



# Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference



Marielena Santiago, *Principal*

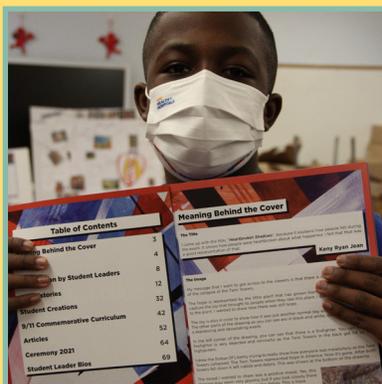
David Pretto, *Supt. of Dist. 20*

Gina Lynch, *AP*

Michelle Buitrago, *AP*

Beatriz Bortle, *AP*

Olivene McIntosh, *AP*



## FEATURING

**9/11 Book Project & Collages at PCSS Conference**

**Why History Matters: Students Born in 2008 & Beyond**

**Mask Mandates: Mask Appeal & Issues**

**Collages Celebrations**

**Space Tourism: Desired Destination or Distraction**

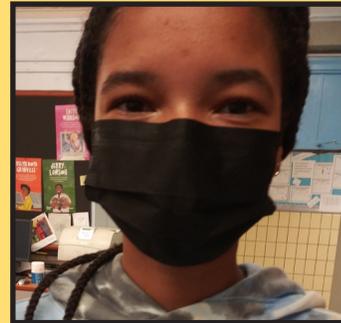
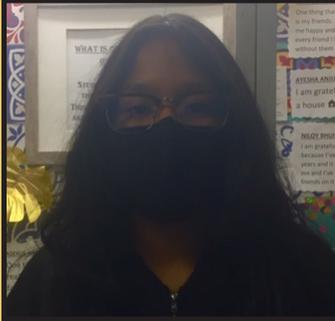
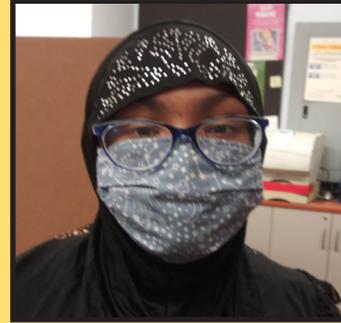
**Awkwardness: From Fiction to Ditmas**

**Ditmas Insider Stories**

**Maya Angelou Inspires Poetry**

**Student Comics**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference



The Ditmas Buzz is the forum for a series of articles and issues by Ditmas students which focus on our school and the global world around us. We, as evolving journalists, cover the events of our school as well as react to the events outside our building from our perspective.

With a range in this issue from holidays and events to equality and safety, we cover a broad spectrum of topics. Here, within the pages of Ditmas Buzz, everyone's voice is heard. Ditmas students, your voices matter. We seek students who are passionate about speaking out to write, create art or take photos for us.

We listen to what you have to say. Tell us, what are your dreams, passions and ideas? You name it and articulate it in images and words. Come join the Ditmas Buzz.

**Nurzahan Chowdhury**, *Editor-in-Chief*  
**Noushin Islam**, *Story Editor*  
**Momma Arif**, *Story Editor*  
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**Abeeha Mahmood**, *Inside Reporter*  
**Ana Gonzalez**, *Inside Reporter*  
**Amina Amritdinova**, *Inside Reporter*

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**Marielena Santiago**  
*Principal*



**Michelle Buitrago**  
*Assistant Principal*



**Gina Lynch**  
*Assistant Principal*



**Beatriz Bortle**  
*Assistant Principal*



**Olivene McIntosh**  
*Assistant Principal*

The Writing Institute Teacher Leaders develop and implement data driven, student-centered best practices. Ditmas Buzz Writing Institute Teacher Team: **I. Akhter, C. Daccordo, C. Donadio, S. Franzese, M. Grzelecki, L. Jayson, M. Kass, A. Mathis, R. Michel, J. Snyder, M. Silverman, & J. Digeronimo**

**Mr. Michael Downes:** Ditmas Lead Faculty Advisor, SS Innovator PCSS, Chase/WNET Technology Education Award

**Dr. Rose Reissman:** Director of the Ditmas Writing Institute, 2019-20 Education Digest Tech Influencer

**Ms. Amanda Xavier:** NYS English Council Teacher of Excellence, Ditmas Writing Institute Associate Director, NTA Humane Education Award

**Dina Annese:** Writing Institute 6<sup>th</sup> grade implementer who specializes in posters, character traits & project based learning

**Mr. Carideo:** Develops, runs & edits Ditmas Life daily and shares its contents as part of his collaboration with Ditmas Buzz to broaden student journalist & media presenter opportunities. Chase/WNET Technology Education Award

**Mr. Sefaradi:** Writing Institute resident videographer, photographer and media outreach specialist



Special thanks to **Rosalie Pinto, Julia Santos, Ms. Charles** for ongoing support. Funding for this issue and for Writing Institute Programming including author visits, the Daffodil Spring Event, Aunt Sophie Memoir project and student celebrations is provided by the Simi Foundation.

The Ditmas Proud theme reflects the Principal's and Administrative's Initiative which grew out of the expertise in guidance work of Ms. Bortle. The articles and news events have been aligned and filtered through that coherent, congruent and cohesive perspective.

The Ditmas Buzz is developed and run in synergy with Mr. Carideo's ditmaslife.com news feed. His technology and journalist leadership invigorates all Ditmas publications.

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

# PCSS 68<sup>th</sup> Conference at Valley Forge 10/11: Ditmas Presents 9/11 Book Project & Cultural Collages



Dear Principal Santiago:

Dr. Rose Reissman and Ditmas stole the show yesterday at the 68th Annual **Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies Conference**. Ditmas' work on 9/11 and beyond, and your leadership of the effort, were highlighted to a main conference session. Ditmas was honored with the PCSS President's Award and Dr. Rose took home individual awards for your team of educators and students. Ditmas is also featured on the PCSS web page at <https://pcssonline.org/moments-in-history-9-11-and-beyond/>

Thank you so much for sharing your voice to our group in your video message that is found on the website and that was shown to all conference attendees.

Sincerely yours,

**David Keller Trevaskis, Esquire**

*Pro Bono Coordinator*

*Legal Services*

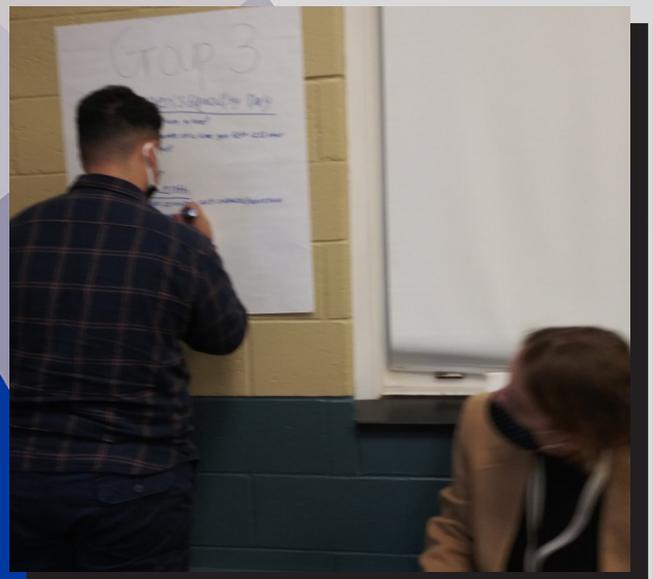
*Pennsylvania Bar Association*

*Executive Director of the Law, Education and PEACE for Kids*

*Executive Secretary, Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies*

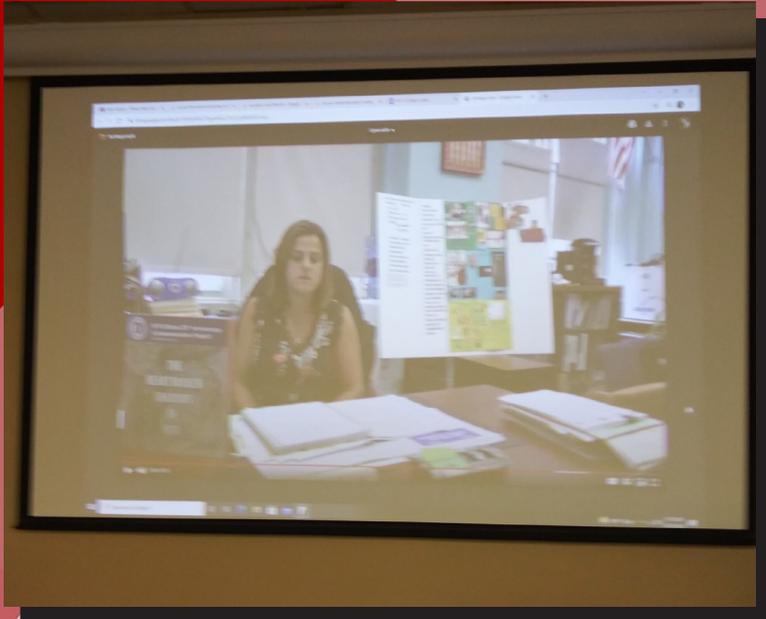
*Dr. Rose Reissman is the Creator & Developer of the 9/11 Commemorative Project*

# Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference



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**Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference****Countering Controversy with Commemoration, Conversation, Ceremonies & Collage: A Compelling & Collaborative Chat with Dr. Rose Reissman**

by Evangeline Sell

With the same strategies she uses to teach her students, Dr. Rose Reissman captivated educators at the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies' 68th Annual Conference, on October 11th, 2021. In a session entitled "Countering Controversy with Commemoration, Conversation, Ceremonies and Collage", Dr. Reissman encouraged curious educators to discuss the ways in which controversial holidays affect their students' lives, and how these conversations can be productively carried into the classroom to educate and encourage understanding.

Dr. Reissman made her unique teaching methods known the second she stepped into the classroom at Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge, where the conference was held. She had 20 chairs be arranged in a semi-circle in the center of the room and the rest pushed to the back. She brought in bag after bag of hands-on materials and began pulling out an endless supply of poster boards, signs, folders, markers, sticky notes, papers, and most importantly, collages. She finished the set-up by cheerfully banging the gavel on the speaker's podium, one would imagine, to test the acoustics in the hall. Once the room resembled an elementary school classroom - a much more appealing sight than the average conference room - educators interested in hearing her session began to fill the room.

Dr. Reissman began the session by bringing the date of the conference to the audience's attention; it was October 11th: Indigenous Peoples and Italian Heritage Day, still recognized by some as Columbus Day. Dr. Reissman discussed this holiday and the controversy surrounding it and other culturally important dates. She stressed the necessity of students understanding these difficult holidays through careful and conscientious teaching strategies. After introducing her session and the issue to be addressed, the educators were split into three groups to allow for more personal discourse and full use of the many art supplies available. Dr. Reissman asked the groups to discuss and select two commemorative days that were personally or culturally important to them or their students. The educators were given the opportunity to engage in conversation over significant, but often controversial, holidays that they believed were crucial to teach their students. Using collaboration, communication, poster boards, and sticky notes, the groups decided to focus on a variety of commemorative and meaningful dates, including, but not limited to, Indigenous Peoples Day, Juneteenth,

*Dr. Rose Reissman is the Creator & Developer of the 9/11 Commemorative Project*

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Martin Luther King Jr. Day, International Women's Day, and Women's Equality Day.

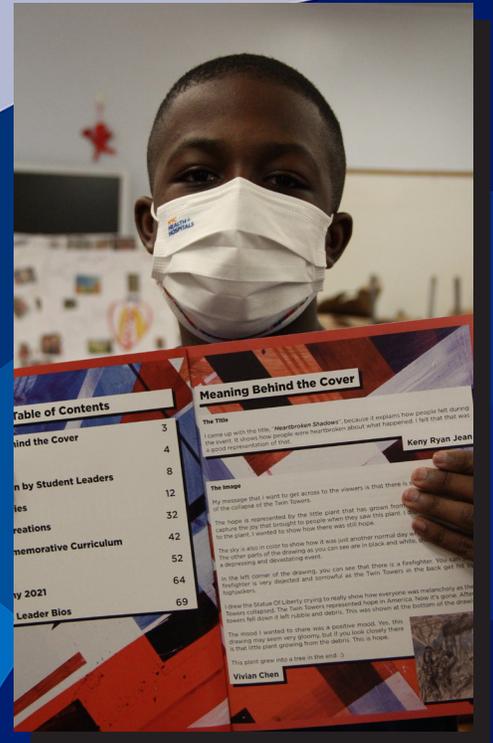
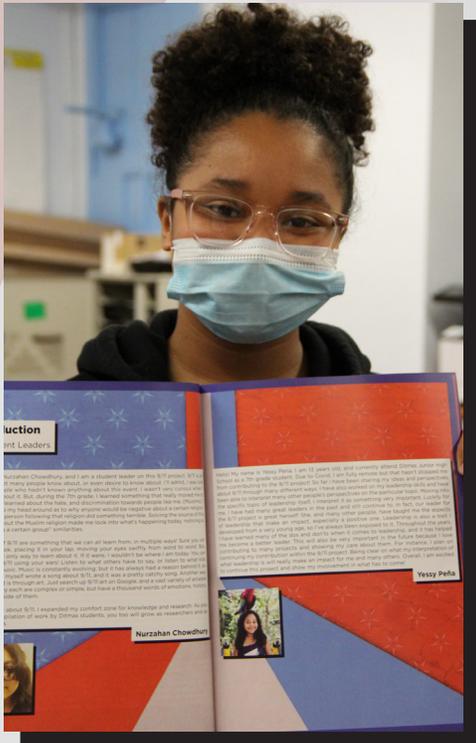
Next, Dr. Reissman asked the groups to discuss strategies to include an oral history interview component into the recognition and education surrounding the holidays they had chosen. The interviews were to be conducted on family members to foster in the students a more personal connection and understanding of the holiday, as well as meaningful conversation and valuable education opportunities from people in their lives. The educators shared what they thought might be some of the most important questions for the students to ask their interviewees. These questions included, "What are some of your memories associated with this holiday?", "When did you learn about this holiday or the potential controversy surrounding this holiday?", and "How has this holiday changed over the course of your life?" The educators participated in this discussion enthusiastically, sharing opinions and fostering friendly discourse, being extra conscientious of the sensitive nature surrounding some of the holidays and the special instruction their students may need when learning about them.

Throughout the presentation, Dr. Reissman had on display the work of the students of Ditmas Junior High School. These students had learned about 9/11 and were the pinnacle example of the effectiveness of Dr. Rose's teaching methods. The students had created art, conducted interviews, written poems and essays, and made beautiful collages, that all culminated in a book written entirely by the students. Their work was fascinating and their understanding of this nuanced subject and the surrounding controversy was incredible. To convey the effectiveness of the students' work, Dr. Reissman showed a video of the principal of Ditmas Junior High School, Mrs. Cipriano-Santiago, discussing the meaning and importance of this project to her and her students.

To wrap up and encourage complete immersion and hands-on learning, Dr. Reissman asked all educators to create their own collages that communicated the message and purpose of the session. The educators went home with the tools to engage their students in these often hard-to-teach, painful, and controversial moments in history, using commemoration, conversation, ceremonies, and collage.

