

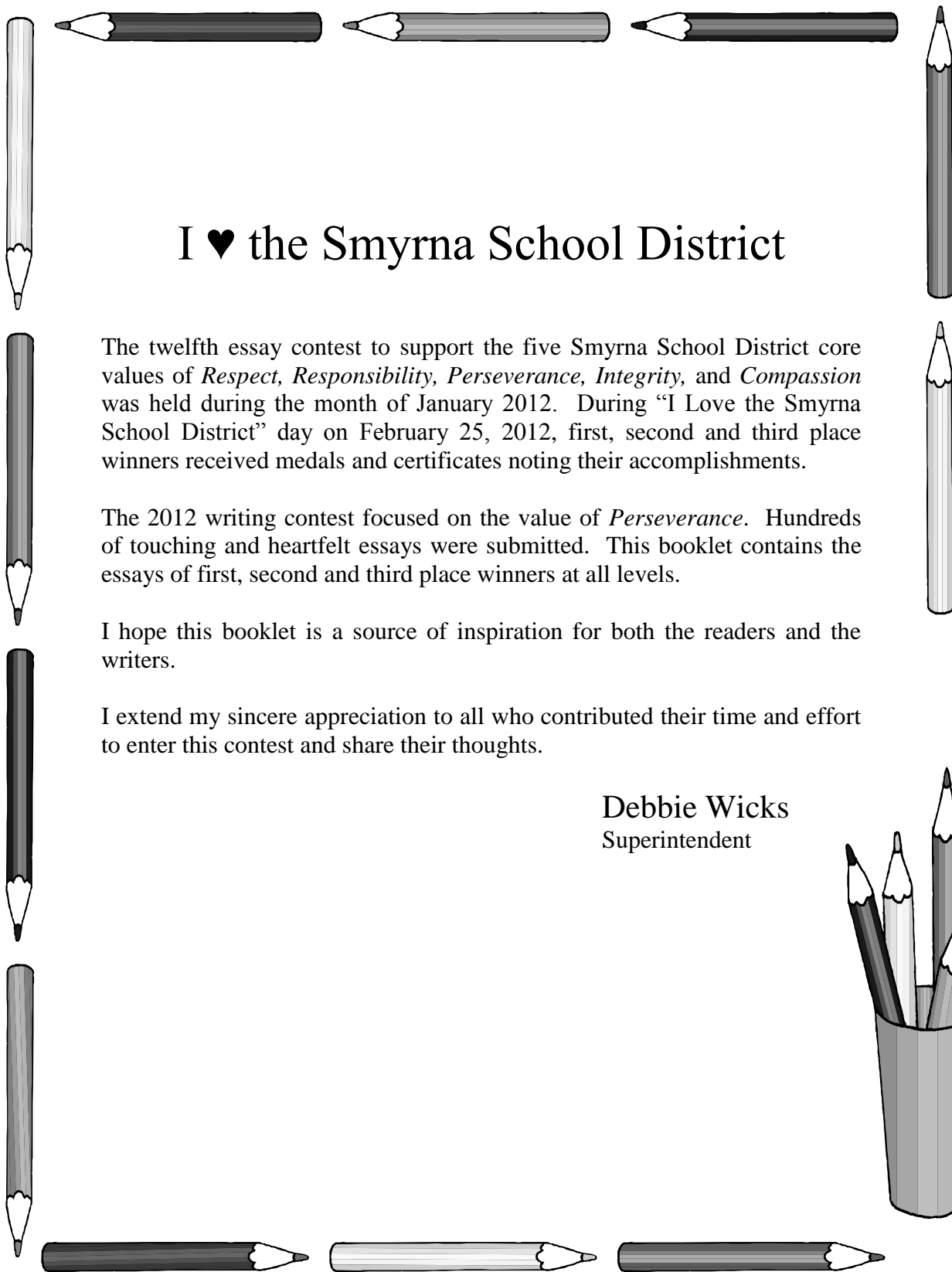


Smyrna School District

Essay Contest

2012

Student Winners



I ♥ the Smyrna School District

The twelfth essay contest to support the five Smyrna School District core values of *Respect, Responsibility, Perseverance, Integrity, and Compassion* was held during the month of January 2012. During “I Love the Smyrna School District” day on February 25, 2012, first, second and third place winners received medals and certificates noting their accomplishments.

The 2012 writing contest focused on the value of *Perseverance*. Hundreds of touching and heartfelt essays were submitted. This booklet contains the essays of first, second and third place winners at all levels.

I hope this booklet is a source of inspiration for both the readers and the writers.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all who contributed their time and effort to enter this contest and share their thoughts.

Debbie Wicks
Superintendent

For the twelfth annual “I Love the Smyrna School District” essay contest, students and adults were asked to write about *Perseverance*, a core district value. Contest rules and a writing prompt were disseminated to students (via their teachers) during January 2012. June Wicks, district reading coordinator, prepared the prompt and assisted with coordinating the essay contest. Janet Garrett, retired Smyrna High School business teacher, completed the typing and formatting of the publication. Jamie Cox, Smyrna School District Curriculum Office secretary, assisted with the layout and editing of the publication. Alexander “Sandy” Shalk, Ed.D., conducted the contest and edited the final publication. District teachers encouraged their students to write and helped select essays. Appreciation is extended to all for their time and effort in making this publication possible.

ESSAY CONTEST

Contestants are asked to write a maximum 500-word essay on the following topic:

Perseverance is the act of trying, failing, learning, and trying again until success is achieved. People that *persevere* complete a challenging task in spite of difficulties they may face. We admire people who *persevere* and never give up.

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” – Thomas Alva Edison

Read this quote carefully. What does this mean to you? Then tell about a time when you had to “*try just one more time*” to accomplish something. Tell how you felt during this process. Have you reached your goal? Why or why not?

STUDENT WINNERS: First (gold), second (silver), and third (bronze) place winners are selected at each grade level (K-12) in each building. Winners receive medals and certificates noting their accomplishments. All winners were recognized during the “I Love the Smyrna School District” day (February 25, 2012).

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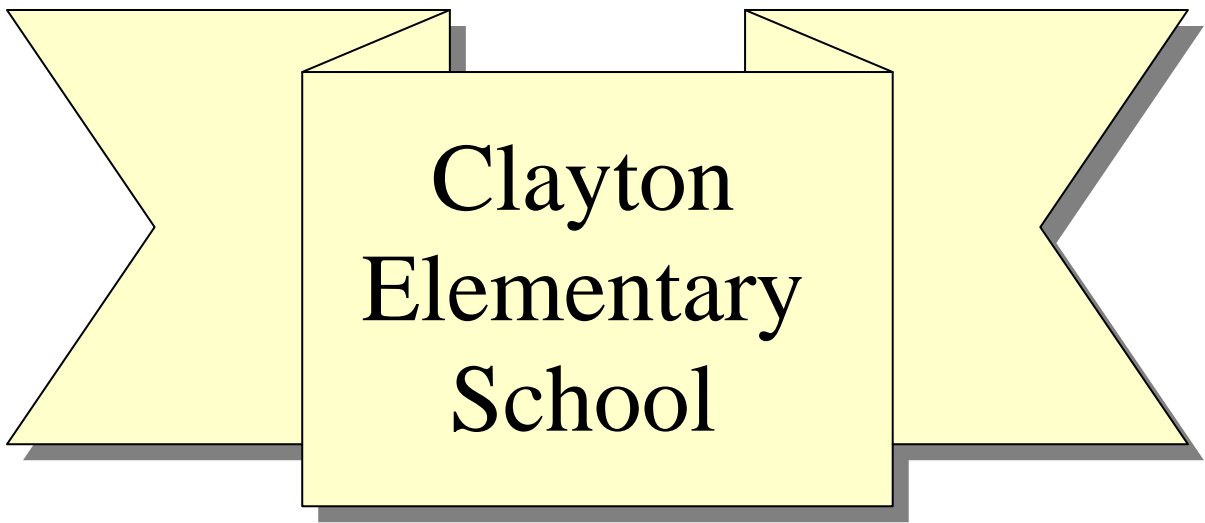
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Grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, and 4

I tried hard to ride my 4-wheeler. I tried to ride again and again. It's still hard but I am getting better.

Jamísen Dean

First Place, Kindergarten

I tried hard to train for football. I had to run fast. I felt proud.

Joshua Archible

Second Place, Kindergarten

I tried hard to walk my dog Butters. He kept dragging me. Now I can walk Butters.

Oliver Pearce

Third Place, Kindergarten

One time I was trying to ride my bike. I kept falling off my bike. I never gave up on myself. I kept trying until I got it right and I did get it right! I can ride my bike now because I persevered!

Zariah Russell

First Place, Grade 1

At summer camp I went skating. I could not skate. I tried, tried, and tried and I finally did it. I was so happy! Wow! Yeah! Don't give up! Keep on trying. Try until you get it! That is what Thomas Edison said. I like skating.

Jordan Myrick

Second Place, Grade 1

Thomas Alva Edison meant never quit. Keep on trying until you get it right. Tying my shoes is really hard for me. I keep on trying. I never give up. I keep getting stuck on the double knot part. I never feel like giving up. My mom keeps on telling me to keep on trying and never give up. The task is not completed because I keep getting stuck.

Justin Chí

Third Place, Grade 1

Thomas Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always try just one more time." This means to never give up.

Do you want to hear about the most difficult thing I ever did? It was when I was trying to learn to swim. First, I swam in the shallow water to practice, but every time I did that I sank to the bottom. Then my dad threw me off the shallow end of the pool, but my boney legs wouldn't move.

Next, my mom-mom tried to teach me how to swim by holding my hand and moving me around. When I got the hang of it she let go. I kept sinking to the bottom. Then I held onto a black tube and kicked my feet to move, but I didn't move for a long time. My mom-mom pushed me, but that didn't work either.

It was hard because my feet wouldn't stay up. I did not give up yet. I tried so many times. At last, I let the tube go and I was swimming. My mom-mom and pop-pop were so happy and I was too. My whole family was happy. Now I love to swim.

Alyssa McLamb

First Place, Grade 2

Have you ever walked on your hands with your feet nice and stiff in the air? If you did, you did a handstand. It's not easy at first but if you keep trying and persevering it will be easier. I listened to the quote Thomas Edison made up and that's how I didn't give up. "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." I think Thomas Edison means that if we give up we will never finish our goal, but if we try and try we can do anything.

I went to gymnastics class one day. My teacher put me into a group. Our first center was to do a handstand. First, I had to make a triangle with my hands and head. Then I put my knees next to my elbows. Then I put my knees on top of my elbows. Finally I could put my feet in the air! I kept falling but I kept trying. When I saw my friends walking around on their hands that made me try even more! It took me months before I tried without help at gymnastics class. Now I can walk on my hands! I feel so glad that I persevered to do a handstand! I learned that if you try you can do anything!

Isabel Wilson
Second Place, Grade 2

I had to persevere when tying my shoes. To tie your shoes you have to twist shoelaces, put them in the loop, make two bunny ears and pull it tight. It was hard to do the bunny ears. I felt like giving up because my back started to hurt. I stretched and started to tie again. Perseverance means to try to do something until it works. Thomas Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." I think he means try just one more time. I can tie my shoes because I practiced tying my shoes.

James (Jimmy) Jones
Third Place, Grade 2

My definition of perseverance is that if you don't succeed try, try again. You never stop learning, so never stop trying. Perseverance isn't only something you have when you are little, you have it your whole life. So work on perseverance now while you are young.

I have struggled with many things in my life such as biking and sharing, but one of my hardest things to do is piano. The hard thing about piano is hitting the right note. The reason it is hard to hit the right note is because you have to look at the book and look at the keys at the same time. Sometimes it takes weeks just to learn one song, for example: "Toymakers Dance." The more songs I seem to get, the farther away my goal seems.

Although I've felt like giving up many times, I remembered that if I quit (which I can't anyway) I won't be able to play when my mom gets too old. Also I might never be a piano teacher either. My mother also helps me not to quit by helping me when I need it. I also try to remember that if I quit in piano I will probably quit with everything else. I am practicing my songs when I have free time. For example: after my regular practice time or maybe after homework or just any time I feel like it.

I won't just be practicing when I'm a kid, I am going to be practicing piano all my life. That means it is a life-long thing. I haven't met my goal, but I know someday I will achieve it. I just have to keep working hard for the rest of my life.

I'd just like to sum up my piece by stating that I will never give up on my goals in life such as piano, and you should never give up on yours!

Hannah Osborne
First Place, Grade 3

To me perseverance is something you have to keep trying and it involves failing. You can even learn from your mistakes. Plus you can do anything if you put your mind to it, and you should never say you can't. You can if you always keep trying like me. Every time you try, you are closer to your goal.

I have mastered a lot of gymnastic tricks but the hardest trick was doing a back handspring! I think it may be the hardest thing I've ever had to do. It was so hard because I could not kick my feet over my head. Plus I was so scared I would fall on my head, which I did a few times. I was so, so scared I almost quit. But I told myself no, and kept trying.

To help me learn how to do a back handspring I made my sister hit my feet so I could flip over. For a minute I wanted to give up, but I told myself no and kept trying again and again. My sister was a really big help. Whenever I had free time I would go out on my trampoline and practice. The next day I was so proud because I finally did it! I told everyone!

I hope I helped teach you what perseverance means. Through this experience I have learned that it does not help to be a quitter. You should always keep trying because some day you will meet your goal like me. Now that I've learned how to do a back handspring, I will be a better gymnast!

Lily Wynne

Second Place, Grade 3

Have you ever had to show perseverance? I have when I learned how to play hockey. I thought maybe if I fell I would be embarrassed and everyone would start laughing at me. After a while I got so stressed that I felt like my head was going to explode with frustration! I got so angry because I just kept messing up. I didn't even want a break until I learned how to play hockey the right way. I kept mumbling to myself, "No one can stop me, I am determined to do this!"

It was hard, but I didn't stop trying. Also I never said, "Let's just quit and try again some other time." I wished I could just slam, bang, boom a strong and fast slap shot into the white net. Finally on a Sunday evening I did it. I had achieved my goal! It was as hard as writing a 1,000 word assignment on the presidents of the USA. From this experience I learned that when something becomes hard, show perseverance and never give up. Always keep trying. Also, keep on going and if people say you can't do something, never ever believe them!

Also, if you feel like you can't do something don't give up even if things get hard or if you are uncertain you can do something. Like Helen Keller--she could not do everything but she could still do something! She knew that she could do something and kept trying. Also, Michael Jordan the best basketball player ever, he never gave up and kept practicing and never stopped. He missed more than 9,000 shots in his career. Also, Rosa Parks showed perseverance by standing up for herself when she was on a bus and white people said she had to sit at the back of

the bus. She said "No!" She stood up for herself! That is why I persevered when I learned how to play hockey.

Marie Youngcourt
Third Place, Grade 3

"If you're trying to achieve there will be roadblocks. I've had them; everyone has had them. But obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it." That's what Michael Jordan says. To me that means a lot. To me it means that there will always be a problem, but try to overcome it instead of giving up. His words are important to me because he describes how everybody feels at least once in their life. So just because he is a famous basketball player doesn't mean he hasn't had experience.

After I heard Michael Jordan's words, I automatically thought back to when I made a PowerPoint on the brain. It was very difficult. The brain is a very complex organ to research about. There were a lot of words I didn't know, and to make it worse, it was confusing to find everything I needed. So I was getting mad, but I kept working.

If you think making a PowerPoint is easy well, IT ISN'T!!! First of all you have to look up facts. I tried and I tried, but I couldn't find anything. I searched what felt like a million sites. It was very confusing because there were a lot of websites that said "Brain" but most of them didn't work. As a result of that I asked the teacher for help. She got me on to a good site, but I only found a quarter of the stuff I needed. So I searched a different website and found something useful.

When I got to the middle of reading the page I saw a word I didn't know. I tried to sound it out but it was weird. After that I looked the word up and found out how to pronounce it. I am glad there is the internet.

After I wrote everything down on my paper, I set up my PowerPoint. That means I had to choose a background and set different slides. Then I had to organize it in categories and put everything that belonged together and pictures that matched it.

