

# 2007 Minnesota Charter Public Schools Writing Contest:

## Winning Entries

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Minnesota State Capitol Building  
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Elementary Division  
(10 and younger)

**FIRST PLACE**

Emilie Villaume (Beacon Academy)

**SECOND PLACE**

Camdon Bowers (New Heights School)

Oscar Cruz (Partnership Academy)

Kyle Laudergaugh (Metro Deaf School)

April Leahy (Beacon Academy)

**THIRD PLACE**

Joshua Bauer (Concordia Creative Learning  
Academy)

Ellen Livscheets (Beacon Academy)

Fatah Malone (Concordia Creative Learning  
Academy)

Melissa Platt (PACT)

Hannah Salovich (Seven Hills Classical Academy)

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**First Place Winner**

**Emile Villaume**  
**Beacon Academy**

Since I have been at Beacon Academy I have felt safer. All the kids here are kind and smart. I have made a lot of new friends and I am becoming intelligent. The Beacon Academy motto makes me even more confident. Kids are kind and friendly. I like my old school but I prefer Beacon Academy.

I feel luckier and confident in Beacon Academy. It makes me feel I can do anything. Beacon Academy is more challenging and pays a lot of attention to my safety. They have great ideas and thoughts. They make me want to think very hard. They take it to the next level! I feel great entering Beacon Academy and the Principal is always standing right there to say “Good morning Emily.” It’s music to my ears!

Beacon Academy has taught me all kinds of new things from challenging addition to harder subtraction. I have techniques to me learn. I feel confident and stronger. That is how Beacon Academy changed my life!

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Second Place Winner**

Camdon Bowers  
New Heights School

**How My Charter School has Changed My Life**

I am from Russia and New Heights School helped me learn better. My school helped me read and speak a little bit of American Language. They teach me how to learn about science. They help me to write and say the Pledge of Allegiance. My school also helped me learn about continents and about computers. They help me draw pictures. They help me tell time.

In Russia we didn't get to draw pictures or have snacks. We didn't do fun things in class. In my school now we get to do all these things. Also at school, we have a principal. In Russia, we didn't. I am so glad I get to go to school here.

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Second Place Winner**

Oscar Cruz  
Partnership Academy

**How my life changed when I came to Partnership Academy**

Going to school at Partnership Academy has changed my life by helping me make new friends when I didn't know anyone. My life changed here because when I first came I didn't know how to talk in English but with my friends on my side I learned how to talk English.

When I first came here my teacher was nice and tried to help me a lot because I didn't understand English at all. The second year I came here I just knew a little English and the teacher was nice like the other. My life changed a lot.

My life changed after the second year. I now know how to speak English and I made a new friend. I always have a great time at Partnership Academy. When I get home from school I teach my little brother every day. I hope my life keep changing.

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Second Place Winner**

**Kyle Lauderbaugh**  
**Metro Deaf School**

**How MDS changed my life**

Do you know what happened in my life? Do you know about Metro Deaf School and how it has changed my life?

At the public school I was at I had interpreters, I had to look at them with my head facing sideways. I didn't I didn't like it, so I told the teacher to move me to a different spot, she said "No"! Now here at MDS I don't have to look at an interpreter, so now my neck feels better.

IN MDS I can sign more easily, and I can have a better education. My first school had a little bit of education; then I went to another school when I was hard of hearing where I had absolutely no education! Then I came to this deaf school, and I have a lot education here because I am deaf. At the other public school, they gave me home work, but I did not understand but I did not understand my homework because the teacher did not explain it to me!!!! Here at MDS the teachers explain my homework so then I can do my homework more easily and return it to the teacher.

MSA has the perfect education for me because I can communicate more easily with my friends, teachers, and the staff at MDS. The other public school was fun, and cool, but not right for me, because I have to look at my friends more carefully when they spoke! Also it was hare work for me to talk with my friends there, but I still want to be with my friends at that elementary school, but I can't so now it seems to me I have new friends at Metro Deaf School. I prefer to stay at MDS and I don't want to go back!

The students in MDS don't pick on other students that have aids or something because if they do then they are "talking to themselves" because they are deaf or hard of hearing too. In the elementary school I went to before, the kids (not all of them) picked on student that have hearing aids, and I think that is the wrong thing to do!

In MDS there are no interpreters for me (like I said), so now I don't feel like my neck is broken!! Metro Deaf School has no bullies that I know. My school is an original school. So why don't you do a challenge for me, try signing once in a while for me!!! This is the best school ever in my opinion!!!!

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Second Place Winner**

**April Leahy**  
**Beacon Academy**

At first, when mom signed me up to go to Beacon Academy, I wailed non-stop. I didn't want to be switching from school to school for the rest of my life! Neither did I want to lose any more friends from Pilgrim Lane. And I really did not like the idea of stairs. (I hated stairs) But, my mind changed soon enough.

I heard it was first year opening. I listened closely when mom said, "It's closer to our house." I really did like the idea of Core Knowledge.

When I was finally I, I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. By the end of the year I knew the Constitution, Greek Myths and Gods, (Goddesses too) and then four or five new friends! My brother, Kaelan, was in kindergarten back then. My family decided to stay. My family decided to stay. After that, it was third grade I was in. I kept most friends with me. I had learned multiplication by the end. My life moved on to fourth grade.

Where am I now? I made lots of new friends. Already, I'm learning long division! Life is way better. I have thousands of friends. And now I know stairs and all. Beacon is a great place to learn.

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Third Place Winner**

Joshua Bauer  
CCLA

**How CCLA Changed My Life...**

My school has changed my life in a lot of ways. I've read lots of really cool books that I never knew existed! Now, my reading is at an 11<sup>th</sup> grade level, and I am only in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade! I've also gotten really good at football and basketball! I can beat my dad at football now. CCLA has such great teachers that make learning for everyone easy.

In Art, I have studied lots of different styles of art and paintings. Math is also really fun! We do something called accelerated math, plus we get a bonus from our math Mr. Maloney. English and Literature are fun because I am writing a book!

I am the student council president, so I have to make a lot of important decisions. This has improved my responsibility skills greatly! I love Science, because we get to do a lot of really exciting experiments! My Social Studies teacher, Mrs. Molde, just taught us about Civil War. It was very interesting!! Now, our class is doing research and projects on South America. Overall, I would say that CCLA is AWESOME!!

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Third Place Winner**

**Ellen Livscheets**  
**Beacon Academy**

Everyone should have equal rights and respect when learning and going to school. Beacon Academy & Prep shows all of those traits. All people should have friends or someone to talk to. I think that everybody here at Beacon Academy & Prep is very, very welcoming and friendly. I believe that these things are very important.

