De’shawnte’s Best Day of School

My best day of school was the day of D.A.R.E graduation. My D.A.R.E essay won first place. we
got to see a slideshow, graduate, and see my mom.

On that day I graduated the dare program. Everyone got a D.A.R.E certificate. I felt like I
graduated from college. I committed to be drug free when I get older.

Then we got to see a slideshow. I could’ve bought a CD, but my mom said she didn’t have any
money for it. I was laughing my face off with my classmates while we were watching the slideshow
because we were making jokes. It helped us remember things we forgot.

My mom came to the school to watch our D.A.R.E graduation. I felt so happy when I first saw
her. I gave her a huge hug. It was very special because it showed me she cared about me. After the
graduation my mom gave me a snack to eat for break time.

My D.A.R.E essay won first place. I got to read it in front of 4th graders and 5th graders. I also
won a D.A.R.E basketball signed by Derek Williams from the Minnesota Timberwolves. It was neat
because Derek Williams was picked 2nd in the NBA draft. I got to take a picture with my principal Mr.
Seiler and my director Mrs. Williams. That’s why it was my best day of school.
My Best Day At School

My best day at school was when my class and I went on a field trip to Feed My Starving Children. I picked that day because I think that day was the day I felt good about myself. Also my class and I fed over 1000 children in Haiti. I felt proud of myself, and I feel that my class and I were doing the right thing by taking our time to help kids in need of food and water. While I was there we met 3M people, and they were kind of funny. They helped us pack the food that people needed. I just don’t want to eat right now because now I’m looking at my food, and other people in the world are in need of it. Also when I look in my refrigerator I just want to carry it to people who need it.
My Best Day at School
Mia Kraker Gr. 4
North Shore Community School, Duluth

It was a Thursday. One of those days that starts out good, but gets better.

What really made my day was Environmental Education. We were going to the greenhouse. I love the greenhouse, with its moist smell and humidity. We all gathered around the compost bin. We were learning about worms. That’s when Mr. Schutte showed us worm eggs.

They were tiny and round, and were a kind of toffee brown. I sifted through the dirt to find one. If the egg felt a little soft, I squeezed it gently. At first, I was unlucky. The egg burst and some liquid squirted out. But then, I squeezed, and a worm about the size of a strand of my hair slipped out.

I went through this process several more times. It made me feel like I was a worm midwife. It felt awesome to help these slithery creatures into the world.
Best Day of School

By Evan Nguyen

My best day of school was when the big snow storm hit. When it was gone there was 9 inches of snow. When I got there was so much snow, I was so excited when I got to school. At recess I did super wacky barrel rolls, down the big snowy hill. Barrel rolls are like somersaults. I loved the 1st day of snow because I got to make little snowmen, and I pretended I was Godzilla in Tokyo, Japan! I had so much fun I didn’t hear the recess whistle. So I had to make that the best day ever! I loved that day and I can’t wait till the next snow storm.
My best day this school year was when we went to camp. This was my best day because it was like an all 6th Grade slumber party except their were boys too. We did things such as staying awake until 4 am, going snow tubing, dancing, talking, telling scary stories, rock climbing, watching movies, and sipping hot cocoa. One of my favorite things that we did at camp was riding the red raft and flipping off into giant piles of snow. The girls had more fun than the boys because we stayed up later and did activities with Ms. Sheena and Ms. Jahanna. At camp we ate a lot of junk food and drank a lot of pop because it was unlimited so that made it even better. Though the best part of all was when all of the girls really got to know each other. That was all about my best day this year.
My best day of school was when we were going to have a black history month presentation. On the morning of March 1st, my teacher called me and another girl up to her desk. She said, “Ms. Hassan needs two girls with loud voices to help her with the presentation.”

At about 8:20 we went down to Ms. Hassan’s office. We got our papers and started to practice. Soon two other girls joined us. One was going to read about Shani Marks with me and the others would read about Tanya Bransford.