Suddenly happiness carried over me. I thought I was finished. I showed it to my teacher and to my disappointment she said I had to describe the disease more. So I had to look up more information and when I found that I had to type more.

When I was done (this time for real), I showed it to her and YAY!!! She said it was good. Finishing the PowerPoint was like winning a gold medal because I'd been working on it for so long

Now do you think I gave up? Well I didn't. I didn't give up because it was interesting learning new things (even though it was hard). Since I didn't give up, it is done and it is excellent.

Leila Sebastian

First Place, Grade 4

Crackle, Crackle, Crackle. That's the sound of me giving up. I threw the crumbled-up piece of paper into the waste paper basket, not thinking about persevering. I was in my bedroom at night just practicing my spelling words (for the spelling test) when I came across a word that was hard for me to spell. I tried to spell it, but it was just too difficult for me to spell. I didn't want to fail the spelling test so I "persevered." When you persevere, it means you keep trying--and never give up. Thomas Alva Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up, the most certain way to succeed is try just one more time." What he meant by "try just one more time" was if you try one more time, you might accomplish something. So that's what I did. I spelled the word one more time, and I finally got the word right. I knew I was going to get an A+ and I did. I was proud of myself for persevering.

A task that you might have accomplished by persevering could be learning how to ride a bike. If you were going to learn how to ride a bike, you would probably start out with a tricycle. A tricycle has three or more wheels. To begin riding a tricycle, you would have to situate your feet on the pedals, and move your legs in circles. Now you are moving! Next, to steer you place your hands on the handlebars. To move to the left or the right, tilt your hands to that side. Finally, you are riding a tricycle! You probably already know how to ride a tricycle, but if you don't know, these instructions will help you. To ride a two-wheeler, you need to take off your training wheels, and get on the bike. It might be a little wobbly, but you have to have balance and control of your bike.

Those are examples of an activity you might have accomplished by persevering. What can you do by persevering? I'm guessing a lot!

Karina Bartlett

Second Place, Grade 4

There are many quotes in the world, but this one means a lot to me. The quote is "Success is falling nine times and getting up ten" by Jon Bon Jovi. I like this quote because it means even if you keep failing, always try again because you might succeed the next time. The quote makes me think to never give up and always persevere.

In my life there have been hundreds of times I wanted to give up. I tried to succeed--some I finished, some I gave up. One I tried for months was when I decided to be able to climb a tree. My brother inspired me to climb a tree because he was very good at doing it. I could always climb things like climbing my bunk bed in two seconds. I think climbing the tree was difficult because it was very tall and didn't have many spots on it to get a grip.

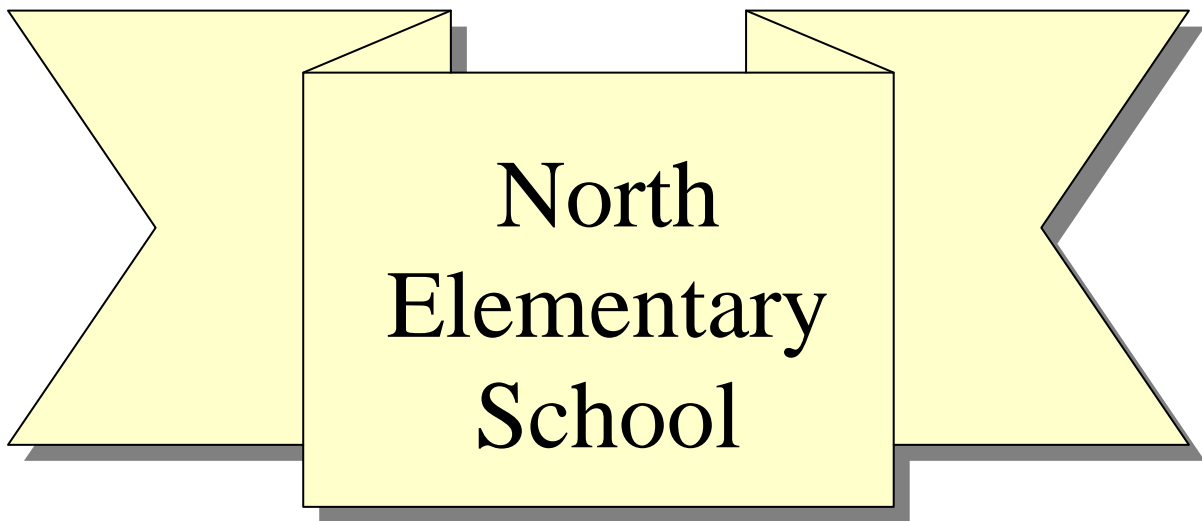
All people know that you need to be able to get a grip on the tree that you're climbing. I tried jumping to grab the branch, but I slipped off and hurt my arm. I tried again even though my arm was hurting like a tiger bite. So I jumped higher this time, but I jumped too high and couldn't even grab the branch. I felt like an epic failure in life. I tried one more time. I grabbed a perfect spot, but I couldn't pull myself up.

Now I had to work on pulling myself up. I ran, grabbed the branch, and pulled like I was playing tug-of-war. Yet I didn't manage to pull myself up. I got discouraged, but I tried once more. I walked back far and started to run as fast as a cheetah. Then I jumped in the air like a frog, grabbed the branch, and pulled myself up. I felt triumphant. I jumped down and tried again and pulled myself up. I was so happy.

I never felt like giving up because it was a task that I wanted to complete so I could show my family. The task is complete because I didn't give up on myself or doubt myself. I persevered.

Owen Zolper

Third Place, Grade 4



Grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, and 4

I tried to ride my bike. My mom tried to help me. It looked like I was going to fail. As soon as my mom let go, I started pedaling.

Sinae Watson

First Place, Kindergarten

I tried to tie my shoes. I felt sad. I was happy when I tied my shoes.

Kate Cornelius

Second Place, Kindergarten

I tried to play basketball. I kept trying to shoot the ball. I made it.

Jaun Fowler

Third Place, Kindergarten

One thing I work hard at is swimming. Sometimes in the summer I practice. My mom helps me. It took days and weeks. I'm still not ready, but I'm getting better. I like to go to my friend's house to swim in his pool and practice. I keep trying and trying. Now I'm really better at swimming. My mom said we will go to the beach again soon to practice. Then I will get better. I am learning to use my arms and legs. Soon I will learn to stay on top of the water. I didn't give up! I am going to try and try until I get it!

Machai Stinnett

First Place, Grade 1

What is perseverance? Perseverance is to try again and again. I showed perseverance the first time I tried to ride a two-wheeler bike. Once in kindergarten I saw kids riding two-wheeler bikes so I wanted to try it. I got on the two-wheeler bike and I wobbled and fell. I felt nervous and scared. I tried again and again. The next day I tried again and I did it. I know now that if I try I will succeed.

Farrah Charles

Second Place, Grade 1

Do you know a person that never gives up? My little cousin tried to walk to me! Then his mom came in from the kitchen. She asked me if he could walk yet? I said no. He almost did it! But he didn't get it yet. He kept trying. I kept helping him. The whole family was watching me. He was so close to getting it. He finally got it! We were proud of him. It was great that he got it. It was so cool. He showed perseverance.

Bahsíl Laster

Third Place, Grade 1

Oh my goodness--this is so hard! Do you go to dance class? Well, I do and I was trying to learn a dance move, but I did not give up. I persevered, and you should too because it will help you. Never ever give up on something. What I did made me feel proud of myself because I accomplished something and practice makes perfect. I did it by remembering the steps. I was frustrated and I wanted to quit, but I did not because my mom and dad say if you put your mind to something you can do whatever you want to do. When I got it I was proud!

Madison Simpson

First Place, Grade 2

Have you ever failed to do something and wanted to quit? I have. It took me a long time to get skating. I am still trying. My sister and I still skate with our mom. Sometimes I will let go of my mom's hand. I said I really want to quit, but I still skate once in a while. I heard that Jon Bon Jovi said, "Success is falling down nine times and getting back up ten times." I think he means you should try again and again till you get it. I am very mad at myself but I will keep trying to roller skate.

Robert Tricarico

Second Place, Grade 2

Have you ever had a fun time roller skating. To me ugh . . . a little. This is the time I persevered. My family and I went to the skating rink. When we got everything it was hard for me because this was my first time. Then my friend Jaden told me the steps to roller skate. She said to first put on your roller skates. Then you try to balance. You move your roller skates. Then you move your feet side to side. When she told me that, I did the same thing that she said. Then I knew what perseverance meant. It means you try and try till you succeed. Then I knew what Jon Bon Jovi meant when he said, "Success is falling down nine times and getting back up ten times." To me it means when you fall you keep falling, and when you get up you keep on trying till you succeed. Then I did it one more time and I got it. When I finally learned I felt really happy.

Nora Charles

Third Place, Grade 2

Thomas Edison once said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always try just one more time." I think Thomas Edison was trying to explain the importance of perseverance. Perseverance means the act of trying, failing, learning, and trying again until success is achieved. Thomas Edison had shown perseverance. I tried riding my scooter and I showed perseverance.

On Christmas morning, we all went downstairs and there were presents everywhere! I saw an electric scooter for me and my brother Emilio. I asked my mom if Emilio and I could ride it and she said yes. So while everybody else was opening presents, we scurried outside. We were so happy we got an electric scooter. First, he tried and he did it. Then, I went and I tried to stay on but I fell off. I tried again, but I fell off again. I gave up for the day.

The next day I went for a ride with my electric scooter. I tried but I couldn't stay on for a full minute. I was going to try another time. Unfortunately, the battery died. Immediately I went inside to charge it. I waited until it was at full battery. Finally I unplugged it and scurried back outside. I dragged it out and tried to stay on and I almost fell off. Finally I twisted the handle bar and rode it for a full minute. The scooter is fun to ride now because now I know how to ride it. I showed perseverance by trying and never giving up.

Mateo Torres

First Place, Grade 3

Perseverance to me means that people don't give up--just keep trying. Thomas Alva Edison once said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." Perseverance is such an important quality to possess. Never giving up, trying even after failing, and even learning from your mistakes--that is what perseverance means to me.

"Plop! Plop!" was the sound of the first time doing a cartwheel. On Monday night in July, my mom and I were going to clean the back yard. Then mom said, "Forget cleaning the back yard. We can do it another time." Cartwheels had called mom. When I first did a flip, I fell. "I give up."

"Honey don't give up" replied mom. I will never do a cartwheel again. The next day my mother and I had a talk. "I am so sorry mom, can we try again and you hold my feet," I said, and step by step we tried again.

First I thought that I would be able to land a cartwheel, then after I tried it wasn't so easy. I felt frustrated. I admit it was hard and I did not want to do it after my first fall. Would you give up the first time you tried if you couldn't land it? That is how I felt. So my mom and I worked it out. She told me she gave up on her mom. That is when I showed perseverance.

After a month of practice, I finally completed the task. I am able to do a cartwheel. I learned to never give up. My mom said, "Never ever give up!" That same summer, I went to school on the first day of third grade and my teacher Mrs. Noll told me about perseverance. I told her how I showed perseverance when I was doing cartwheels. Always show perseverance.

Jaydah Foote

Second Place, Grade 3

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to just try one more time." - Thomas Alva Edison. I think this means if you give up you will never succeed until you try again, and if you don't you won't be able to do anything. Don't give up until you succeed or you will never get anywhere in life. If you never try you won't get what you are going for.

Once when I tried to swim I kept failing and I couldn't stay above the water. I was moving, just not good enough. I could swim underwater but not on top of it. Then one day I could. I just tried and got it. I swam forever, back and forth. It was so much fun swimming above the water.

When I was swimming it was difficult because I couldn't get above the water. I couldn't get any higher. I kept trying and trying by moving faster and faster, and I stayed above the water longer but not forever. I was going to give up but I just knew I could if I tried a little more, and I did. Then I could swim anywhere.

I can swim now because I persevered. I swim faster, better, and higher than before. I always persevere because I know I can master anything. I will always and forever keep trying for what I am going for.

Robbie Robinson

Third Place, Grade 3

Do you know what perseverance is? No! Well then I will tell you what it is. Perseverance is when you never ever give up, you try and try. There are a couple of sayings. I thought of one by Jon Bon Jovi. He said, "Success is falling nine times and getting up ten." But it is hard not to give up. I bet Thomas Edison wanted to give up, but he didn't. That is why we have the light bulb and much more.

I love riding horses, but I'm going back to when I was four. When I was four I used to be afraid to ride horses because my brother sat on a horse and got kicked off of the horse. I used to think that horses go as fast as a road runner. I didn't like to go fast. I felt like I was going to get sick. Now I know they go quick if you want them to go quick. But I was only four. That was only one reason I didn't want to ride a horse. Another was that I didn't want to get knocked off. Each day I tried not to be scared. The terrifying feeling just came over me like a blanket. I thought I would never be able to ride a horse.

The first time I got on the horse, I was scared and worried that I was going to get kicked off. After I got on and walked like one step I fell to the ground. I was sad but not hurt because I fell on straw and it blocked me. It felt like sewing needles were poking me. The second time I tried I was still scared. I was going to fall and get hurt again or break my leg or arm. So this time I got on a small horse that was better trained so I wouldn't hurt myself that bad because I was fragile. Now the third time I was frightened but not too bad. This time I was going slower. Then the next second I was going fast. I was scared but I almost fell. Then I did fall because the saddle wasn't fastened tight enough. But it wasn't that bad. I was determined to ride that horse. I never gave up!

The main reason I wrote this was to show perseverance, not a funny or sad story. But anyway I completed my task and didn't give up. I got hurt but I didn't give up. I fell nine times and got up ten. From there on I was never afraid again.

Delaney Tome
First Place, Grade 4

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is to always try one more time." Never give up on your dreams because you can do it. Have faith and believe in yourself. That's what perseverance means to me. Never let anyone steal your dreams from you and never give up.

When I was 8 years old my pop-pop passed away in 2010. I was sad and unhappy. Two days before the funeral my mom found the perfect song called "His Eye is on the Sparrow." So then she gave me all the words to the song. It takes 3 minutes and 59 seconds to finish the song. She knew it was the perfect song for me since I wanted to learn a new song.

It was the next morning when I woke up. My mom said to get out the lyrics so I could practice. Thirty minutes passed while my mom was saying try again over and over. My mom was telling me to sing from my stomach and not my nose. I got very frustrated.

One day before the funeral my mom and I packed my bags. While we were on the road for almost four hours, I practiced "His Eye is on the Sparrow." When I was practicing I noticed my mom and I were on the George Washington Bridge. We could see all of the tall buildings.

On the day of my pop-pop's funeral I cried a little bit but when it was time for me to start singing. I took a breath and started to sing. As I was singing I was showing how much I loved him. When I finished the song everyone clapped because if I can believe in myself and have faith you can too. And that's how I persevered by not giving up on my dreams.

Sydnei Ruff

Second Place, Grade 4

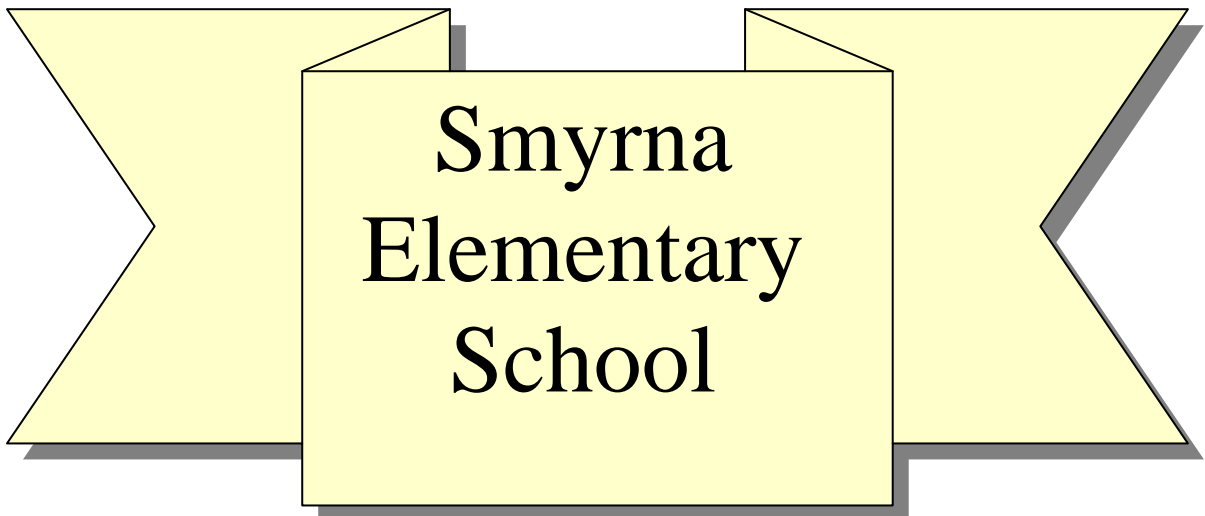
Have you ever tried doing something new and weren't very good? I know I have. Thomas Alva Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." That means to me that you should not give up. New things may seem very hard at first but with practice it gets easier to do.