*Dr. Rose Reissman is the Creator & Developer of the 9/11 Commemorative Project*

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Dr. Rose Reissman is the Creator & Developer of the 9/11 Commemorative Project

700 Cortelyou Rd.  
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## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Mask Mandates: Mask Appeal & Issues

*Ms. Franzese uses a personal inventory to provide her students with a chance to reflect mindfully on how public health and emotional health concerns figure into their lives as young community members and as citizens.*

I feel that masks are needed and appreciated. I feel this way because masks are really good for keeping us safe. We are able to cover any bacteria that may or may not come out from us. Masks prevent spread of bacteria and safeguard elderly people since they are the most vulnerable. So this is why I think masks are needed and appreciated.

To me, masks aren't really coming into the way of socializing and speaking. It's just students who have been in their homes for 18 months, so it must be a bit hard making friends or speaking with teachers. But, in general we just need more time to socialize a bit more. This is why to me, masks aren't really coming into the way of socializing and speaking.

I have had the vaccine. I was nervous about it. I did finally take it because schools were starting and they were available for 12 year olds. My parents and I made the decision to take the vaccine. I also wanted to take it because I wanted to make others safe that were around me. So this is why I was nervous about the vaccine.

My parents did want me to get the vaccine because they said it would be better to be safe

around school, friends, family, and elderly friends. My parents also wanted me to take the vaccine so we would go on vacation. This is why my parents wanted me to take the vaccine.

The shot itself going in was a bit like a flu shot. My arm around the first dose did hurt a lot. But through medications, and exercising my arm. I was able to fight through it. I was really glad to get the first dose though. But then I had to get the second dose where my arm hurt a great deal more than it usually did, with the flu shot. I did get a fever with it. After 2 to 3 weeks, my arm pain and body went back to its flow. I was glad though because I felt way better than before the shot. I am grateful to have had the shot.

Yes, I want kids 5 through 11 to get it because then they would be safe as well as us and adults around them. Usually, younger kids can get the virus since their body isn't that immune. It would be better for kids to get it then they would be able to be better situated to fight back the virus with the vaccine in their body. This is why I want kids 5 through 11 to get it.

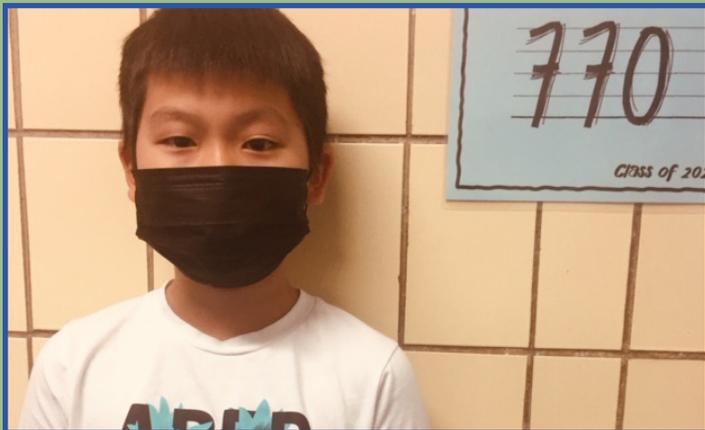
**- Abeeha Mahmood**

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I feel that masks are useless and may be a waste of money. I feel this way because in school everyone wears masks. Outside of school not many people wear masks. As long as everyone takes care of themselves and covers their germs with their arms (sneezing) nobody should get the virus.

I had the vaccine. I was completely scared about it. Some died because of the shot. **[These statements are not verified by the FDA]** I didn't feel like I should take it because I might have been one of the unlucky people. I did finally take it because I really didn't have a choice. The shot on top of that hurt like a needle sting plunging into you. It hurts for like 2 seconds. When it came out, it hurt for another second. 3 seconds of pain, twice!

- Eric Ou



I feel that masks are needed because it helps us not get sick. It prevents the spread of germs. It does also lower your voice volume and ability to be heard when you talk through the mask. It interferes with your speaking. But would you rather die from Covid or speak up behind the mask?

I have a very personal response to whether persons younger than 12 should get the vaccine. I am 11, a very young 7th grader. If I were 12 now and eligible for the shot, I would feel very frightened. I do not want students ages 5-11 to get the vaccine because they are too young for it. It would be hurtful for them.

- Amina Amritdiner

I have taken the vaccine. Having done so, I felt relieved about it. I took the vaccine because I wanted to keep others safe and myself. I also did it because my whole family is vaccinated. But mostly I did it, because I was going to the airport in a couple of weeks! The airport is a very risky area for to get covid transmission so I wanted to make me, my family and everyone else safe.

My parents wanted to get me it because they got it. They wanted the whole family to be safe.

The shot felt a bit scary when going in because I thought it was going to hurt. I thought this because the vaccine was for a very strong virus, so I thought they would make it extra strong. I couldn't remember how I last felt when taking a vaccine.

I personally think that 5-11 year old kids should not get the vaccine, because 5 is a young age. For example, arm soreness and sickness may be too much for just a kid to handle. I think that 9-11 years and up, should be eligible for the vaccine.

- Sehar Syed



I feel that masks are needed and appreciated because the masks are used to prevent getting COVID. I honestly feel comfortable in the masks because I've gotten used to wearing masks. When COVID is over and we don't have to wear masks anymore, it would feel wrong to not wear a mask since COVID has been here for a long time.

- Ana Gonzalez

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Space Tourism: Desired Destination or Distraction?



Hollywood's Captain Kirk, 90-year-old William Shatner, blasted into space Wednesday in a convergence of science fiction and science reality, reaching the final frontier aboard a ship built by Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin company.

The "Star Trek" actor and three fellow passengers hurtled to an altitude of 66.5 miles (107 kilometers) over the West Texas desert in the fully automated capsule, then safely parachuted back to Earth. The flight lasted just over 10 minutes.

"What you have given me is the most profound experience," an exhilarated Shatner told Bezos after climbing out the hatch, the words spilling from him in a soliloquy almost as long as the flight. "I hope I never recover from this. I hope that I can maintain what I feel now. I don't want to lose it."

[...] Shatner became the oldest person in space, eclipsing the previous record — set by a passenger on a similar jaunt on a Bezos spaceship in July — by eight years. The flight included about three minutes of weightlessness and a view of the curvature of the Earth.

Sci-fi fans reveled in the opportunity to see the man best known as the brave and principled commander of the Starship Enterprise boldly go where no star of American TV has gone before. The internet went wild, with Trekkies quoting favorite lines from Kirk, including, "Risk: Risk is our business. That's what this starship is all about."

[...] "Today's launch is a testimony to the power of the imagination, and we should not lose sight of that power," University of Rochester astrophysicist Adam Frank said in an email.

"William Shatner may be 'just an actor,' but Captain James T. Kirk represents a collective dream of a hopeful future in space that 'Star Trek,' and science fiction in general, gave us all," Frank continued. "Bezos gave Shatner a seat on his rocket because he, like millions of others, fell in love with 'Star Trek' and its vision of a boundless frontier for humanity."

- via AP News

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference



Milan and Costa Rica were among the winners of the Earthshot Prize on Sunday [Oct 17], an environmental award created by Britain's Prince William, who has criticized world leaders for an uninspiring response to the climate change crisis.

The honours were established to find solutions through new technologies or policies to the planet's biggest environmental problems, with a winner in each of the five categories receiving 1 million pounds (\$1.37 million).

Milan won the "Build a Waste-Free World" award for its food waste hubs, which recover food to give to those most in need, while Costa Rica received the "Protect and Restore Nature" prize for programmes paying citizens to plant trees and restore ecosystems.

"We are alive in the most consequential time in human history," William, second in line to the British throne, said in a video message to the ceremony held in London.

"The actions we choose or choose not to take in the next 10 years will determine the fate of the planet for the next thousand."

British royals have recently made a series of comments on environmental issues.

William took a thinly veiled swipe on Thursday at billionaires embroiled in a space tourism race, saying the world's greatest brains should instead be focused on solving the environmental problems facing Earth.

Queen Elizabeth has said she was irritated by world leaders who talk about climate change but do nothing to address global warming, and added it was still unclear who would turn up at the upcoming COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland.

**- via Reuters**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Space Tourism: Desired Destination or Distraction?

Students at Ditmas IS 62 had the opportunity to actually watch the October 13, 2021 launch of the Blue Origin Shepherd rocket with 4 passengers aboard. Among those passengers was the actor William Shatner, 90, who the students did not recognize. The 10 minute adventure received high praise from Shatner who felt it was an experience that everyone should have. Prince William, another personality the students did not recognize who was set to give 5 prizes to persons who were trying to innovate ways to safeguard our environment, slammed the trip, stating that the earth needed saving, rather than financing a trip to space.

Students, as current citizens and as potential customers for space tourism (when and if it becomes as affordable as other means of transportation), were asked to consider whether they would opt to be space tourists or environment protectors. They produced posters based on their choices and expressed their viewpoints.

When you are older, would you rather -  
Visit outer space? Work to fix climate change?

I would rather fix climate change. This is because when the rocket ship takes off, gases are released into the air. These gases have multiple negative effects on the environment. They can contribute to global warming and pollution. The gases are toxic. Their results can contribute to trees dying and plants dying. At some point these gases will sicken humans as well.

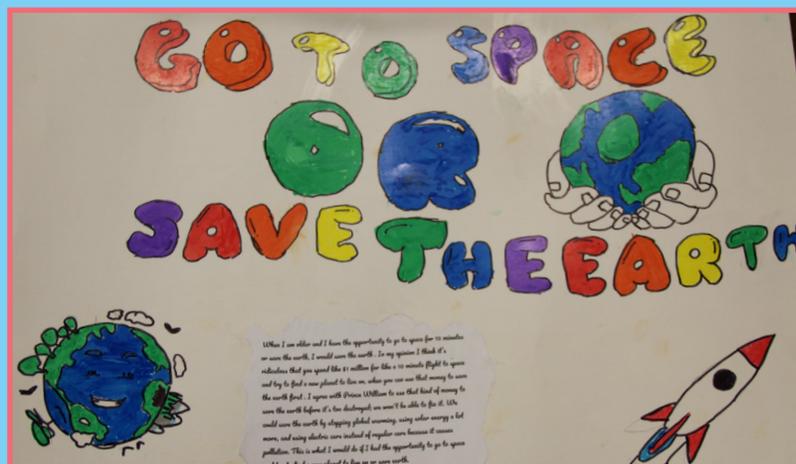
Given this outcome of space tourism launches, I say focus on this planet, not a space tourist trip.

- Mariya Sarker

Were it my choice, I would save the planet. The earth is our home. For us to live in a healthy environment, there has to be improvement and change for us humans to protect the planet. Should we not make healing the planet a priority, the earth won't be able to provide us with everything we need to live healthy lives. Why would we need to look for another planet to live on, rather than concentrating on repairing the one we have already?

Should we not attend to the needs of our earth, the planet will become more polluted with toxins. Plants, animals and our lives will be at risk. Rather than be tourists in space, focus on the earth, our space.

- Anisha Adrita



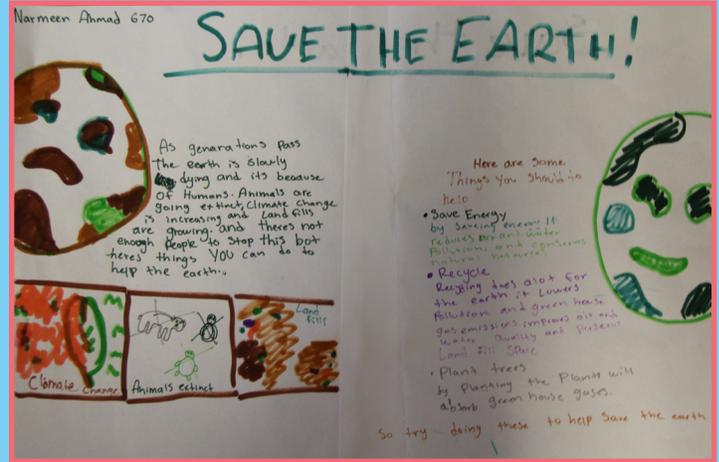
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“We need some of the world’s greatest brains and minds fixed on trying to repair this planet, not trying to find the next place to go and live.” - Prince William

I would rather use the money to fix climate change. Going to space, per person, at this point for the ten minute trip costs a quarter of a million dollars. That amount could be put to saving persons and animals. A space tourism trip can negatively affect the atmosphere. It can cause pollution as well as contribute to global warming. In addition, obviously this expensive trip is risky, should something go wrong.

We all live on earth. Let us work on making certain our home is safe and protected, before we set off to space.

**- Ayaan Qaisar**

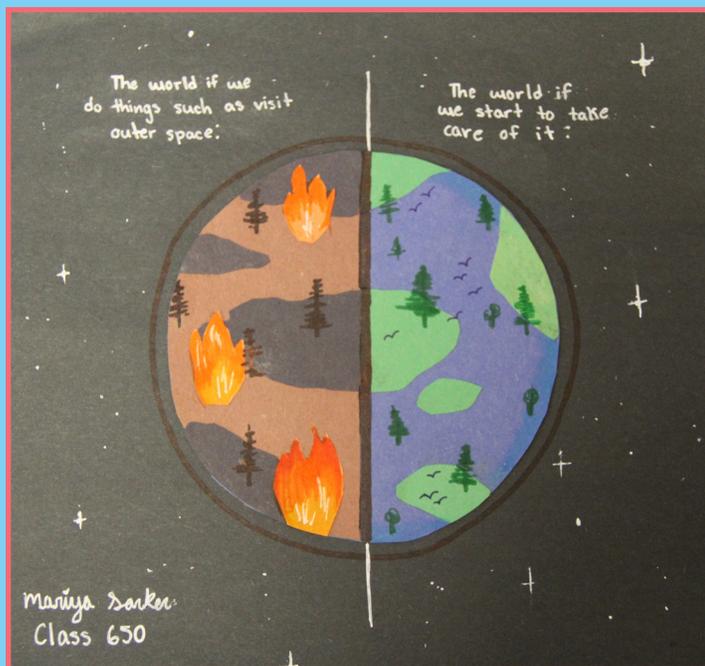


I believe focusing on helping/fixing the world is the better choice over going to space on a vacation. I argue this because if you were to go to space as a vacation, you would be staying in space temporarily. However, should you choose the environment, you are focusing on earth where you live permanently. If we maintain our environment well, we will have no need for space vacations.

We need to focus on recycling. The best part of caring for our environment is that it is so easy. It can all begin with placing reusable items in the recycling bin.

Choose the earth over a space vacation.