After practicing and practicing, we had to go down to breakfast. After breakfast, two boys came by and said they were going to read about Chester Cooper and Harry Davis. I really enjoyed talking to all the classes. I loved it when the classes clapped and smiled. That was the best of school I ever had.
My Best Day At School!

My best day of school was when our first grade buddies came in to play games with us. They were so excited to play the games. We had planned, Statues, Simon says, and ohoshinotinton. Some games. We played statues first. It was hilarious when the first graders were moving because it was their first time playing. One first grader was using a teacher so she couldn't be seen.

It is so fun hanging out with them, but sometimes it can be backbreaking being the older person. Like when they aren't deciding on what to do. It does have some advantages though. Like when you want to read a book to them or you get to help them out with so many things. Sometimes you never want
them to leave. Other times they can feel like your brother or sister. That's why that's my best day at school. Thanks for reading!
The best day is going to Fort Snelling because I like learning about history. The Dakota lived right across the river. They washed clothes in the river water and they rung them out. They made their own boats and went across the river to trade lots and lots of furs. We learned how they traveled up river to get food. It was awesome learning about how to make and carve tools because they did not carve tools like we do. They make tools by putting it in fire for 5 minutes, carving it how you want and putting it in water and it is ready.

I really like how they washed their clothes and how they rung out their clothes. It was really cool how they made their buckets to go on their shoulders to go down to the river and get their water to wash their clothes.

The next reason Fort Snelling was the best because I learned about how the Dakota went all the way across the river to trade their furs and they went into a room that was only to trade the furs, nothing else, only for grading furs. I learned what kind they sold and how much they sold it for. I think they sold a dozen beaver furs for $10.00.

The blacksmith had a big air pumper and it pumped air for the fire so the flames would start on fire, then you held steel in and leave it till it is hot and then you carve it how you want the kind of tool that you want to carve. It is put in the water for about 5 minutes and then your tool is done. And their whole house was full of collectible stuff.

My friend and I spotted a diamond back rattlle snake at Fort Snelling. It was so awesome to see because I have not seen a snake like that before.

Have you ever gone to a place where the natives have lived and made their own boats, weapons, and went up river to hunt and kill their own meat?

Have you ever been to Fort Snelling? Well I have and it is so much fun! You get to go to 25 different stations. You get to read about my favorite kind of reading,
History. History goes back to the 1800's when the Native Americans lived. It goes back so far in life that you can't even imagine it.

If you ever go to Fort Snelling I'm telling you, it is so fun you get to learn way more than you will ever learn in school. It is so fun.

This was the best day cause we got to leave to go to a place that I have only been to once before.

Maybe we will learn about different stuff because GHES is going to Fort Snelling this year. It is so awesome going to Fort Snelling because you learn how school was and how the houses were. The general leader lived in the house that had many bedrooms.

BY, TRISTAN

4V.5
The Day I Started Band

By Maddie Moeller

Grade 5, Cologne Academy, Mrs. Friedrich's Class

Out of all the days I've had at school, not one could top the day I started band. I had waited all summer to begin and couldn't wait to lay my hands on my brand new trumpet. As I walked into the band room my heart jumped with excitement and joy. I saw posters of fingering charts hanging all around the room. I just couldn't wait to start learning every different note. When the first lesson began the band teacher, Mr. Pagel handed out the music books and instruments. As the lesson continued we learned the notes D, E, and C. When the lesson ended I was disappointed because it was so much fun. I wished I could have stayed in class longer. My enjoyment and excitement that day all prove why the day I started band was my favorite day of school by far.
My Greatest Memory of Fifth Grade

I felt like I was in a real massive tornado because the screen really looked like it was getting closer to me. Boom! Crack! Boom! The thunder sounded like a huge explosion, it was just like TNT all over the sky. We were in the IMAX Theater at the Science Museum watching the movie Tornado Alley.

Then we were walking around the museum and we saw a real mummy. It was creepy and really old. Next, we saw a camel and we sat on top of the camel and took a picture. When we entered the building we saw a huge lizard, a two headed turtle and a humongous gorilla. Then I saw a boat racing game, so I played it and it was really fun.