When I first had surgery on my legs and tried to walk with my braces and walker, it was difficult. Each time I had to get out of my wheelchair, put on my long leg braces, stand up, and try walking with my walker. This task was difficult because I had a little pain and got tired.

Sometimes I felt like giving up because it hurt my legs, but I decided to keep on trying. I overcame that feeling by not giving up. I was able to complete this task by walking every day until it became easier.

Nikolas Maws

Third Place, Grade 4



Grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, and 4

I can run far. My grandpop helped me train. It was hard at first. I got better at running. I showed perseverance.

Mileah Cotton

First Place, Kindergarten

One time I messed up my homework. It made me feel sad but I kept trying. Then I finally did it. Then I felt happy.

Peyton Cole

Second Place, Kindergarten

I keep trying to ride my bike. I couldn't do it. I still can't do it. I will try again.

Kathleen McGowan

Third Place, Kindergarten

Perseverance is never giving up until you learn! Ice skating was hard but I did not give up. It was difficult because it was on ice and people kept bumping into me. It was slippery and cold! I did not give up until I got it right! I learned how to do it because someone showed me, and they held my hand to help me. I felt fantastic!

Kaylee Casey

First Place, Grade 1

I think they mean the little train can pull the pretty and fancy train up the hill. I tried to play the piano and the song was "Hot Cross Buns." The piano was at home. It was really, really hard. I did not press the right note on the piano. I kept trying every day, and I got the hang of it! Were you able to do the hard things? I did it because my daddy helped me play the piano!

Kaitlynn Maylone

Second Place, Grade 1

Perseverance means to try your best until you get success. I have tried to do my Legos and I had to do it over and over again. It's because my Legos were too hard because I kept putting one piece in the middle. No, I did not give up and I never will. Was I able to do the hard thing? Yes! How did I do it? Finally I glued it together.

Landon Andrus

Third Place, Grade 1

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." - Thomas Alva Edison.

Perseverance is when you keep trying until you get it. To me Thomas Edison's quote means it is weak to give up. An example of a time when I showed perseverance was when I tried to learn how to swim. When I was five, I wanted to learn how to swim. I went to my cousin's home and played in her white pool. She told me to strive but I kept sinking. It was difficult to complete this task because I could not do it by myself. It was too hard for me but I didn't give up. I kept trying so I could prove to myself that I could swim. I didn't learn how to swim but every time I go to the pool I keep trying. Perseverance means it's weak to give up and if you keep trying you might get it.

Cameron Hood

First Place, Grade 2

Do you know what perseverance is? Let me tell you a little about perseverance. Perseverance is when you tried to do something and you didn't get it but you tried and tried over and over. One day you got it. This quote means don't ever give up what you are trying to do.

When I tried to do a bridge I fell. Everybody started laughing when I fell. One day I went outside. I kept on trying and trying every day. One day I got it. I was five. I was outside in my backyard. I tried for four weeks. My brother helped me. It was spring. My dad cooked burgers and hot dogs that day.

Yes, I felt like giving up because everybody laughed at me and I felt disappointment in what I tried to do. I felt humiliated in front of all those people. I overcame because one day my brother called me and said, "Come and see if you can do a handstand." I said, "okay." So he told me to bend back and held my back and when I went all the way he let go. I stayed! I did it all by myself, I completed this task because I got it. I did a bridge all by myself. That's the time I showed perseverance by learning how to do a bridge by myself.

Mariah Carmona

Second Place, Grade 2

Do you know about perseverance? I will tell you about the time I broke my wrist. To me the quote that Thomas Alva Edison wrote means to never give up--instead keep trying. One time I went roller skating and I wasn't good so I fell and broke my wrist. Then when I practiced I was great! I felt like giving up because I was so hurt I had to go to the doctor, get my bones checked, and get a cast. My mom and dad helped me because at home I saw them help my sister so they helped me at the rink. Yes, I was able to roller skate with the help of two sisters, friends, mom, and dad. Now you know a time that I had to persevere through my broken wrist.

Alexis Bento

Third Place, Grade 2

Thomas Alva Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." In my words I said, "Instead of giving up, keep trying because you will get it."

The task I had to do more than once were pas de chats. It is from my ballet class. It is tricky for me, but I'll get it. Pas de chats are when you jump. Then passé, then another passé. That is why it is tricky for me. I didn't feel like giving up because my dance teacher had faith in me. She also told me I could do it. Then she made me feel better.

Now I can do pas de chats because I did not give up on it. Now I'm better at it and I'm now moving on to the next step.

Giianne Hannum

First Place, Grade 3

Have you ever wanted to give up? I have a quote from Thomas Alva Edison, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." It means we should always keep trying. I did and now I'm a great ice skater.

When I started skating it was hard and I needed help. Then I started to skate by myself and I started to fall. When I could not do skating right, I gave up. But I didn't think giving up was the right thing to do.

Then I started to skate some more. I was doing a really good job. Next, I got the hang of it and I started getting ready for the competition.

When I was there I got nervous and wanted to give up, but I knew that I worked hard so I didn't give up. Then I started to skate and I was good. When I was done I knew it was good to try your best and not give up. It leads you to something good.

Nya Bazemore

Second Place, Grade 3

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is to always just try one more time."--Thomas Alva Edison. What does perseverance mean to you? Well to me it means an act of never giving up like when Thomas Edison said, "Your greatest weakness lies in giving up." Well my weakness is common sense before self-defense. I have kept on trying to stop being so physical.

The task was hard for me because I always act up when people touch me or my stuff. To me it's like an addiction. I'm still working on overcoming it. I know one solution to help some people if people are like me. I would think about how it would make you a better person by acting out--it doesn't.

Well this task was actually the hardest one I'd ever faced in my life. Over the years I've kept trying to succeed in this task. I have tried many, many, many things and still I'm trying. If people are like me they might keep trying just like me. So I have never given up. All in all everybody in this world has perseverance like workers, kids, and adults.

Ali Baqi

Third Place, Grade 3

This prompt is about me failing, and then succeeding by finishing this writing prompt. I never gave up and I never stopped trying. Just like Thomas Alva Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is to try just one more time." This means when you fail, keep on trying and trying till you get it--until you succeed at what you failed.

Doing this writing prompt was difficult for me. I had to start over and over because I couldn't think of anything to write. I was going to write about riding a bike for the first time, but then I thought everyone else would be doing that and it was not an original idea. I was going to write about playing lacrosse but lacrosse comes easy to me and I didn't think that was difficult enough. I was going to write about playing football but I couldn't think of good details. I was also going to write about how difficult it is to get along with my step-sister but I am still trying at that. This task was difficult because I couldn't think of anything that I thought would be good to write about. Whenever I came up with an idea it didn't sound like the perfect idea. I just didn't think you would be impressed. I was so frustrated that I couldn't think of anything. The more I thought about it the more frustrated I got. I overcame the feeling by taking a break. I sat down, got relaxed, watched TV and thought of this idea.

My task was not completed because I had only come up with the idea and hadn't written anything. I sat down to write my paper and my sister, Delaney, spilled coffee all over me so I

had to take a shower. I had to take the dog out because that is my chore every day. Delaney was crying and whining because she wanted attention and I couldn't think. I still haven't finished the next part. It has taken a lot of perseverance but I haven't given up. It has been hard not to give up. Once I finish this prompt I will have completed my task. I will feel great when I have finished this. I am proud because so far I have done a good job and I am proving that I don't give up.

It has been a hard time writing this prompt, I had to think of stuff which I am not good at. There has been a lot of stuff distracting me, like my sister. I don't like writing because I am not good at thinking. I knew I had to finish so I kept trying and trying and now I am done.

Parker Roskovich

First Place, Grade 4

Do you remember a time when you persevered through something? Persevering is like always trying no matter how hard stuff gets. "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." Would you like to know the story of me riding my bike without training wheels? It was hard but I never gave up. I am Justin Bautista and this is my story.

It was one summer day when my dad said, "Hey Justin, now that you can ride your bike pretty well, do you want to try to ride it without training wheels?" I agreed so I put on pads first while my dad unscrewed the training wheels. First I tried to ride with him behind me, but I was scared to fall because I couldn't balance well. The task was so hard and took a while to complete because it was completely new to me. I really wanted to give up because I was scared to fall or get hurt, and worried I would have to go to the hospital. I overcame it by saying in my head, "eventually I will be way faster and be able to ride on grass and LOVE IT!"

Finally it is completed. Riding my bike is finished because I never gave up and kept trying. So no matter how hard stuff gets always try your best. Have you ever needed help with something really hard? Is it done? If not ask a friend or try something new out but NEVER GIVE UP!

Justin Bautista

Second Place, Grade 4

Have you ever had to persevere? Hi, I am Skylar Hass. I struggled with going underwater and not freaking out. Perseverance means to keep trying. You can't succeed when you give up. This would be more about the experience and how it went.

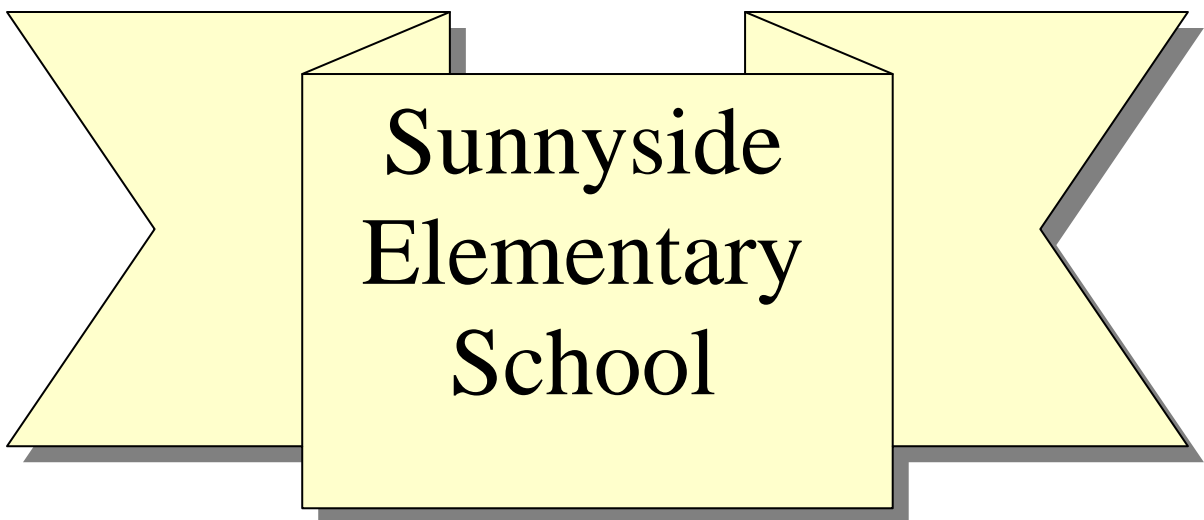
Going underwater was hard. At one point I was even scared to go down a waterslide where you go down on this inflatable tube (you float). My mom would say, "You can do it." I would try but I couldn't go down any farther than my mouth. When I would go to Killens Pond with my

summer camp, my friend and I would go to the deep end of the pool. I would always watch her go under but I could never. Then one day I got these goggles that protect your nose too. I tried going down farther and I did it! The next week my friend and I went again and I knew I could do it. Then when we got to the pool my whole head almost went under (except a tiny part of my head)! I was overjoyed. I almost did it. I kept trying it with my friend and one time we went down together and waved. It was better than I thought. It wasn't scary. It was fun. I wanted to give up many times but I didn't. Like Thomas Alva Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

Although I wanted to give up, I didn't. My friend and parents helped me through it. I achieved my goal because I tried over and over again until I achieved it. Everybody helped me through it and it's done. I did it.

Skylar Hass

Third Place, Grade 4



Grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, and 4

When I found out how to climb the blue monkey bars, I was scared to go around it because it could flip to one side and then to the other side. I could fall off or in the middle and fall on someone. I kept trying, I did it, and now I love to do it. I am not scared anymore. I can even grab onto the things that hold it up because I persevered and never gave up.

Reaghan King
First Place, Kindergarten

On my birthday I got a bicycle and I was so scared to ride my bicycle. I kept trying. I practiced many days and one day I went on my bicycle with no training wheels. I was so scared. I tried and I went by myself. I was by myself and became perfect.

Abby Nelms
Second Place, Kindergarten

This is my first time learning how to ride my bike. It was really hard but I kept trying even if I didn't make it. One time I rode my bike and fell down. I felt sad and I kept trying. My dad helped me. It was really hard but I kept trying. It took me five days and finally I could do it by myself.

Kailah Crews
Third Place, Kindergarten

How do you persevere? Perseverance means try your best and try it more than once. Never give up. Believe you can do it! I do believe I can do it. Well, let's start from the beginning. My dog's name is Neo and his group is Australian Shepherd. I tried to train my dog. It was very, very hard because he is literally crazy. It was fun to train my dog, but it took time. I had to start every day when the yellow sun came up. First, I got a dog treat and took Neo to my big family room. I told him what to do and if he did it, he got a treat. I asked dad to help. I can get Neo's attention with a fuzzy dog toy. I throw it and he is so good he can catch it. I tried to train my dog, but he walked away. I had to try over and over, then he got it. It's still pretty hard but at least I know how. He stands up and twirls for a treat and sits. I like to train my dog because it makes me feel glad I can do it.

Lucas McCleary
First Place, Grade 1

Do you know what perseverance means? It means if you fall, get up and try again. When I was five years old I wanted to ride a four wheeler. It took hours of practice. You have to buckle your seat belt. You have to concentrate. The task was difficult because I kept falling. I did not feel like giving up because I wanted to ride with my friends. Now I know how to ride a four wheeler. That was the best day ever.

Carl Rifino

Second Place, Grade 1

Have you ever gone skating before? I have. It was hard but I did not give up. I kept on trying and trying. I kept on skating. I had to hold onto the wall. I held my dad's hand. Balancing was hard too. I'm still practicing and I am getting better every day. I'll never ever give up. I have a good time skating. Skating is fun. Someday I could be a professional skater.

Lindsey Seeney

Third Place, Grade 1

I heard counting on the other side of my wall. I went to my sister's room. I asked what she was doing. She said, "I'm adding." I bet I could beat her at math. Math was hard. Math takes lots of perseverance. Perseverance is when you try, try, fail, and succeed. I wanted to do math to not look dumb. My sister said to give up, but I persevered. Then I made it and made math cards to practice over and over. My dad went through each card. If I gave up I would have more time to play. But I kept on saying it will repay you. When I succeeded I felt like the king of the math world. Here's some advice--never give up. Persevere and it will repay you.

Ronald Westgate

First Place, Grade 2

What does it mean to persevere? To me perseverance means to try and try and never give up. It is also to try your best. One time I couldn't hit a home run. Hitting a home run was so important because my coach depended on me. It was also important because the score was 6 to 2. It was so hard because the baseball fence was so big and wide. It was also hard because I was nervous and everybody was looking at me. It would be easier to give up because I knew they would win the game; but I told myself my coach still depends on me and to try my best and work hard. I'm still trying and I still feel great. Some advice I would give is to try and try and never give up and try your best.

