

West Central Express: Arts Edition



Level Up! Winter 2024

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From the Engine Room

When I hear “West Central Express,” I think of young journalists writing out sentences and paragraphs. The first time I heard talk of an Arts Edition, I nearly spit out my lettuce! Great comics have been part of these issues for years, but could students use other art forms to practice storytelling? After lots of pondering over parsnips and Earl Grey tea, I thought, “Fine - let’s give it a try. But it better be great.” And low and behold - it is!

Alongside excellent comics, there’s lots that’s new in this issue. I’m told there’s an art form called ‘conceptual art’ using nothing but writing and imagination. You’ll find examples among these pages – thought paintings, surreal recipes, and mirror monologues. Here’s a thought painting I wrote:

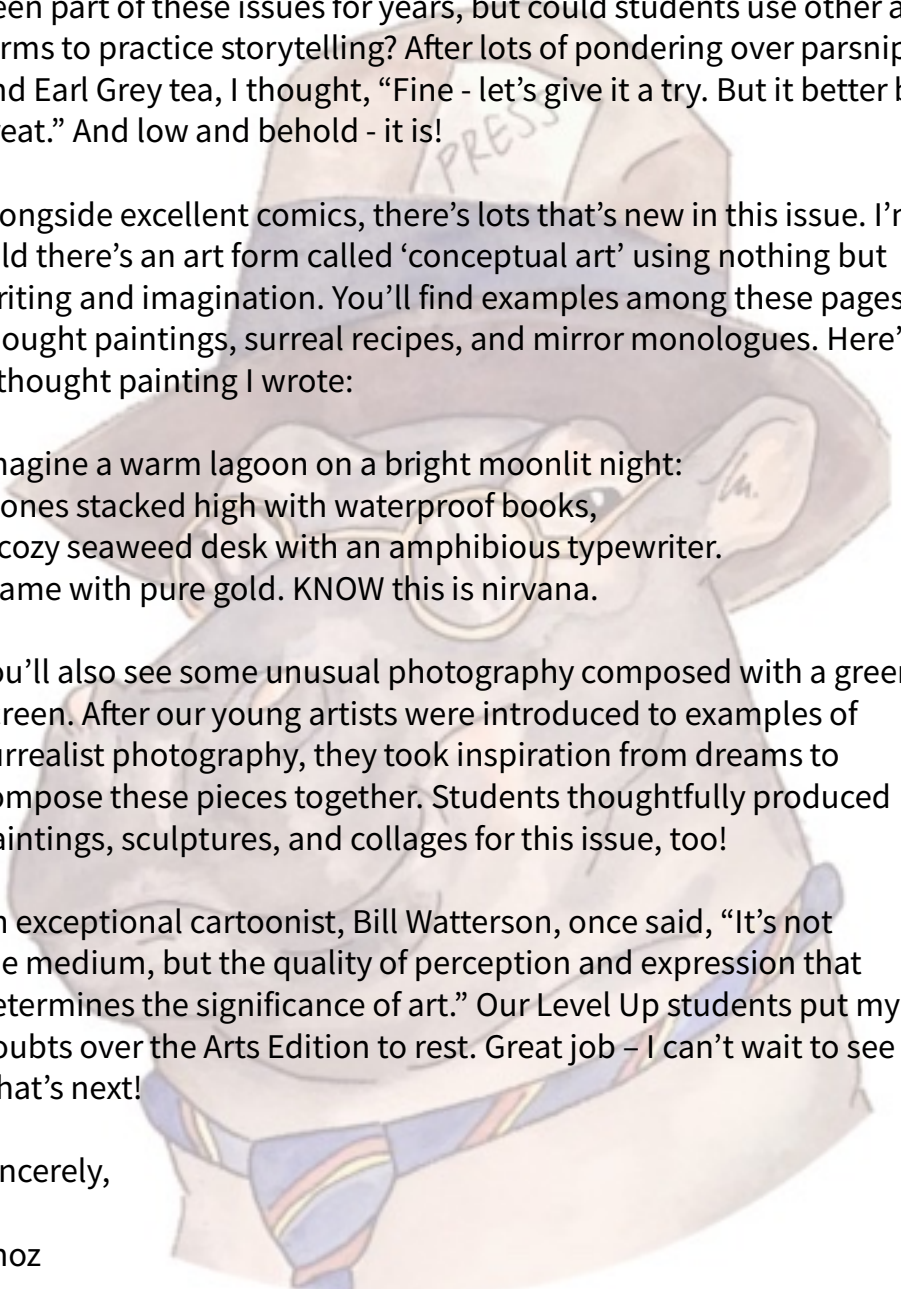
Imagine a warm lagoon on a bright moonlit night:
Stones stacked high with waterproof books,
A cozy seaweed desk with an amphibious typewriter.
Frame with pure gold. KNOW this is nirvana.