Next we went to a part of the museum that gives you information about germs. I was walking with my friends and we saw a cardboard person who sneezes out germs when you touch his hand. When we were done with the germ part of the museum, we went to my favorite part where I saw a huge dinosaur bone.

Overall, the trip to the Science Museum was my favorite day of fifth grade because there were animals and other things I had never seen before.

By: Aviael Sanchez Chavira, 5th grade

Partnership Academy
6-8 WINNING ESSAYS

~1ST PLACE~
Wah Nay Moo, College Prep Elementary, Grade 6

~2ND PLACE~
Autumn Corey, Riverway Learning Community, Grade 8
Sara Lizbeth Gutierrez, Academia Cesar Chavez, Grade 6
Cathy Perez Ortiz, Academia Cesar Chavez, Grade 6

~3RD PLACE~
Grace Buell, Academy For Sciences & Agriculture, Grade 7
Gabi!, Beacon Academy, Grade 8
Jack Wickenhauser, Cologne Academy, Grade 7
Michelle Xiong, Noble Academy, Grade 6
School in America

By: Wah Nay Moo
Sixth Grade
College Prep Elementary
Mr. Stegeman

It was a beautiful fall day in September of 2011, when I stepped into the doors of CPE Elementary school. Prior to this day, I had never attended school in America. My family moved to America from a Thailand refugee camp in the Summer of 2011. This morning, my teacher, Ms. Novotny, welcomed me into the classroom and showed me to my desk where I would be sitting this school year. I had never had my own desk before so I was very excited to be able to learn in a spot that was strictly for only me. I did not know anyone in the class who I was sitting by, nor did I know English very well to be able to talk to them, but despite this I still had the best day ever at school.

This day was my favorite because I had my first experience learning with materials that were in good shape, unlike my school materials in Thailand that were over 30 years old. I also really liked the class schedule in America. I thought it was neat how we got a break from learning to have lunch and recess. We had recess in Thailand but it was different than in America and much shorter. I was worried about the school day in America being longer than Thailand’s, but I had so much fun learning this day I did not want to leave when the end of the school day came.
The Importance of Water

My best day in school was when I learned something new in Science. I learned that us Americans are very lucky to have fresh water. We can just walk to a sink and not worry about getting sick or dying.

Other countries have to walk miles to get water and half the time its not even fresh water. We do just fine with water and we can drink it with no worries but there's other countries that have to worry and get sick and die from the water because its not good water. We do not have to go through what other countries might have to go through. We flush our sewage water away and there's other places that can't flush it away. Only 3% of this world's water is what we drink. The other 96% of the water is salt water.

Learning about the importance of water was the best day of school because it opened my eyes what other people have to go through. I'm thankful that I learned this in school because it changes on how I feel about water and the world.

Knowing all this water information made me value life more. Realizing that we have a lot and that we also take lots of things for granted too. We all need to be more thankful of what
were given and not what we don't have. It's sad because we all should be like we have a lot to look forward in life.
The Time I Went To Bethel University

I could feel my heart thumping, my brain imagining everything that could happen, either good or bad. I felt the soft wind in my red face cooling it a little by a little. I couldn’t talk even if I wanted to. What would you have done in my place?

This all started when I was going to my second class at Bethel University. I was selected to go to a young author’s conference. Not everyone got to go, just people that the teacher thought would like to go and the students that were always being good. When I got to my second class I saw that everyone there was white. I’m not trying to offend but it was true. Everyone in my class says I’m white. Well, I’m not that white I think. Anyways I felt weird everyone being American and me the only Hispanic-American, a little darker than everyone in that class. Later I saw that the teacher was really nice, and I felt kind of special because my school was the only school that had Hispanic students there. Then I noticed that everyone is different. No matter what color of skin you are, what is important is how you are and what personality you have. This was my best day ever because I knew that you shouldn’t judge anyone by their skin color, but I had never known how it felt until now and it is not cool and will never be.