Grant Robinson

Second Place, Grade 2

Perseverance means never give up. That is what I think you should do if you don't quit. I just know it should work. One time I was trying to ride my bike. I knew it would be fun. Once you get the hang of it, it is easy to do. When you can ride a bike you also can do it with friends and family. I always peddled backwards. I couldn't steer that good. Every time the wind blew I would lose balance. I knew I would lose balance every time and it would be hard to peddle. But then I noticed something. When I grow up it will be easier. If somebody is having a hard time riding their bike, I would tell them to never give up.

Daymien Mickle

Third Place, Grade 2

One time I had tried to persevere; persevering is when you try at least one more time. I remember the time I tried to ride my skateboard, Betsy Wonder Wood. I remember that moment like it was yesterday. At first I did not feel like doing it, but I was so happy when my dad told me when he was young he skateboarded with Tony Hawk!

One spring day I was in my house with Lucas, mom, Mim, and Mung-ung on my 8th birthday, May 15, 2011. A weird shaped present suddenly came into view. I had no clue what it was. So I said, "Lucas, please pass me that present." I ripped open the paper and I was so surprised to see that I got a skateboard! So after opening all those wonderful gifts I went outside to try out my skateboard. First I named her Betsy Wonder Wood, then I put on my gear and went to dad to teach me how to stand on it. After that I went down the driveway. I was so excited to be on a skateboard; but there was one problem. I had no idea how to steer! I was starting to get scared. How would I stop it? Well I could not so I crashed. I was so disappointed in myself I cried and cried.

I was so mad I thought smoke was going to come out of my ears. I thought I never wanted to do it again. I gazed at Betsy in her one eye, and when I gazed at her I felt like I was letting her down. So I said, "Dad, I think the problem is the wheels are too tight. Please make them loose." He said, "I will do that Jacob and I will teach you how to control the skateboard." So he taught me to control the skateboard, but it was late and we had to go inside.

Then it came the day I tried one more time. The next day I got up, took a shower, got dressed, brushed my teeth, and ate breakfast. After I ate I wanted to go back outside so mom and dad took me outside again. I got on my gear and went to the top of the driveway. I tried one more time with loose wheels and I remembered how to steer. I went down the hill and I did not get it. It took me a few tries but at last I got it.

I made it at last. All that effort paid off. I was screaming with excitement, tears of joy falling down my cheek. I felt like the happiest kid alive. I felt like I just did something impossible. I

felt so much pride in myself and Betsy. I also thought my dad took a big part in this as well. Any time you fail the first time--persevere!

Jacob McCleary
First Place, Grade 3

Thomas Alva Edison's quote means that giving up is a big weakness. You should always try one more time. This reminds me of when I played softball. I persevered when I played with the Little League. Do you know what perseverance is? It is when you try very hard and you never give up.

When my parents pulled into a parking lot next to a huge field I felt like a cat in water. I did NOT want to be there. Do you want to hear how I got through hitting, pitching, and trouble with teammates? Well, it wasn't easy but I was glad I accomplished all my tasks in softball.

Before I started Little League, I wasn't doing any sport at the time. Softball seemed like it would be fun. When I got there a tall lady in a t-shirt and shorts welcomed me. She told me that her daughter would be pitching and I had to catch. I missed every time. Next I met my team. The girls weren't very nice. Every Saturday I went to practice and I never talked to my teammates. Those girls were NOT my friends. I tried to talk to them once, but it didn't turn out well.

I also had a hard time hitting. My coach would throw the balls and I'd swing once, twice, and miss. The third time I'd swing very hard, but then the coach would yell, "Out!" One time my team was sitting on one side of a bench chatting. I sat on the other side. Our coach called a girl to hit some balls while I quietly took out my water bottle and had a few sips. I showed a girl my Alvin and the Chipmunks and Chipettes Beanie Babies. She seemed to like them. We talked for awhile until the coach called my name. Slowly I walked to home plate. My fingers were tingling. I grabbed hold of my bat and WHAM! I hit a ball right into the sky. My teammates cheered. Later the girl I talked to earlier was throwing balls. I tried to catch them. I missed the first and second times but the third time's a charm--right? I jumped and caught it with my glove.

At the end of the day, I sat on the bench with my team and my parents while eating a hot dog. I was very proud of what I did, and I couldn't stop smiling! "You know something," I said between bites. "I thought I wouldn't like softball but this was pretty fun!" My mom and dad couldn't believe it. That night at my house, my brother threw balls in the air and I tried to hit them while my pets ran across the grass. If you were me, wouldn't you be full of pride too? So this is how I persevered in softball. I am so delighted that I got through hitting, pitching and making friends. If you have to persevere, think of how I did it. Never give up!

Erin Finney
Second Place, Grade 3

Do you know what perseverance means to me? Well to me it means trying hard, and if you don't succeed the first time keep trying and you might do it. I think that perseverance is important because if we didn't persevere we would just give up and not succeed. I'll tell you a time I showed perseverance.

It was my first time ice skating. It was me, my friend, her mom, and her dad. I thought it was going to be as easy as walking but it wasn't. I got onto the ice; I was excited. Then I grabbed onto the wall as fast as a cheetah could run. I got frightened. Then I tried to skate and then "Crash." I fell to the floor. It hurt. I thought how could I get better.

After that, I knew it! I was going to practice until I got it. I kept trying and I still fell a lot. I fell again and I said to myself "don't quit." So I kept trying because I knew I would be happy if I did it. So then, I tried one more time because I knew I could do it.

Then, I did it! I was off the wall ice skating! I felt so good! When I started I couldn't stop. It was so much fun. Then I crashed but I still wanted to get in the center. My friend said, "Come on. Get in the center with me!" I kept trying until I realized I could do it. When I got into the center it was so much fun! I never knew how much fun it was. We left but I had an awesome time.

So that day I realized that I could accomplish anything if I just tried. Even if it's simple. I knew I could do it. So if you want to accomplish something just persevere. That's the time I persevered.

Samantha Muza

Third Place, Grade 3

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." These are the words of America's one and only Thomas Edison. Aside from being a great inventor, he also was a person who never gave up. Without perseverance you would be asking who is Thomas Edison.

Perseverance is more than meets the eye because you might think it helps in one situation but perseverance impacts your whole life. How you ask? Keep reading and I'll give you an example because this is the story of how perseverance impacted my life. What Thomas Edison's inspiring quote means to me is that if you give up you might never reach your goal; and you can be this close but never make it because you didn't persevere. Perseverance is in your attitude. There is a good and a bad attitude and to switch on your good attitude you have to persevere. You can't give up. There will be things in the way of your goal, but you have to overcome them all.

Now it's time to hear how I persevered and how I reached my goal by persevering. In my story I persevered by trying just one more time in cheerleading. I know you may think cheerleading doesn't require lots of hard work, but you are wrong. In fact cheerleading is a real sport, believe

it or not, and it was a lot of work trying to nail the routines, jumps, stunts, and motions. But enough with that, let's get into the story. I was going to cheerleading for my first time at Municipal Park's football field around the time when school was going to start (so that gave me two things to worry about.) I really had wanted to try cheerleading ever since I watched the movie "Bring it On." It was hard to keep trying and I almost gave up. That's what this writing prompt is about.

During cheerleading I felt terrific and terrified. I knew some of the girls were really advanced, and I was just starting out so I didn't know what they would think of me. Plus it stressed me out trying to make a good impression on them. Then on the other hand I felt terrific because cheerleading was my dream and it was so cool it was actually coming true. It was all fun and games until it got harder. It wasn't just cheers anymore, it was jumps and stunts and tumbling. I could barely do a toe touch and wasn't anywhere close to being able to do a decent cartwheel. Then a voice inside my head whispered, "You'll never ever be able to do this, just give up. You are wasting your time." Suddenly the voice disappeared and had me thinking it might be right. Just before I could think of any more bad thoughts a new voice exclaimed (in a much nicer tone than the other voice), "Don't give up Azariah. You can do it. Persevere and try just one more time." I listened to the good voice and had perseverance the next half of the season. It was all great until the bad voice came back.

It was the Nickelodeon Worldwide Day of Play and my family said we could go. I was so excited because my new favorite band was playing there live. Then my dad reminded me that I had a game. I didn't want to go to the game, but there was the bad voice and you all know what it said, "Go to the concert Azariah. It will be fun." I knew I would let down my team so I persevered and went to the game. Every game I got better and better. My team placed third in the competition. I knew I should have persevered. All the stretching and practicing really paid off because now I can do a toe touch twice as high as I could before the season started. In tumbling I can do a cartwheel and a round-off perfectly.

Did I accomplish my goal? YES! With my head held high I finished the season with success and ended it being a better cheerleader. Why did I reach my goal? That's a no-brainer, I'll always say perseverance.

Perseverance is important because it helps you fulfill your dream and your dream is important to you. Whatever you want to do is important. You must have perseverance. When your perseverance fades away you never get to your goal and your hard work is for nothing. All you have to do is try just one more time.

Cheerleading is the coolest thing that ever happened to me. It's my passion and if you have a passion you have to work hard at it. It requires a lot of persevering. You can't give up because what I now love most in the world could have been taken away from me if I didn't try a little harder. Please remember to never give up because you can do great things if you persevere.

Azariah Torain

First Place, Grade 4

In this writing prompt we had to write about a quote by Thomas Edison. It was "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always try just one more time." This quote from Thomas Edison means to me that you should never give up because one day you are bound to succeed.

One thing I felt like giving up on was softball, because when I went up to bat I would always strike out. If I did hit the ball, I would never get to first base because I wasn't fast enough like the other kids. They would go up to bat, hit the ball, and make it to first base.

There was one game I was playing that I'll never forget. My dad, my mom, and my softball team were counting on me. That Saturday in the summer I wasn't ready, the ball came at me, and I missed.

So at another game the next day I was ready. I was pumped and finally it was my turn at bat. So I grabbed my bat, put on my helmet and I was ready to go. I strutted up to the plate. I wanted to show the pitcher I was ready and that I wasn't terrified. I struck out again! I was angry and sad at the same time because I didn't hit the ball. Everybody was being wicked to me except this one girl on my team named Sophie.

I did accomplish my goal because the next day my dad had off so he played with me in the back yard. We have plastic bases, and I have a helmet, a bat, a glove, and a ball. We practiced; I hit some but I kept practicing. I got better and better. All my practice and hard work finally paid off. I wish I could say I never struck out again, but that is unrealistic. I have gotten some pretty sweet hits. Who knows one day I might hit a home run or better yet a grand slam! I will never give up on myself.

It is important to show perseverance in life because when you persevere that means you are a good person and you never give up. The most important thing is to never give up on yourself. So that's how I persevered.

Haley Stewart
Second Place, Grade 4

Thomas Alva Edison stated, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is to always try just one more time." That means don't give up in a grown-up version. In my version, it means that people always give up. We need to learn how to keep trying because if you *don't* try you will fail and you might never reach your goal. Read these words carefully: You will and you might never reach your goal.

An example of a time I persevered was when I began learning how to ride a bike. It was a pain in my neck. It all began on one hot, sunny afternoon when my older sister started teasing me

because I still needed training wheels. So I got my kneepads, shoulder pads, and my helmet. Then I went outside, got on my bike, and started pedaling.

I was doing it for the first time. After a while I realized I still had my training wheels on. So I went inside and asked my parents to take them off. When they took them off I tried riding again. I didn't succeed the first couple of times so I went back inside defeated, and decided not to try again.

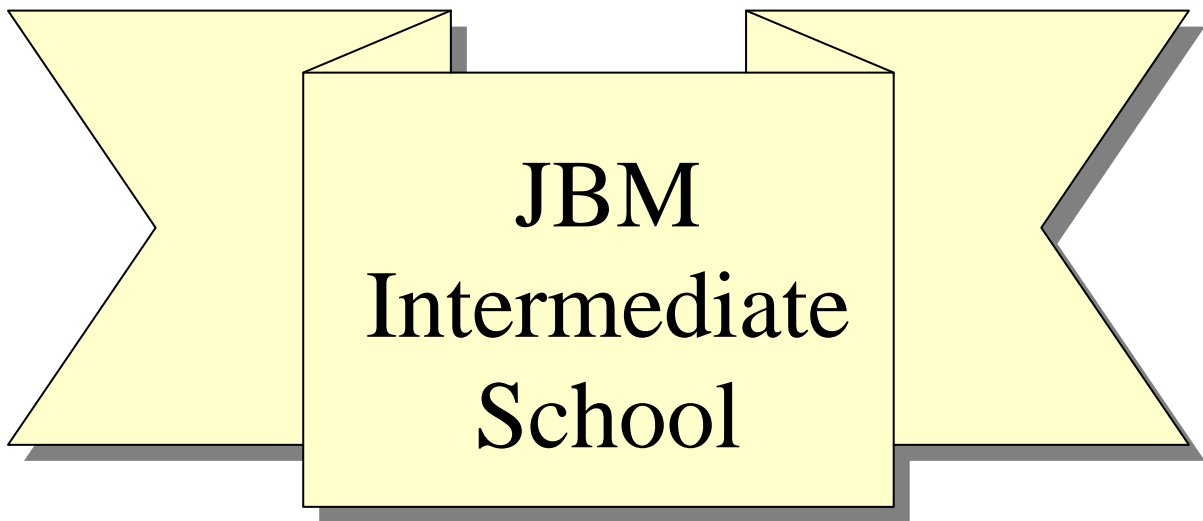
I felt mad, angry, depressed, and sad all at the same time. I felt so mad I never wanted to try just one more time and I didn't want to talk to anyone at the moment. The next day my friends came over and before I let them in I said, "Can you ride a two-wheeler?" They all said yes. I asked how they did it, and they said, "All we did was persevere."

Eventually I learned how to ride a bike but it wasn't easy. I was lucky to have persevered. If I didn't I would not have known how to ride a two-wheeler. The important thing is I persevered.

Someday you will too, I hope. Perseverance is the key to success. Trying again gives you another chance to reach the goal you have in mind.

Raymond Nyameke

Third Place, Grade 4



Grades 5 and 6

Thomas Edison once said that "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." Thomas Edison must have lived this philosophy or how would he have ever invented the light bulb! In my opinion, Thomas Edison is telling us that the most certain way to be successful at something is to not give up. Keep trying until you get it right, no matter how tough it gets. Then you are likely to succeed in what you are doing. I feel that this quote on perseverance is something I can relate to every day, particularly when it comes to math. I feel like I have to try just one more time even when I feel discouraged and frustrated.

For me, when it comes to math I have to work very hard and focus a lot in order to understand the concepts and get the problems right. I have to study hard with my parents and even ask them to give me more math problems so that I am sure I am doing the math questions correctly. Sometimes it can be hard for my parents too since it has been a very long time since they have done some of the math that we are doing now. They use the computer to go online and remember how to do the problems; so to me they also show perseverance in trying to help me be successful.

What helps me most in dealing with my emotions are my teachers and my parents. They encourage me to relax and focus my attention on what I am doing so that I can remember the steps for figuring out the math problem. I really appreciate my parents' help because they work with me every night on my homework and find ways to show me how to solve the problems in a way that I can understand. They also find math worksheets on the computer for me to do to continue practicing my math skills so that I can be more confident in myself, which makes me feel better.

When I do well on a quiz or a test, I feel very proud of myself, and my teachers and parents are very proud of me too! My parents especially know the long, hard road it takes for me to do well, and getting a good grade on a test makes me feel as if all the hard work and determination was worth it! This to me is perseverance. Just like Thomas Edison's determination to invent the light bulb, hard work and dedication are the necessary tools for success.

No one knows the amount of time it took Thomas Edison to perfect the light bulb, but he never gave up and he just kept trying. I am sure many of our great inventors and scientists have all shown perseverance. The important thing is that they never gave up, and they wouldn't have gotten where they are now if they gave up. My parents always tell me that math is a tool that everyone uses throughout life, and it is important to understand math. If I would like my dreams for the future to come true, I need to do well in school and math is an important part of that. So I will continue to persevere no matter how hard it gets and will achieve the goals that I set for my future--just like Thomas Edison.

Caitlin McCutchan

First Place, Grade 5

The way we choose to act is who we are and the Smyrna School District core values play a vital role in our personality. We have five core values: compassion, respect, responsibility, perseverance, and integrity. All of these values are significant, but one in particular is relevant to me this winter--perseverance. Thomas Edison coined the quote, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." My interpretation of this quote expresses the feeling that you can never succeed by giving up, but you will succeed if you always try again. To persevere is to never give up on yourself or anyone else. I'd like to share a time when I persevered. It was a bitter time of year with icy winds and foggy skies. As I turned around I found myself staring into a winter wonderland!

