

POETRY CONTEST INTRODUCTION (Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr.):

- **This evening**, we are delighted to recognize our new ACPS Poet Laureates. This recognition is a result of our annual division poetry ceremony.
- To present our award winners, I am pleased to introduce our instructional specialist for secondary language arts, **Ms. Kimberly Schell**.

REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION (Kimberly Schell):

- Like Dr. Hutchings mentioned, for the past decade, the division has held an annual poetry contest that results in a published anthology of poems. For the second time ever, the contest was extended beyond elementary school to our middle and high schools. The contest involves each school coordinating a school-based poetry contest where teams of teachers review student-submitted poems, and identify a best-of-school poem as well as winning poems for each grade level at their school.
- The poems teachers selected as winning school poems are then submitted to a division judging committee. This year, the elementary division judging committee is composed of Central Office staff, the Deputy Director of Alexandria Libraries, and the Alexandria City Poet Laureate who work to select the best poem from each 3-5 grade level, as well as an elementary poet laureate. At the secondary level, the secondary division judging committee is composed of members of the *T.C. Williams Labyrinth Staff* who coordinated the 6-12 division contest and selected the division best poem for each grade level, as well as the division secondary poet laureate.
- The division then hosts a ceremony to honor the students the schools selected as “best of school” and district grade-level winners as well as the few other division awards. As you may recall, all winning poems are collected into a small booklet that is distributed to those who join the ceremony. The poems in the book are also studied in elementary grades as poetry mentor texts in subsequent years.
- For the second year, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction connected with Mr. Taki Sidley and the students in the *T.C. Williams Labyrinth Staff* about helping to publish the booklet of poems. Not only did the T.C. Williams students agree to help again, but they also designed a creative and professional-looking booklet to honor the creativity of our ACPS students. Making the contest extend from grades 3-12 has been a wonderful enhancement, and we don’t think we will ever revert back to just an elementary contest.
- Our gift for you today is a collection of each school’s winning poems that have been reviewed, edited, designed, and formatted by the students of the *T.C. Williams Labyrinth Staff*. The 2018-2019 poetry book titled “The Anthology” is a truly lovely bookstore quality text and a wonderful improvement from the previous format.
- This year, more than ever before, our students seem to have written poems from the heart that they want an audience to hear. We are thankful that ACPS encourages students to express their thoughts, emotions, and opinions in avenues such as writing. Tonight, we would like to honor students from the division ceremony that was held on April 24, 2019. These students were selected by the division judging committees as our new ACPS Poet Laureates. It is important to note that the content of the poems reflect the beliefs and opinions of the gifted writers and not necessarily ACPS. At this point, it is my great pleasure to introduce our award-winning students:

ACPS Division Poet Laureates:

- At the elementary level, the judging committee had a tie and identified two different poet laureates. Julia Mickelsen is one of our two ACPS Elementary Poet Laureates. Julia is in third grade at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. She enjoys science and drawing as well as writing poetry. Julia won this honor for her poem titled “Wheelchair”.
- Henry Miller is the other ACPS Elementary Poet Laureate. Henry is a fifth grade student at Mount Vernon Community School. He is an avid reader and soccer player who loves to write. Henry won for his poem titled “The Greatest Inventor”.
- At the secondary level, the judging committee selected Emma Lally as the new ACPS Secondary Poet Laureate. Emma is a tenth grade student at T.C. Williams High School, and she is a founding member of a Del Ray neighborhood book club that meets weekly and reads both fiction and poetry. Emma won for her poem titled “Red.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS (Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr.):

- **We congratulate these students and encourage them, and all students, to keep writing. Your voice matters, and we need you.**
- We recognize the parents, teachers, and school leaders who made the ACPS poetry contest possible, and we are grateful for the extra work that went into supporting poetry and writing instruction and appreciate your commitment to your students.
- **Again**, a special congratulations to our new ACPS Poet Laureates and another thank you to T.C. teacher, Mr. Taki Sidley, and the high school students on the Labyrinth Staff who created such a beautiful book to showcase the important words ACPS students want to share with the world.

Wheelchair

I want to run.
To dance, to jump.
I want something more than pointing fingers and mean remarks.
I see them on the turf field.
Where they run and jump and dance.

I try to catch up.
They run faster, teasing the lack of life and energy in my legs.
Then I see another like me.
Crutches, she calls them. It's temporary.
A new friend.

I can't run.
I can't dance, can't jump.
But now I feel like I can.
Because with a friend,
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

Julia Mickelsen

3rd Grade

Ms. Bousquet's Class

Douglas MacArthur Elementary School

The Greatest Inventor

Some people think that a mistake is bad,
But it's sort of like a big launching pad,
All sorts of things were created by failure
It's like if your brain's a bicycle, mistake is a derailleur
And that's why we know that mistake is the greatest inventor.

The chocolate chip cookie, and Post-it notes
Mistakes can change ANYTHING (even springs for boats)
A lot of inventions were created by failure
Sometimes it might seem like your savior
The inventors that failed,
Almost bailed, but stuck with it
Not what they wanted but maybe better
Mistake is warm and cozy like a great sweater
The inventors that tried
They dried their eyes and found a different use
Because mistake is the greatest inventor
Saved last of all,
two more mistakes
Potato chips and crunchy corn flakes
These innovations were big flops and fails
At first it seemed like a chalkboard on nails
But mistake is the greatest inventor.

Henry Miller

5th grade

Ms. English

Mount Vernon Community School

Red

Maybe it was the hunger that got to her
Or maybe she saw the fruit
And was curious what darkness tasted like,
A snake and an apple showed Eve the truth,
and gave her wisdom.
She knew it was wrong
But the forked tongue of the snake whispered in her ear
And she grew curious.
What great sin came from only one apple?
In the end it brought her pain
But no ignorance ever filled her belly again.
And when that pain came over and over,
cursed upon her descendants, she knew it was worth it,
For it had given her and Adam their selves,
Not perfect creatures
By any stretch, but ones
Who knew the good and evil in this world,
and could choose.

Persephone saw the pomegranate,
bursting with life in that dead garden.
There was no snake to tempt her
that she did not already have inside her.
She had been born with that,
A wrong part for every right part that made her.
She took only six seeds,
Red droplets
In her unblemished palm.
And they showed the young goddess
That the world had some darkness in it.
She did not turn away.
She held the evil with the same hand that held
her mother's hand in those long summer months
And carried them both inside her.

Emma Lally

10th Grade

T. C. Williams High School

Mr. Cunningham - English Teacher