Sara Gutierrez
Grade 6
Academia Cesar Chavez
The Day I Met Lila Downs

I was excited. My hands were sweaty, I could taste my dry mouth and I could hear murmurs. I couldn’t wait to see Lila Downs, a famous Mexican-American singer. How would you have felt if you meet Lila Downs?

It was a chilly afternoon. My mariachi group, Ms. Koski, and I got off the bus. Then a lady named Lisa told us to look around the art gallery until Lila arrived. The specific rule they told us was not to run around and be loud and I think that was the only thing we did.

That’s when I saw her. Everyone sat down and she started singing. She told everybody to stand up so we could dance and sing with her. Her music just made you want to move.

Afterwards when it was my turn I asked her for her autograph and I hugged her and she smelled so good, as sweet as a gardenia. Then Ms. Koski told me that my turn was done.

It was time for a picture and I was too far from the group so Lila Downs grabbed my hand and said, “Come on girl, get closer.” She pulled me closer to the middle and I kneeled with her. There was a lot of light flashing at us and I felt like a star. I chose this to be my best day ever because I’ve never met a famous person and also it was cool to cross out something off my bucket list.
Grace Buell
7th Grade
AFSA High School

Forever Friends

I could see the fear in her eyes. The fear to able to fully trust someone, but I could see that she wanted to. It was the first day back from spring break, and AFSA had gotten a few new students. One girl caught my eye, she was quiet, and always had her ear buds in trying to drown out the sound of the world. I later found out that she had the exact same schedule as I did. In our classes we sat next to each other, or we sat at the same table. We got partnered up with almost everything, so we became very close.

After we got to know each other, she was telling me how much our friendship meant to her, and she started to say that she was at a hard time in her life, and that I was helping her through it, I didn’t realize that a trustworthy friendship could mean the world to someone. I feel that meeting her has changed my life in so many ways. By telling me how she sees things, I now see them differently too. The best day in school was definitely the day I met my best friend.

What I have learned from meeting her, is that having a really good connection with someone could change their whole life. It could make them a better person, a bad person, or it couldn’t even change them at all. She has had such a positive impact on my life.
At 13 it’s nearly impossible to feel accepted. It’s the time where everyone experiments with their lifestyles in an attempt to truly discover themselves.

It was yet another gym day, and my awkwardly long legs certainly weren’t helping my case, considering I tripped practically every other kick to the soccer ball. I would aimlessly flail around in an attempt to keep up and despite my classmates’ supportive façade; I knew no one wanted me on their team. My spirits were never too high leaving that gruesome class. I sulked to the science room where I took my next class on genetics. We were studying genetic diseases and we were each told to research one: I chose schizophrenia. After moments of research, I was captivated by the baffling fact there was no known cure. I learned that many illnesses have no known cure, because the human brain is too intricate to easily understand. In this moment I knew I wanted to study the brain and that it was my duty to change someone’s life, because everyone deserves the opportunity.

I can feel it, somewhere deep within me, that my place is helping others. Ms. Sharpe, my phenomenal science teacher, encourages me to follow my dream and is always there to talk to me one-on-one about my future. Even though I may never kick a soccer ball as well as the other kids, I know I will be life-changing one day, but it’s that day that will always be life-changing to me.
My best day at school is everyday since the end of February. Everyday after school I stay after by choice and help watch the little kids in club care. I enjoy being with the kids. They're fun and full of ideas. It just makes me think of when I was that age, wasn’t it like that? One thing I know about myself was when I was younger, I always put other kids needs ahead of my own. I have always been one of those kids who looks after the little kids. I think when I'm there I mostly look after one kid who has ADHD because I know what it's like. I try to help him to the best of my ability. When I look in his eyes I see a younger me.
My best day in school that I ever had was when I was in third grade, and we were going to go on a field trip to Mall of America, Underwater Adventure. It was my best day there because my classmates and I were amazed by the ferocious sharks, scared fish, beautiful corals, and many other things that were underwater. Many fish were over our heads and we were very amazed how their scales were bright and colorful, gloomy and dark, or even camouflage to blend in with the sand.