I have always enjoyed the sport of skiing--until I hit the moguls. One thing to know about skiing is skiers are never the same level so slopes compliment the skier's level. Therefore, each slope has a rating. Green circle is the easiest, blue square is intermediate, black diamond is difficult, and double black diamond is super tough. I love to challenge myself with the diamonds. My good friend Rachel and I decided to ski down "Widowmaker." We paused at the top to view the slope; a combination of moguls and plain old steep. I started to turn down when I turned into the moguls and in seconds my speed control was gone--then suddenly BAM!!

With a click my ski went flying down the mountain, then I veered off track, and hit the ice. I was lying on a mound of snow with no way to get down to the bottom. I was stunned. I asked myself, "What now?" My hopes lifted as Rachel skidded to a stop beside me. She promised to retrieve my ski as she zipped away. What good would it do though? How would I get it attached on top of a mogul?"

"This hopeless attempt will get me nowhere," I thought as I began drowning in self pity. In all logic it seemed as if this plan was prone to fail. Soon a tiny spark of hope ignited, then a colossal fire of determination burned as I saw Rachel edging her way up the mountain with my ski in hand. Finally, my confidence returned. I managed to stand up and I clicked my ski on. Rachel was a great friend because she did not give up on me and she inspired me to persevere. I got up and whizzed down the slope.

As you can see, perseverance took me a long way down the mountain. You can accomplish much if you persevere. Every time I remember perseverance I will remember mountains and moguls. I hope that you value perseverance and friendship in life as much as I do. Perseverance will take you down many mountains.

Leah Gaynor

Second Place, Grade 5

Do you know what perseverance is? Perseverance means to never, ever give up--to always try again. As Thomas Alva Edison once said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." I think this means to always persevere. One time I had to persevere was to get my black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

This task is laborious! First of all, I had to know everything I had learned since I was a white belt (the first belt) seven years ago. Also, I had to do an essay about Tae Kwon Do. My topic for the essay was about how General Choi Hong Hi created the art of Tae Kwon Do. The essay had to be three pages long. I was reluctant to do the essay, but I had to do it anyway to get my black belt. It took hours of research, and then I finally was ready to type it out. I typed it and it only came out as two pages.

"This is awful!" I thought to myself. I had to keep trying. It took another hour of research and after that I successfully completed the essay. After the essay, I had to take a timed written test.

The most frustrating part of the whole process was the 20 hours of community service I had to do. Not a lot of people would accept me because I wasn't over the age of 16. It took a lot of time and searching to find someone who was willing to let me help.

The toughest part of earning my black belt was the four hour physical test. The first part of the test went magnificently. The last part was not so good. The final part of the test was the board breaking. I had to break three boards. One with a "jump snap kick," the next was a "turning kick," and the final one was a "punch." I did the "jump snap kick" first. There was no doubt that this was one thick board! So I launched myself into the air and kicked the board as fiercely as I could. But it didn't break and my toe was aching badly. Since my toe was hurt, my instructor said that I would have to try again another time. This was very disappointing, but I had to let my toe heal.

Three weeks later I was ready to smash those boards. I powered through the "jump snap kick" and the "turning kick." But this time I failed the "punch." Three weeks later, after my hand healed, I went for the "punch" again. The first try I didn't break it. On the second try, I gave it all I had. Then I heard SNAP! I saw the board in two pieces. I finally got my First Degree Black Belt!

Why is perseverance so important you ask? Well, if I gave up I would never have gotten my Black Belt. I'll be first to admit I almost gave up. I'm glad I persevered. Before I wrap it up, I still have one more thing on my mind. I wonder how hard the 2nd degree test will be?

Aaron Lewis
Third Place, Grade 5

The quote "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."- Thomas Alva Edison. This quote means to me that we all give up sometimes. We're only human but we can succeed if we just try again. If you don't get something the first time and you don't try again, there is no way you will succeed at all. Have you ever tried to do something and then failed miserably? Have you ever pushed yourself to try again until you succeeded?

I persevere to get good grades. I grew up with eleven people living in one tiny house, so there was always a lot of chaos. Everything was always so loud. It doesn't help that we all have a lot of Italian in us and Italians tend to be pretty loud. My sisters Katelyn and Paige, my little brother Chase and I were going to school. We used to go up to Paige and Katelyn's bedroom and make a little study group in there. Let me just say, it didn't help. Katelyn was in 10th grade, Paige was in 8th grade, I was in 2nd grade, and Chase was in kindergarten. We were all so far apart in our ages and grades and nobody really understood what everybody else was doing. We can at least say we tried. It was just a mess. But, I love our mess! I know it sounds strange, but I wouldn't have it any other way!

I feel if I try hard enough, I can get good grades and I can do anything I want. At times I feel like giving up on school, but my brother dropped out of school in 9th grade and I saw how damaging it could really be to just give up. I overcame that feeling to just give up because when I really tried I started getting good grades and my parents were extremely proud of me. I was proud of me too. Whenever I got A's on my report card we would go bowling or I would get paid three dollars for each A. When I had something to motivate me like that it got easier, and I actually wanted to try to get good grades and do well in school.

The task of getting good grades will never be finished as long as I'm in school. I also have to keep my grades up. I feel like if I keep my grades up I will be successful in life. I can get into a great college, get a good job, live in a nice house, and live a happy life. I want to keep my grades up in school because I *need* to get into a good college. People spend 1/3 of their lives working and if I'm going to spend 1/3 of my life working I want a job that I actually like. I now feel like getting good grades isn't that hard. It feels normal now. I hope getting good grades still feels normal when I'm at graduation walking off the stage with my diploma in my hand.

In the words of Jon Bon Jovi, "Success is falling nine times and getting up ten." This quote means to me that you can fail a hundred times, but eventually, if you really want it, you will succeed. If I could give one piece of advice to the world it would be: don't let anyone and I *mean* anyone (even if it's your best friend I don't care) tell you that you can't do something. They are just jealous because they know they can't do it. So, whatever you do just keep trying and you will succeed.

Olivia Southward

First Place, Grade 6

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up, the most certain way to succeed is to always try just one more time." This was a famous quote written by Thomas Alva Edison, and every time I read this it still has the same meaning. What it means is everyone has many weaknesses but everyone's greatest weakness is giving up when things get too tough. The second half of the quote obviously means every time you decide to try again the closer you will get to accomplishing your goals. Soon you'll work right up to your goal and eventually achieve it. All of the time life becomes really hard on you. It's happened to me many times but there is one

time that I'll never forget when I didn't even like talking about it. Then one day I decided to wake up and persevere.

As you know, everyone has had a certain time in their life when they've put all of their efforts forth and persevered, and it just so happens that my one time has fallen into the sporting category. I started wrestling when I was six years old, and every year I went to the state tournament I lost. At this certain time (2010 season) I was going to be the one with the weakness and not show up that year. No matter what anyone told me I didn't want to go back to states again this season. One day I woke up and thought to myself, "What's the harm in going back again this year? Why be such a coward?" That's when I decided to go ahead and take another shot at states, but this time I was sure I would be the champion of the ninety pound weight class. But first I had a lot of work to do.

As I stepped off of the scale that read ninety pounds, my veins flooded with anxiousness. After I tied the last knot in my wrestling shoes, I was twenty-five percent tempted to look at my bracket and seventy-five percent scared. When I finally worked up the courage to look at it I found out that I was the number one seed and I had a first round bye. Usually that would mean a pretty long wait, but it felt like only a five minute wait until I was shaking hands with Logan Montgomery. He and I had wrestled once before and I only beat him by one point in overtime. Now we were facing off once again and in the split second before the whistle blew I knew I had to overcome the nervousness inside me. There was only one way to do that. I took every emotion I had and turned it into a great ball of boiling anger. As we started the match the first thing we did was hook up in a collar tie, and from that moment on I knew I was the stronger wrestler. As a result, in the second period I put him on his back and pinned him. All of a sudden the crowd erupted with cheers. I couldn't believe how many people were watching me. As I walked off of the mat all happiness disappeared because I now knew that I would be wrestling Tony Weust in the finals.

As you probably guessed Tony Weust is a really good wrestler. He and I had been wrestling all season long and every time we wrestled I'd win, then he'd win, then I'd win, etc. What really made this match nerve wracking was I had won the last match, meaning it was his turn to win. There was no way I could let that happen. I had to go out there and get it done. No matter what happened I would try my hardest and never quit. As I set foot onto the mat, Tony was still a real good friend of mine, but when I placed my foot on the line all emotions changed. He was now my enemy. After we shook hands the whistle blew and as a result Tony and I hooked up in a collar tie. As the last few seconds of the first period ticked away the score remained zero to zero. When the second period started Tony got out from the bottom with a reverse making the score two to zero. As we entered the third period I ended up tying the score two to two with a reverse. Then Tony started to slip away from me and all I had was his leg. BOOM! His forearm connected with my face, but I couldn't let go or I'd lose. I'd have to dig deep and hold on. Then the last few seconds ticked away in the third and the whistle sounded through the gym. We were headed into overtime.

Just like the first period we went scoreless in the first, second, and third overtime. But before we started the fourth overtime my coach was wiping blood off of my face and was telling me to just hold him down. Meanwhile, I was wondering how I could win without scoring but I was too

exhausted to care. As we started the fourth overtime it took everything I had and a little more to hold him down. When the referee blew the whistle I was so relieved, but he didn't continue the match. Instead he had Tony and me shake hands and out of nowhere my hand was raised into the air and the gym was filled with cheers. I HAD WON! I won the match. But as we walked off of the mat Tony had a big smile on his face, and that's when I knew nothing could come between our friendship. Plus I knew that I had worked through the pain. I knew I had persevered.

Ever since that overtime match in 2010, I've lived by the quote "Losers quit when they're tired, winners quit once they've won." What that quote means to me is if you want to be a loser then quit when you're tired or when things get tough. If you'd like to be a winner then you have to fight through tiredness and keep moving through the tough times. If you want to be someone known for perseverance then you need to learn to not give up. It isn't that hard. You just have to go a little farther and work on pushing yourself to the limit. Once you can do that you will be able to accomplish any mission or achieve any goal.

Hunter Moyer

Second Place, Grade 6

"I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I've lost almost three hundred games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed!" Michael Jordan

This thoughtful quote was once said by the basketball superstar Michael Jordan. Michael has shared this quote with people all over America to show that even though you might want to make the winning shot, or win a big game, you must fail to succeed. Even though failing in most cases is a bad thing, it's also a good thing, because everyone learns from their mistakes. Next time you won't make the same mistake. To conclude my thoughts, when you're in a time of failure, just remember to persevere and you'll then succeed!

"Left, left, right--man! I dropped the ball again! You know what, I quit!" Has this ever happened to you? When you try and fail, try and fail, and try and fail, but this time you give up. Before you do, hold your horses! You can't quit now. You've got to *persevere* or never give up! I am here to tell you about an experience I had where I had to persevere even when there were some bumps in the road.

It was late at night, around eight pm. It was finally the day I had been waiting for forever--volleyball night! A couple of minutes later my mom, sisters, and I were cruising in the parking lot of the Smyrna Middle School. As we got out of our car, I blasted into the middle school, and signed myself in. I was told that I was chosen to be on the purple team. I put on my nametag and blasted into the gym. The gym reeked of the smell of sweat and anxiety. I scooped up a ball and bumped it. I was okay at bumping. I then tried setting which was as bad as a baby trying to walk the first minute it was born. About two minutes later, all the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders got separated into their teams, and we stretched our legs, arms, and then our back. After

our stretches, we tried something called ball work. When you do ball work, you hit the volleyball on your right and left forearms two times, so it pretty much goes like this: left, left, right, right. I don't know how to explain how terrible I was--I sucked!

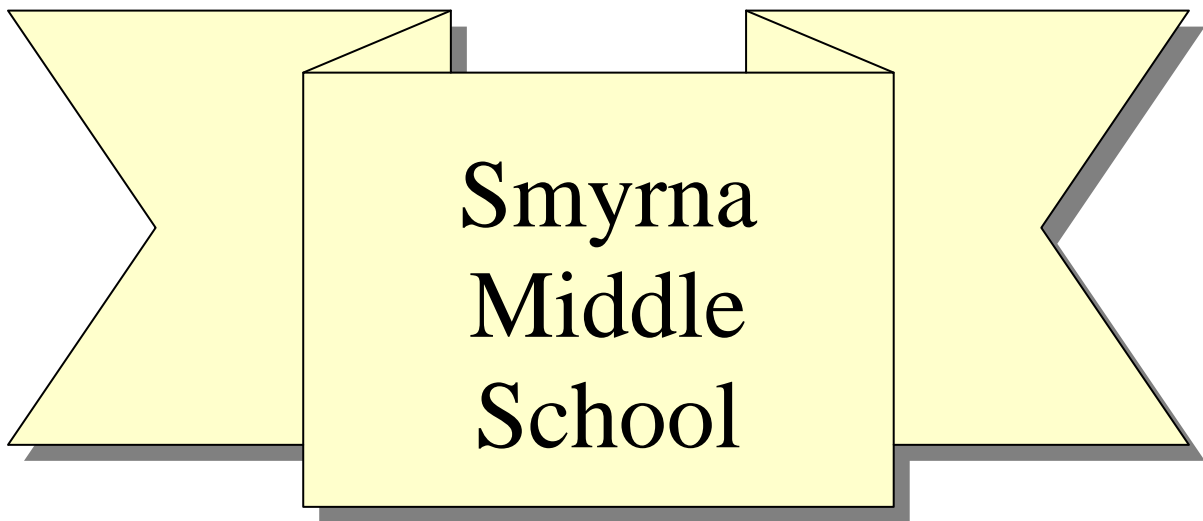
Unlike the bumping, setting, and ball work, I was fantastic at jump spiking! I not only surprised myself, but the coaches too. That was the very last activity everyone did. The very next day when I got home from school, I diligently practiced ball work until I was 100% sore! I surprisingly got better, but something was not right. I checked the placement of my thumbs, and well, what do you know--it was the placement of my thumbs that was messing me up. My thumbs were tucked inside of my fist. That's why I was horrendous at ball work. My thumbs! After I had solved that problem, I was absolutely terrific at ball work. To make it more challenging I would do left, left, right, right bump, set, spike, and then dive. That was after I practiced bumping and setting some more. At this point I could have cried tears of joy while doing my victory dance. All because I accomplished that one little treacherous practice.

With my victory over ball work, I still had to practice bumping, which I had yet again diligently practiced for over half an hour. I learned that it is better not to swing your arms monkey style, which was my conflict. With that problem tackled, I still had one more. The one, the only, setting! I really had absolutely no idea how to set, so I screamed for my sister to teach me. My sister observed me for about ten minutes and told me that you need to put your index fingers and thumbs in a triangular shape, keep your fingers firm, get under the ball, and hit it. I followed exactly what she told me and what do you know--perfect results.

Without my persistent effort, help from my sister and coaches, and plenty of encouragement from my family and friends, I never in my wildest dreams would have accomplished my goal of being the best volleyball player I could be. So, to conclude my thoughts, if you want to accomplish something you say you can't, all you have to do is try and practice no matter how many bumps you come across on the road. If you do, well you'll defiantly achieve your dreams.

Autumn Potter

Third Place, Grade 6



Grades 7 and 8

Perseverance is where you "NEVER" give up. It was Margaret Thatcher who said, "You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it." I have diabetes, and I've fought many, many battles with it--not all of which I've won. Margaret's words have meaning for me because they resemble my struggles with a sickness with no easy cure.

I also chose this quote because it represents all the battles that were fought and are still fighting to cure diabetes. I still haven't fought my share. It also kind of represents other struggles in my life. Although my personal fights with diabetes is just getting started.

Earlier in my life, before my diabetes, I broke my wrist. I remember struggling to write with my right hand. BUT I PERSEVERED. I learned to write with my right hand. Just goes to show how important perseverance is. It also goes a long way in reaching my ultimate goal.