Everyone at this school has to wear uniform as a sign of respect and equal rights to everybody. That is so everybody would be treated equally and not picked as friends because of what they are wearing. So many volunteers and staff care about respect of others. So they have many adults supervise us at lunch and recess, and they also help us solve our conflicts when anybody has one.

Our school is bully Zone free. Teachers and volunteers think of many ways to make school a safer place, so everyone would feel safe and secure. Everyone at Beacon Academy & Prep is encouraged to go outside and play with your friends.

The activities include in our school can be very exciting. People enjoy going to chess club, private music lessons, sign language, choir, and Sticky Math and Science. Beacon Academy & Prep also holds a Student Council which brings out great ideas. Our school activities include art, music, physical education, and Spanish once a day. We have a wonderful curriculum called Core Knowledge. Our history and science lessons can be very challenging and advanced. We have learned and are learning material that some people have been taught in junior school. Also, our teachers teach in a way that makes it very interesting.

Other activities that we have are special occasions. We have Valentines Day Party, a Fall Festival party, and the Sock Hop, a day when you dress up as the 50's people do.

In our daily schedule, we have math, language arts, science and history. During history we learn many great topics. In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we learned about the Renaissance, the Reformation, Feudal Japan Russia, England, The Age of Exploration, and the Aztecs, Maya, and the Inca Civilization. In science, 5<sup>th</sup> grade we learned about chemistry, scientist, and much more. In all grades, students learn math from a math book called Saxon Math. In language Arts, we read stories, and then our teachers ask us great questions. In each subject, our teachers teach us important information that you probably will never forget!

The volunteers in our school try to make the school better too. We have a PAC committee for volunteers. [Parent Advisory Committee] Our lunch ladies are actually volunteers. They come on open days to serve lunch and supervise us during lunch time. Our volunteers are trying to make Beacon Academy & Prep better, and I think they doing a great job!

Our school is streaming to be better in many ways and everyone is treated with great respect. I believe that Beacon Academy & Prep is a wonderful school with wonderful education!

## Elementary Division (10 and younger)

Third Place Winner

Fatah Malone  
CCLA

This school changed my life because I used to get in trouble at my old school. I would tell my friend Cory at my old school. My teachers didn't support me like they do at CCLA. We go on lots of fields like the Renaissance Festival. It was a blast. I bought a sword from one the stores there. I beat one of my friends in a splashing game. I have been at this school for five years. My teacher, Ms. Le Ann wants to be on American Idol. I don't think she will make it. My principal Ms. D, she lets us go to her house during art and we do graffiti. That is our favorite subject. Graffiti is my favorite subject and we have pet named Zinkoff. We use to have a pet named Tom but we gave him away to our principal. Our 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher is Mr. Maloney and he is really cool, he likes to do science experiments like dropping eggs from the window. We have experiments like putting oil, water, and pop together. That makes pollution. At my old school, I got into trouble for fighting with other kids, but when I came to CCLA, they taught me how to not fight with other kids. I try to do better and not fight with other kids—many people have been complimenting me about this. The teachers taught me to never scribble or rip my papers like I always use to do.

I have no problems at this school. I have no problems with the teachers or the students. I hope that I will be successful in life. They told me that I could go to a private, community, or public college. I hope I can stay at CCLA for as long as I can.

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Third Place Winner**

**Melissa Platt**  
**PACT**

**Find a Better Place**

You should come to Pact Charter School! Pact isn't a regular school; it is fun, exciting, and awesome! We do a lot of different things than you do at your public school!

First of all we have Fall Festivals and symposiums! You probably don't know what they are because you've never done these great events! I'll tell you what these awesome things are! The Fall Festival is a great way of learning! This awesome year at Pact we had a Fall Festival on what you need for your body to be healthy. We had a lot of things set up for it, like booths that help you learn even more! We also did skits and sang songs for people who wanted to learn more! The symposium helps you learn so much more! We decorate our school so it looks like the place we're studying, like this year we studied Australia. We go from class to class learning about it and we see a play! These events are so much fun!

We also have multi-age classrooms. That means first and second grade go together third and fourth, all the way up to eleventh and twelve. The reason why we do this is so we can help each other. Older kids help younger kids, that's the way all schools should be!

Also we learn second languages, we learn Spanish. We can use Spanish for college and other uses, and we learn Latin and Greek root words!

One great thing about my school is parents, teachers, and students work together. We have a lot of volunteering done! This helps make Pact a better school!

These are just a few things that are great about Pact. This is why you should come to Pact.

**Elementary Division (10 and younger)**  
**Third Place Winner**

Hannah Salovich  
Seven Hills Classical Academy

Why I would encourage my friend to attend Seven Hills Classical Academy

I think that my friend Melissa should come to this school. I would say “Melissa, this is a really good school. It is going to go up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade one day. The teachers are nice and the classes are fun.”

My teacher’s name is Mrs. Tieman and she teaches 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I like her because she plays ‘heads up 7 up’ with us. We start with 7 people up front. They are it. Every one else puts their head down and their thumb up. The people who are it go around the class and they each pick one thumb to put down. Then, someone calls out “Heads up 7 up, stand up if you were picked.” The person whose thumb was down tries to guess who put their thumb down. If they are right, they switch places with person and they become it. If they are wrong, they sit down and the person who did it stays it. It is fun to play.

My school is cool because we do experiments in class, and we have Exploration Destination on Friday mornings. We learn Spanish and next year we are going to learn French and Latin. My Spanish teacher’s name is Seniorita Diaz. Even though my name is Hannah, my Spanish teacher name is Carla. We have learned the months of the year, and on Tuesday we learned the rooms of our houses’ names and our address in Spanish. We sometimes play games in Spanish and that is really fun.

The kids here are really nice. All my friends are Nicole, Blair, Elizabeth, and Ashlyn. The funniest boy in my class is Micaiah because he tells lots of jokes. Being at Seven Hills Classical Academy makes me feel happy.