After going underwater to see the fish, we got to touch Starfish! They were bumpy and wet, and had many different designs on them. We also, got to touch sea corals. It came in different shapes and sizes. Some corals were slimy or rough, and had different colors from each other. Then, it was time to eat our lunch. When we were done eating, we went to the Underwater Adventure store, but before that we had to go through a mirror maze. When we got to the store, I didn't want to buy any thing so I went by the teachers. Then, it was time to go back to school! That happened to be the best day ever!
9-12 WINNING ESSAYS

~1ST PLACE~
Denisse Sanchez, MTS High School, Grade 10

~2ND PLACE~
Nallah Muhammad, Minneapolis College Preparatory, Grade 9
Carter Thorson, Spectrum High School, Grade 10
Ser Vang, Community of Peace Academy, Grade 12

~3RD PLACE~
Emily Barta, Spectrum High School, Grade 12
Sammantha Brandes, Riverway Learning Community, Grade 10
Bradley Peterson, Spectrum High School, Grade 12
Linda, Face to Face Academy, Grade 9
My best day of school happened when my English class had a discussion on the letter written by James Baldwin to his nephew titled My Dungeon Shook. The topic of the conversation was “what do we learn from other generations?” It got intense and it brought me back to the day when I realized my education was the only way out of the hood. I told the class that back in the day, I never went to school, I hated school and that I had all F's. I never looked forward to going to school because everything that was going on outside of school then was my main priority.

My mom and dad never finished high school and now are living the life of poverty. That's all I've ever known. I soon learned that I had the strong urge to get out of it. My dad told me “the only way to get out of this cycle is to get your education.” He's always told me not to be like him or my mom, that they have to struggle everyday just to survive, because they can't live. Because they made the wrong choices, they are now paying for the consequences.

Truthfully, I do not want to be like them, I have already struggled myself and know how it feels not to be able to eat or get what you need because there is no money coming in. I want something better and bigger in life. I don't want to survive anymore I just want to live. The only way to do that is to get my education, go to college and get a degree in something I love doing. I don't want to be trapped in the cycle of poverty and my education is the only way to break free. So now I go to school everyday, get good grades, and am now trying out different things. This day also made me realize how far I've come in life, and that me sharing my story to the class could help someone else who's struggling to make the same decisions I've had to make.
5...4...3...2...1. You are in space! My classmates are all singing. My favorite song in a music video type of way that is helping me comprehend the mysterious world of physics. I could not get any better than this. Being able to have a marvelous experience of such components can make a basic school day a leap more enjoyable. The best day at school consists of constant break-out music sessions, being blasted to space for three hours, and comprehending the concept of physics.

I live in a musical! Although having music in the work environment can be distracting for some, it is very therapeutic to me. To have my peers break out in song on this perfect day would improve my opinion of them and school in general. A geniusly arranged number of Countdown by Leon Thomas III encourages the idea of numerical order and establishing good relationships. The up tempo beat stimulates parts of the brain needed to focus, and the delivery is simply irreplaceable. Musical numbers are entertaining; in addition, they can be very educational. The gift of song would most definitely create the best feeling for a day at school. The discovery of the unimaginable empowers my creative thinking. Although
There are many mysteries that remain on this earth. I am fascinated with what goes on in space. Taking three hours out of the day to be lifted up into the outer limits would be the highlight of the day. There, I would uncover the layers of the stars and travel through the milky way. I would be discovering a world beyond my own; in addition, it only takes a star to spark the star within. Because the outer rim has the sweet aroma of education, my enjoyment of these three hours would be quite productive. Though the point of school is to learn, I also have to be able to understand the content. Understanding the real meaning within physics would enlighten me and open my mind up to new wonders. I have chosen to be an engineer in the future, so it is important for me to understand the laws of magnetism, Newton's laws, and the use of simple machines. With this new source of knowledge I would inquire, my chances of excelling on a quiz being taken that day would increase. Amongst this perfect day at school, a clear dissection of my physics work would be joyful.