My ultimate goal? An actual CURE for diabetes. Not something to make it easier. Not something to make it better. To get RID of it once and for all. It's crucial to me.

Perseverance is where you never, EVER give up. Not under any given circumstances. As for Margaret's words of wisdom, they represent not just my struggle but also the whole world's struggles. All the battles both FOUGHT and the ones we still FIGHT, even when our bones break and our sanity is lost, we don't cease fighting. THAT is perseverance. I know that together we can find a cure for diabetes.

Collin Chase

First Place, Grade 7

Has anybody ever asked you what you want to be when you grow up? Some people want to be a cop or a fire fighter. I want to be a pro-sports athlete. I chose the quote "Football is like life--it requires perseverance, self-denial, hard work, dedication and respect for authority"--Vince Lombardi. I chose it because I want to go to college and play football, and maybe go to the NFL.

I chose the quote by Vince Lombardi because he compared football to life. Life does require perseverance because if you don't persevere you won't be able to get a good job and a good college or career. It requires self-denial, so if you don't succeed at something, you should keep trying until you do succeed. That quote spoke to me because life and football share a similar goal in order to succeed.

It was our playoff to the championship. If we won, we went on to the championships. If we lost, we went home. By halftime we were already down 14-0. We all thought that our season was done, but not me. When we went out on the field, I was ready to play. They got the ball but I was on defense. On the very first play of the half they ran their best running back. They ran a trick play, and they had everyone fooled except me. He could've run to the sidelines and scored, but I was there to stop him. After that everyone was playing phenomenal football. By the end of the game, we won 21-14. That was the greatest feeling I've ever had.

I'm only in the 7th grade, so I've still got to get through middle school, high school, and go to college. One way that I could persevere is to start studying. Another thing that I could do is start trying a little bit harder in school. Some of my grades aren't the best right now so I've got to strive to get good grades to go to college. School basically decides what your career is going to be like. If you don't try and don't get good grades, you probably will get a stupid, dumb, and no-good job.

I chose the quote by Vince Lombardi because he's comparing football to life. Football requires all the things that you've got to do in order to succeed in life. You need to push yourself to get good grades so that you can succeed in life.

Tanner Mullen
Second Place, Grade 7

"Bang" and the crowd goes wild. I am a speaker in a HUGE stadium. It's quiet now. It's time for me to talk. "Hello ladies and gentlemen, I am your host Kayla Foraker. Some of you know me, others are new, but either way I'm here to tell you a story." Have you heard the quote "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do something that I can do"? That quote is by Helen Keller, and I think this quote is my kind of quote.

Why did I choose this quote? Because it's just saying to me that because I am only one person doesn't mean you treat me any different from your family members or someone you respect. Just because I am one person doesn't mean I can't do things. One person can make a HUGE difference. You can too!

When was the first time you ever persevered? I think the first time I did was when my mom passed away and when I went to the funeral. I was brave enough to not cry even though I wanted to. I stayed with my dad the whole time to make him feel better. If I can persevere I can reach my goal.

What's your goal? At this moment for me it's to get better grades. In order to get better grades I need to study, do my work, and turn it in on time. I need to have a better attitude so I can reach my goal.

Because my mom passed away I think the quote speaks that since it's just me, my dad, and four year old brother, I can step up and help my dad to be a happy person by coming home with all A's.

Kayla Foraker
Third Place, Grade 7

"I am building a fire, and every day I train, I add more fuel. At just the right moment, I light the match." Mia Hamm is talking about her own way of persevering. Never quitting and trying until you succeed is what perseverance is all about. Lighting my own match for the first time is when I scored my first goal in field hockey. I had practiced hard and trained for that millisecond my stick hit the ball and the slam of the ball hitting the backboard. To help you understand the challenge in my life, I will discuss never scoring a goal, the determination to get better, and now my goal-scoring career.

Before I lit my fire and persevered I had never experienced that sensation of shooting and hearing my ball slam the backboard. Even though I play defense, I have always dreamt of scoring a goal. Everyone else was always scoring the goals for my team. The announcements never talk about who was blocking all of the other team's goals, only the girls in the spotlight. I desperately wanted to be a game changer who was scoring goals, but my strong spot was defense. I was stuck.

During this challenging time in my field hockey playing, all I could do was practice and then practice some more. I looked up videos and researched skills that could help me improve; and, mostly, I watched my teammates to try and gain knowledge. I built my fire by practicing every spare moment. I would add a log here or there when I would practice my angles. I'd throw some newspaper into my fire as I would try my best at practices. In the end I persevered until there was nothing left to do but succeed.

January 7, 2012 -- what significance does this day have you might ask. This was the day I lit my match for the first time. We were over mid-field and being the farthest player back, I took the possession, as to make for a better chance of scoring. We were playing against Harrington, the best team in the league and we were down 0-3. As I dribbled the ball past the perimeter of the shooting circle I said to myself, "Someone has got to make a move." Turns out that someone was me. Before I knew it I was a yard or two in the circle raising my stick for a long shot. Like a miracle my ball was flying past the goalie and sailing into the goal cage. I was stunned. I was standing still, and had not moved from where I shot. Everyone was ecstatic, banging sticks and overjoyed from the confidence boost. Now I am scoring goals and being a real game changer for my team. Today I know how to properly and efficiently build my fire and I am lighting more matches. It felt so exhilarating to have everyone congratulate me and just to be proud of myself. I can attribute all of this to perseverance.

I have now successfully completed building my fire and adding fuel, and now it is ablaze. I persevered throughout my struggle, practicing every single chance I got, and scoring goals. I wanted to tell my story because it shows just how much you can accomplish by persevering and trying really hard. By succeeding I have gained so much confidence in myself, and made contributions to my team. This lesson of what you can really accomplish by persevering is something I will cherish all my life, and I hope I will be able to have the same result with any roadblock that comes my way.

Gabrielle DiRusso

First place, Grade 8

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change we seek." Barack Obama's quote really reaches me. This quote describes perseverance; perseverance is an important part of life. For me, being picked on made it necessary to persevere. I relate to this quote because it tells me that what other people think doesn't make me who I am. To describe this difficult time in my life, I will discuss further what I persevered through, how I persevered, and where I am currently.

All my life I've been picked on. Picked on for a wide variety of things: my height, weight, hair, clothes, and looks. I've always been a naturally big kid, so this also singles me out from other "normal" kids. So the quote from Barack Obama means a lot to me. For a long time I had given up. Our great president's quote showed me that I choose who I am so I shouldn't let others choose for me.

It was hard for the longest time to persevere through being picked on. I felt I had no power over those kids. I was weak and defenseless, but I found strength. My parents decided to put me into counseling. My counselor told me many things. She said this, "Walk around with a mask on. Not a literal mask, but a mask of confidence. Stand tall with your head even taller." I did and almost instantly the kids stopped picking on me. Because I was so used to being put down, I grew accustomed to it. So when this happened, I was shocked. Then along came football season. I figured, I'm a big kid might as well use what I have. I made the team and shed weight so fast. "We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change we seek." President Obama's line from his quote opened my eyes. It showed me that only I control the reins of my future, and only I decide who I am. I can't let other people decide for me.

Nowadays I'm just fine. I know who I am. I know what kind of person I am. I know where I belong. I am no longer picked on, and I no longer visit my counselor. I'm confident in who I am as a whole and as an individual. Every day I get stronger and stronger. My sense of belonging grows every day. I get constant support from friends and family. I no longer care what others say. My life has been effected in many ways. I've learned self-esteem, courage, and how much my friends and my family mean to me."

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change we seek." Truly one of the greatest quotes I've ever heard. It shows how we must change ourselves if we want the change. I have shared what I have persevered through, how I did it, and where I stand today. I write to show others that we must change ourselves if we want a situation to change. Don't wait for someone or something to change us. I hope you feel that perseverance is a valuable life trait. It truly is. I know because I've lived through it.

Evan Gallaher
Second Place, Grade 8

"Without a struggle, there can be no progress." In order to improve and succeed you need to struggle. Doing so builds character and helps you do better. My current struggle, preparing for a challenging flute playing audition, is a bumpy and not always pretty ride to perfection (or as close to it as I can get.) Though it is a tough struggle to master my parts, just as Frederick Douglas's quote suggests, it's what builds my skills so I can make progress. This competition is so ambitious that it's on the verge of being unobtainable. Playing the flute is not easy under normal circumstances but this will push me further than ever. Being a musician is something I need to persevere at because this is a challenging competition I'm getting into. My plan of accomplishment is difficult, but there is some progress being made in this impossible challenge.

I have a mission, no a challenge, to compete with other excellent flute players and excel. The only problem is that I have impossible scales, chromatics, and a breathtaking solo to master. Formidable doesn't even begin to cover it. How will I do this? The competition is extremely tough and my audition is less than a week away! I need to get this down pat. What if I get it perfectly, just to later freeze with stage fright? Playing under this kind of pressure is **not** my forte. I am definitely struggling as Frederick Douglas's quote suggests. While I feel there is some progress, it's slow and the obstacles are large. Sure it will take a lot of work, but it is worth it to make advances in something I love to do. This will be one of my most ambitious tasks yet.

No one can face a formidable challenge such as this without a plan. My plan mainly includes a grueling schedule of intense practices. Every day I practice 45 to 50 minutes, not including the time I spend in school playing other songs, or Saturdays filled with multiple practices. Once or twice a week, my time is spent after school with my inspirational teacher Mrs. McCutchen who takes time out of her busy schedule to help me. In addition, I hold mini-concerts for my friends and family to work on my stage fright. Who says torture isn't allowed anymore? Struggling has significantly improved my performance level so far. Most successful people have struggled with something along the way. To prove my point, some scientists were observing caterpillars and noticed that as they wake up in their cocoons they struggle to get out. Curious about the process, the scientists helped a couple out of their cocoons with minimal struggle. Though they had fully grown wings, these butterflies could not fly. As it turns out, all of that struggling to get out of that cocoon builds up needed muscles. Without struggling to build character you will never spread your wings and fly. Without all these grueling practices I would never build the skill level needed for this audition.

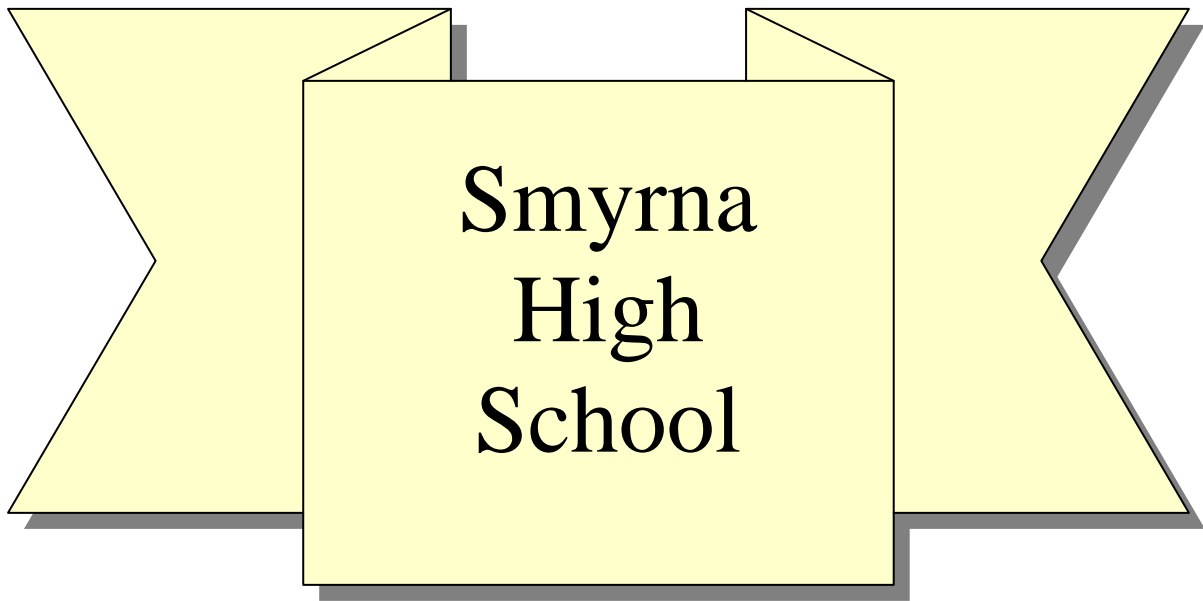
"Just keep swimming. Just keep swimming. Just keep swimming. What do we do, we swim." To most this is just an annoying song sung by a blue cartoon fish but it really has a meaning. When you feel discouraged by something, keep going. I keep this in mind with the final stages of practice with my flute piece. Perseverance is a process that leads to progress. Along with progress comes setbacks. Setbacks are a large part of the reason we need perseverance at all. The biggest reason for my frustration is the inability to master some of the smaller details. The worst setback so far though has been a delay due to snow. After weeks of practice, I was ready to charge the mountain and get this audition over with. Now I see it for the blessing it is--extra time for practice and preparation--but at the time it was disappointing. Preparing for this competition has and will continue to affect my life. It has taken up valuable time and stressed me out, but I get to do what I love. Another plus, I learned what it really means to have to try, and have patience and determination. I now highly respect any professional musician who has

the perseverance to keep going through all the obstacles to become a professional. This experience has matured me as a flute player. I no longer **need** to make it or gain anyone's approval when doing something I love. This process will have a lasting impact of my life.

If you don't struggle to build yourself up and keep trying, you won't make any progress. Mastering the flute is something I need to persevere with. As a result of this challenging audition I'm going to, my plan of accomplishment is demanding, but there is improvement being made in this bewildering process. While a flute audition may not exactly be the same as climbing Mount Everest, it means a lot to me to accomplish something like this. Perseverance doesn't always have to be big and showy. Sometimes it's as simple as learning to ride a bike or play a song for an audition. It feels like years since I started practicing for this audition, when it has really been weeks. My progression has made time stretch and fly at the same time. Frederick Douglas knew what he was talking about; struggling builds character and leads to making progress. In life there are no handouts, you have to take what you're given, use it, and build on it. In other words, life encourages perseverance; and, if you do persevere, the rewards can be endless.

Elizma Pretorius

Third Place, Grade 8



Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12

Throughout my life I will encounter many obstacles. So will the person standing next to me and so will the rest of the world. That's when a person's perseverance comes into play. Perseverance is a persistent course of action and effort that withstands discouragement and difficulty in order to reach a greater goal. As an adolescent teenager I have gone through (and am admittedly still going through) the process of "discovering myself" and "growing up." I used to be an exceptionally withdrawn, quiet girl but it wasn't because I wanted to be. It was because I was afraid to put myself out there. So far in my life there have been times when I wanted to do something, such as join the softball team, learn a martial art, be a high honor roll student, and many other things that I wasn't sure I would be able to do. I would put myself down and tell myself that I wasn't good enough, strong enough, coordinated enough, or smart enough. I would give into these reservations and never permit myself to attempt that which I desired to do. "The only tired I was, was tired of giving in." Rosa Parks said this once and it really called out to me because I was tired of giving into the nagging voice in my head that said, "*You can't, you won't, and you never will.*"

For the longest time, I felt out of the loop. I never really tried to make new friends because I didn't think I was "cool enough." I lacked poise and had very little self-confidence. I believe that was in part because as an adopted child I used to question why my biological parents didn't want me, and so I was fearful that no one else would want me even as a friend. Well, as you can imagine, it began to get old watching all the other kids having fun and playing while I took no part in it. One day I jumped off the swing during recess and introduced myself to a girl named Emily. We clicked straight away. It took a lot for me to walk up to her; I remember the entire time I was just begging myself to turn around. Well, even then I was sick of giving in and so I forced my feet to shuffle through the mulch towards the other children. It played out fairly well for me that day. I had made my first friend. In gaining a friend, I had also gained confidence. Figuratively, I had built a wall to keep people out, but in doing so, I had walled myself in and it took perseverance to get through that.