You’ll also see some unusual photography composed with a green screen. After our young artists were introduced to examples of surrealist photography, they took inspiration from dreams to compose these pieces together. Students thoughtfully produced paintings, sculptures, and collages for this issue, too!

An exceptional cartoonist, Bill Watterson, once said, “It’s not the medium, but the quality of perception and expression that determines the significance of art.” Our Level Up students put my doubts over the Arts Edition to rest. Great job – I can’t wait to see what’s next!

Sincerely,

Snoz





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Front Cover: Palette Moon by Thea, Grade 3, Audubon

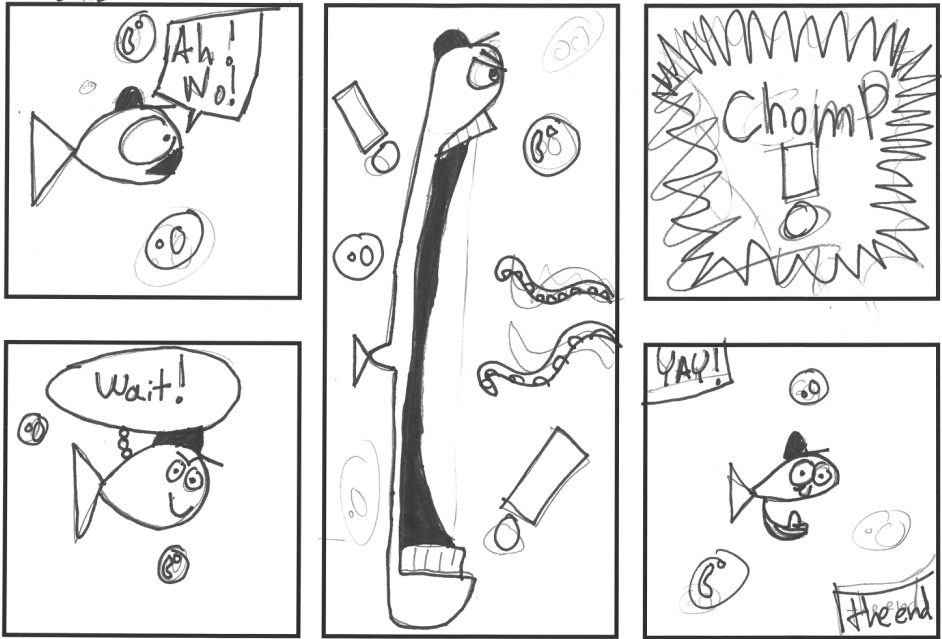
Back cover: Portrait of Ainsley by Leila, Grade 4, Audubon



Abe

Grade 4, Holmes

FISHY!



Weird Woman



Five Night's Valentine



Ainsley

Grade 4, Audubon

Allons-y and the Doctor: A Fan Fiction

One night, Allonsy found a fob watch down in the basement. It had weird inscriptions on it. She felt like she had seen it before... but when she opened it up, she remembered everything all at once. Then she heard the whooshing of the TARDIS. She followed the sound to the forest. There was the TARDIS. The door was standing open.

Allonsy crept through the door of the time machine. The inside was big and shiny. The Doctor had his back turned to her but still somehow knew she was there. “How did YOU get in here?” he asked. “Well,” Allonsy answered, “You might want to check my heartbeat.”

The Doctor checked her heartbeat and looked more surprised than she even thought possible. She had TWO heartbeats just like him. “Because of the watch, I remembered that my family was from your planet but we took refuge on Earth during the Time War,” Allonsy explained.

“Well,” said the Doctor, “it looks like you are traveling with me now.”

“Where to?” Allonsy asked as they hurtled through the Time Vortex. “Oh, you know, just have to stop the Daleks from destroying the world real quick,” said the Doctor.

“Oh, so the usual.” She laughed. They landed in the thick of a battle but defeated the Daleks quickly with sonic screwdrivers before hopping back onto the TARDIS.

“Where do we go now?” Allonsy asked. “Anywhen/Anywhere we want...” answered the Doctor.

TO BE CONTINUED...



Alfredo

Grade 3, Holmes

The Origin of Spider Steve

a Portal appears in front of spider Steve.



Spider Steve then enters the Portal.