Middle School Division  
(11-14 years old)

**FIRST PLACE**

Lily Stone (Nova Classical Academy)

**SECOND PLACE**

Trevor Anderson (Metro Deaf School)

Louie Boyd (Twin Cities Academy)

Jared Kaufman (Beacon Academy)

Amy Vang (Community of Peace Academy)

**THIRD PLACE**

Anna Boisvert (Cyber Village Academy)

Hannah Hass (Minnesota New Country School)

Stacie Lewis (Blue Sky Charter School)

Kathy Moua (Community of Peace Academy)

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)**  
**First Place Winner**

Lily Stone  
Nova Classical Academy

Did I tell you that I am a new student at Nova Classical Academy? This charter school has been in existence for only three year and is located right behind Highland Junior High in St. Paul, MN. Please allow me to introduce myself. I am in seventh grade. The classes that I am currently enrolled in are the following: Latin, Logic, Gym, Art, Music, History, Science, Math, and Grammar. As you can see, I have a lot of studying to do. In addition, I play for Blackhawks soccer, study ballet, and art. There are many advantages to attending this charter school which have changed my life for the better. First, I will focus on some of the sparkling perks. Secondly, I will share a heartfelt story that helped me to push forward when I was academically stuck. Finally, I will conclude with a close examination of Nova’s “mission statement” by putting on my detective’s hat.

The most obvious perk, which other preteens may disagree with, is my uniform. I wake up every morning and put on my maroon and white Nova uniform on with pride and dignity. I don’t need to worry about competing in the fashion industry or being distracted at school with the possible following dialogue: “*Your skit is too short!*” Another perk is the fact that Principal John Greving reinforces the following virtues: *Fortitude, Temperance, and Humility*. Not only are these virtues reinforced during monthly assemblies, but they are enforced year round which helps to create a positive and productive academic atmosphere. In fact, located under “curriculum highlights” it states that Nova teachers “*Moral and ethical character education.*” By focusing on these virtues alone is just one way to teach moral and ethical education. Negativity, bullying, searing are pretty much absent at this charter school as a result. Students

seem to support each other by adhering to these virtues which is refreshing given the negative attitudes and bullying at some public schools that friends attend.

Now I would like to share a story with you. I remember it well. There was a terrible icy snow blizzard a couple of weeks ago. My mom could barely see where she was driving because of the “white out conditions” as the weather man so scientifically termed it. Our charter school closed early as a result. Next, my Latin teacher cancelled our appointment to meet in order to go over my test. I just felt so awful about it. You see I studied and studied and studied but I didn’t perform well. I kept asking myself, “*Where did I take a wrong turn?*” After all, I made flashcards; I reviewed them on an hourly basis around the clock; and I even stayed in for recess. On the bright side, we met last week. She explained how I could improve and what I did wrong. I just hate making mistakes. However, I am grateful for her constructive feedback. My strict English teacher, and I do mean strict, took time during recess in order to assist me in diagramming sentences which I struggled to master. When I aced my test, she let me know right away! It is always nice to witness my grades improve.

In summary, the official mission statement of Nova Classical Academy state the following: “*In nurturing, small-school environment, and through the use of an academically accelerated and enriched curriculum, Nova Classical Academy will offer its learners a rigorous, thorough, systematic, challenging, K-12 college-preparatory education the classical tradition.*”

One way that I have been enriched and transformed is by studying the classics. For example, last fall we read Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. At first the language sounded completely foreign to me. I did not know what *lamentable*, *gallant*, or *amorous* meant. However, our teacher showed us some film-clips from the film version of the play and asked us to read certain sections out loud and engage in a theatrical role playing exercise. I played the

role of Hermia. In addition, as a class, we saw the play performed live at Park Square Theater which was magical. The words crystallized before my eyes! The actions I once only imagined came to life! I am truly grateful to my dedicated teachers who provided me with the tools to help decipher this tough play geared for adults. Speaking of plays, another way that the curriculum has enriched me is through learning a foreign language. You may ask me, “*Who needs Latin?*” Well, after seeing a play performed 100% in Latin last week, I would argue I do. Since most words are derived from *Latin*, I am being educated accordingly. Indeed, this charter school has provided me with a rigorous curriculum. For example, in my Science class, we were given several high school experiments to complete throughout the year. I even had to work on my sludge experiment with a partner after the class hour. It paid off because I aced the test! Another way that the curriculum is rigorous is due to the fact that we were asked to write a formal research paper on the “four most important events that happened from 1300 to 1500” in History which required that I view life through a historical lens, conduct research at the library, and write over 200 flashcards! These assignments clearly challenged me to form views about the present.

Without a doubt, *Nova Classical Academy* has provided me with the tools and skills in order to succeed in this global and diverse society. I walked in last fall no knowing anything about Latin or Logic. I didn’t know how to diagram sentences properly; I had no idea what type of writer Shakespeare was or that he was famous for his dramaturgy; and I didn’t even know how to play a xylophone. Still, I wasn’t able to do algebra. I never drew a two point perspective before. Now, I am delighted to report that I do! I am armed with new confidence! Nova has changed my life for the better.

Thank you kindly for your time.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)**  
**Second Place Winner**

Trevor Anderson  
Metro Deaf School

I would encourage you, who are deaf, to go to Metro Deaf School! Metro Deaf School is a remarkable school, all teachers are creative and hard working, and it is easy to learn in Metro Deaf School!

Metro Deaf School is a remarkable school because all the people in this charter school are deaf or hard of hearing. We communicate together with American Sign Language. Another reason is that Metro Deaf School is proud to be the first deaf charter school in U.S.A! Those are the reasons why Metro Deaf School is unique!

All of the teachers in Metro Deaf School are creative! I bet you are very curious why they are? They are creative because they have many different ways to teach us, most of them are fun! For example, they use SMART boards to teach us (I will explain about the SMART boards later). And they use PowerPoint to show their presentations. That is why they are creative!

Guess what? All of the teachers in this charter school works so hard to teach us! And they enjoy teaching us which makes it enjoyable to attend school! Other reasons are that they really care about us, are friendly to us, and easily communicate with us! For example, if something is bothering me, they would ask, "What is the matter?" and "How can I help with the problem that is bothering you?" Those are the reasons why they are the BEST!

It is easy to learn at Metro Deaf School because this school has great technology, such as a classroom that has a SMART board. What is a SMART board? It is like a white board with a LCD projector that shows the image from the computer. Teacher can move the cursor on the SMART boards, just the same as the mouse except you touch the SMART board and move.

SMART boards are cool and fun! Most teachers use the SMART Boards everyday and it saves trees! Another reason is we usually go to the computer lab once a day. These are reasons why it is easier for students to learn at Metro Deaf School!

These are just a few of many reason why I like Metro Deaf School and you should join us. You can visit our school and see for yourself. Or, for deaf children, you can join us!