I didn't want to stand in the background anymore because I was afraid. I was being my own obstacle. Nothing was stopping me, but me. I needed to prevent myself from backing down every time I encountered something new or untried. So I gave the softball tryouts a go and I made the team after all. I made friends on the team swiftly and I began to appreciate my decision to try out. I spent most of the season injured but the highlight of it all was when I hit four for four and was given the game ball. A year later, I joined karate. At first, I wasn't positive I could do it; I was anxious that I would end up quitting. There was no way I was allowing that to happen and so I made sure that every time I went to karate class, I gave 120% effort. I still do. My martial arts school is a black belt school. We are not all black belts, but we all train like black belts. I am in all honors classes, a high honor roll student, and sporting a hundred percent grade point average. Keeping up with my grades and staying on top of my karate studies has not been easy, nor will it begin to be so. I had to persevere to get to where I am now. Every night I do my homework before I even think about doing anything else. During karate classes, when my instructor makes me do the same kick over and over for an hour and a half, I don't complain. Most of all, I had to persistently beat down the voice in my head that said, "*You can't, you won't, and you never will*" and push past it so I could do what I wanted to do and achieve what I wanted to achieve.

Now I could tell you that my need for perseverance ends here; but I would be lying, for I will forever require it. It's rather analogous to hiking; I can walk for miles and it's certain that I will come upon a hill. But how probable is it that out of numerous miles of hiking, I only walk over one hill? Not probable or realistic at all. I am bound to encounter another hill. I am not so naive that I would deem the remainder of my life to be devoid of problems or difficulty. These past years I have been considering joining the military following high school. At times I will be thinking about it and that absurd, bothersome voice will come back telling me that there is just no way I will be able to do it. I am aware of how rigorous the training can be and how tough it is mentally and physically, but I really want to serve my country. In America, we uphold the ideals of freedom, liberty, justice and equality for all, and I am proud to be a citizen of this nation. I want to protect the people who reside in it and follow the soldiers before me who have done exactly that. However, I will be incapable of doing that without getting through the training and I will be incapable of getting through the training without perseverance.

I heard once that if you stubbornly persist you will find the limits of your stubbornness go well beyond the stubbornness of your limits. I find this as true a statement as "The sky is blue." There have been occasions when it was obligatory that I persevered, and there will continue to be occasions when it will be so yet again. I know what it feels like to doubt myself and allow those doubts to stop me from doing what it is that I want to do. It is a distasteful sensation that I have no wish to repeat. There will come a time when I'll want to submit to my own misgivings. When that time comes, I will remember what Rosa Parks said about be tired of giving in, and I will know that I shall not give in to my doubts of not being good enough. I *will* persevere when hard times call for it. If I have learned anything about perseverance through my fifteen years, it is that I *am* good enough. I have no need to doubt that for my actions speak for themselves and I determine my own worth.

Nicole Simpson

First Place, Grade 9

"Success is falling down nine times and getting up ten." - Jon Bon Jovi. This quote jumped out at me because it really relates to my perseverance. My house burned down on Easter Sunday of 2008. I've faced many obstacles since that devastation. I always have and still am trying to recuperate from it.

On the date of April 8, 2008, my house burned down. I woke up happy and excited, but that only lasted for so long. My happiness and excitement ended when my house caught on fire. The fire lasted about 20 minutes until the house was nothing but ashes, but the damage lasts to this day. Not a day goes by that I don't wish this was just a bad nightmare and I'll wake up soon. I have moved five times since that day. I haven't had a place to call home, and I have had trouble concentrating in school. My struggles are getting harder and harder.

Basically, I've faced many obstacles that would make someone give up, but I keep fighting. My perseverance hasn't hit success yet. That is how I differ from the quote. The reason I haven't hit

success is because it hasn't ended yet and, in the quote, it is speaking from the view of success. "Success is falling down nine times and getting up ten."

I'm not sure when this history will turn into the past. It might end today; it might end tomorrow. It may never end. This event has lasted for about four years and is still going on to this day. I've had to adjust to moving around and coping with the different life styles. I still haven't hit success, yet.

So, my house burned down on Easter Sunday of 2008, and I've faced many obstacles since then. On April 18, 2008, I woke up not knowing that I was about to need the biggest perseverance ever. I am still fighting this event to this day. I'm just waiting to wake up

Coften Carey
Second Place, Grade 9

We all know Michael Jordan as a famous basketball player. He has had many mess ups but has shown that you can succeed in life. No one is perfect; therefore most things take many failures to achieve greatness. Michael Jordan has once said, "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games; 26 times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.

As someone grows in life they'll realize that they aren't going to get everything handed to them. People will come across obstacles, skills won't magically appear, and there may not always be someone there to help you all the time. Michael Jordan has a fierce, positive outlook on failing. Just because a person is not succeeding . . . that doesn't mean give up. Anyone always has the ability to put their all into something if their mind is set. Anyone who can set goals for their self can take a big step in achieving what they want. Pushing oneself to the highest point can help even when you are failing. If someone tells their self they can do something, try until it's accomplished. Any person can do it.

When I first started playing volleyball, there wasn't much confidence found in me. Being in the same gym with much more experienced girls was intimidating. Coming into the sport, I knew there was much to learn (being the new girl.) As I was acquiring these new skills, there were many mess ups and failures. At first I wanted to just give in but then thinking about it, I would regret that. I was in love with the sport, but I just had to put the effort into learning everything. After I had learned everything, it paid off in the end.

This year was my first year of high school, so playing volleyball for a high school team freaked me out. At tryouts, I didn't let my nerves and fears overcome me. Unprepared, I had to run a mile. After almost convincing myself that I couldn't do it, I remembered how much I wanted to play for Smyrna. All of the tiredness from the tryouts paid off throughout the season. I've gained many more skills and have improved the skills that were already there in the beginning. Believing that I could be as good as these other girls led me to being able to start in most first games. My coach kept me in the first six lineup. This has motivated me to continue what I was

doing but also improve myself so I can continually keep my place and not have the fear of being replaced.

Whenever someone comes across an obstacle in life, don't hold back, push through. Perseverance is the key to getting far in life. If anyone lets little mistakes and failures bring their self down, they won't be able to move forward and, sure as anything, they won't expect to succeed. From every day average people to famous stars, quitting never wins, but trying succeeds in some way, shape, or form. Always staying positive about the things a person does will always get them much farther than negativity ever will.

Emily Battles

Third Place, Grade 9

"Success is falling down nine times and getting up ten." Jon Bon Jovi says this and he is exactly correct. Perseverance is the key to success in life; not many people are naturally gifted in what they do. Many people need to try and try over again. This quote speaks to me because I can relate. All my life I have had a weight problem and to this day I am fighting through diet and exercise to lose weight. I would like to share with you my story and hopefully it will inspire those of you with this same problem, or even completely different issues, to persevere. Keep trying and remember, "Success is falling down nine times and getting up ten."

It dates back to my 11th birthday. My pop-pop died after battling lung cancer for six years. I fell into a depression, and began to eat from stress. I fought through it though. I kept my faithfulness and I persevered. It was actually Jon Bon Jovi's music that inspired me to keep fighting. I'm a rock and roller and Bon Jovi's music is upbeat and inspires people to get through the hard times because eventually it will get better. This is clearly depicted in his song, "Living on a Prayer." This being the main reason I am still happier today.

When I was 13, I hit the 200 pound mark. My doctors were more than concerned; I was told if I did not soon lose weight I would be hospitalized and have diet supervision. This is when they tell you what to eat and when to eat. I once again turned to Jon for his music and I wrote a letter to him asking for his advice. Two months passed and I got no response, but then I was on my way to church one day and standing there at the entrance was Jon Bon Jovi. He talked to me and inspired me to fight through this stage of life, in fact he gave me the very same quote I am using on this essay. I joined a gym, I dieted, and I did everything in my power to beat my weight problem. Half a year later on my 14th birthday I was down to 165 pounds.

But then things took a turn for the worse. I began to stress eat again. It is one of my propensities; I hit 290 pounds. Then my doctor gave me the same threat he did when I was 13. I had hit rock bottom again, but you know what? I took to heart what Jon told me. I knew I had fallen again but I also knew if I wanted to succeed I had to get right back up again. So I did. I joined Brazilian ju-jitsu and I now weigh 250 pounds. I dropped 40 pounds quickly. I am at the stage where I want to be and I owe it all to my biggest role model and hero, Jon Bon Jovi.

So I say to all of you, I would like to leave you with a quote of my own: "You can't always do everything alone. Asking for help is not showing weakness, but showing the strength to be willing to do anything to succeed." I hope my story has inspired you to fight through whatever your problems are. My advice is to find a hero even if they are not famous. Find a hero and get help. You can always beat an issue, just make sure to persevere and remember, "Success is falling down nine times and getting up ten."

Chace Madden

First Place, Grade 10

Six time NBA champion Michael Jordan has had a successful life full of failures. Yes, even one of the most successful basketball players has had his share of letdowns. He admits in the following quote that, "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games, 26 times I've been trusted to take the winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed." Just like Michael Jordan, I've failed many times in my life and on my road to being a successful artist, but I always keep trying no matter what.

I know I'm quoting Michael Jordan, but late R & B artist Aaliyah once said in a song, "If at first you don't succeed, get yourself up and try again." That means that if you fail then you have to get back up and keep trying. Failure locks the door of success and perseverance is the key. I've been trying to be a successful music artist for seven years, and I'm still not as successful as I want to be; but I will be if I keep on pushing. Sooner or later all this hard work will pay off and I will overcome my failures with success.

There would be no such thing as success if it weren't for failure. I've failed numerous times in my life, but I kept trying to succeed. I've lost many talent shows and contests that I've tried my best in, but that just means I have to try better. The equipment I needed to record, such as a microphone, headphones, and even the recording software, have been broken, lost, or misplaced. Without this equipment, I could not record music and that really slowed me down on my career. I've also lost materials such as songs, beats, and written songs. For the worst, I've slacked in my effort to become successful and that is really one of the biggest reasons why people fail.

Even though I've failed, I have learned from my mistakes and have then succeeded in the areas that I failed. After I started to pick up my slack to succeed and started to record again, I began to release music and developed a fan base. I began to record at my cousin's house where he had equipment similar to what I had. He helped me promote my music and told me what I should do when I'm up on stage to help my performance skills. If I make it to an award show or maybe even an interview, I will give him thanks for helping me get where I am.

Just like Michael Jordan, I've failed a few times in my life. I lost all of my equipment and access to a place to record. But like Michael Jordan said, "Sometimes you got to keep getting back up even when you fall." You have to keep pushing even when you're getting backed down because that's what perseverance is all about. Michael Jordan is the most successful basketball player

there has been, but his life is full of failure and that led to his success. No matter what, you're going to fail some times in life. If you don't fail, you can't succeed.

Taron Brooks

Second Place, Grade 10

"I am building a fire, and every day I train, I add more fuel. At just the right moment, I light the match." --Mia Hamm. This is a quote about perseverance because it's about trying over and over again until you finally get it. When I first started playing basketball, I wasn't what you would call the greatest. Eventually I made the JV basketball team at Smyrna High because of all my hard work. I made the team because, like Mia Hamm, I had perseverance. I was able to join the basketball team because of my hard work, my sacrifices, and my refusal to give into criticism.

It all started my freshman year right after our loss to Sussex Tech. I was mad I didn't score and really didn't help the team. As I was walking off the court I jumped up as high as I could and grabbed the rim. I was surprised because it was the first time I had ever done it. The next day at practice, all I did was grab the rim hoping I would dunk soon. I would go to the park almost every day trying to dunk. At one point my finger tore open because I grabbed the rim so much.

The more I trained the less time I had to spend with friends. I would go to the park instead of going to do something with them. I lost some acquaintances, but I also gained some new companions. I quickly became close to new people I would see a lot at the park. Slowly I grew further away from my old friends from school, but some friends also went to the park so our friendship remained.

When I first started playing basketball, I was less than perfect. Actually, I was, for lack of a better term, a scrub. My dribbling ability was that of a toddler; I could hear the crowd saying I just sat on the benches and watched the games. My layups were suspect, and most of the time, I wouldn't make them in the game. The crowd made fun of me for this and would say I was trash, but I didn't listen to them. I knew I could do better. I finally got to a point where I had tried so many times to dunk, I could jump higher than anyone also. I also began to lose weight which helped my game. Even though I could dunk, people still said that I was garbage, but I knew I was getting better every day.

That's perseverance. I stood up through criticism, sacrificed friends, and put in much work and effort. I finally felt good about myself, even when others didn't. So while I may not be perfect, I am building my fire, adding fuel and waiting for my time to glow.

Jose Ortiz

Third Place, Grade 10

There are many battles that are fought in this world every single day--the fight for America's freedom, and even the fight for survival for some. There is one quote that accurately depicts the way people should go about fighting these battles. As Margaret Thatcher once said, "You may have to fight a battle more times than once to win it." This quote really stood out to me because I have had to fight battles more times than once as well. I feel that this is a direct reflection of my life, and probably many others as well.

I chose this quote primarily because it directly relates to my life. You have to continue to try regardless of the circumstance, until you reach optimal success. For some, this may be difficult because of a past that may turn them away from giving something a second try; however, even if something takes a thousand tries, if success is reached on the thousandth try, the other 999 tries were 100% worth it.

With regard to perseverance, I can relate to this because I have been trying to find a stable job so that I can have my own disposable income. So far, I have been unsuccessful. I have tried at many different locations, but I get the same end result: rejection. This does not upset me at all, however, because I have perseverance. If the first employer says no, that does not matter because there are plenty of employers out there who would love to have an employee such as myself. If I persevere, feel that it will be worth it in the long run; I will eventually find the job that I am looking for. Currently, I am in the process of applying for a job at McDonalds. I feel that this time will be different. I am maintaining a positive attitude throughout this whole ordeal. Even if I get rejected, I will know that I gave it my all and continue on with my search.

The current uphill battle that is my task relates to Thatcher's quote because it is difficult for many Americans to get a job in today's tough economy. The current unemployment rate in America is 8.6%, which is a substantial amount. Unemployed Americans must have perseverance and understand that if they get rejected once, they must try again. They may reach the success that they dream of if they continue to persevere and do not give up at the first sign of rejection.

I believe that Margaret Thatcher's quote is significant in today's society. It has a great message that is not always recognized. I feel that is extremely meaningful, and it shows the battles that people face. It shows that people should never give up. People must learn to view rejection as a motivator and not the end of the line if they are going to be able to achieve success.

David Norwood

First Place, Grade 11

Perseverance is steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, or a state especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement. John F. Kennedy said, "Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly." In my opinion, he is trying to say that if you take big risks and aren't afraid to fail, eventually you will succeed whether you do the first time or have to try more than a million times. There have been many times in my life that I have personally shown multiple examples of perseverance by simply taking huge risks and overcoming problems. No

matter how many times one fails, perseverance means to keep trying until one overcomes the mountain being climbed.

When I was five years old, my mother sent me to The Ballet Theatre of Dover to start taking ballet classes. At that age, no child is particularly coordinated enough not to trip over her own feet, and I was definitely no exception. Despite the difficulties of learning new ways to stand and position my body to show refined elegance, I persevered for many years to achieve my goal. It wasn't all about just how good the technique was but one's personality and drive to become pure perfection.

I struggled a lot and eventually when I was 14, I decided to try stepping out of Delaware to audition for The Kirov Academy in Washington, D.C. They had a prestigious summer program that many young, striving ballerinas would be honored to attend. After working extra hard and doing my absolute possible best at the audition, I received a letter stating that I had been accepted. Being one of the few young ballerinas in the country accepted to this program, I knew I had accomplished something commendable.

At my local studio in Dover, I never went in with any ounce of cockiness because of this honor. I just went and worked just as hard as anyone else; but there will always be those people who act out of jealousy and who treat others unfairly. My biggest act of perseverance was not working to achieve this honor, but to deal with the drama that came with it. There were many girls at my studio who were much older than I, but they hadn't started dancing as early. They didn't always show true dedication, and it was hard for them to accept that being a ballerina was a huge burden in life and difficult to master. I received a lot of hatred from them, which was challenging for me to deal with. They would say things about how I was conceited and call me mean names. In the end, I still would go to the ballet class every day and persevere through whatever new thing they said about me. I didn't let them get to me and that fall when I got to dance the lead role in *The Nutcracker*, everyone knew I deserved it because of the perseverance I had shown.