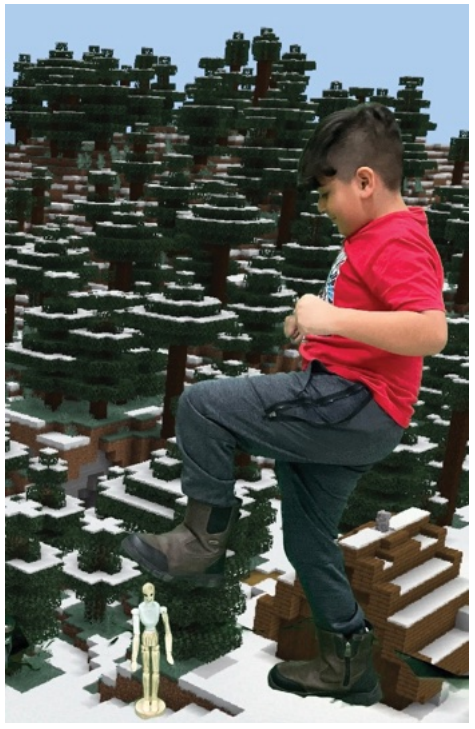
Spider Steve appears in front of Spider hero-Bryan



The two realize there is a problem, they begin to duel each other...



Zombie Invasion





Allison

Grade 4, Holmes

Allison's Imagination Painting:

*Imagine tears on gold.
A baby dragon provides the tears
in a burnt cave.*

*Burnt ashes off the dragon's
father. People leave the cave.*

Dog Dude's life



Dog Dude's life



Rainbow Wave



Ariana

Grade 4, Audubon

Paper Towel

Ariana



Two Good Days A thought painting

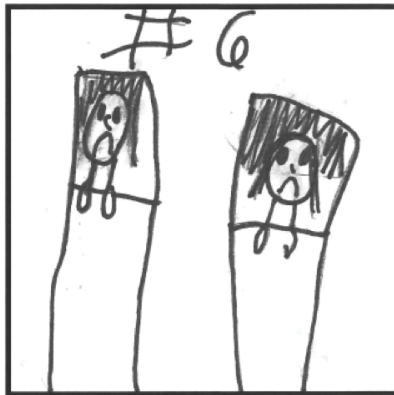
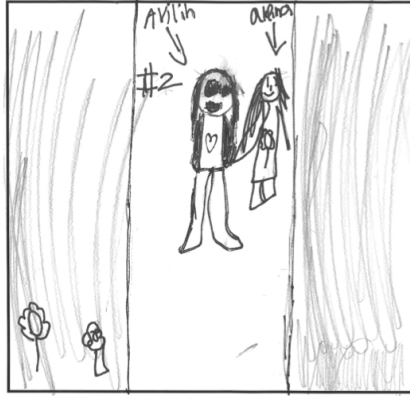
Imagine going to bed and waking up in the morning and going to school and having a good day at school and having 1,000 ramens on my desk for me and me only and going back home to eat them.

Imagine going to bed and waking up in the morning and going to school with 1000s of candies on my desk for me and me only to take home with me to eat at home.

Audrienna

Grade 3, Audubon

Friends Shopping



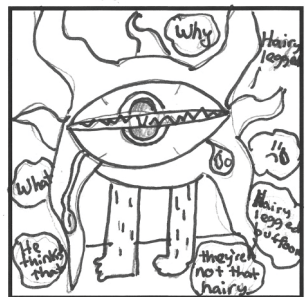
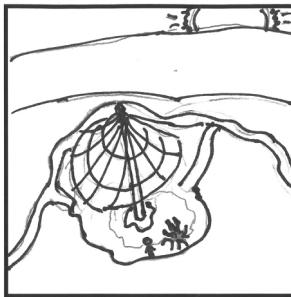
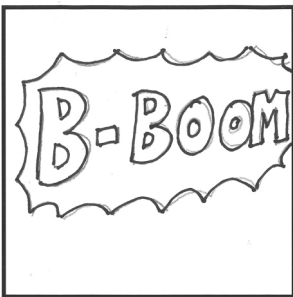
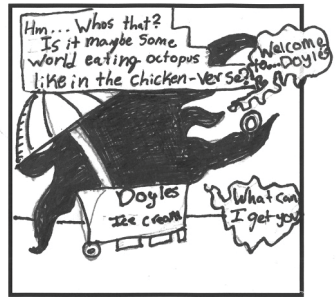


Benjamin

Grade 5, Holmes

Ben's Origin

Ben's Origin. Teh!