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)  
Second Place Winner**

**Louie Boyd  
Twin Cities Academy**

**How my charter school has changed me**

My charter school has changed me in many ways. First, I am participating n more than I did at my old school. Now since there are stamps for good and bad behaviors, it makes me try my hardest to get my homework done. Here, there are expectations for each and every student. At TCA, our principal, Mrs. Wynne, helps us meet her expectations.

First, I am participating more than I ever have. At my old school, I was like the kid in the back who didn't say anything. Now that I am at TCA, I participate in everything. At TCA, I raise my hand and tell the answer, rather than mumble. I have the courage to say something right and not act dumb to be cool. Also, I now have fun, energetic teachers who keep us happy with all kinds of events. For example, on March 14, 2007, in many Math class, we celebrated Pi Day! We recited as many number of Pi as we could. I only recited 20, but the highest was 146! We ate pies for a reward.

Second, there are high expectations and discipline at TCA. The teachers have all kinds of stamps. They have stamps for incomplete assignments, being tardy to class, uniform violations, office referrals, chewing gum, C.R.I.S.P, and V.I.C.T.O.R.Y. stamps. You get the incomplete stamp if you do not do your homework or if you do not have it to hand in. You get the tardy stamp if you come to class late. If you get the office referral stamp, you are probably not unknown to Mrs. Wynne and have been to the office before. The chewing gum stamp is used when you are caught chewing gum. The C.R.I.S.P stamp, which stands for citizenship, respect, initiative, and perseverance, is a good stamp. You would get the V.I.C.T.O.R.Y. stamp if you

get caught doing a good deed! All of the stamps are motivate us to be good students and attend the end of the quarter event, which is always fun.

In conclusion, I think my school has changed me in a way for the better. I am now thinking more positive and I am better at getting my homework done and turned in. Most importantly, I have learned to be more respectful. Our principal, Mrs. Wynne, has a good way of teaching us respect towards our teachers and other students. She gets respect from us and she always will.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)  
Second Place Winner**

Jared Kaufman  
Beacon Academy

**Why I would encourage a friend to attend my charter school**

Are you dissatisfied with your public school system? Well, if so, then try out Beacon Academy! I would encourage a student to attend my charter school, Beacon Academy, for four main reasons: the teachers, the curriculum, the benefits of a charter school, and the great features this school has to offer.

First, the teachers are wonderful! They go through great effort to get everything prepared for us, including test, lessons, and fun activities. Not only do they make the tests, but they also take time out of their weekends and evenings to grade them. Recently, our Spanish teacher spent her whole weekend grading our tests because she promised they'd be returned by Monday! These amazing people also create their lesson plans and implement them to teach us things, to do fun projects, and to review.

Second, the curriculum is very content-rich. It is the nationally-recognized Core Knowledge curriculum. The math and reading curricula are also very good and challenging, using Saxon math and Houghton Mifflin reading/language arts. The Saxon textbooks are grades four through six, and are divided into 120 daily lessons and 12 investigations. The Houghton Mifflin reading book has selections that are short stories or excerpts from longer ones. There is also a corresponding workbook that has some assignments for each selection.

Third, the benefit of a charter school, in general, is that it is its own school district and has its own school board. Therefore, the school can have unique programs and opportunities that larger districts may not have. Some benefits of Beacon Academy are the uniforms, small class

sizes, and daily Spanish. Uniforms (ours are navy pants and a white or red shirt) are good because then you don't have to worry about what to wear in the morning. Also, uniforms help because kids are not distracted by what others are wearing and kids cannot wear inappropriate styles of clothing or shirts with inappropriate words on them. Another benefit of Beacon is the small class sizes. At Beacon Academy, there are 23 students in my class. At my former school, there would have been over 30 students in my class. Daily Spanish at Beacon Academy is one more benefit of going to school here. We have 45 minutes of Spanish everyday. Now only are we learning another language, but we are also learning how to communicate with people in Spanish-speaking countries around the world, as well as in the United States.

Lastly, the school has some other great programs that are offered. We have after-school opportunities including math and science classes, basketball, chess, sign language club, drawing class, Girls Scouts, and choir. Enrichment and leadership opportunities are also available through clubs such as, Math Masters and Student Council. Beacon schedules the entire school to have math at the same time to allow students to attend whatever level of instruction they need. In addition, the guided reading groups are leveled so that students can read at *their* reading level rather than a *classroom* reading level.

All of the reasons previously explained are why I would encourage a friend to come to Beacon Academy. The teachers, curriculum, the charter school benefits, and unique programming make it a wonderful place and a great school.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)  
Second Place Winner**

**Amy Vang  
Community of Peace Academy**

**How has the charter school I attend changed my life**

My charter school has taught me many things. I have learned to be a more respectful and peaceful student.

Our school is about peace building. In the morning, we say a pledge. The pledge describes what a peace builder should do everyday. At the end of the school year, two students in each class get the “Peace Builder of the Year” award. This award demonstrates their ability to show peace and leadership to their friends.

I have learned how to help others, to right wrongs, and ask for help from wise people. Helping others is when someone is hurt and trying to make their day a better day! To right wrongs is to fix your mistakes. Asking for the help of wise people is when you ask a teacher or someone who you can trust.

My school also taught me to praise people, to not use put downs, and to be respectful. Also, to treat others the way you would like to be treated. To not use put downs is to not say something that will hurt others feelings and not to say bad words. To be respectful is show respect others for who they are.

I am thankful to be a student at Community of Peace Academy. The school and the teachers have taught me many things about a peaceful person’s view of life.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)**  
**Third Place Winner**

**Anna Boisvert**  
**Cyber Village Academy**

In my opinion, Cyber Village Academy is the finest school in St. Paul. It contains several learning possibilities that are fun to participate in, but from which you can still extract knowledge. The school has a family-like feel to it. CVA has more flexibility to offer than most schools. CVA is a school of superior quality.

One reason that you should come to CVA is that there are many unique learning opportunities. There is an individualized education plan made for each pupil where student can learn from home on the computer or at school for three days a week. Some of the most important happenings are field trips, History Day, Science Fair, and the Spring Musical. The many extra options to choose from include Chinese Class, private tutoring, Student Council, Newspaper Committee, and Chess and Checker Club. In this school there is experiential and technology-focused instruction. CVA offers numerous diverse educational choices.

Another reason to attend is that CVA has a warm and welcoming environment. The school is filled with kind and considerate teachers who give individual help to each person. Because it is a small school, everyone knows everyone else. Everybody in CVA cares about the other students because they are part of the community. The school possesses a cordial and inviting environment.