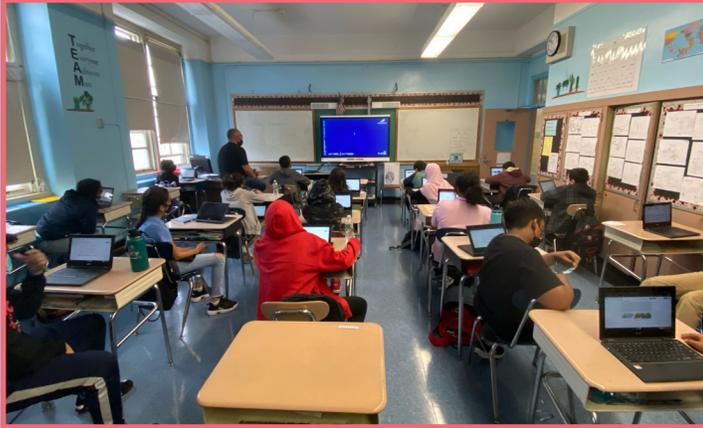
**- Mohammad Haque**



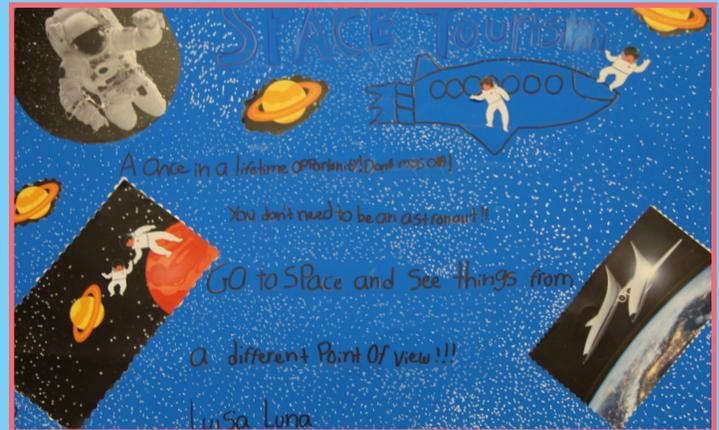
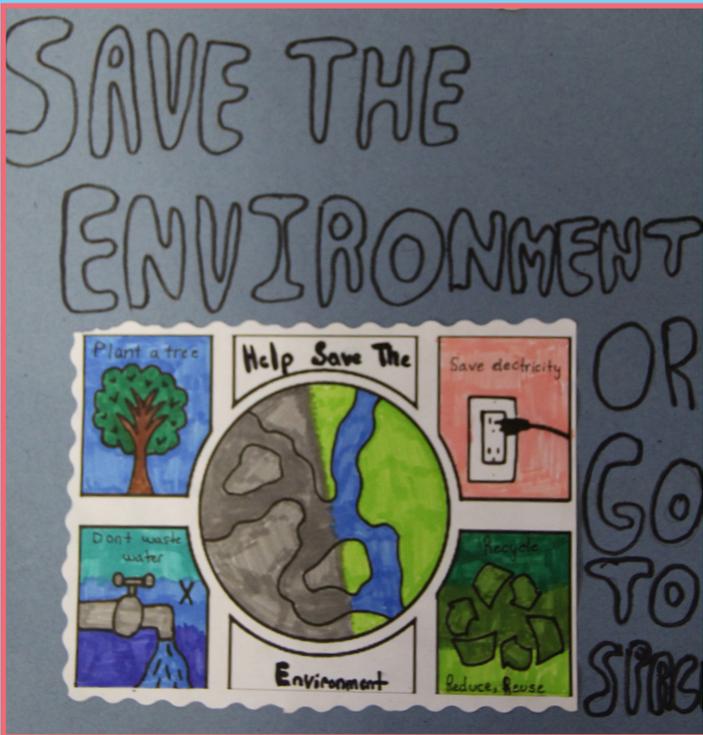
First, fix the planet. One reason why is that if we fix the environment, we might be able to think of new ways to go to space without ruining the planet. Perhaps we could find ways of blasting off while eliminating the gases that hurt the planet. In addition, having to live in space might not even be possible.

**- Charos A.**

# Space Tourism: Desired Destination or Distraction?



Class 706 watched the launching and landing of the capsule returning the crew back to earth. The class erupted in a cheer!



# Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Help Save Our Planet

**Why is it important to help save the Planet?**

The earth is our home and only home. The earth and its environment provides us food and water. It is important to take good care of this planet to improve the quality of our life.

**Ways to help protect the earth:**

- Conserve water
- Plant a tree
- Reuse and recycle
- Avoid driving
- Start a garden
- Conserve energy
- Volunteer



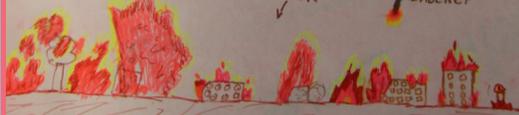
Anika Adrika  
600

## SAVE EARTH

Why you ask? Well would you just go to space for ten minutes hurting Earth and spending over 200,000 dollars too.

Before you answer that, think about it a bit. Our home is dying yet you are hurting the Earth paying thousands, just to be some place for ten minutes.

It's all burning but everyone's in space and doesn't see it. When we come back, there we see fire, everywhere maybe we can't even see it. Humans, animals, everything would be gone. No life, no way to live, we are all doomed. We might find new things on the planet we never knew where a thing can maybe help us get to space without hurting Earth. All this after just try to help Earth. <sup>what can happen</sup> -Rocket



So what do you choose? Cheers

**SPEND ON THIS?** 

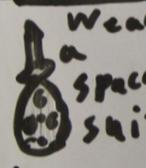


**OR SAVE THIS**

Ishtiaq uddin 6-660

Do you have a lot of money, and want to go to space? Well now you can spend 250,000 usd for 10 minutes in space!! It is an AMAZING experience, by going to space you are also helping further space exploration. It may be a big fee but you'll change space exploration forever! (call this number to book an appointment ex: 292-231-992)

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Wear a space suit!  Buy now!

**\$250,000**  for **10m!!** Float in low orbit!  float above the Earth! **Space Tour!**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Why History Matters: Students Born in 2008 & Beyond

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History is a very important topic to learn. If you do not study history, you will not know anything about life. Michael Crichton said: "If you don't know history, you don't know anything. You would feel lost and confused. Alexis de Tocqueville expressed it in another way: "History is a gallery of pictures in which there are a few originals and many copies." This means that if you do not study history, its events will repeat as copies of the original ones not reviewed by students of history. Finally, history shapes us as the persons we are today. Its study is crucial.

Another quote, that of poet Maya Angelou really connected with me on a personal note. Her words on history were: "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but be forced with courage, need not be lived again." I agree that people try to forget or ignore history because of its cruelty. I feel as does Ms. Angelou that cruelty needs to be acknowledged, so it will not be repeated.

A final reason for studying history is our need to learn what came before us and how the past evolved into the present. Study of history makes it clear to us how many of the rights we have today were fought for in the past. This study will inspire us to retain and to exercise the rights we have today plus fight for others.

Study of history will help us prevent repeating many events and not acknowledging cruelty. It will also inspire us to cherish the rights we have and fight for new ones.

**- Medula Hassan**

Many individuals are perplexed about the need to study history. They feel since it has already happened, why study it? They question the benefits of learning history for them in the present.

One key purpose is to learn from past mistakes. "Those who fail to learn from history are destined to repeat it," said Winston Churchill. Understanding the past allows us to avoid making new mistakes by devising a different approach.

In studying history, we are actually learning more about ourselves. As Franklin D. Roosevelt remarked: "Remember, remember always that all of us are descended from immigrants and revolutionists." That means that we are all here because of history and we should never forget our past struggles.

Studying history of the past, allows us to positively work toward a future we desire. Pearl Buck stated that if one wants to understand today, one must first understand yesterday. We can if we know the past, write a history we author. Eleanor Roosevelt stated: "One thing I believe deeply. We create our own history. " Today's decision impacts the story of tomorrow's future. We can shape the outcomes of our future tomorrow through actions we make today. If we decide those actions today taking past history into account, we can work toward a better future for our nation and the world.

**- Kimberly Ahuati-Pajaro**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

Many reasons why history is important to study can be presented, there's many more floating around in the air, clinging onto your furniture, around the people who linger near you, etc. If I were to pick only three, I would say history is important to be studied due to the numerous events that happened throughout thousands of years. It allows us to know how everything was portrayed back then, it also affects how everything is portrayed now. Another reason why I believe we should study history is because of who it created us to be. We all are different, we have different beliefs, opinions, and minds. History affects that. A final important reason as to why I feel we should study history, is that we, every day, contribute to history. Without learning it, we wouldn't even know this process was taking place. A man, in the slideshow provided to us, vividly showed that. Michael Crichton. His words connected to me.

I strongly connect to one of the people presented in the slideshow. This man so bluntly, yet vividly said that if you do not know history, you don't know anything. His name was Michael Crichton. Word through word, his quote says, "If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree." This quote spoke out to me, the wording seems a bit confusing, but well put together. The quote is also entirely true. If you don't know history, then you pretty much don't know anything. Every minute of every day, every hour of every month, every day of every year, all are spent. The thing that comes after becomes the future, and everything you did then becomes the past. The future is also based on history.

The fact that we continue to have inauguration days for our presidents, is due to George Washington having one. If you didn't know that, then are you even aware of these days happening? After all, everything has a beginning. Crichton continues the truth, by saying that not knowing history means you're a leaf not knowing it's in a tree. Looking outside, you see many beautiful trees glued onto

the ground. Each one has luscious green leaves making it whole. Without a tree's leaves, it's just a branch. The leaves growing add onto that branch, just as we do to history.

History affects how everything today is portrayed, due to the events that took place then. Some examples would be racism, hatred towards Muslims and Asians. Racism only happens now because of how black people were treated then. The disrespect they were screamed at to catch, affects the balls that are thrown today. 9/11 was an incident that took place in 2001, and because of it, many Muslims today are called terrorists. Covid-19 was said to have begun in China, due to this, Asians are treated horribly today. History affects what happens now, the moments of it all simply repeat. It's important to study it because of this, because explanations are behind it, and because we can recognize, and help the issue. History has also created who we are to be today.

The events that hold onto the rope are all being watched by us, as we learn about it every day. We question what happened then, comparing it to what's happening now, and keep our minds thinking about it. We are affected by it. The way we think is based on history, due to the questions it asks us. These questions develop our opinions, and our opinions affect our other opinions, which affects the way we even think! The structure in which we all work, the minds in which we use every day, are affected by history.

Finally, we the people, everyday contribute to it. History isn't just made on its own. It's gum. It's gum we need to pull out, and chew to get to the flavor. We need to add onto history to have its point made. Just as people such as Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Malala, and even Hitler, we create what happens. Today, covid is the main focus in which it is being written. How the people react, and deal with it, affects how in ten years today, it will be learned.

**- Nurzahan Chowdhury**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Why History Matters: Students Born in 2008 & Beyond

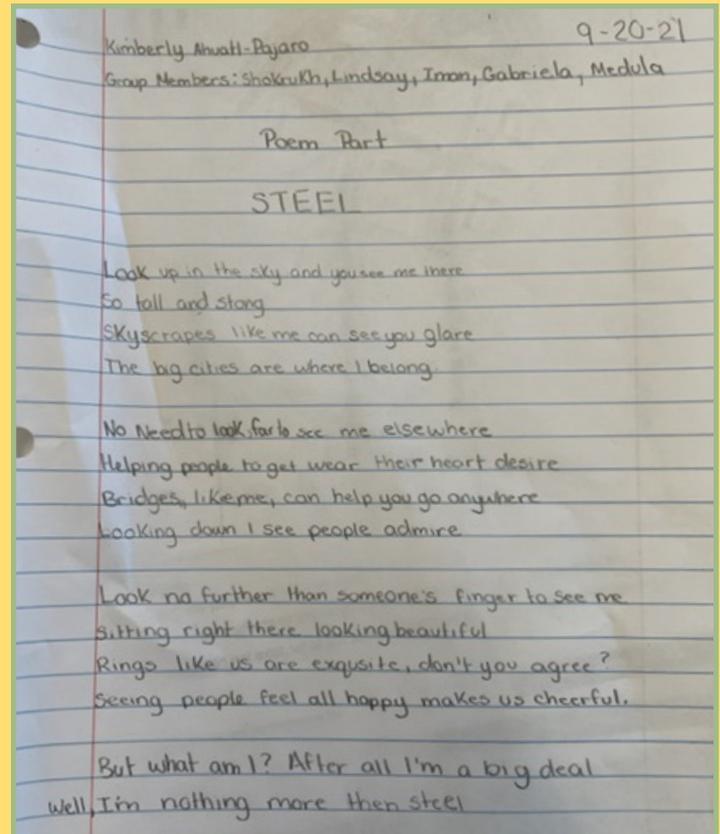
Quotes can inspire us to study history.

First one from an individual who is infamous, Adolf Hitler. He said: "How fortunate for governments that the people they administer, don't think." Sadly, Hitler was able to achieve some of his infamous actions because some citizens did not reflect on what he was doing. I also notice that many people elected to govern are not very knowledgeable about history. They do not use knowledge of history to connect current actions with past events. Hitler's charismatic personality and many people's lack of knowledge of history, allowed him to get away with actions which should have been "red flags."

Winston Churchill confirmed this idea of the need to know history as we live under and with various governments. He stated: "Those that fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it."

Another very image rich quote is the African proverb that states: "Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunters." The historian is the author of history from the historian's perspective so if the hunter, the hunter is the hero as the lion is hunted and killed. But if the lion has a historian who sides with the lion as hunted, the history of the hunt has a very different perspective. Often different historians and the media present very different perspectives about the identical history event. Media channels can also present contrasting coverage of events and the citizen or viewer must weigh the accuracy of the coverage. It is important to study history and to learn how to analyze coverage for accuracy and for bias.

- Gabriela Huachi-Cabreja



## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

### ***The Holocaust and Today's Anti-Semitism: Too Close a Parallel for Comfort***

Have you ever heard someone say something like, "The Holocaust never happened."? Did you ever read or hear comments along the lines of, "The Jews deserved to be killed", or "They wanted to be separate from everyone else and the Nazis let them be separate."? I, a 7th grader, have heard these comments. They all boil down to Anti-Semitism. That is defined as "hostility or prejudice against Jewish people." Why would I write about this topic?

Allow me to provide the context for my writing. The Nazis murdered all but five of my immediate ancestors. I myself have been affected by Anti-Semitic retorts and Holocaust denial statements online in Roblox. As I react to these 21st century statements about a historic reality, I sense sadly a close parallel to Europe of the 1930s and 1940s and the comments about Jews made then. History needs to matter.

What was Anti-Semitism during the Holocaust? A Britannica article on "Nazi Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust" states: "the Nazis . . . regarded the Jews not only as members of a subhuman race, but as a dangerous cancer that would destroy the German people. The Nazis sought the final solution to this threat of destruction." Anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s was a product of the Nazis fostering the belief that Jews were indeed subhuman. They themselves viewed the Jews as similar to a cancer that would destroy Germans.

History matters. In what way is this 20th century view of the Jewish people parallel to modern day 21st century Anti-Semitism? According to *race.org*, in an article titled "Modern Day issues in Anti-Semitism," the author states that 21st century Anti-Semitism includes "Jewish power" in business and "dual loyalty"- the notion that American Jews

are more loyal to Israel than America. Both forms of Anti-Semitism - the 20th and the 21st - posit power in the Jews that in reality they do not and never had.

How did these two non-factual 20th and 21st century misconceptions about Jews manifest in real time events?