Carson

Grade 5, Holmes

Indiana Jones and Princess Peach's Castle

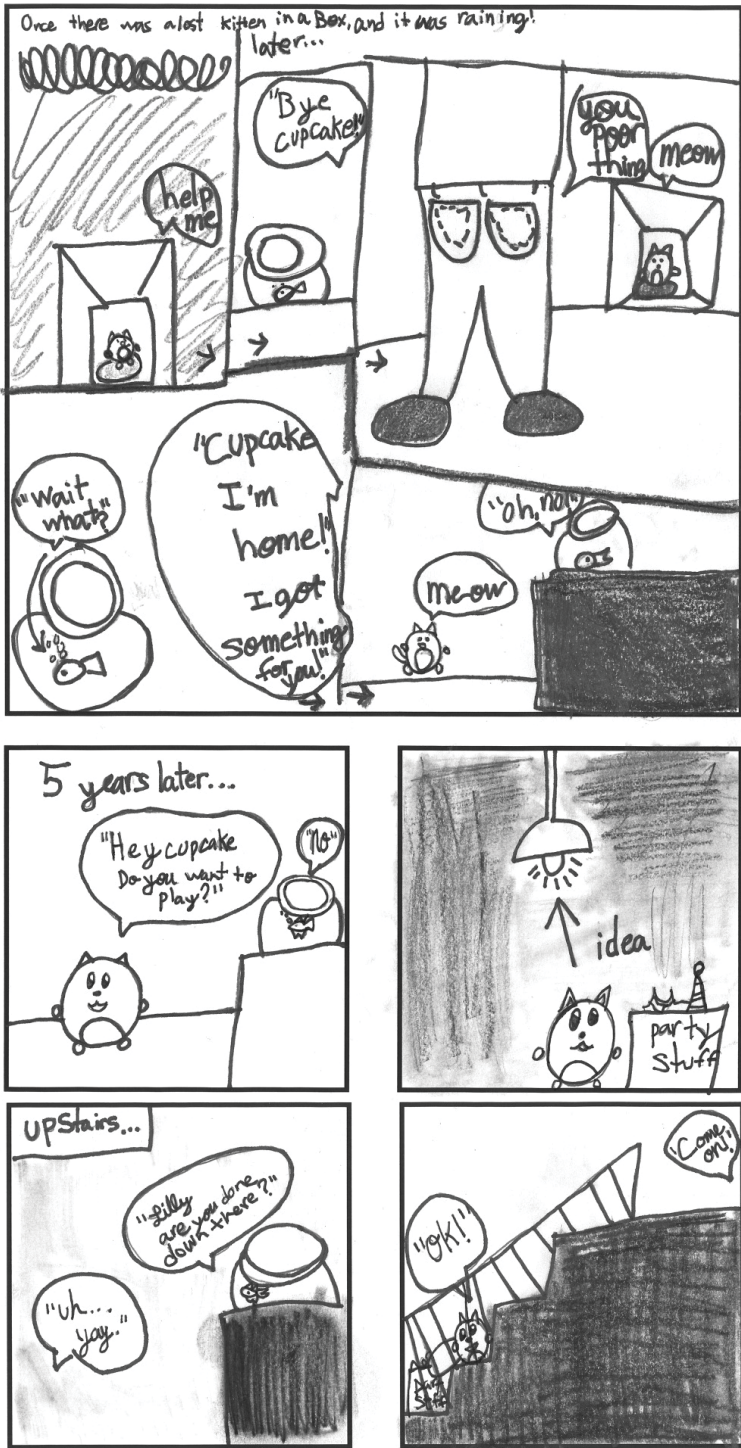


Photo by Carson (center), Jayce (Grade 3, left), Jonell (Grade 5, right), Lienn (Grade 3, back); title by Jayce (Holmes)