A third reason to enroll is that students at CVA have more free time than kids at other schools. There is no homework on school nights, which means evenings are open for time with the family. CVA gives you more time to get to know your family better. Kids are only away from home for three days a week, and when they are home, they work with their parents online

to finish their homework. You can do assignments at your own pace and at the time you choose. Going to CVA gives you less stress because due dates are not until Monday morning, so it gives you a flexible schedule. Students at CVA have more choices about what to do with their time than kinds at other schools.

CVA is the best school in the city. At CVA, there are many hands-on opportunities to discover knowledge. This school has a cordial and welcoming air about it. The choices that the school presents you with give you more time to be together as a family. CVA is the most advantageous school in St. Paul.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)**  
**Third Place Winner**

**Hannah Hass**  
**MN New Country School**

I like it better here than at a traditional school because the staff takes more time to listen to what I have to say. I think I am a better student here than I was at my old school. The staff and the students have motivated me to, and, when I was at my old school, I wouldn't have even thought about doing these projects. For example, I just finished a Child Development project and at first I said, "No, I can't do it, it will be way too hard," but then the teachers sat down and talked to me about it. They made me realize that it wouldn't be so hard and I would get a lot of credit for it. I said, "Okay, I will try it," and it ended up being really fun. It was kind of hard but I felt really well once I was done and I felt like I did something big. It made me feel very proud of myself. So, now I am more confident.

I really like the students at MNCS and going here has made my life a lot easier. At my old school, there was a bunch of gossip and if someone was mad at me then everybody else would be mad at me, too. At MNCS I'm friends with everybody. At each advisory, there are mixed-aged groups which give me the opportunity to meet everyone. Students don't think "Well because you're in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and I'm in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I can't hangout with you." I also like this school because I don't have a teacher talking in front of me the whole day. I can work on my projects, but if I need help, the staff will help.

At my old school, there was a janitor but here we help keep our school clean by picking up after ourselves. Each advisory takes turns cleaning, for example, some people in the advisories clean the bathrooms and some vacuum. Plus, think how much money the school is

saving by not having a janitor and not having a principal. The school can spend more money other things like computers and that kind of stuff.

MNCS is also nice because I look at my advisor, Jim, and see how good his relationship is with the kids who have been here for at least two or three years. At a traditional high school, I would just go from class to class and I wouldn't really know the teachers that well; but here everyone knows each other really well, even the new students. So, I hope that one day my advisor will know me as well as he knows other students, but I guess that all depends on how long I go here. I think I'm going to go here until I graduate.

One of the great things at our school is that we have some Fridays off and some Fridays that required. When we don't have a required Friday, I can either stay home or come to school and do remediation. That is when I just work at school. Or I can sign up for something to do, for example, my favorite things to do are scrap booking or building a suspension bridge. There is pottery or, in the winter, some of the staff members take kids ice fishing. So, there are a lot of fun activities going on at school.

Another really cool thing is when we have experience week. That is when I can sign up for some activity that I would do for a week. I can pick three of my favorite things to do out of ten options. Then a staff member looks at everyone's slip and I might not always get my number one choice, but I will usually get one of my three choices. I got pottery and I spent my time making pottery and glazing. I learned so much during experience week. We usually have experience week in October and in April or May.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)**  
**Third Place Winner**

**Stacie Lewis**  
**BlueSky Charter School**

Attending a charter school has changed my life immensely for the better. The school previously attended was close to being a nightmare. Not only did my fellow students give me a hard time, but the teachers and principals did as well. I have been told since I was in kindergarten that the school staff is always there to help. Well, they never said what to do when the principal reprimands you for going down to the office for assistance. Everyone failed to tell me what the correct action is to take when the nurses badger you for calling your own parents. Those were just a few problems I experienced after going to the same school for over seven years. Then, one day, my mother found an advertisement for BlueSky Charter School. We discussed it and decided I would try the school for a time. A few weeks later, I joined BlueSky.

I was immediately able to tell how much better the staff was compared to my former school. Never had I been so sincerely encouraged to ask questions! The teachers' answers are always prompt and extremely courteous. Whether it be by email, instant messenger, or telephone; I've always found my teachers willing to help. The rest of the staff at BlueSky is great as well. Our director couldn't get a hold of my family the week after I started, so he took time out of his day to call us on a Sunday.

Certainly, that's not the only thing great about BlueSky! I find the work much more detailed and in depth than at my former school. Never before was I able to say each day I learned something. Knowledge is easier to retain now. Besides, since I'm not in a normal classroom setting, concentrating is simple. Also, time is no longer wasted with teachers having to discipline students, taking roll, or waiting for people to finish taking notes. Charter school

allows each learner to work at their own pace. At BlueSky, I am more at liberty to take breaks when I need them. Also, absence isn't always necessary when I get sick. I'm also able to help my dad with the business he started a year ago. That business knowledge will undoubtedly help me in the future.

All in all, I would say that switching from a conventional school to a charter school was one of the best decisions I've ever made. The liberty, happiness, and quality of education it offers can hardly be beat.

**Middle School Division (11-14 year olds)**  
**Third Place Winner**

**Kathy Moua**  
**Community of Peace Academy**

Have you ever told yourself that you were dumb? I use to say to myself that I was. People would call me names if I made a mistake. My relatives would compare me to their own kids. A lot of people hated me. And it made me feel that I didn't fit in. When I made mistakes or did something that I couldn't do, people would laugh. I felt sad and felt like crying just right then, but if I cried I know how they would've laughed and teased me even more, like calling me names such as cry baby and a loser.

My relative didn't care how I felt. They would say things about me that weren't even true. They would say I'm dumb and I should change and they would say that I should be more like their kids. I hated it when they said those things. I knew I'm supposed to listen to the adults and respect them but they didn't respect me for who I was. I knew that people were talking about me and comparing me. Students hated how I was a teacher's pet. Students laughed when I passed by and they would whisper stuff about me, just because they didn't like me.

Things changed ever since I attended Community of Peace Academy. On my first day of kindergarten, I was shy because I thought I was going to get laughed at but I made a lot of new friends and met a lot of people who were nice to me. The teachers were nice. They helped me out with a lot of things that I needed help with. People made me feel like I fit in and they encouraged me to do things that I couldn't do.

After attending Community of Peace Academy, I felt that I was not dumb. I should have just tried harder, but I was just too scared—now, I don't feel dumb or scared. After all, Community of Peace Academy has taught how to do things that are better for me and made me

happy for who I was. Now I know that Community of Peace Academy is a place I can have fun, enjoy myself, and a school that I can count on.