In the 20th century the idea of Aryan racial superiority appealed to the masses and to the economic elites as well. In Germany, Anti-Semitism became the official government policy and the education curriculum for schools, with backing from "research" journals. Sadly liquidating the Eastern European Jews became official party policy. This German mass appeal of Anti-Semitism, as picked up by other European Nations, of the 20th Century led directly to the death of 6 million Jews.

So does that history of the Holocaust matter now? According to *news.northeastern.edu* - in an article, "Surge of Anti- Semitism Reflects Ingrained Pattern", the author states: "There is a famous phrase in the Gospel of John which suggests Jews belong to their father the Devil."

Pittsburgh Synagogue shooter Robert Bowers, killed 11 members of the Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018. On his social media profile, he posted, "Jews are the children of Satan." This obviously inaccurate non fact based description of Jews and the resulting deaths because of this are eerily similar to the non-factual ideas about Jews that allowed the Holocaust to unfold.

Given that Anti-Semitism today echoes that of the Holocaust, what can all of us do to demonstrate that the lessons of past history matter today?

**- Anna Block**

## Ms. Silverman's Plants

### *The Arrival*

Nameless plants are in for a surprise.

Like the students they are fresh and new to the building.

They and the students enter the building as strangers. The plants and the students are equally confused.

The plants cannot speak, while the students can express their confusion.

A difference between the plants and the students, is that while the students shift in and out of the classroom, the plants are there to stay.

To their amazement, the students voted to name the plants - Chicken Cookie, Bob and Lemon Face.

Lemon Face wished the name were the cooler "Lemon Phase."

Thanos who is purple and looks like a red onion had nothing to say about the name he was given.

A positive of life forever in Room 201 is that the plants will forever be taken care of and never be ridiculed.

**- Noushin Islam**

### *A Tale of Two Plants*

There were once two plants. One was an Aloe Vera plant and the other was a hanging plant. These plants were siblings from a traumatic background. They had started to look for a new home.

Now in Ms. Silverman's room on the 2nd floor of Ditmas, they were in a beautiful classroom. There were sights to see. The students in the class treated them with love and respect. They were provided by the children with the necessities of life.

The children decided to give the plants names. The Aloe Vera plant was named Chicken Cookie and the hanging plant is now called Bob. Chicken Cookie and Bob reside in a Ditmas classroom. As an outcome of all the love the children have given them, they are starting to emerge from their traumatic background. They have begun a new life. As the year goes on they will have more adventures and also some melancholy days. However, the love of the children will always surround them.

**- Momna Arif**



## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Ditmas Insider Story: Lemon Face & Chicken Cookie

by Nushat Sharkar

*This Ditmas Insider Story is inspired by Ms. Silverman's Lemon Face, Chicken Cookie and Thanos personae in her 7th grade - 701 homeroom.*

"I like him!" shouted Lemon Face.  
 "No, I like him!" Chicken Face yelled back.  
 "What is going on here?" asked Thanos.  
 "I don't know." a confused Bob responded.

The loud fighting went on until someone yelled "STOP!!"

Thanos pointed out to both Chicken Cookie and Lemon Pie that screaming aloud that they both liked Bob would not prove that they liked him at all. However, Chicken Cookie boasted as he headed that Bob was his.

"In your dreams." replied Lemon Face.

At 7 am in the morning, Bob woke up and went to make breakfast. He heard the doorbell.

"Who is ringing the doorbell so early?"

When Bob went to open the door, he saw a box had been left. The box contained a letter.

The letter read:

*To: Bob*

*From: Lemon Face*

*Here are some homemade cookies. I hope you like them.*

Bob could not resist. He opened up the container with the cookies. He tried the cookies. They were just AMAZING! He actually loved them so much

that he ate them all up in one sitting. After Bob finished eating he decided to hang out with his friend Thanos in the park.

At the Park:

"Hey, Bob, look, isn't that Lemon Face?" Thanos asked.

Bob turned around quickly to see Lemon Face sitting on a bench all alone. He decided to go up to her since he felt badly that she was seated all alone.

"Hi, are you okay?" Bob asked Lemon Face, "You seem sad."

"I am." replied Lemon Face.

"No one wants to hang out with me, everyone thinks that I am a freak."

"I will hang out with you and I will be your friend." said Bob.

From that day on Lemon Face and Bob became best friends. Soon after they started dating. The news of their dating spread like wild fever. When rumors spread to Chicken Cookie, she got jealous.

"I will get my revenge." said Chicken Cookie.

*How might this story end? What does Chicken Cookie do for revenge? What elements of this story could connect with real life for actual humans?*

## Ditmas Insider Story: The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Experience

*After a lengthy time away from Ditmas, our current 8th graders find themselves back in the building on the third floor. They have returned as 8th graders with all the privileges and the anxieties that come with that status. Here is the perspective on that experience from our two insiders.*

There's been a vast change in everything since Covid. Among the things changed or shifted by Covid are: friendships, studies, worth and emotions. Ms. Tazama's classroom is sometimes cold, but she herself is so wonderful and warm. She prepares us with instructions making us independent. I love learning in Ms. Tazama's class. She helps with the work and makes it fun!!

Ms. Jayson is a teacher I've had since seventh grade and she is an angel. She teaches gym with another cool teacher, Mr. Wilkerson, they really help us stay in line and healthy. Both of them get our bodies moving. Both of them make certain we understand the sport we are playing and physical movement.

Our Dean, Ms. Polito accomplishes so much and socializes with us at recess. She takes time to get to know each and everyone in the 8th grade. Any problem I have presented to her, she tries to help me immediately. Do you know what is being planned by her for Senior activities?

She is working on events for us which will provide us with memories for our futures. Two events which we can look forward to are graduation, which honors the hard work of all the students, and prom.

I personally wish every 8th grader a joyous year. Remember, if you have any problems during the year, there are always solutions!

**- Amelia Jules**

As a former 6th and 7th grade student, I can immediately say that 8th grade is far more interesting than the other grades. I would say the interesting aspect of the grade lies in the fact that in 8th grade, you have to be much more responsible for yourself as well as be ready to switch classes.

My mathematics class is fun. However, as an eighth grader I have many more assignments to do than I did in other grades. I have had to get used to the number and the depth of the assignments, although Mr. Cancel's class is one of my favorites.

Mr. Vizcarondo offers 8th graders reviews to do and extensive test preparation. I have a sense of learning test preparation skills that will stand us in good stead as we take tests in various subjects. There is an extremely positive vibe about these classes that motivates me to do well, plus sets me up motivated to do well at Ditmas overall.

As part of our physical education program, Ms. Jayson is amazing. She was my 7th grade teacher, but I also knew her in 6th grade. This continuity and getting her now in 8th grade is important this year after all I and other 8th graders have been through. Ms. Jayson is only hard on students when she has to be, but she is also fun to be around as a teacher and as a person. Like her, Mr. Wilkerson keeps us in line when we do not listen, but can be fun when we are following his program. I can also say as an 8th grader, I have sweet memories of my sixth grade gym teachers - Mr. Biscuiti and Ms. Affitigato.

Best of all, 8th grade has a terrific Dean, Ms. Polito. Again she represented continuity for me because I had her as a sixth grade Social Studies teacher. I enjoyed her class then. She is planning a set of senior activities we will actually experience in the building at the very least. Now as all 8th graders, I happily look forward to graduation, having a high school placement, and making joyous 8th grade memories. To the class of June 2022!

**- Michelle Stabile**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

Back in 2019, I was 11 years old, a 6th grader at Ditmas IS 62. At that time I was part of a Keyboard Class. We were learning the basics. Eventually we started learning concert songs. But that learning ended with the virus - Covid 19 - that entered our lives.

At first, school closed for two weeks. Those two weeks turned into two years. You can imagine my frustration as part of the keyboard class, since we had learned all those songs, just to have a virus ruin our performance. No concerts, no performances, and no trips.

I decided to opt for remote learning during 7th grade because of the virus. I did not have a keyboard in 7th grade remote. I forgot how to play it. I forgot how to read the notes. Basically I forgot everything. My keyboard sat in the corner at my home, collecting dust.

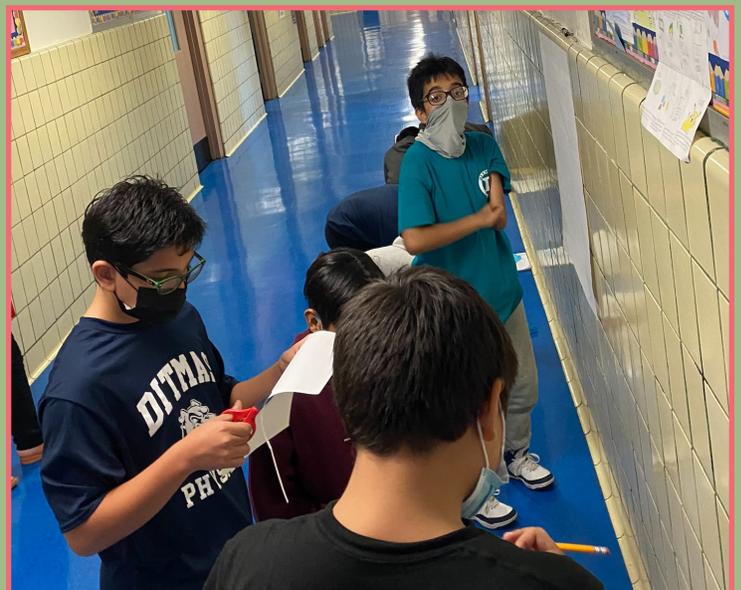
Eventually this Fall 2021, we returned to school, but I was not too happy about the return. However, the only aspect of the return I was happy with was going back to the keyboard. I was not only happy to go back to keyboard, I was also happy to see Mr. Kass, the keyboard teacher. He was and is still one of my favorite teachers.

The second I started playing keyboard everything came back to me about how to play it. In fact my playing returned even better than it was in the 6th grade. That is pretty odd since I have not played for almost 2 years!! I am pretty happy playing keyboard now and learning new songs. Hopefully a virus will not ruin it this time.

**- Moeez Ahmed**



## Mr. Snyder 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Awareness Posters



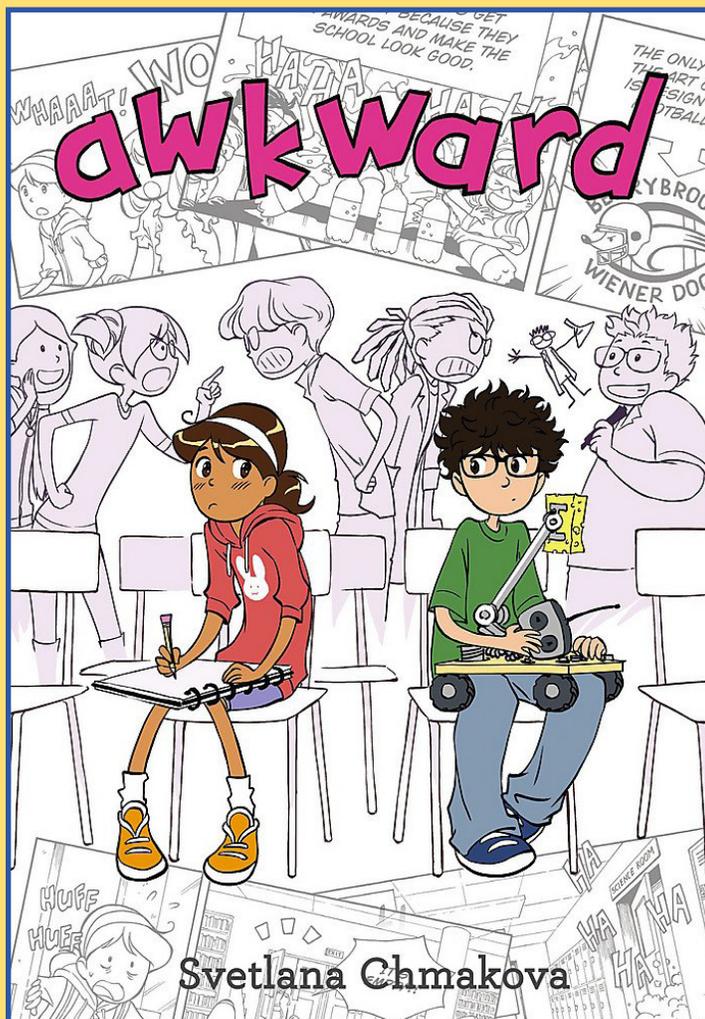
## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Awkwardness: From Fiction to Ditmas

Students in 650, 660, 670, and 680 recently read *Awkward* by Svetlana Chmakova. It details the very awkward entry into middle school of Peppi Torres. She has to deal with a mistake she made on the 1st day of school, bring up her science grade, help the art club win a table at the school fair, and apologize to Jaime all while navigating her new school.

From Graphic Narrative Fiction to Student Reader "I Relate" Fact

We realized that we also have some experience with awkwardness since we are returning to school after a year and a half of interrupted learning. Here's what we have to say.



"You feel awkward when you are next to real people"

Going to school full time after going remote for school for 2 years is very awkward to me and everyone else. First of all, it's hard to get your body used to doing things in real life again manually, after doing work by only typing. For me, my handwriting has gotten worse because I barely used a pencil for school when I was remote. You also feel awkward when you are next to real people, instead of typing messages to a person with no face but an initial.

School has become harder now, to me, since you have to exert more effort and energy into doing anything since you can't just sit behind a screen anymore. Another reason why school has gotten harder is an obvious reason, we all had Google at our fingertips and could get help at any time. Even one person in my 5th grade class admitted to using a calculator most of the time for homework.

In conclusion, school is going to always be awkward whether you're remote or not, but in the end you'll get used to it. Eventually, you will forget how you were using a computer every day and actually interact with real people and start writing on your own.

- Mohammad Uddin

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

## Awkwardness: From Fiction to Ditmas

*“Blocking other students out in online school would make me a little more comfortable.”*

Returning to school after the pandemic was a little awkward for me and maybe for some students. I felt awkward because of the vibe. The vibe is so weird, for example picking your chair up and putting it on the desk feels weird because throughout online school I would just run and lay on my bed after school, but I can't do that in school. Participating also feels more awkward compared to online school participation because in online school you can just block the other students from the screen and act like you're just talking to the teacher. Blocking the other students out would make me a little more comfortable, but in person school things get weird.... MORE THAN 20 PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU EYE TO EYE WHEN PARTICIPATING! This feeling gives me butterflies and makes me feel like an awkward block.

Another reason why returning to in person school makes me feel awkward is because of the people. This one is kind of like the participating one but it's not. In lunch/recess I would just call my friends and play some games. But in person school you can't do that (sadly). In person school you kind of have to talk to people that you do know or don't know because then you're just ruining the fun for yourself. Doing this also makes me awkward. It makes me awkward because doing some stuff can make people upset but when we play games you really can't do anything wrong. Getting new teachers by itself is awkward but returning back to school after 18 months really adds on to the awkwardness. It feels weird adapting to a new teacher IN PERSON after 18 on facetime because when the teacher wants to talk to you online he or she would take you in a breakout room and talk to me and that kind of lowers the intensity. In person, the teacher will take you out in the hall or whatever and talk to you AND THAT BRINGS UP THE INTENSITY.