Corinne

Grade 3, Audubon

Cupcake & Lily

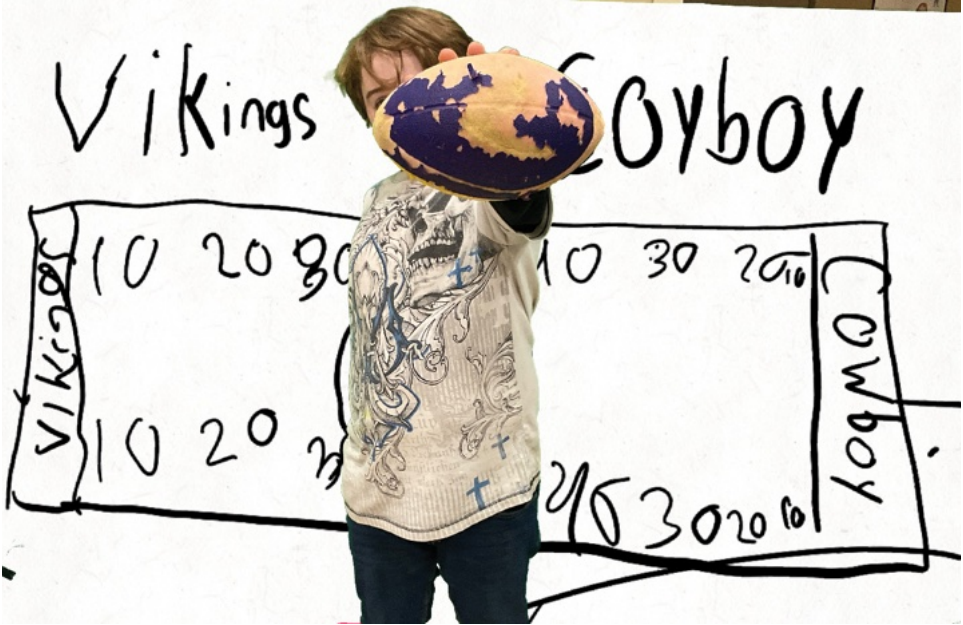




Dean

Grade 5, Audubon

MVP



Imagine Football A Thought Painting

Football.

*Me in the NFL as a wide receiver,
Leaning back with the football in
my hand.*





Delaney

Grade 3, Audubon

Nightmare Room



Bob



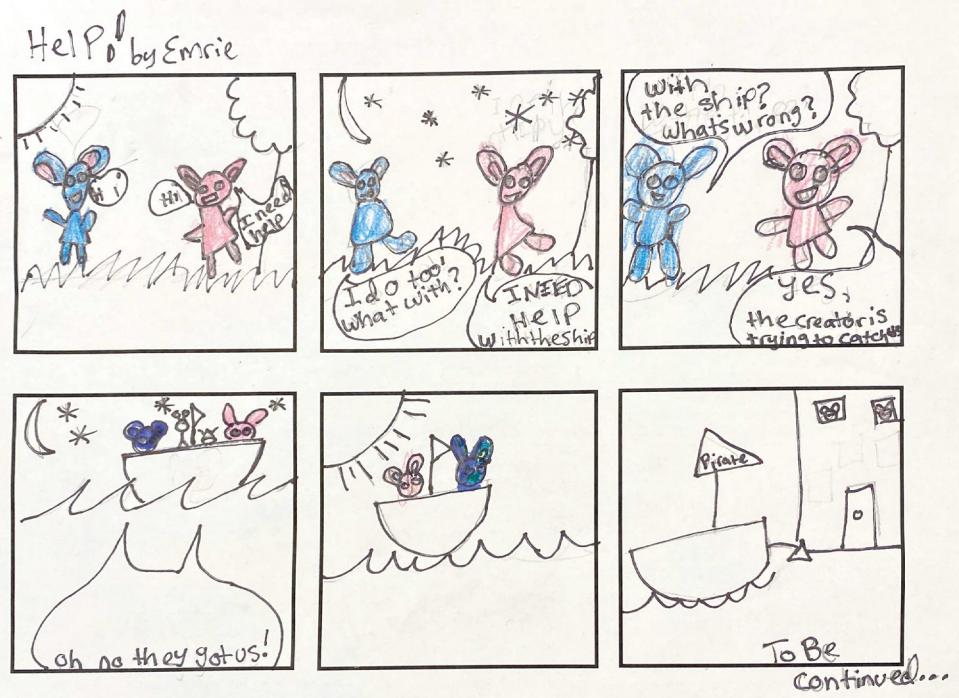
To be continued....



Emrie

Grade 3, Holmes

Help!



Recipe For Hippo Hot Chocolate

Ingredients:

- 1 Cow to milk
- 1 Swift Spritz of Love
- 1 Cup of grass
- 1 Mommy's Kiss
- 1 Chicken
- 1 Drinking Utensil
- 1 Dash Cocoa
- 15 Sticky Marshmallow

To be brewed in a cauldron
Instructions: Gather our special Ingredients and pre-heat the cauldron. Put the grass in the cow's mouth (thank you, cow). Milk the cow and heat up the milk in the cauldron. Chase the chicken. Add Chocolate. Get some Love. Give your mom a kiss. Count the marshmallows. Put cocoa in a cup. Add marshmallows

Notes: Enjoy your Magic!



Harlow

Grade 4, Holmes

The Message is nothing
A conceptual assemblage sculpture



Yes!