# Special Award

Jesse Seelye

## Special Award

Jesse Seelye  
Metro Deaf School

### **How has the charter school you attend changed your life?**

I joined this charter school, Metro Deaf School (MDS). This school changed my life. Before I joined MDS, I went to a different school. I didn't do well. I was frustrated and struggled. I will explain more about my education, social skills and friends here at MDS. Also, I am deaf and blind since birth.

I have been deaf and blind since I was born. I hear some sounds in my ears a little bit but not much. I use my hands to sign (talk) and do not use my voice at all for talking. With my eyes, I can see colors and can see shapes. I use my glasses and see things close, but I can't see far.

At my old school, all hearing teachers did not use sign language. Other hearing students never used sign language. I didn't learn a lot of sign language and was behind in my education. Then my family discussed with me about attending a new school called Metro Deaf School to help me get a better education.

I struggled at my old school because I learned from one teacher. Sometimes I didn't understand the teacher. At MDS, I learned American Sign Language from many deaf teachers, aides, and students. I also have an intervener to support me in sign language. My intervener helps me by interpreting what my teacher says, learn new vocabulary, and writes on a small board when the teacher writes on the big white board in order for me to see.

I didn't talk to other students at my old school. I didn't have anyone to play with. At MDS, I've made many friends. I can communicate and talk with many friends. I learned a lot about social skills like doing eye contact, signing right properly, and how to pay attention.

I feel happier, proud, and excited to be a student at MDS. I have friends that I can learn more new signs from. All my friends and I respect each other. I made it on the B Honor and got Student of the Month. This demonstrates that I pay attention, show respect, finish homework, and cooperate with people. I continue to be improve in my skills and hope to become successful. Everyone at MDS has helped prepare me for high school and college.

# High School Division

(15 and older)

## FIRST PLACE

Kaidi Williams-Jankowski (Math and Science Academy)

## SECOND PLACE

Ben Harris (Harbor City International School)  
Leah Peacock (Lakes Area Charter School)  
K. (MN Online High School)

## THIRD PLACE

Liz Marcus (New Century Charter School)  
Marcus Olson (MN Online High School)  
Katie Stangel (Northern Lights Community School)

**High School Division (15 and older)  
First Place Winner**

**Kaidi Williams-Jankowski  
Math and Science Academy**

“Do you learn anything other than math and science?” That is the first question people have asked me since seventh grade when they heard that the name of my school was called “The Math and Science Academy.” To answer truthfully, “I learn everything there.” I learned how to write research papers for both English and History classes. I also learned how to calculate the coefficient of kinetic friction and construct the antiderivative of a sinusoidal function. In addition, I learned that being smart is a good thing. Good grades are earned by hard work and girls do not have to be stupid to get attention from boys. Teachers are some of the most overworked and underpaid instruments in developing the future of the world. Last of all, I learned how to do physics, analyze literature, and make historical connections. I like calculus. I learned a lot.

My sixth grade year at Hudson Middle School, which bulged with one thousand students, was not a good school. During that year, stomach migraines brought on by stress plagued me everyday and sent me to the nurse’s office at least twice a week. Almost every night ended in tears, and the year ended in a search for a better place. That sanctuary came in the odd little package of a charter school called The Math and Science Academy (MSA) which offers refuge to about three hundred students and twenty staff members. My mother’s need for a teaching job and my need for a new school compelled us to grab hands and take the leap of faith. Six wonderful years later, I will graduate from the place I so lovingly call MSA.

At MSA, there is no peer pressure to drink or do drugs but instead, to think and achieve. Here, geek is chic. There is nothing cooler than acing a history test, or getting an ‘A’ on a lab

book and spending the whole weekend perfecting an English project. This “cool” status of academic excellence, especially in math and science, is not limited to the boys; MSA girls enjoy and excel in those subjects traditionally dominated by boys. Being a girl a MSA is an experience that has taught me how to be confident, adventurous, daring, forthright, and independent.

At MSA, girls as well as boys learn from a unique and dedicated faculty. The innovative teaching styles of the staff have pushed us to formulate opinions on issues, pioneer unknown topics, develop new methods to reach established conclusions, and think for ourselves. As I learn more from my teachers every year, I think that others could benefit from these methods. The teachers at MSA have inspired me to become a teacher myself and to show others that there are inventive ways to teach conventional subjects. The Math and Science Academy has helped me grow and my experience there will continue to benefit me for the rest of my life.

**High School Division (15 and older)  
Second Place Winner**

**Ben Harris  
Harbor City International School**

**Why I Would Encourage a Friend to Attend my Charter School**

Have you ever had a math teacher who casually practices kick flip while taking attendance? A six foot something civics teacher in Converse All Stars who gets you black coffee in the morning? I have, and this is my charter school, Harbor City International. Since I came from my old-fashioned Silver Bay school, William Kelly, to Harbor City, the atmosphere has made school life more relaxing and more a home than a county jail. The teachers here at Harbor City seem to be perfect for my unique learning style. The education and atmosphere are one thing, and going between Silver Bay and Harbor City is a whole new experience.

At Harbor City there seems to be great attention paid to the feeling one gets when first stepping off the elevator. “Welcome” is written in many languages, including binary, on the wall directly across from the elevator doors. Attention is paid to whether a blank white wall or a French window with flowing long red and black curtains, opening on a magnificent view of the lake, inspires more creativity in a student. For me this is the difference between a bleak sentence or a whole page essay. The halls, classrooms and common areas at HCIS are not crunched but tightly knit together, making the atmosphere cozy. The school has a personality, from its French windows to its beat up couches, and its bulky wooden pillars to the computers that seem to be in almost every square foot of extra space. These things change how I learn, my mood, my concentration, my creativity, and make the day more relaxing.

How teachers teach here plays another important role in my education, even more important than atmosphere. It is like I am a piece to a puzzle in the middle of an empty gap, and

my teachers are those missing pieces; they connect me to all the other pieces – my ingenuity, my strengths, and all the things I want to express and learn.

At HCIS the curriculum is self directed, hands on, and has creative approaches to learning things – like a jug band physics class that combines building jug band instruments with learning to play them, and the physics behind how they work. The jug band physics class was one of Harbor City’s symposium classes this January. Symposium is four weeks to two classes the first semester and two one week classes the January. Symposium I have taken are a class in preschool and elderly care where I made a good friend, Stanley, who is now like my grandpa, and a creative writing class where we made a goob er cool poetry hot water heater.