Finally, I feel awkward returning to in person

school because of the partners/group work. This is awkward to me because in online school/breakout rooms I would just stay on mute. However, in person the teacher would walk by us and ask questions so we're kind of forced to talk and talking to someone you don't often talk to is really awkward.

**- Mohammad Haque**

*“Education on Google Classroom was not the best. Connectivity and Zoom glitches were to blame.”*

Coming back from online school, for me, could definitely be described as awkward. This is because I haven't seen my friends or any of my classmates for about a year and 6 months. Getting situated into having homework was something that I got used to this week. Yes, I was given homework, but it's different carrying the homework you've been giving to your house and then completing it, rather than just having it been given to you at the end of a zoom session. It was very awkward because of Covid-19 actually. Because of Covid, if you merely sneezed, people would look at you weirdly.

I haven't been in the school building for about a year and 6 months, which causes me to be confused about a few things. Such as how the school system works, the homework and other parts of the day.. On top of that, going to a new school is even more awkward. What is even more awkward is the education on Google Classroom wasn't... to put it lightly, it wasn't the best. The teachers tried their best, and I appreciate them being with us, and helping us when we needed it the most, and overall, just being there for us. But, there isn't that much you can't do with online learning. Bad internet connections and glitchy zoom. It was hard even learning because of real life distractions. All of these give us/me a halted learning experience. Which can be awkward if you start struggling in subjects because of that.

**- Zunairah Nadeem**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

*“My graduation . . . a thirty minute zoom meeting.”*

The new school year has been kind of difficult for me. It's very hard for me to make friends. Sometimes I feel lonely. Throughout the pandemic, things have not been easy. I've been a student that went to school during the pandemic and I was an elementary graduate.

My graduation was not the best. For example, it was online and to me it wasn't that meaningful. It was not fair to me for going through 7 years of school, working very hard, and just getting a 30 minute zoom meeting. But, my teachers have tried their best to make it a special day for me. I really appreciated it.

Now that I am fully back into school it has been very great. For example, all the teachers at Ditmas are working hard, and supporting all of the students. I love this school so much, it's a different experience for me. I'm enjoying it so much. In conclusion, the school year has been difficult, but I am really liking it!

**- Tanisha Hossen**

*“We have to follow even more rules.”*

How I felt on the first day of school was mixed feelings. Some of the feelings included: nervous, anxious, excitement and happiness. Why I felt like this is because I haven't been in school full-time learning since 3rd grade. 4th grade was weirder than the grades before because the pandemic started. We would go back to school then leave for a month, then go back then leave, because there were groups. Group 1 would go on Mondays and Thursdays. Group 2 would go on Tuesdays and Fridays. Group 3 would go on Wednesdays only and the others would go remote.

This school year has been overall awkward because of the pandemic, and most likely awkward for other students. We have to follow even more rules than before even though some of the rules stayed the same. Some of the new rules are stay 3 feet apart, put your mask up/wear your mask all the time. Overall I think this school year will be very weird.

**- Rosaura Ordonez-Chan**

*“One thing I did learn from this experience is not to get stressed. It is what it is.”*

*“I think in school I was not as productive as I am remotely online.”*

The previous school year was “awkward” or weird for me because I really had to learn how to work with the new changes in school. It was also open minded because truly we can't do anything about it so we just had to cope with it. One thing that I did learn from this experience is to not get stressed. It is what it is. We just have to move on and try to work things out. Working on remote learning I personally thought it was really weird but then over time I really felt that we learned more online than in school. I think in school I wasn't as productive as online because there was more emphasis on finishing work or keeping on track to the class deadlines. It also taught me how to be more independent.

This new school year so far has been awkward because I did not think I would actually be going in person to school. I thought I would be online until I heard we would be in person the whole school year. I was worried because it was a new school and I did not know if things would change socially and academically. The new school year is also awkward because we have to learn to socialize and meet new people with masks. It's also awkward because sometimes I picture people's faces differently without their masks and then when they take off their masks, I'm shocked that their faces are completely different from what I pictured.

**- Luisa Luna**

*“You will have space for new friends.”*

The pandemic ruined our school year because I wasn't able to see a few of my friends and we aren't in the same school this year. But I was able to make new friends this year. It's ok if you don't see old friends, because you'll have space for some new friends. Another reason this pandemic also ruined the school year is now with masks on you might not recognize people you have met before. My last reason is a positive one! Overall this school year is starting out well and I hope it gets better and better until the end!

**- Denzel Boyer**

## Awkwardness: From Fiction to Ditmas

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*"It had been so long since I talked to somebody my age."*

This school year was a bit awkward for me. Why? It has been so long since I have talked to somebody my age. Also before I didn't have any of my friends' numbers so I became really distant with them over the years. Now that I'm here at school, I was a bit awkward and didn't know how to start talking to people again. Now I have gotten used to it and made some new friends as well. This is why in the first week of school the year was a bit awkward for me.

**- Tanjica Afreen**

*"The mask can be overwhelming, since you can barely breathe in it."*

After a year or two being quarantined and locked up in our households, it feels different and rather more complex. Some students might be socially awkward. It has been a little awkward for some students to socialize, since it's been so long since we were in a school building. All the masks and social distancing makes it awkward for students. Having to wear a mask full time and maintaining a proper social distance of course is awkward and makes it hard to socialize. Wearing a mask can make it harder for you to hear your peers speaking. The mask can be overwhelming since you can barely breathe in it. Now that everything has changed, students are awkward and unaccustomed to learning like this. Of course, making friends is even more challenging.

**- Anisha Adrita**

*"If you forget a friend's name and that person says 'hi' to you during lunch, it could be very awkward."*

For some students this school year could be awkward for students, because they don't know any people and it's their first time in middle school so it could be really awkward. For example, what if you don't say a teacher's name right or say another teacher's name by accident, it could be very awkward for you and that teacher. Maybe you forgot a friend and they say hi to you during lunch but you don't remember them because it's been a while. That could be an awkward and embarrassing situation for you. These are just some ways students could feel awkward in school, there are many many more.

**- Shaharina Yeasmin**

*"In the new school everything looks exactly the same and the bathrooms are hard to find."*

I felt awkward coming back to school after the pandemic because I had to get used to a new school after the pandemic. It was hard to get used to it because in the school everything looks exactly the same and the gym was very big. My old school was very easy to get used to and very small, its gym was small. In Ditmas the bathrooms were very hard to find. It was hard to remember their location. This is how I felt on the first day I came to Ditmas after the pandemic.

**- Asadbek Ulmasov**

## Ditmas Excellence @ PCSS Conference

***Fiza decided to continue the Awkward graphic novel in her own style, adding in the pandemic 18 months since 2020.***

It has been a year since the incident at the art and science club happened. Peppi and Jaime couldn't go anywhere because of this two year pandemic. Finally they went back to school, when the virus had calmed down. They both started 8th grade. They both also had the same class, which was kind of awkward for Peppi.

Peppi was walking in the hallway putting her mask on her nose, Jaime greeted Peppi.

"Hey Peppi, how are you? I know this is weird and awkward, one year of pandemic and another year back. Kind of scary."

Peppi replied: "Yy-yeah. I kind of miss my friends. T-they had to rotate s-schools because... Of... the pandemic."

Jaime: "Oh that's so sad Peppi, but you always have me as your friend! Anyways gotta get to class! Bye."

"T-thanks Jaime... Ok b-bye."

Peppi and Jamie went to science class. Then it was lunch time. Peppi sat at a table and this girl came up to her, and Peppi thought she looked familiar.

"TESSA?! Is that YOU?"

"Yes it's me, girl! I missed you so much!"

"But it thought you had to rotate schools!"

"Well.... Yeah, but I missed you so much so I convinced my parents.. I MEAN Convinced."

"OOPS...I don't like the sound of that hahaha."

"Hahahaha."

\*Bell rings DZZZZZZZZZZZ\*

"See ya Tessa!"

"See ya Peps!"

Peppi and Jaime had math now. Peppi did something super awkward that she wouldn't forget in her life! \*Teacher speaking\*

"Peppi and Jaime, would you mind getting the computer cart? We have to take a test."

"Not at all miss."

"Y-yeah."

Peppi and Jaime went to get the computer cart which was a few hallways past.

"Ok got it, you hold it from that side Penelope."

"Ok Jaime."

Peppi was pushing and Jaime was holding.

"Almost there."

Peppi was pushing the cart inside but then it went \*BUMPPPPPPPPPPPP\* because of the trolley wheels!

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH," cried Peppi.

"Peppi are you okay?" Jaime asked.

"I-im -"

"POOR PEPPI!?! POOR ME! MY COMPUTERS!"

"I'm so sorry, Miss JackOlsen!" cried Peppi.

Peppi could see all of the faces laughing inside of their masks. Welp, I think that was a "good first day" for Peppi!

Peppi at home: "MOM DAD! I WANNA CHANGE SCHOOLS!"

**- Fiza Kamran**

## Countering Confrontational Controversy with “Coming Together” Collage: Collage as a Classroom Connector

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This past year, 2021, so many educators and students have worked together through remote or hybrid learning. These communicators have personalized their backgrounds and, at home, sets using template backdrops provided by the platform which reflect aspects they chose. As I was considering which Zoom backdrop might best fit my distinct “self,” I realized that I would much prefer developing my own “backdrop.” I am a licensed ELA teacher who loves visuals, but has zero arts expertise. I realized that what I could do to “personalize” my backdrop for my Zoom and Google Classroom lives by using an accessible art format. That format is a collage and is accessible to me and my students.

I quickly collected some visual documents/items that signified “me” the person, my culture and my teaching. They included: family pix, close friends, school programs (like Daffodil Day using the Wordsworth poem image for First Day of Spring), covers of my published books, rose pins, student pictures, library reading emblems (elastic Invest in Library bracelets) and more. I decided to collage the “me” I wanted to share as a backdrop with my students directly on the wall behind my set-up. I placed my collection of selected items on a desk with a row of photos of me in the center. Then I added an old one of my mother plus some great pix with friends. As I “built” up the collage, I started to cut and clip items to match colors and shapes that represented aspects of me. Among these - a cover of a stylish dress designer from the early 20th century and a clipped sign saying “To Life.” I looked at a file of sayings or quotes I keep which resonate my values. Two were perfect for my collage. They were: “Those who do not believe in magic, will never find it,” Roald Dahl and “Life is about creating yourself” George Bernhard Shaw.

Just putting the collage up gave me pleasure beyond anything I had anticipated. I had a strong, satisfying, deep, sense of having used the collage to communicate my personal likes, philosophy and traditions that were part of my cultural ID including a pin that was a tree of life and a healing hand plus a dove stick pin.

I shared the collage with the students as we began a new class bonding, plus an assessment of our descriptive and interpretive document analysis skills. I challenged the students to explain in a paragraph the professional and personal identity I was conveying through the collage. First they were to state what they felt the collage “communicated” about me. This of course parallels reading an author’s work and interpreting its details and purpose using details.

Next for each aspect of my personality students inferred from the collage, they were to identify the specific component of the collage - photo, artifacts, print text - which communicated

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that aspect. Finally, the students were asked to decide how effective the collage was in communicating who I was as a person and as a teacher.

The second stage of this, after the sample deliberately personal educator collage, was challenging to examine their drawings, souvenirs, memorabilia, badges, pictures, certificates, tee shirts, caps, and more to decide which could be curated into a “Me” collage.

They were guided to do this in a systemic “authorial” artist style by:

1. Assembling what they had to hand at home or accessible which depicted different aspects of who they were.
2. Lining these items up on a table/board- the school provided small tri-folds as a perfect and portable backdrop - which could also be exhibited in a classroom or school website display.
3. Then cutting and co-mingling these different items into an effective collage.
4. Once the student “author/curators” actually glued or taped or montaged the disparate items into a “Me” collage, I challenged them to author a statement - an artist’s statement about the theme of the collages and how the process of co-mingling different visual, print and artifact items into an artwork.

As an added enrichment, students were given the option of also submitting focus questions about their collage to help their peers interpret the data they used to communicate their “Me” theme.

The “Me” collage engaged students in a SEL-Social and Emotional Learning- Arts and English Language Arts Experience- to identify strengths, deficits, relationships, goals and demonstrated empathy by designing it with an audience in mind. They analyzed aspects of their family culture, values, and aspirations in developing the collage plus effectively used visual, print and artifact elements to communicate it. Therefore, the collage project was a visual exercise in author craft and purpose with the collage a visual document designed for a peer viewer to correctly “read”. The works can be assessed with a teacher developed rubric for details conveying “Me” personality communication and number of different visual, print text and artifacts used, plus effectiveness of design to convey student stated personality.

An effective aspect of this project is that it effectively and deeply bonds, rather than distances and divides, the diverse class as caring and cognizant community members who understand and empathize with peer strengths and personas.

Collaging can easily evoke equity among different kinds of learners to help everyone get on the joyous and emotionally satisfying canvas of collaging as they connect, communicate and curate as a class of authorial artists and persons.

**Dr. Rose Reissman**

## Ms. Donadio Dance Class

After a year and a half stuck at home, being able to dance feels amazing! It's so refreshing to be able to move, since most of us remote learners were glued to couches. Dance is a great exercise, plus it is fun as well!

I am so honored to be back in class. Dance is my favorite class. It actually manages to put me in a mood of delight. Dance is a truly beautiful mix of art and sport. I feel so positive about life in the dance class. I feel so genuine. Dance class has no negatives. We learn fun choreography. Dance class is a class to love!

**- Shari Sultan**



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### Collage Celebrations

The purpose of my collage is to show who I am. For example, the telescope details my interests on the collage. I like gazing at stars through it. My ultimate goal is to be part of NASA. I included a picture of colored pencils because I love to draw. Another of my loves is playing basketball. I intend to get better at basketball. I also put a controller because I play games. The laptop is in the collage because last year we learned remotely. The quotes included in the collage tell you what inspires and helps me to work hard.

**- Mohammad Rashid**

The purpose of my collage is to tell the audience that I love the study of space and science. I look at stars during the night. I love studying and reading about space.

In addition, I want the audience to know that I am a very positive person. Giving up in any situation is not a choice for me. My favorite foods and beverages are: Arizona ice tea, Coca Cola, Dunkin Donuts, and water.

**- Ashfak Arabi**

The purpose of my collage is to let everyone know about me. I made this collage to communicate who I am to those who view it, my audience. It will also broaden the number of people who know me.

The collage is designed by me so people see my name first. After they see my name, they will then observe on the collage the many objects I like. They will see my family as well. The collage is an art format to help the audience get to know me.

**- Ayesha Noore**

My collage's purpose is to share how I try to be a positive person. My brother Pete is pictured in the collage because I care for him and love him. Honey Bunches of Oats are included in the cereal because that is my favorite cereal, not Cheerios. The picture of videos I placed in my collage is because I love video games. Food is a key part of my collage because I am food focused. My picture is in my collage because I want to use the collage to help people get to know me.