*Photo by Harlow and Maeve
(Grade 3) (Holmes)*





Jayce

Grade 3, Holmes

Alien Invasion



Animal Friendship



Jiuleonna

Grade 5, Holmes

Superwind





Jonell

Grade 5, Holmes

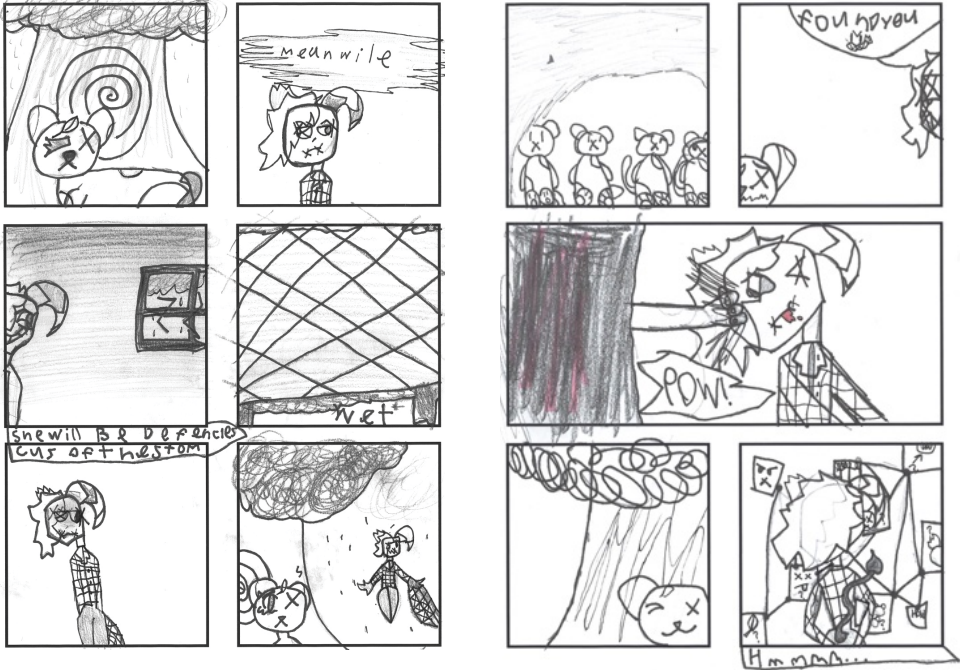
The Lady



Karen

Grade 5, Audubon

Lavender



Spring

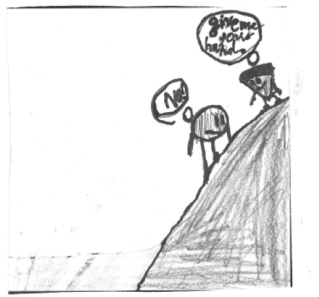
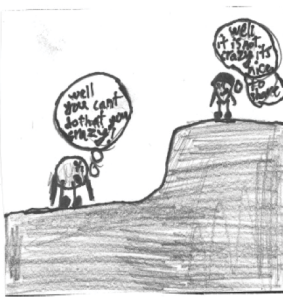


Photo by Karen (left), Corinne (Grade 3), and Kaydance (Grade 5) (Audubon)

Kaydance

Grade 5, Audubon

Pizza & Pepperoni



Trampoline School A thought painting

Imagine me changing the school into a trampoline park with me and my friends in charge and me breaking all the rules. My friends and other people are allowed in Summer for a celebration of the last day of elementary school.



Leila

Grade 4, Audubon

Stev Bob at Work



The Friends





Lienn

Grade 3, Holmes

The Wither Attacks



Beautiful





Maddox

Grade 5, Audubon

MAD-dox



Happiness A Surreal Recipe

*Ingredients: Happiness; emotion;
food; water; and deliciousness.*

Instructions:

*Measure a dash of happiness,
a pinch of salt, food in
general, a drop of emotion,
teaspoon of water, and grain
of deliciousness. Mix for 5 min.
Serve on a plate.*





Maeve

Grade 3, Holmes

The Sweet Pickles

The Sweet Pickles by Maeve



A Picnic

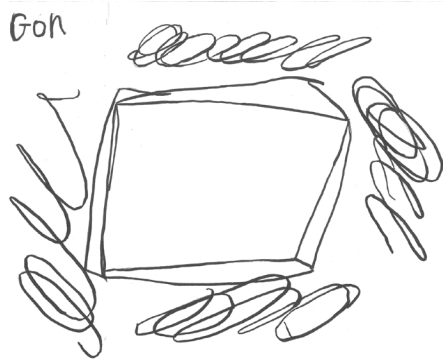
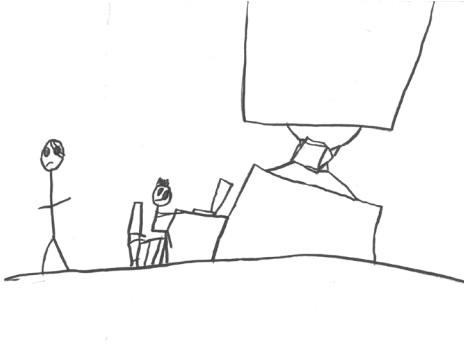