Jacki Holford

Second Place, Grade 11

Michael Jordan can be considered to be quite possibly one of the most famous athletes of all time. I chose the quote "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games, 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." It is a prime example of how even the most successful people had to demonstrate perseverance to get to where they are today. Michael Jordan failed hundreds of times and still he persevered and ended up becoming one of the most famous athletes in history. When I was first learning how to play lacrosse I faced a comparable challenge.

Every time the ball came towards me I cringed. Every time I tried to catch a pass, I dropped the ball. Every time I did actually catch the ball and tried to run with it, I promptly dropped it. But with practice, a lot of effort, and a little dose of perseverance I achieved an entirely new level of

skill. The most difficult part of getting good at lacrosse was losing weight--an obstacle I am still struggling to overcome. It doesn't matter how good one is at catching or throwing the ball if running for a few hundred feet isn't an option.

All my life I've struggled with being overweight, being the last one picked in gym class, as well as the last one picked for teams. Being the fat kid got old very quickly. I was used to eating the wrong foods and not exercising my entire life. I failed and failed again to change the way I lived because I had no motivation. Then I discovered the great sport of lacrosse and finally had some motivation to succeed at my goal. This year I've lost almost 30 pounds and counting. I hope to get down to 190 pounds and make varsity for lacrosse. I know that I won't be a starting defender, but I hope to be a backup and then start varsity my senior year. I am proud of myself for achieving the weight loss that I already have, and hope that I can summon up the motivation to continue on the path I'm on.

My task compares to Michael Jordan's because, like him, I failed and failed again; but eventually I will reach my goal, and I will be successful. It takes dedication and perseverance to reach a difficult goal--something I will do. While I don't compare myself as an athlete or as a person to Michael Jordan, I can compare my situation to his. It took a lot of dedication and effort by both of us to get where we are today.

E. J. Fields

Third Place, Grade 11

"I am building a fire, and every day I train. I add more fuel. At just the right moment, I light the match." This quote couldn't be more relatable to my life as a cross-country runner. When I was a child, I wasn't the most athletic kid on the playground. As a boy, you're expected to be able to throw a perfect ball, be stronger than all of your friends and be good at sports (which is supposed to come naturally.) None of this seemed to happen for me. I played tee ball and somehow I would manage to miss the ball. Figuring that baseball wasn't my strong suit I gave soccer a try, and the same disappointing lack of athletic ability became even more prevalent. Through other activities, it was all the same. I know what it's like to be the last kid picked for the kickball team, what it's like to hate gym class, and what it's like to be embarrassed out on the field. From third to eighth grade, I was convinced, when it came to sports, there was no place for me. Then in ninth grade for some reason I found myself sitting in the interest meeting for cross-country. That was the beginning of a journey that would change my life forever.

In the interest meeting, surrounded by kids who had been running since the seventh grade, I thought "Great, another sport to make me feel even worse about my non-existent athleticism." Despite my doubt, I went to the first summer practice. It was there that I realized I was absolutely right. I had never been more tired, miserable, or mad at myself for even thinking I could run four miles with high school kids. However, I continued to go to practice and it wasn't easy, but over time I could feel myself improving. My first time ever in a cross-country race was 29 minutes and 13 seconds. I was mortified; I thought that me getting 29:13 was the worst thing that could have possibly happened. As I walked around after the race, my teammates were

coming up and congratulating me on my time, telling me how great I did, and how they were proud of me. Even the coaches (who completely intimidated me at the time) told me that I did a good job. Me, doing a "good job" at an athletic event was something that I was definitely not used to.

Over the next couple of years, I trained as hard as I could and pushed myself to the limit at every practice and every race. I wanted to be the best that I could be, and I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of great things in this sport. The summer before my junior year, I ran 210 miles in preparation for the upcoming cross-country season. My hard work didn't go unnoticed and I was named captain of the team--a title I never imagined I would have. I thought my ideal season was finally here; I was ready to take the cross-country team by the reins and run the best times I had ever run. However, due to how heavily I trained over the summer, I got tendonitis in my knees. I wasn't about to let that stop me, so I ran through the pain and ignored the advice my friends and parents gave me--to rest. My knees were hurting so badly that my body tried to protect itself, and I started to run differently. This eventually led to a bruised heel bone. I tried to run through this, but the pain was too severe, and I was sidelined from running for two weeks. Unfortunately running isn't like other sports. I couldn't take two weeks off and then just jump right back in at the same level that I once was. I lost a certain amount of endurance that was detrimental to my plans of a perfect season. But I didn't give up, and I came back from that injury with more determination in me than ever before. I finished the season third on the team and with a new best time that was significantly lower than 29:13. However, I knew what I was capable of and that I could do better than that. So I set out for my last year of cross-country and had plans to make it the season that I had always hoped for.

Luckily my senior year went more smoothly. Without being plagued by injury, I was ready to have the best possible season that I could have. I was named captain again, and this time I successfully fulfilled my goal of being number one on the team. My once embarrassing time of 29:13 is now something that I am proud of because it shows me how far I've come. I can remember the freshman me--on the line, scared to death of a race, and my goal was just not to walk. Now, as a senior, every time I step on the line, I have confidence and my goal is to not let anyone pass me. Cross-country gave me an intensity that I didn't know I had. But I had to earn it; I had to run as hard as I could for four years. At the end of the four years, I had taken off over 10 minutes from my first time ever. I can now say that my best time is 19:02. This time still isn't the best time ever, but I never did cross-country to be the best, I just did it to be better than I was.

Running gave me confidence, it gave me a million new friends, and it gave me a place in athletics. Cross-country isn't about throwing a perfect ball or being the strongest, it's about hard work and doing the best you possibly can. I learned that as long as I push myself, I am capable of achieving anything. Even if I fall down, I can always get back up, learn from my mistakes, and be a stronger person. Cross-country showed me that even the last kid picked on the playground can be the MVP; all they have to do is persevere.

Jake Hughes

First Place, Grade 12

Have you ever been in a situation where you have been attempting a task for a certain amount of time just to find yourself getting nowhere? When in that situation a typical person would just give up when the going got tough because it was the easier solution. What makes a person extraordinary is their ability to continue trying that task until it is completed or done the right way with desirable results. Jon Bon Jovi said the infamous quote, "Success is falling nine times and getting up ten." Without perseverance, or the act of trying, failing, learning, and trying again until success is achieved, success cannot be accomplished. The quote mentioned above can be applied to an event in my life when I received my first college rejection letter, but continued to further my journey to be successful in life.

Since my middle school days, I have always dreamed of applying and later attending Hofstra University. Having been born in Uniondale, NY, Hofstra is located in Hempstead, which was literally five minutes away from my house. It had been my dream school for years, so naturally I applied for early acceptance in the beginning of my senior year. I made sure all the necessary requirements for acceptance were met, including the necessary grade point average and SAT/ACT scores. I had my essay perfected and personalized specifically for Hofstra because, since it was my first choice, it deserved to have its own essay. There was no doubt about it; I was going to Hofstra.

The day my rejection letter came in the mail was one of the worst days of my life, and a day I will never forget. I came home from an amazing day at school, and it was the last day before winter break. Everyone was full of excitement and joy for the holidays and the chance to spend time with their families. I was no exception. I couldn't wait to get home and tell my parents about my day, so I rushed home and grabbed the mail while I was walking through the door. After passing several irrelevant envelopes addressed to my family members, I came across one addressed to me with a return address from Hofstra. I was too excited to speak, so I read the contents of the envelope. Never in my life was I more confused. In a nutshell, Hofstra basically rejected me from joining their class of 2016. I cried for days, heartbroken that I didn't get into my perfect college. The rejection letter discouraged me from going to college in general because it convinced me that if Hofstra didn't want me, then no school would want me either.

After spending my entire winter break depressed over my rejection letter, I was tired of crying and not being productive. I decided to check my email, something I hadn't done in weeks due to the abundance of college-related emails. One specific email caught my attention and it was from the University of Delaware. I visited the website and fell in love with the pictures of the campus. This encouraged me to apply to other colleges besides Hofstra University. Just because one college rejected my application, did not mean every other college would. The best way for me to learn this was to research more colleges and start my application process once again. There was the perfect college out there for me--I just had not found it yet.

Being rejected from Hofstra University broke my heart, but it did not break my ambition and perseverance. I started my journey to furthering my education by applying to my "dream" school, getting rejected, accepting my rejection, and learning to continue doing what I had to in order to be happy. Today, I can say I have not reached success just yet, but I continue to

persevere and have devoted my time to getting into the college that is best for me. Though I have not fallen nine times yet, I am prepared to get up ten times because without perseverance and ambition, I cannot be successful. Success might just give me the happy life I desire.

Tiara Baines

Second Place, Grade 12

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."-- Margaret Thatcher. These words could not speak more to me. This quote talks of a fight, a fight that only you yourself can win, and it's called perseverance. We all go through times in our lives when things get hard, maybe even more than once, but we have to be able to find a way to push through these hardships. One of my most memorable times of perseverance was during soccer season of my sophomore and junior years. There have been a lot of ups and downs with soccer, injuries, and recovery.

I have always loved playing soccer. I played as a youngster, but didn't seriously start until the eighth grade. Most people would probably consider my position one of the most important on the team: goalie. A lot of stress can come with playing this position, as well as physical demands. Most of the season my body is covered in bruises and cuts; people would cringe if they saw them, but to me they were battle wounds. I was good at what I did; I even received 2nd team all conference in tenth grade. However one accident took it all away.

The injuries all began at the end of my sophomore year. Smyrna was playing in the first round of the games to determine who would vie for state championship. We were ready to finally make it past that first game, and then everything changed. A girl made a breakaway, leaving us one on one. We were so close that I didn't even have a chance to react when the ball was kicked towards my head, leaving me with a concussion and her goalless. Fortunately for me, this would be our last game of the season. However, the next year I took a kick to the head giving me yet another concussion. This timing was not as good, since it was in the beginning of the season. Scared and afraid to play, I had to recover.

The recovery was different for both incidents. The first one was at the end of the season and didn't affect soccer. I was also only out of school for a few days. The second time was when it really hit me . . . literally. The side effects were far worse, and I constantly had a pounding in my head. I couldn't even drive (especially at night). When I had finally recovered from some of the side effects, I was extremely scared to play. The worst part was there was now another goalie I had to compete with. I had to work so hard to get my starting position back, but I had to work even harder to play through the fear. During the past two years, it really has been hard for me with soccer season. Trying to recover I really had to persevere through the fear I felt from those two concussions. Like Margaret Thatcher said, "You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it." I'm going to keep on fighting.

Kaitlin Brown

Third Place, Grade 12

HONORABLE MENTION

CLAYTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Roland Riser Kindergarten
Logan Lewis Kindergarten
Hailey Ennie Kindergarten
Bryce Blisard Kindergarten
Emily Slaney Kindergarten

Adam Lascaro Grade 1
Liam Wilson Grade 1
Karalyn Osborne Grade 1
Mary Watts Grade 1
Anthony DiMattia Grade 1

Reagan Reynolds Grade 2
Brice Feldman Grade 2
Haley McDowell Grade 2
Savannah Alioa Grade 2
Grayson Dowell Grade 2

Courtney Ogle Grade 3
Steven Boyce Grade 3
Brandon Lunch Grade 3
Kyle Love Grade 3
Gabrielle Treadwell Grade 3

Kathryn Dixon Grade 4
Malik Matthews Grade 4
Destinie Lopez Grade 4
Adara Turek Grade 4
Coral Dillon Grade 4

NORTH SMYRNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Robert Kamara Kindergarten
Michelle Fleming Kindergarten
Tristan White Kindergarten
Tiana Tribbett Kindergarten
Jack Riley Kindergarten
Talaney Pierce Kindergarten

Daniel Neidig Grade 1
Peyton Broadway Grade 1
Mia Schultz Grade 1
Gabrielle Powell Grade 1
Shane Steele Grade 1

Owen Withrow Grade 2
Jaydon Morton Grade 2
Khady Ndaiye Grade 2
Cheyenne Hill Grade 2
Dayja Washington Grade 2

Victoria Jordan Grade 3
Jaylen Sudler Grade 3
Kim Vest Grade 3
Jacob Brock Grade 3
Ashlee Heinefield Grade 3

Antonio Rosada Grade 4
Sarah Charles Grade 4
Nicole Withrow Grade 4
Izaiah Credle Grade 4
Aaron Tyler Grade 4

SMYRNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jacob Sauder Kindergarten
Aliana Walls Kindergarten
Eva Clements Kindergarten
Elizabeth Nix Kindergarten
Christian Carmona Kindergarten

Madison Sullivan Grade 1
Gabriella Spaulding Grade 1
Gabriella Castro Grade 1
Brian Wright Grade 1
Tyler Sparrow Grade 1

Matthew Knight
Collin Hood
Maggie Benningfield
Jared Deppish

Molly Sanderson Grade 2
Robert Mace Grade 2
Peter Hawkins Grade 2
Anthony Avina Grade 2
Savana Kopach Grade 2

Madison Pharis Grade 3
Kaniya Jones Grade 3
Edward Walter Grade 3

Evan Cahall Grade 4

Grade 4
 Grade 4
 Grade 4
 Grade 4

SUNNYSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

<i>Yasmina Gall</i>	Kindergarten	<i>Rachel Brown</i>	Grade 2
<i>Aiden Johnson</i>	Kindergarten	<i>Aubrey Burleigh</i>	Grade 2
<i>Katelyn Curtis</i>	Kindergarten	<i>Sabrina Richards</i>	Grade 2
<i>Michelle Golding</i>	Kindergarten	<i>Brooke Green</i>	Grade 2
<i>Alex Gates</i>	Kindergarten	<i>Laila Gilliam</i>	Grade 2
<i>Kristin Keister</i>	Grade 1	<i>Taylor Christensen</i>	Grade 3
<i>Grace Jansen</i>	Grade 1	<i>Ian Rosario</i>	Grade 3
<i>Makayla Brantley</i>	Grade 1	<i>Sophia DeMarco</i>	Grade 3
<i>Savannah Blue</i>	Grade 1	<i>Mya Stinson</i>	Grade 3
<i>Robert Yeager, III</i>	Grade 1	<i>Teresa Pena</i>	Grade 3
<i>Trey Deakyne</i>	Grade 4		
<i>Dylan Bonilla</i>	Grade 4		
<i>Jasmine Ousley</i>	Grade 4		
<i>McKenzie Gearhart</i>	Grade 4		
<i>Bryce Gordy</i>	Grade 4		

JBM INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

SMYRNA MIDDLE SCHOOL

<i>Abby Mace</i>	Grade 5	<i>Sarah Salvador</i>	Grade 7
<i>Lorene Naylor</i>	Grade 5	<i>Mason Williams</i>	Grade 7
		<i>Chanelle Lee</i>	Grade 7
		<i>Steven Russell</i>	Grade 7
		<i>Bryce Adams</i>	Grade 7
<i>Colin Shalk</i>	Grade 6	<i>Hunter Anderson</i>	Grade 8
<i>Casey Berchtold</i>	Grade 6	<i>Alyssa Brewer</i>	Grade 8
<i>Kaelyn Press</i>	Grade 6	<i>Carissa DiCarlantonio</i>	Grade 8
<i>Kyle Wentling</i>	Grade 6	<i>Cameron Saunders</i>	Grade 8
		<i>Lucas Zlock</i>	Grade 8

SMYRNA HIGH SCHOOL

<i>Gabrielle Jones</i>	Grade 9	<i>Elizabeth Bailey</i>	Grade 11
<i>Jade Williams</i>	Grade 9	<i>Emilee Virdin</i>	Grade 11
<i>Alex Hoke</i>	Grade 9	<i>Wesley White</i>	Grade 11
		<i>Teekira Rollins</i>	Grade 11
		<i>Andrew Gilbert</i>	Grade 11
<i>Diana Wilson</i>	Grade 10	<i>Brooklyn Wright</i>	Grade 12
<i>Tyler Thorpe</i>	Grade 10	<i>Rachel Blair</i>	Grade 12
<i>Ali Shaffer</i>	Grade 10	<i>Najah Smith</i>	Grade 12
<i>Gabrielle Ramsey</i>	Grade 10	<i>Ernest Carlisle, III</i>	Grade 12