**- Franco Cortes**

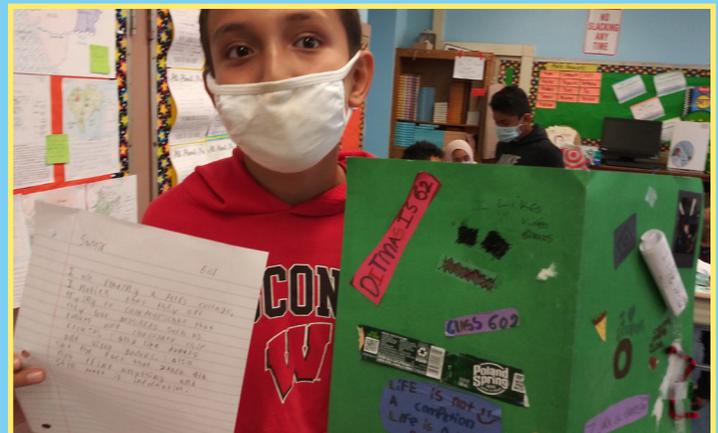
This collage shares with its audience that I am from Bangladesh. My favorite foods are Biryoni and Ice Pops. I love building with blocks and playing Roblox.

One quote which I follow is: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose."

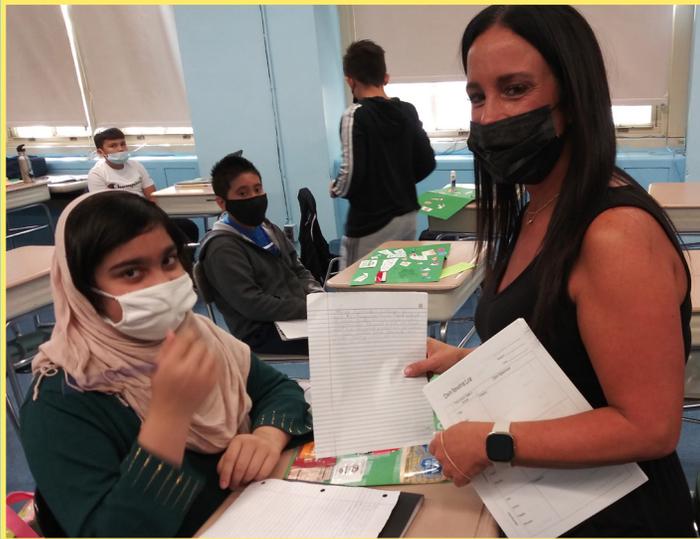
My purpose is to tell you about myself. I am through the collage reminding myself of my childhood. I want to represent my school and my family.

My quote is: "Happiness depends on us, not others."

**- Yasin Potwary**



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The purpose of my collage is for you to get to know me.

Personally, I found this a really cool activity to do. I would rather not talk about myself. The collage did my talking for me.

**- Takla Tsering**

The purpose of my collage is to show my family, my favorite quote, and what I like to do. To design the collage, I collected 5 photos, a quote and made a few drawings plus included my address.

I selected photos of myself from when I was younger. I also used photos of my brother when he was younger as well as my father. I included the photo of my father when he became an American citizen plus a photo of me and my brother on his birthday.

All of these items come together as my collage of myself which others can "read."

**- Maria Guerrero**

My name is Samir. The purpose of my writing is to show my classmates that I love pizza and Halloween. My favorite drink is Dunkin' Donuts. My flag is illustrated in the collage so that you can see where I was born. Before I came to the United States, I lived the first six years of my life in my country. That means for more than half my life I lived in my country before coming to the United States.

**- Samir Akhmatov**

The purpose of my collage is to communicate my personality by collecting pictures or things from my hobbies. I clip them out or collect them and place what I have collected in the pockets of my file folder.

I am using my brain to collect and to select the pictures and items which will help my audience learn about me through looking "reading" my collage. This project also helped me identify as a human being who I am. I am communicating what I care about through this collage.

I used the collage to show what I do during my free time. Among the things that define me are: getting ice cream for a snack, playing soccer in a league called Ayso, and more.

**- Kian**

"Read" My Collage: Learn about Me

The purpose of my collage is to show who I am through drawing. I drew a narwhal and a panda because I find these types of animals interesting and adorable. In addition, to share the things that I like, I also drew a sweet potato, a strawberry sprinkled donut, bubble tea, cookies and a bowl of rice. These are what I love eating and drinking. Rice in particular, is something I have everyday.

I included Human Fall Flat and Waking Wizards because they are my favorite video games. I play both on my devices. I also used the cut Poland Spring water bottle because I have that all the time.

My drawings of the lily, paint brush, and poetry book share these loves of mine. Poetry books provide me with inspirations for drawing and art.

**- Nafiza Sultana**

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### Collage Celebrations

“Like” is my go to word.

My collage includes painting and drawing because I have been doing that my entire life. I find that super fun. My favorite seasons are Fall and Winter because key holidays happen during them. They are also visually pretty times of the year.

My favorite store is Target because it has everything I need. I also like Bath and Body Works because the scent in the store is wonderful. All its products are so good!!

I love hamsters because they are cute and fluffy. The colors that I favor are blue, green, yellow, and white.

When it comes to villains, I pick Bowers in Mario. The movie Child’s Play and Caroline are scary Halloween ones I enjoy. On the other hand of light movies with great music, I love the Diary of the Wimpy Kid and its music is something I listen to all the time.

I am someone who has “like” in her vocabulary. I say it 24/7.

**- Kimberlyn S.**

Collage: My Personality and my Aesthetic

The purpose of my collage is to show things I like. Basically the collage communicates my personality in art form. It details my aesthetic (yes this is my word) and shows how I live each day.

Ariana Grande is a singer whose songs I love. Harry Styles represents music and fashion. I love cats and I so want to own one. Harry Potter is in the collage to represent my love for magic. He also demonstrates how bold I am and why I so like his boldness. Walt Disney made the collage because I love Disney movies.

**- Anaya Usania**

Collaging Myself: Mission Possible

I’ll start by saying that I loved the process of designing my collage. The love came because I felt I was on a mission. I went all over my house looking for stuff that I liked. My brother helped me. Together we found a Dunkin Donuts bag, popcorn, water toy, noodles, and Bath and Body Works packaging. We also collected lotion packets, stickers, and Extra Gum.

Beyond collecting the material at home, the collage project gave me the chance to do something different in class. The collage itself allowed me to talk about who I am as a person and what I like.

This art technique, even though I had to print some items for my collage, since I could not find samples at home, was one I loved. Rarely have I loved doing school work or felt so good about the result.

“Reading” our collages- Reading the collage as a visual communication for artist/author meaning and purpose. Taking Our Collage Communications to Our Peers - Peer Critiquing Each Other’s Collage.

Evaluating how well the student message came through in the collage about his/her mission and purpose. Asking questions or making comments for others.

**- Noor Hussain**



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On “reading” Mohammed Diyyor’s (603) collage - I am getting the message that he as an artist is trying to communicate that he likes video games and pizza. Immediately, although I have not really met him since he was in 603, I know that we share the same favorite food, pizza.

I also like his use of photos which represent his likes and his ambitions for his collage. I would also have enjoyed seeing personal photos of him as well.

**- Samuel Fernfino**

I assume that you and I share a favorite brand of Ramen. I also find cream Kit Kats really nice. I agree with you that the book and movie Diary of a Wimpy Kid were amazing. You did a good job on this collage, Fernando.

“READING” other student collages from other classes is a great way to get to know students who are not in your class. A Social and Emotional relationship and social skills plus.

**- Takla**

I “read” my peers’ collages to identify the likes we share and start to make social connections with students in the class I do not know.

For example, as I “Reading” Anaya’s collage, I see the watermelon, cats, butterflies and dog clearly in the design. We both have in common that we like cats and horror movies. I also immediately connect with Logan who seems like me to be what I would call an “over-thinker.” I can tell that she is that because she includes many quotes on her collage which she feels are important. I do that as well. However, one difference between me and her is that I do not like to dance, but she does.

**- Maria Guerrero**

“Reading” Ashley’s collage from 602. Making personal connections to this sixth grader in another class.

Ashley is using her collage as an artist/author to communicate that she likes chocolate, pizza and strawberries. Connections between me and her are already made since I like chocolate and strawberries. She uses drawing - one her talents to communicate her liking these foods. I can also “read” that she likes cats. There are many images of cats, indicating a strong affection for cats.

Finally, Ashley’s favorite subjects are Math and ELA because she puts them all over the collage. Overall, Ashley used the collage to share her personality with its audience. I share two of her favorites. I liked “reading” what she communicated on the collage.

**- Sandra Garcia**

I found out many details about Ashley from reviewing her collage. It is obvious that she loves Hershey Bars, pizza, tacos, You Tube, flowers, cats and more. She is a Roblox fan with her favorite game on it being - Adopt Me. Other favorite games of hers are the Last of Us: Part 2 and the Flash. While she is definitely into cookies as well, she does not just like any old cookie. She goes for chocolate chip cookies. I really enjoyed “reading” her collage.

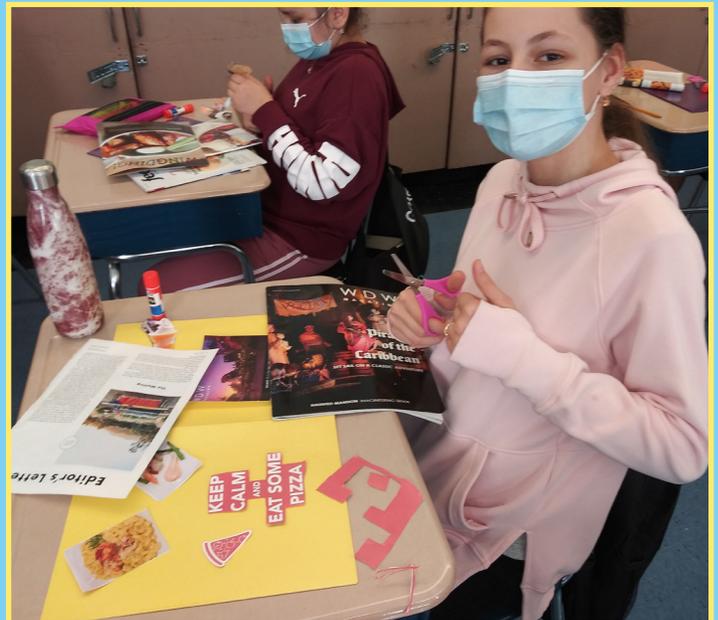
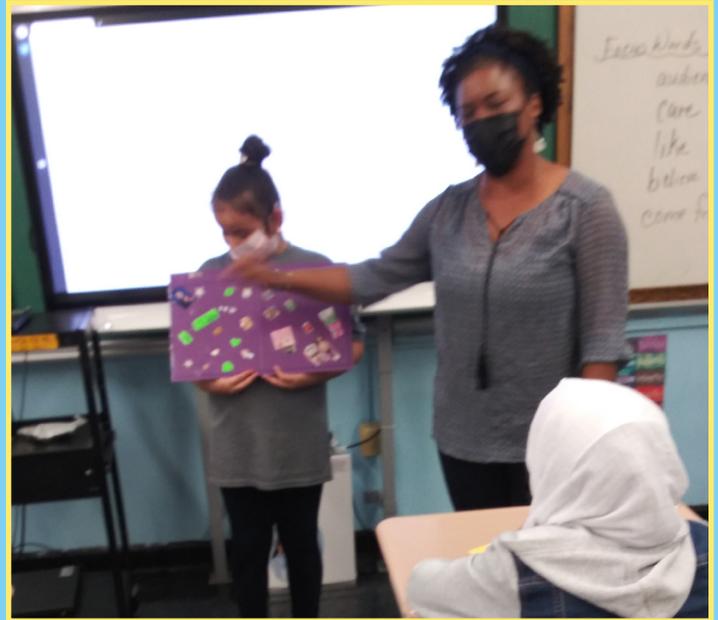
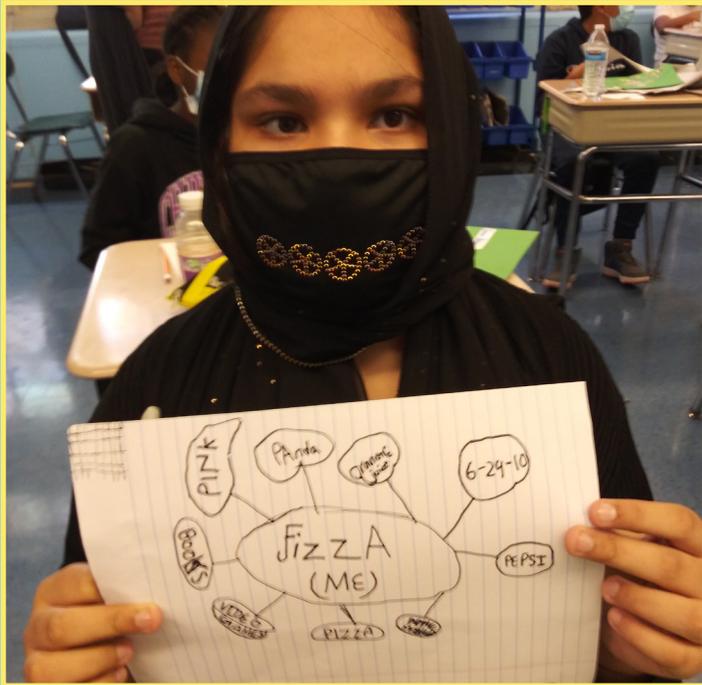
**- Ashton Colot**

“Reading” and analyzing Deena’s (from 603) collage, I notice that the collage communicates her love of cars. Furthermore, she likes the colors-black, grey and white. The collage states that she doesn’t like to talk much. Yet by her using the car picture and saying what kind of car she likes, her message come through loud and clear.

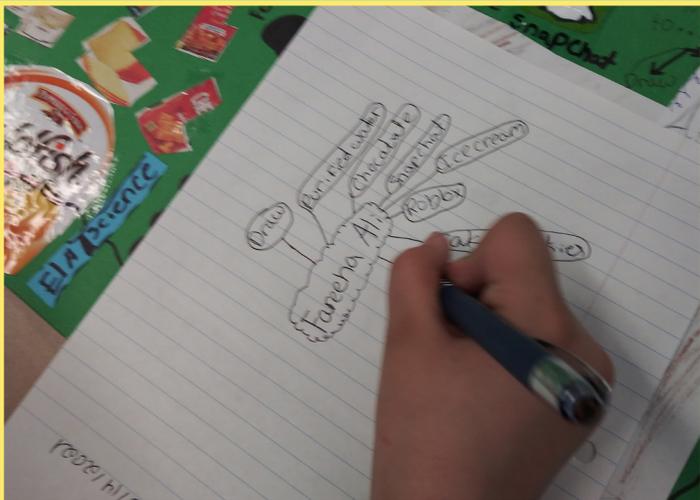
I think she should also clearly label key facts about herself such as her birthday, which is February 23, 2010. More labeling and highlighting of other facts will make this terrific collage, even better.