Micah

Grade 3, Audubon

The Unvengers



Micah



Daddy Eagle



Noah

Grade 3, Holmes

Storm Chaser



Tornado Monster





Nora

Grade 5, Audubon

Stealing Paris



Trusted **A mirror monologue**

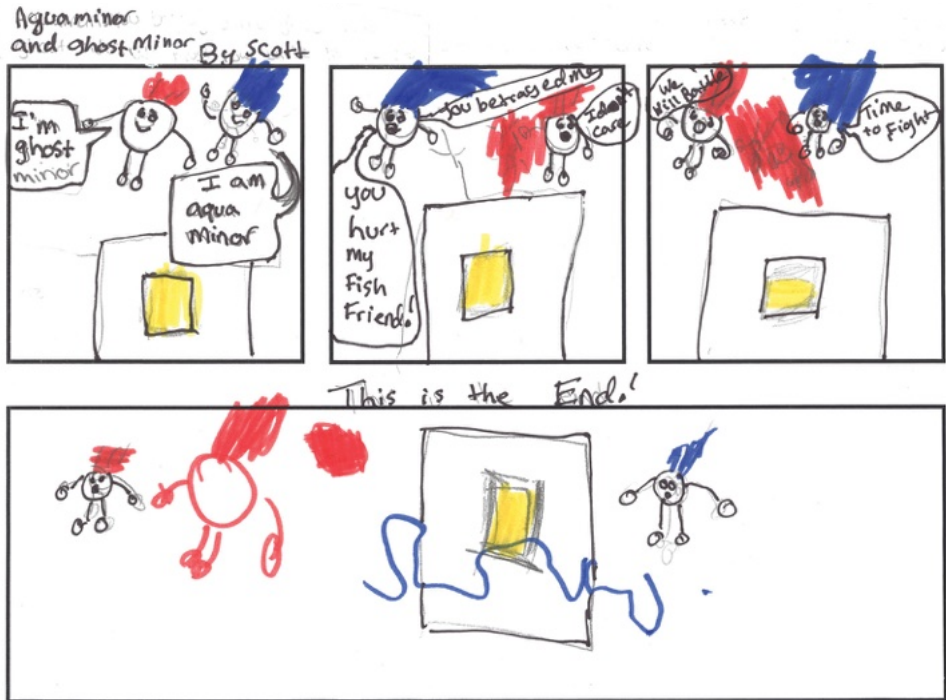
*I know that sometimes people
can't be trusted
But I know that Nora can be
trusted
And she is helpful, supported,
and confident.*



Scott

Grade 2, Holmes

Aqua Minor Cartoon



Imagine Minecraft A thought painting

*A pickaxe, a diamond, a cow, all pixelated.
Build everything except bedrock.
It's all a game silly.*

Stevie

Grade 3, Audubon

What It's Like in the Clouds



"I lied - it is fake." - Stevie



Tariq

Grade 3, Holmes

Tariq in the Sky



Space Out





Terence

Grade 5, Audubon

Football





Thea

Grade 3, Audubon

Fairy



Photographed: Nora (Grade 5, Audubon)



Person



Theo

Grade 3, Holmes

Fight of the Grand Masters



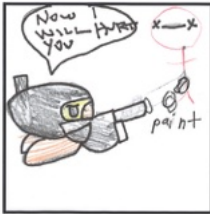
Super Theo



Wren

Grade 3, Audubon

Peanut's Revenge



Silly A mirror monologue

*I don't know.
I don't know.
I'm a silly girl.
I like being silly.
When I drink milk and laugh it
comes out of my nose.*

Wren Fairy





Sculptures





Surreal Photos





Paintings



Notes from Staff

From Wilson, Program Director:

Every day I work with Level Up students, they surprise me with their incredible capacity for creativity, adaptability, and collaboration. Whether they're brand new to our programs or third-year members, it seems like they never run out of ways to grow and innovate. Even third-year student faced new challenges working on this Arts Edition; it's not easy to find an idea that truly inspires you and shape it into something you can share with the world! To make it happen, they worked together, took creative risks, and practiced applying a growth mindset when encountering limitations.

Throughout the process of transforming ideas into the conceptual art, photographs, cartoons, and other artifacts included in this issue, our students grew their sense of self, sense of community, and sense of confidence as artists and storytellers. I hope you find a sample of their spirit here and find yourself laughing, contemplating, narrating, and celebrating with these amazing kids. Thanks for reading!