If everything were to go my way in a basic school day, it would involve a little beauty of music being sung by my peers, being blasted into the atmosphere beyond the the clouds, and having a clear idea on the concept of physics. My favorite song would absolutely light up my basic school day, along with the stars, overwhelming beauty, capturing my eyes. A marvelous school day should always be intertwined with productive, spontaneous events. In addition,
One's learning environment should be designed to fit them and their various ways of absorbing information.
Carter Thorson

Ms. Pinz

Spectrum High School

3/20/13

Grade 10

The Best Day at School

In the waning days of the ninth grade, there once was a child. Though he would not consider himself a child, most of his superiors would consider himself so. His name was Carter Thorson, he was the outcast of the social highrarchy, but he liked his life this way, the less people trying to pester him about thing the better. He would always respond to people with a hostile and cynical comment.

The day his world changed however, was June third 2012. When he would gain something, something he never expected to receive. He received the book, the book which would change his life. When he found the book, he could never put it down. It was in some way bounded to him. It gave him his uncanny incite, it gave him his extraordinary knowledge, it gave him his greatest ability, and it gave him a motive to write. It gave him the ability to motivate armies; the book gave him the knowledge to conquer the minds of the many. This book most of all gave the young boy his passion; this book gave the young boy his ability to write. This book was a notebook.
The notebook was acquired on the day of June third 2012; the day Carter Thorson picked up the pen would be the day his life would change. Carter Thorson is me, I realized on that day my boredom pierced my mind so deep that I decided to pick up a pen and tablet of paper so that I could create entire world with only my mind as my only ally. That was my greatest day at school, the day I found the thing that I love most, my stories.
First day is the best

On my first day of school at Community of Peace Academy, I was so proud. I thought, *Wow! I can't believe that I can go to school.* I had never gone to school in my entire life. I was 13 years old and I had just arrived in the U.S. from a refugee camp in Thailand. When my teacher asked me to write my name, I wrote in Hmong, *Sawm.* When she came to look at my name, she said, *“Whoa, is this your name?”* I nodded yes and she pronounced my name in a funny way because she can not read Hmong and I could not write *Ser* in English.

I thought, *I can go to school now, but how many days or years will it take me to learn English?* In 7th grade my ESL teacher asked me to go return a book to the library, but I didn't understand what he said to me. Almost six years later, I can speak English better but when I turn back and look at those years, it seems like just minutes ago.

Now the thing that I wanted in my life has come to me. It was school. I wanted to get an education like other people. I wanted to change my life to the better instead of staying the same like my grandparents.

Time goes faster than I thought; life changes so much. I never thought that my life would change this much. I'm happy about my life now, and I'm not worried about anything like I was before. That's because I know English a lot more and I can do everything just like other people. The time I wished for has come now. I still need to continue my education in the future, but I'm happy to do it.
Challenges and Unexpected Kindness

My best day at school was in the spring of 2008 when I was in eighth grade. The day was beautiful, and I was feeling pretty good. The entire eighth grade was on a three-day field trip to the Audubon Center near Sandstone, Minnesota. It was our second day there, and everyone was eager to begin class with their assigned group.

My group was doing a class called Team Challenge. We did many teamwork exercises like getting in order by birthday while standing on a long wooden beam and moving planks of a bridge suspended between two trees with everyone on top of them. We started out being able to freely talk to overcome each challenge but were soon restricted from talking at all to problem solve. At the end of each separate challenge, we were asked to metacommunicate on what the most effective ways we found to communicate and what made the challenges easier or harder.