**- Ayesha Noore**

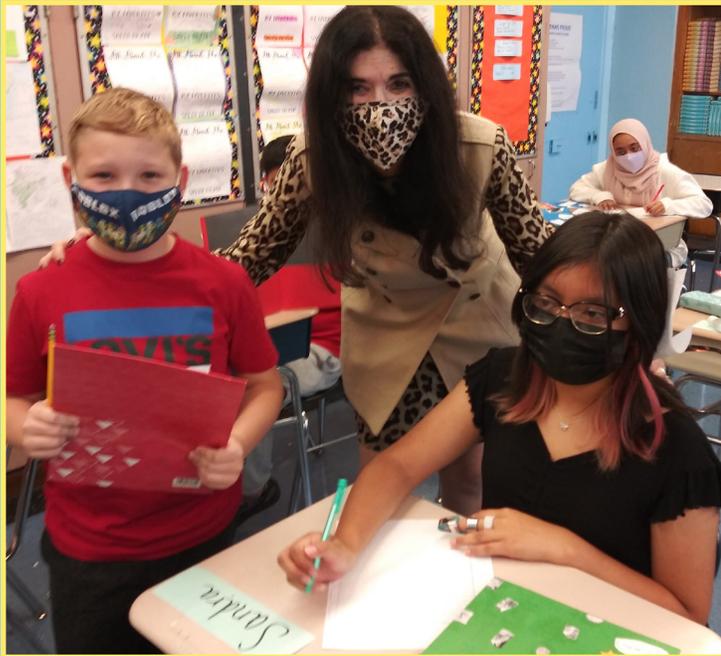
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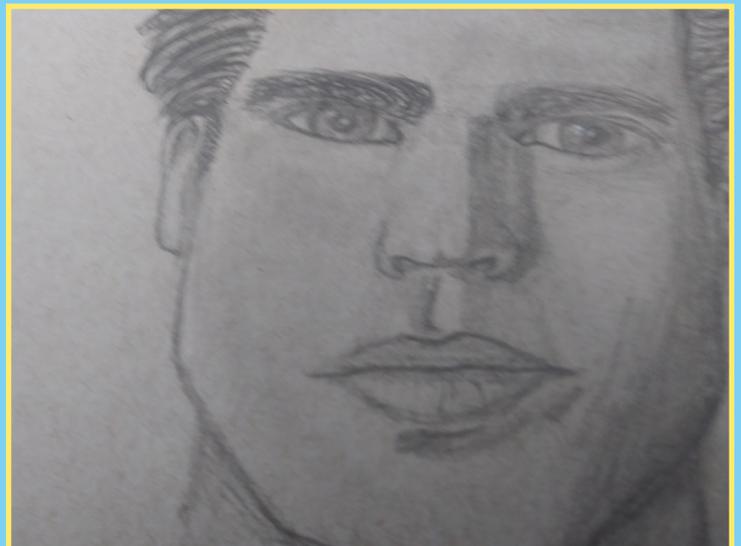
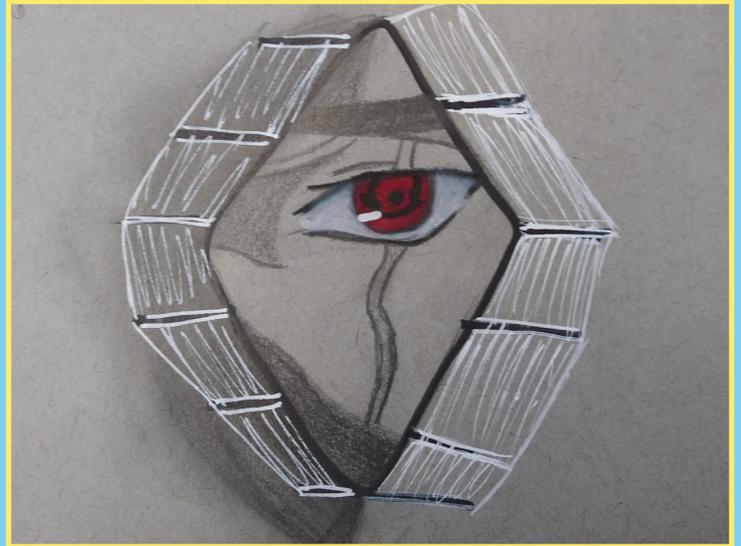
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# Collage Celebrations



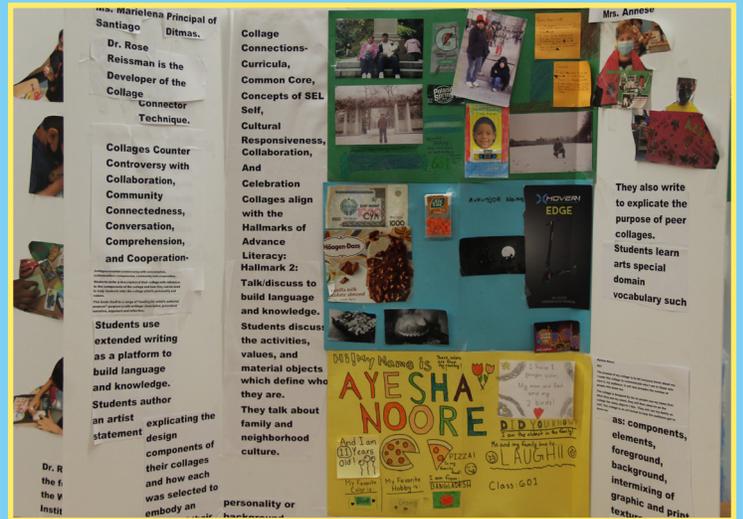
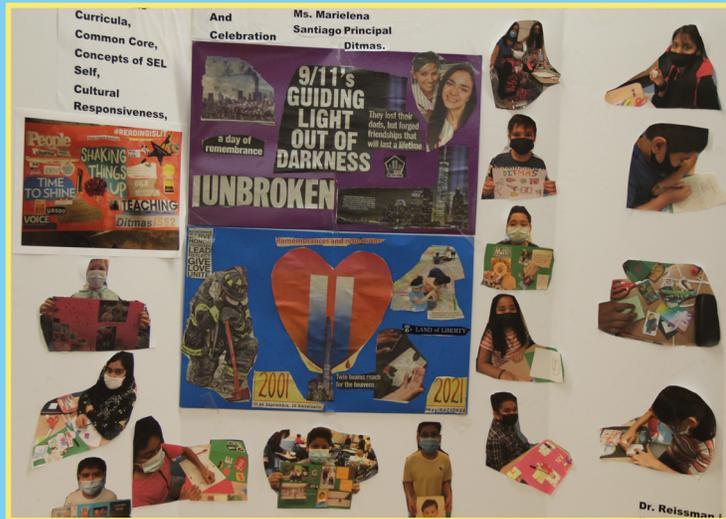
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# Collage Celebrations



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## Maya Angelo Inspires Poetry

### Life Doesn't Frighten Me At All

by Maya Angelo

Shadows on the wall  
Noises down the hail  
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Bad dogs barking loud  
Big ghosts in a cloud  
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Mean old Mother Goose  
Lions on the loose

They don't frighten me at all

Dragons breathing flame  
On my counterpane  
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I go boo  
Make them shoo  
I make fun  
Way they run

I won't cry  
So they fly  
I just smile  
They go wild



Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Tough guys in a fight  
All alone at night  
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Panthers in the park  
Strangers in the dark  
No, they don't frighten me at all.

That new classroom where  
Boys pull all my hair  
(Kissy little girls  
With their hair in curls)  
They don't frighten me at all.

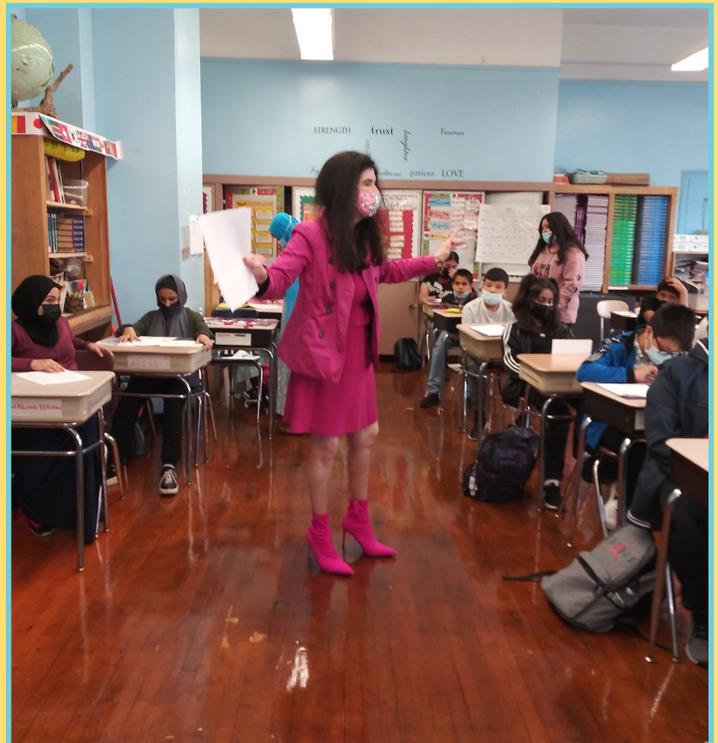
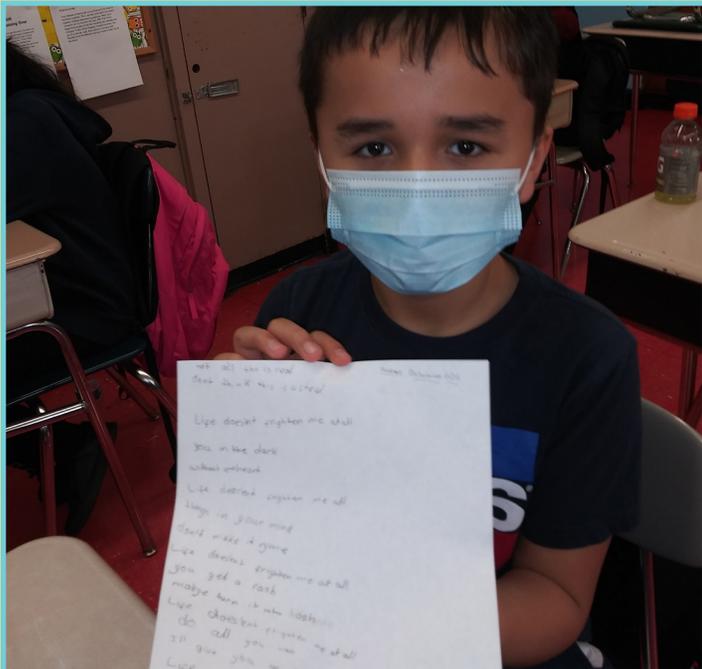
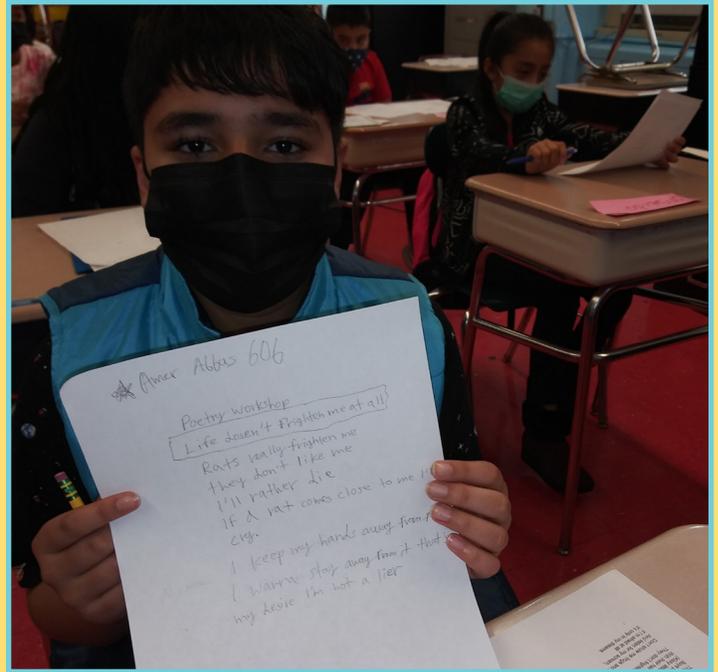
Don't show me frogs and snakes  
And listen for my scream,  
If I'm afraid at all  
It's only in my dreams.

I've got a magic charm  
That I keep up my sleeve,  
I can walk the ocean floor  
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn't frighten me at all  
Not at all  
Not at all

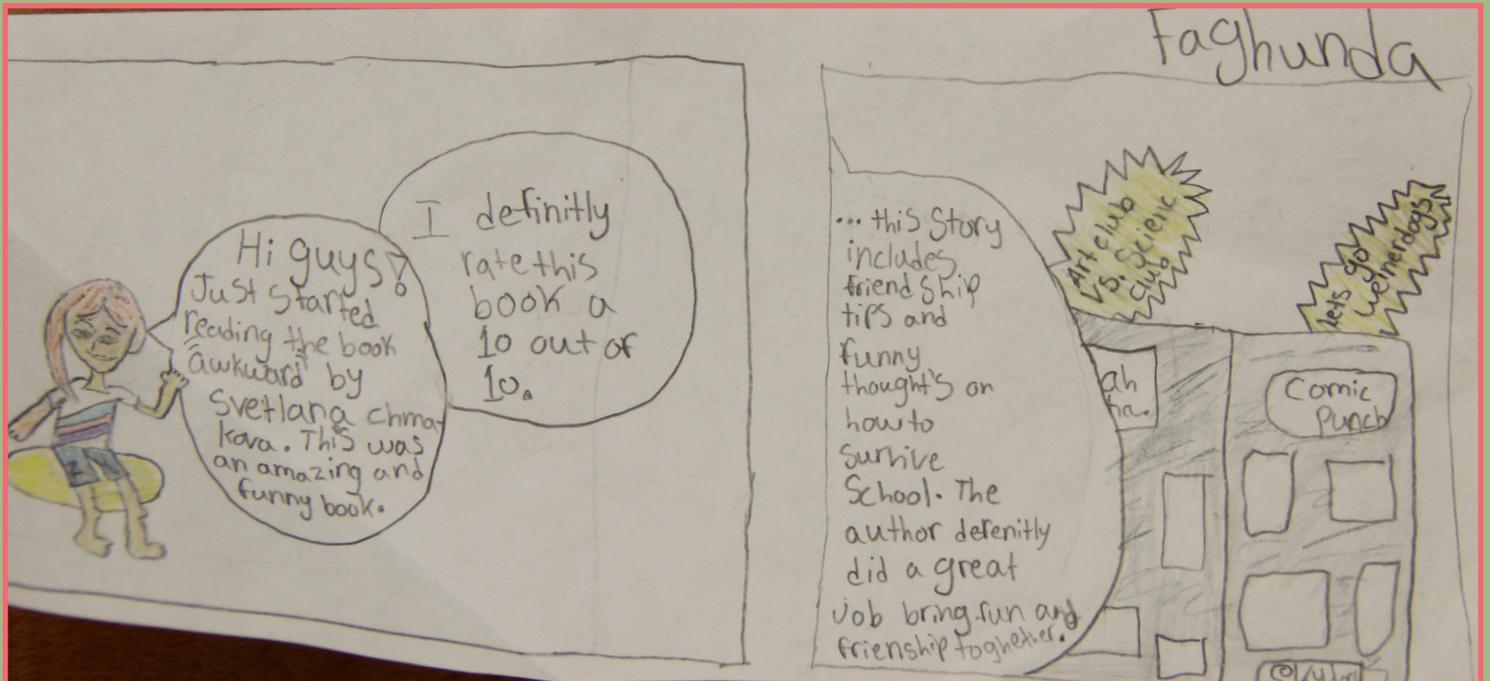
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