A Note from MX Terra, Level Up Program Manager:

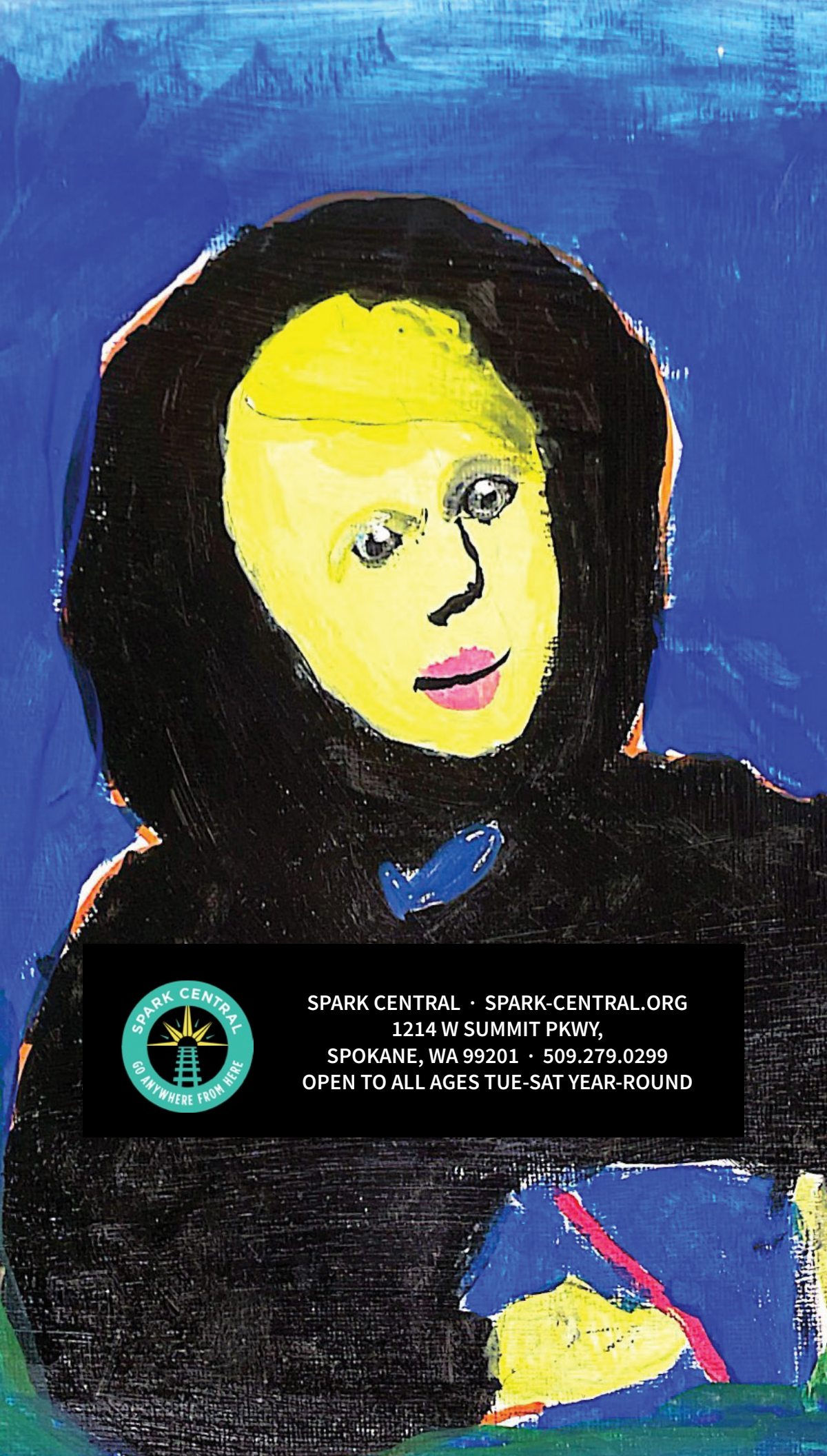
I am absolutely tickled purple by the adventure I am on with my friends at Spark Central. The opportunity to develop a new arts curriculum for our after school program, Level Up, has been a dream come true. In a former job where I tried to be a Batwoman (because police called me for help at night) I had to mentally go to my happy place a lot. Now I don't need to go to my happy place because I work there with all these incredible students in Level Up. I believe that helping young artists find their expressive voice is every bit as important as emergency rescue work.

Creative problem solving is a self-rescuing skill that our students can call up whenever they face challenges in their lives.

Huge shout out to Dr. Bedford who was our curriculum doula, Mr. Wilson Faust who was the first to suggest an arts focused edition to begin with, Nadia our designer and resident art gremlin, Krystianna our last minute art photographer, and to all our Level up mentors who work side by side with our students to guide and support their work. The best part of the job has been spending time with all of you - our Level Up artists!

THANKS TO OUR MENTORS!

*DEANA • ELLA • KAIA • KATELYN • KAYLA • KRYSTIANNA • MADISON
MEGAN • MINDY • NADIA • STEPHANY • TERRY • WILLOW*



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