Each semester we also have two Friday elective classes. This year I took a guitar class where I developed my playing skills and a Middle East studies class where I got a better look at how the culture and problems in the United Stated affects our relationship with other countries. This semester am taking am taking a relaxing yoga class and a creative non-fiction writing class. I always enjoy writing and want to improve my composition writing. These classes give me a chance to learn about something I usually wouldn’t learn. For the more formal, daily classes I have Core, which consists of civics, English, and physical science. These classes all focus on themes. For example, we looked at nuclear bombs in all three classes. We do a lot of hands on things, such as science experiments, mock political situations, and lots of personal opinion writing, essay writing, journaling, and creative writing.

Each semester in Core we get to do one self-directed project. The first semester I did a project in which I built a potato gun, studied the physics behind it, studied the guns effect on child development, and worked on my direction writing skills by writing plans for the potato gun. While doing our projects, we are required to set up deadlines for ourselves. Core projects

let me challenge myself, plan ahead, and they allow me to dig deeper into something that interests me.

At Harbor City I get to take Spanish, a class I otherwise would not have taken at my other school. I have music classes, which consist of one day of theory, and three days of me on trumpet and my friend, Forest, on trombone. I also have three required classes in the afternoon. They are technology fundamentals, which prepares me for all the hundreds of times I use computers in my other classes; art, where I am getting a glimpse of many different things, such as, cartooning, clay, oil paint and others; and algebra, my last class of the day, which is much smaller than my previous math classes, so I get more personal help.

My parents live in Silver Bay, Minnesota, and going between there and Duluth on the long eye-opening road along Lake Superior always brings new adventures. Whether I am going to concerts, snow boarding, or to whatever is happening, I seem to feel more content about life. With my school schedule, I stay in Duluth two days a week and drive back and forth the other days. Staying in Duluth two days a week gives me a chance to curl, which I always enjoy. The next day I might shred some metal on my snow board or hang out in town with friends. The other days are not quite so exciting, though I do enjoy the rides from busy Duluth to the small town of Silver Bay. The drive usually gives me relaxing down time, and time to sleep, think, or do homework.

Harbor City has been an excellent choice for my school career. Now I am actually enjoying school, the busy life style I have, and the educational atmosphere at the school. I hope to cherish this awesome charter school until my last senior day. (Cheesy music starts playing here!) All of the things each teacher and class have to offer makes me strive further, and I actually enjoy schools for the first time in my life. You rock Harbor City International School!

High School Division (15 and older)  
Second Place Winner

Leah Peacock  
Lakes Area Charter School

**I TRIED TO WRITE AN ESSAY, AND THIS IS WHAT CAME OUT**

I stare out the bus window, eyes still heavy from a fitful night of half-sleep, waiting for the shape of the school to come into view. Most people think ‘big, blocky, intimidating, confining’ when they think of school. I think of a house, hot chocolate waiting in the kitchen if you want it, bagels, bread, peanut butter, jelly, and butter for breakfast sitting in the fridge and on the counter, and smiles galore being directed at you when you walk in the door. “Good morning” is the reigning phrase of welcome as we come in from the chilling wind and snow that whips through the parking lot. I’m not a morning person, and I often find the cheeriness and smiling faces to be overabundant and sometimes mocking, as though they’re thinking, “*We’ve got you for another day, and there’s nothing you can do about it.*” I don’t mind. Yes, it’s school, but it’s not like normal school. It’s more homey and comforting, plus there’s no homework to speak of – unless you failed a class or two at your previous school(s). Personally, I’m sitting on a history of 2 other high schools from last year, and I have to say, my attitude about school has improved an incredible amount since my last day at either Jefferson Senior High or Morris Area High School. Middle school wasn’t exactly an easy time for me, and I repeatedly found myself buried under several hours of detention that no one even told me I had. I know, I shouldn’t have been late to my Social Studies class that many times, but if I had known about the detention, I would have gone and gotten it done with instead of having it double on me time and time again. I guess bringing a huge Care Bear to the middle school’s vice principal’s office put me on his bad side. I don’t see *why*, but if I were to bring one of my many large

stuffed animals to school here, at the Lakes Area Charter School, my teachers would (at worst) give me an odd look and tell me it couldn't have its own chair, or laugh at the comical image of me carrying a bright pink bear at least half my size through their classroom door before they asked where I got it. It's an easy-going place, this charter school, and it's got a calm, laid-back environment. Sure, there's always drama between certain students, but that's normal. Some people say charter schools don't have cliques. They're wrong. The teachers may not see it, but there are always cliques. I've always rejected the social norm, and so have been categorized as an 'oddball' or 'social reject' or 'outcast', and those students who have been blessed with an abundance of money or are lacking in parental supervision automatically classify me as the type of person they can step all over. While there *are* still cliques here, they're not as prominent. I'm by no means popular, but I'm not as cut off from the rest of the school as I used to be. It's a nice feeling, to at least be partially accepted for who I am. In short, this school makes me feel good about myself. Isn't that how young adults are supposed to feel? With how the world's been lately, if there's a place where kids like me can feel confident in themselves, shouldn't that place be supported and kept in good shape? I think so.

**High School Division (15 and older)  
Second Place Winner**

By K.  
Minnesota Online High School

**A New Way of Learning: Minnesota Online High School**

The charter school that I attend is Minnesota Online High School. This is my first year being enrolled in it and it has changed my life in many ways. Of course there are some negative benefits like not seeing my friends as much as I used to but overall there are many more positive advantages. Finding this particular charter school basically saved my high school career.

Through the years, I have had frequent migraine problems. Traditional public school was great, but because I was sick a lot, I had a poor attendances record. The school administration was not accepting my problem and basically drove me out of school. I had numerous doctors' notes informing the school why I was absent all the time. This problem was blown out of proportion and my parents have many meetings with the school board. After they threatened to prosecute me for delinquent behavior and report my parents to the police for not being adequate parents and sending their child to school, they decided that because I was sick too much they were just going to deduct my grades as a punishment. I worked harder than I ever had last year in public school to catch up on my work and maintain good grades, but my good grades were all reduced and I even ended up failing a class.

"Enough is enough," my parents said. My mom, dad, and I all agreed that I couldn't take the chance of going back to my public school again the following year. We also didn't want me ending up in the same situation and getting reduced all over again.

My dad did a lot of research on different schools, and home schooling. He came across Minnesota Online High School. It was nothing like I had ever heard of before. After looking

into it, I decided that it would be a great opportunity. I knew I needed to find a school that could work for me, and this sounded perfect. I always wanted to try home schooling but because my dad works all the time and my mom only has a high school degree, there would be no one to teach me. So an online high school was a perfect solution.