Some of the things we did were very physically demanding for me. This was largely due to the fact that I became very ill after a surgery and had to go on heavy steroids, causing me to gain over 100 lbs. in just a few weeks. I attempted half-days of school for about a month while attached to a small IV pump but was unsuccessful. Most of the kids bullied or alienated me. So when one of my fellow classmates voluntarily stayed behind with and encouraged me whenever I began to falter during this field trip, it meant a lot to me. That has stayed with me through the years, reminding me that
there is always someone who cares about me and my success. Even though it wasn’t easy, it was still the best day I ever had at school.
Best Day of School

I was on the gym stage with Mina. We were dressed in traditional Korean clothing. We did namaste and got off the stage, “You did great!” Mina complimented. “You did too” I replied. When I got picked I wasn’t sure I was going to do it, but I’m glad I did. It was fun and I learned a lot.

We were sitting in our desks, Mr. Peterson stood up and said, “In a few days, we will be having a school-wide celebration called Nations Day.” He explained further on. “One boy and one girl from each class is going to get picked to dress up with a person from our country, Korea.” “The girl is...” he paused, “Sammi.” I was shocked, everyone looked at me. Rachel looked at me, “Lucky!” Everyone was mad because they didn’t get picked, and I almost didn’t want to do it.

Our classroom was decorated with things from Korea. We had a boy named David who just moved here from Korea and he brought in stuff. We were getting ready when the principal came in and called my name. “Are you ready?” he asked. I nodded. We went into the gym. He brought me to a couple people, they introduced themselves. Mina, who was my partner, and I went through the clothes she had from Korea. We picked out what were going to wear. I wore a pink dress with an orange scarf.

After we showed our costumes we went to each classroom, and we got to learn about a bunch of different cultures. We got to taste foods and learn dances. We also learned about history and other things.

So far, Nations Day was my best day of school. Even though I was scared at first, I had fun and learned a lot of new things. I’m glad I decided to do everything I did that day. I would do this again any
Bradley A. Peterson
Spectrum High School
Grade 12

The Great Exam

It's a perfect summer day; the temperature is between 65 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit, the sky is completely clear without a cloud in sight, there is a sweet-smelling summer breeze. While other teenagers are sleeping in, tarrying, and playing video games, there is a 17-year-old boy in his dorm at Stanford University studying for six long hours for an exam in Developmental Psychology. The next day, he takes his final examination for the intensive Developmental Psychology course that he had been working on all summer. This was my best day of school.

In November of 2011, I received a letter from Stanford University inviting me to attend their fourth academic quarter of the 2011-2012 school year. I applied as soon as I could and got accepted after a few grueling months of waiting. My trip to Stanford changed me forever; I learned a higher sense of responsibility to my schooling as well as a higher sense of responsibility in my daily life. Developmental Psychology was, by far, my favorite of the four courses I took at Stanford. While taking the final exam, which consisted of six essays, I was filled with passion and conviction that I wanted to study the brain for my career, and I had to do well on the exam to do so. The feeling of accomplishment when I finished the exam was the second greatest feeling I've had toward a school-related thing; the greatest feeling of accomplishment was later finding out that I aced the exam.

While most students would talk about their best day at school as consisting of some award they got or someone they liked asking them out, I say mine consisted of sitting at one of
the greatest universities in the world, taking an exam for a field I have passion for. I pose this question to you: What gives a better feeling than making a gigantic leap toward your passion?
Minnesota Charter School Writing Contest
“My Best Day of School”
By: Linda
Grade 9
Face to Face Academy

What was my best day of school? My best day of school was when I returned back to school. That day meant another shot at life, another shot to become a doctor. Coming to school everyday made me feel so much better about myself. Ever since coming to school again, everyday has become my best day. It’s like school is my kingdom, a place where I know it’s a safe place to be and a place where I’m happy and proud to be. A place that I know will lead me to my destination. My teachers are my gods for helping me one on one and lifting me up when my wings are broken. They make sure I can make it to the finish line, and they are there with me through it all.

My teachers made it possible for me to feel like everything would be fine. It doesn’t matter how weak I am, it’s about how much I am willing to try. Some say life is too short to spend such a long amount of time on one thing, but if you really think about it, life is the longest thing us human have. Now, I’m taking my time and making every school day my best day.