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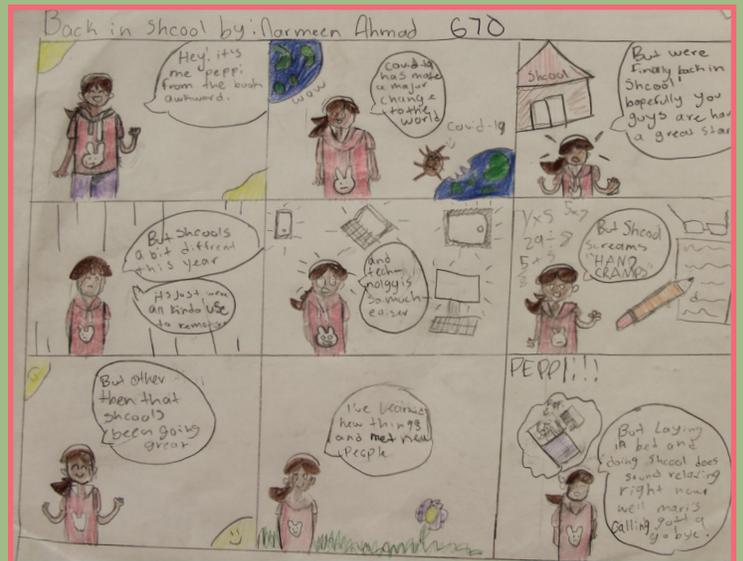
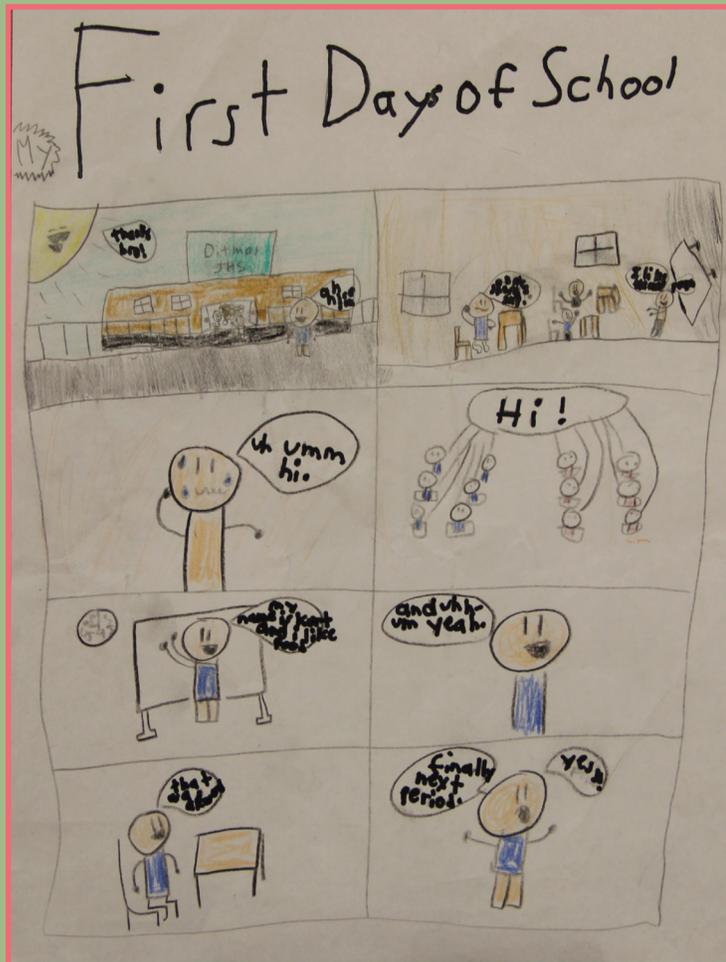
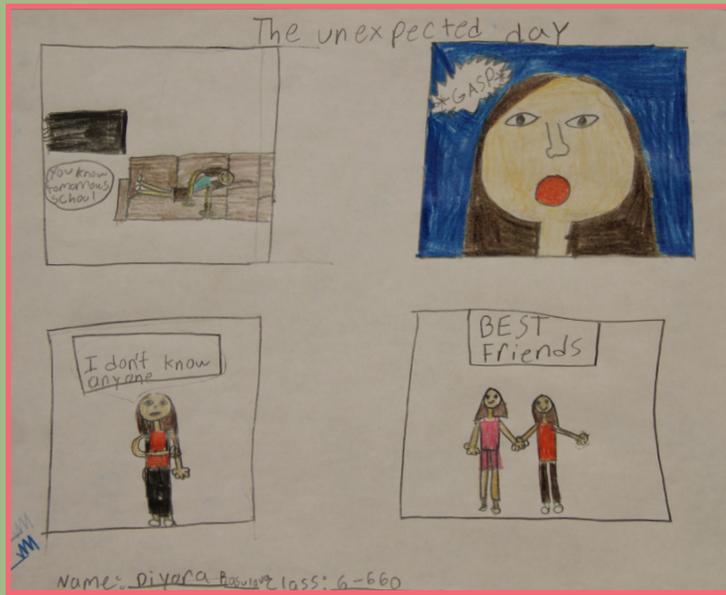
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# Student Comics & Artwork

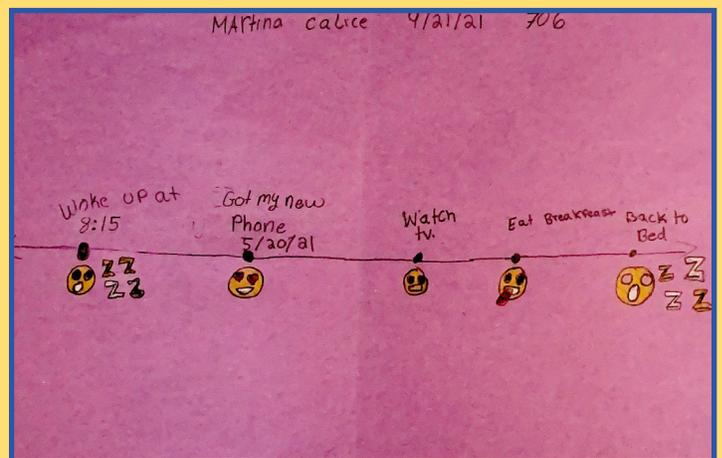
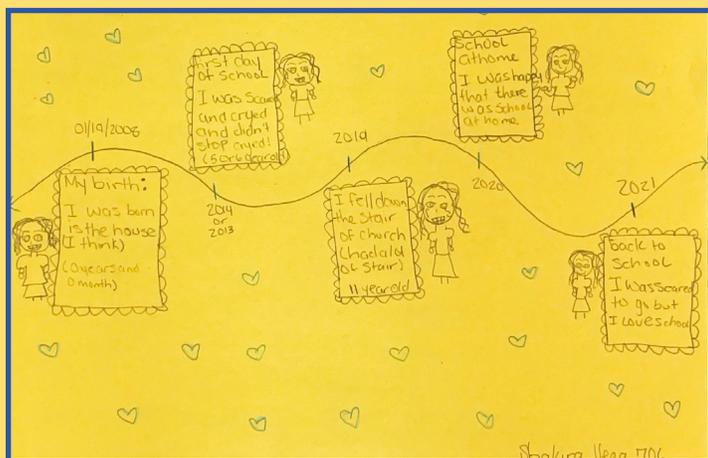
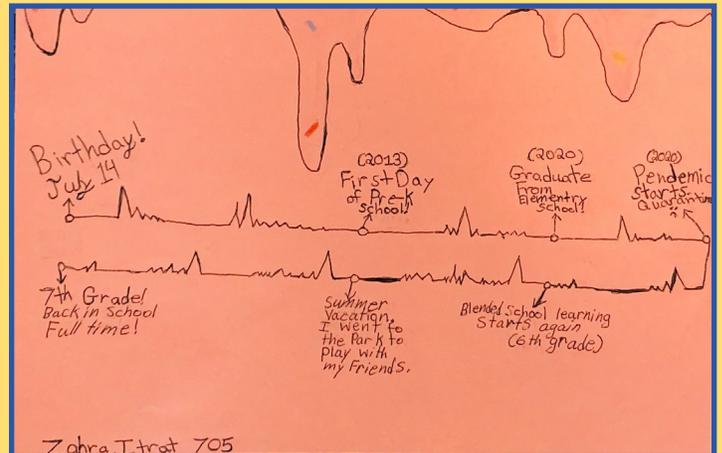
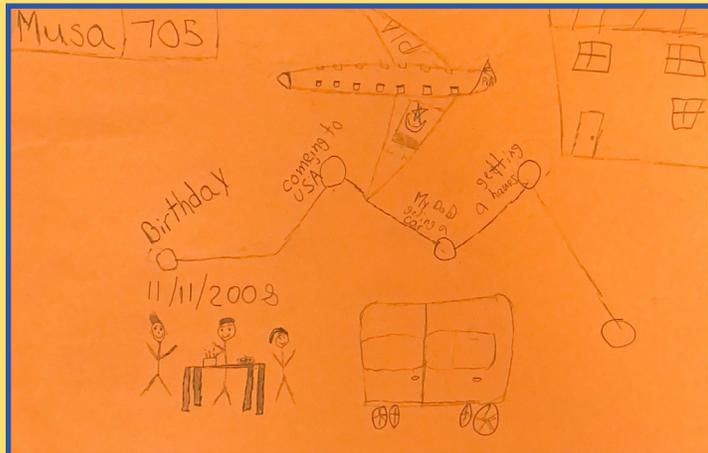
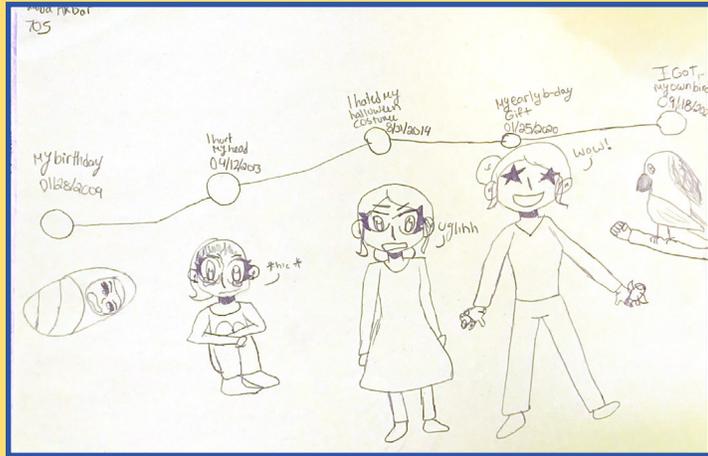


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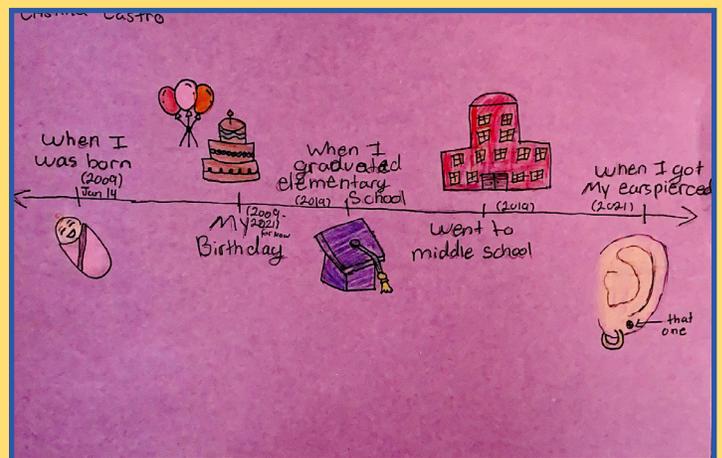
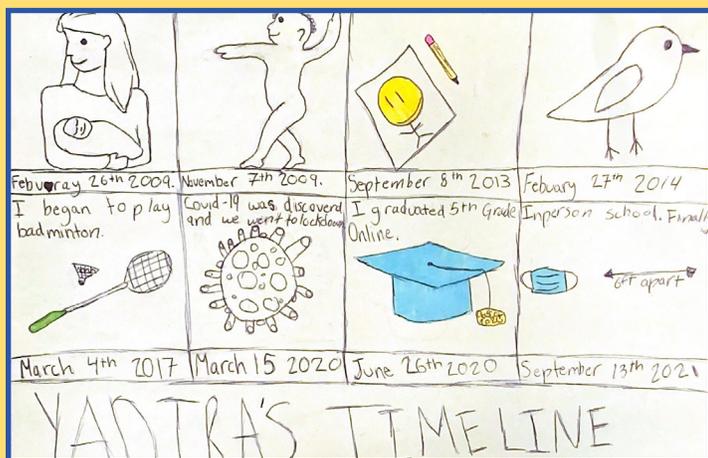
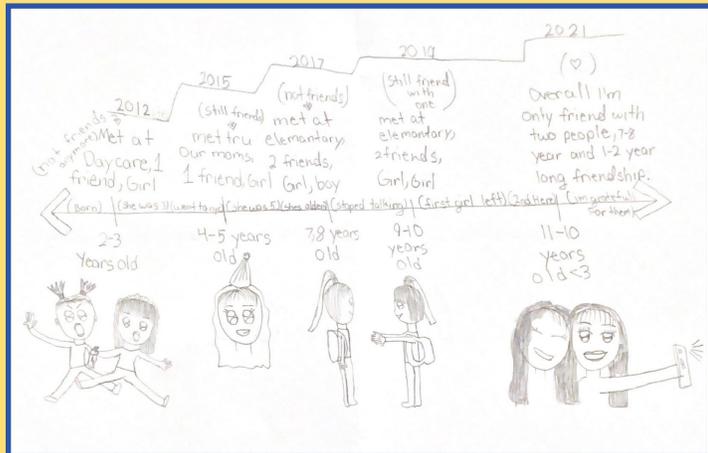
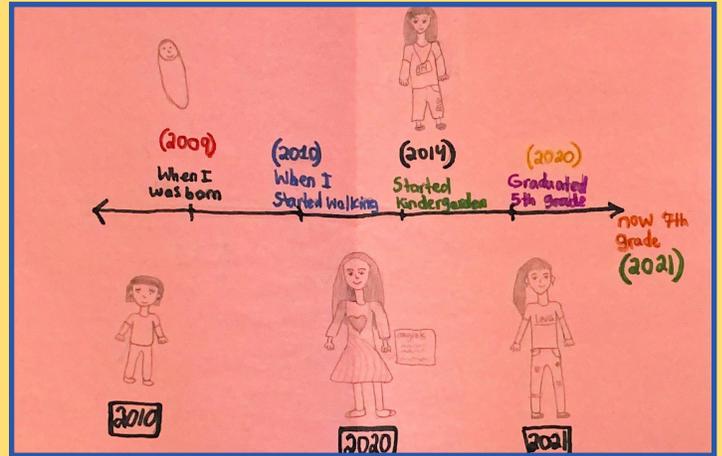


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## Student Timelines: From Birth to Now



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# Ditmas Wins Big @ PCSS Conference



See You In Issue 2!