By attending an online high school, it gives me the flexibility I needed in my week. I still have migraine problems, so when I am sick, it doesn't matter because I can still get my work done. I know that I will get full credit for it. Because of all the flexibility in the school, I have been able to get a job and participate in some extracurricular activities. One of the biggest things that I am getting out of attending a charter school is learning how to manage my time and expand my learning style. Public school is very structured and there is not much time management involved. Last year, I would get an assignment and it would be due the following day, but this year is much different. Each class that I take gives me a week's worth of work at one time and I have to be responsible for managing my time to get all the work done. At the beginning of the year, I was really bad with the time management concept, but now I think I basically have it down. My learning style is also being broadened. I am a visual learner, but without direct contact with teachers, I have had to learn to develop my other learning styles. The main form of learning my school comes from reading, and reading all day I am beginning to get much better at it. By expanding my new skills, I know that I will benefit from them in the future and will greatly contribute to my college career.

Overall, my charter school has really changed my life. It has given me the opportunity to be successful in high school, and still have a good chance at attending college in the future. My school has also given me the flexibility I need. Minnesota Online High School is teaching me

new things. I am really appreciative that charter schools are around and they help many kids who don't do well in a traditional schooling environment.

**High School Division (15 and older)  
Third Place Winner**

Liz Marcus  
New Century Charter School

**New Century: Embracing Individuality**

I suppose I could say that the greatest thing about my school is the privilege of technology that we possess. Or perhaps I could choose to say that I most enjoy our unique class schedule. I could even say that I like the student-teacher relationships best. There are many appeals to my school; however, what I appreciate most is that it encourages individuality, is lacking of peer pressure, and compels its student to be well-rounded.

If you had been at New Century Charter School about four years ago, you would have seen an awkward and quirky girl, clad in a crazy, mismatched outfit, with hair no longer than an inch or two. That girl was me; back when I had first begun New Century in seventh grade. Although I must have been an unusual sight to see, I quickly made friends and adjusted right into my new school system.

Throughout these 15 years of my life, I have been to nearly all types of schools—home, public, private, and now charter. Although they all provided me with an excellent education, I don't think my 7<sup>th</sup>-grade self would have been entirely accepted within all of them. Peer-pressure is an active factor in how students dress, behave, and speak. Have I been living under this influence, I might have had long, highlighted hair, and have been wearing Abercrombie jeans and an array of makeup. Yet at New Century I did not feel pushed into any of that; peer-pressure did not exist. I felt glad to be the person I was, and I never cared what people thought of me. I didn't need to, because no one criticized me. Things are nearly the same today,

although my clothing sense has improved a bit. I am not alone in being my own person.

Everyone has something slightly different about them, and we all let it show.

It seems the diversity my school offers is constantly providing new outlook on life. I believe this presents the chance for me to better myself. It teaches me to be more open-minded of new ideas, and more accepting of other people—understanding that everyone brings another distinctive, innovative idea to the table. In this way New Century is certainly preparing its students to be respectful and well-rounded adults.

I would absolutely say that New Century encourages students to find out how they are and to be proud to that person. It is an environment where individuals do not have to look or think like everyone else in order to fit in. Each student is different from the next, and I find it refreshing. It is for these reason that I appreciate New Century Charter School.

**High School Division (15 and older)  
Third Place Winner**

Marcus Olson, age 18, grade 12  
Minnesota Online High School

**Why would I encourage a friend to attend on-line school?**

Why would I encourage a friend to attend an online school? Online high school is one of the best ideas for kids like me, who have a hard time sitting in a class room. I like school, but all day in the same place is something too much for me. Oh, I know, but when I graduate I have to work 8 hours a day in the same job, but I know I am the sort of person who needs to be busy with my hands so I don't get bored. I will be a person who works outside so I move around.

I tell all of my friends they need to look at Minnesota Online High School to help get their diploma. They ask me, "Why would I want to sit in front of a computer all day?" This is what I tell them: "Huh, you think I sit all day."

I try to split my day up. I will work on my homework and do some studying online for awhile. Then I can go to my job and work for 5-7 hours. When I come home I can work online some more or I can get back at my classes the next day. If I'm in town at the library, I can get online to work on classes from there too. My school can be so portable I can take it with me as if it is a part of me. I tell them, "Instead of dropping out, give me online classes a try." Being in these classes gives me the freedom to work at my own speed.

My brother had trouble in school a year ago and he attended Minnesota Online High School to help him graduate. He needed a couple credits to finish his year. This is where he got those credits. His teachers were very understanding and always were there to help. I watched how easy it was for him and I figured if I was going to graduate, I had better get up to speed.

I tell all of my friends being online is better than being in a classroom. I feel that the teachers don't know me personally like a instructor where I sit in his/her classroom everyday. I know I can contact my instructors through email, on the phone, through classroom discussion, and will always receive the help I need.

I feel we should advertise in the paper, television, computer, by word of mouth, or any other way possible to get the word out of how great an opportunity Minnesota Online High School is. Have a hard time sitting or paying attention for long period of time? Turn on your computer and type in Minnesota Online High School. Check it out, you won't be sorry!

**High School Division (15 and older)  
Third Place Winner**

**Katie Stangel  
Northern Lights Charter School**

My charter school has changed my life drastically in many different ways. When I was seven years old my kidneys failed. After a year and a half of being on renal dialysis I got a kidney transplant. With all the time it took for all my medical stuff, I really was not in school all that much. When it came time to go back to school it was horrible. I was used to not going and being with my mom and dad all day.

Finally, I went back to school and dreaded everyday that I had to go, up until a year ago. That is when I transferred to Northern Lights Community School. I still did not like going to school, but then I got to know the teachers and they got to know my medical history. Eventually, day by day, and week by week, I started going every single day and actually enjoy going. Who would have ever though a medical condition could affect my life in such drastic ways...but it did.

Now we are in our second year and the teachers cannot believe how much I have improved since I first started. Every single day I get comments saying how proud they are of me for how well I have done to get motivated in school. They say I have a gift of making everybody happy anytime I walk into a room.

They do not have this in traditional school, and that is what makes our school so special. It makes me feel like a better person inside knowing that my teachers believe in me. When a teacher gives me a comment it makes me feel important. In a traditional school you have to look, act, and have good grades to even get noticed...not at our school. Everyone is treated equally. I really think if I would not have transferred that I would have dropped out at 16. The

charter school made me realize that I do want to succeed in life. Those are just some of the many ways that Northern Lights Community School has changed my life and opened my eyes to a whole new perspective on things.