

Special Issue with 826LA

Spring 2026

Epistle

Literary Magazine

Letter from the Editor

As I approached the one-year anniversary of beginning the World Literacy Foundation Youth Ambassador Program, I knew that I wanted to do something different to commemorate not only what *Epistle* has become, but also the people who reminded me why I started it. One of my earliest and strongest takeaways from the ambassador program was that, while much of what is broadcast about the global literacy effort is packaged into attention-grabbing statistics, the more significant impacts happen on a much smaller scale. Literacy isn't only about the mechanics of reading and writing. It's also about believing that one's words deserve to be read. I started *Epistle Literary Magazine* to celebrate the idea that lives can be changed by a single mentor, a single moment of respect and care. The feeling of being seen and taken seriously as an artist is invaluable; I remember the year my New Year's resolution was to submit to writing contests every month, and the day in late March when I got my first acceptance. It was for a sweet, silly poem I'd written a year or two earlier, one that would make me cringe now if not for the memory of how thrilled I was at the idea of seeing my name beneath a poem.

The act of submitting any writing for publication is a quietly brave one. Making oneself vulnerable to faceless editors and unknown readers is daunting enough that many adults still find it intimidating. And yet, at the same time, it is one of the most rewarding things in the world for an artist, and I knew that there could be no more fitting use of *Epistle* than as a venue for young writers to take that first step with support and celebration. I believe that there should be no age restrictions around being respected and validated as an artist; indeed, I firmly oppose the tendency to view children's writing as rehearsal for the "real" work they'll produce later, mere stepping stones on the way to supposedly more sophisticated writing. Children write with an unfiltered honesty and authentic perspective that many more experienced authors try desperately to reclaim. And that honesty is particularly touching when applied to a lens of gratitude.

This special issue of *Epistle* is close to my heart. I have been volunteering with 826LA, a local non-profit organization that helps youth develop their writing skills while encouraging creativity and self-expression. Upon reflection, I believe that mentoring at 826LA—watching children create with such imagination and share their work without fear of convention—was one of the things that inspired me to start *Epistle* in the first place. Partnering with 826LA seemed like a natural celebration of all that I have learned through *Epistle* so far, and I am so grateful to everyone who participated in this project. I'm excited to present a collection of letters written with heartfelt gratitude to mentors that have made a difference in these students' lives, and humbled to watch these authors see their names in print. I have learned so much from every child I've had the opportunity to work with. If this issue leaves even one young writer feeling more confident in sharing their stories with the world, I will consider it one of *Epistle's* greatest accomplishments. I sincerely hope that this issue connects with readers of all ages and reminds you all that it is never too early, nor too late, to share your voice with the world, and thank those who help you to do so.

Rory Baskin, *Editor-in-Chief*

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To Mr. Gonzalez

Sophia

Dear Mr. Gonzalez,

Everything I learned this school year is from YOU! I know a lot of everything because of YOU! We all know that you are not only the fun teacher but also the smart & best teacher. We appreciate all your hard work and effort into teaching us. I wish there were more teachers like you! Thank you for getting me to the gifted arts program of palms. Thank you for pushing me from my limits.

Thank you for everything I learned!

Sophia

Dear Mr. Gonzalez,

Everything I learned this school year is from **YOU!** I know a lot of every thing because of **YOU!** We all know that you are not only the fun teacher but also the smart & best teacher. We appreciate all your hard work and effort into teaching us. I wish there were more teachers like you! Thank you for getting me into the gifted arts program of palms. Thank you for pushing me from my limits.

Thank you
for everything
I learned!

Sophia



To Miss Diana

Natali

Dear Miss Diana

Thank you for helping me with math and reading Miss Diana. Thank you for taking care of us in the yard. Miss Diana you make me happy and what makes me happy is I like to talk to you, you are the best yard duty!

With love,

Natali

natali

Dear Miss: Diana

Thank you for helping me
on math and reading Miss Diana
thank you for taking care of
us in the yard. Miss Diana
you make me happy and what
makes me happy is I like to
talk to you you are the best
yard duty!

Miss: Diana With love, Natali



To Derick

Javier

Dear Derick,

The day I met you it was good we didn't really know each other, we just talk for like 30-40 min. It was time to go home. The next session, we met again you sat at my table, we got to know more about us. We laughed, we talked about One Piece, I was on volume one now I am on volume sixteen. Are you impressed?

Before we ever met I was bored at 826LA I barely talk to College Corps (French word). We were like best friend until you said "I won't be coming anymore". I was crushed, I said nothing, all I said was "why are you leaving?" You say why, I forgot why, I was sad. I went home and said to myself is he ever going to come back.

Javier

5/11/26

Dear Derrick,

The day I met you it was good we didn't really know each other we just talk for like 30 40 min. It was time to go home the next session we met again you sat at my table we got to know more about us we laughed we talked about one One Piece I was one volume one now I am on volume sixteen are you impressed?

Before we ever met I was bored at 826LA I barely talk to a college corpse ^{French word} we were like best friend until you said I won't be coming anymore. I was crushed I said nothing all I said was why are you leaving you said why I forgot why I was sad I went home and said to my self is he ever going to come back.

To Sra. Layra

Alan

Dear Sra. Layra

Thank you for teaching me how to solve composite figures. It helped me solve a composite figure on the state test. I appreciate you teaching me fourth grade math even though I'm in third grade. When you taught me how to add hundreds together, that helped me excel at math.

Sincerely,

Alan

Alan

5-11-2026

Dear Sra. Layva,

Thank you for teaching me how to solve composite figures. It helped me solve a composite figure on the state test.

I appreciate you teaching me fourth grade math even though I'm in third grade. When you taught me how to add hundreds together, that helped me excel at math.

Sincerely, Alan
Alan

To Angie

Ali

Dear Angie,

I loved when we first drew together. I was really content that we were drawing flowers together. It was really exciting drawing together and learning each other's art style. You taught me how to add shading to the drawing.

Ali

Dear andie,

I loved when we first drew
together. I was really ^{excited} ^{about}
that we were drawing ^{together}

It was really exciting drawing
together and learning each
others art style. You taught
me how to add shading to the
drawing.

-Alli

-Alli

To Danca

Camila

Dear Danca,

I'm very grateful to have you in my own life! Thank you for supporting me in the difficult times I have faced this year. Today on May 11th, 2026, you have made me feel special when I had a challenge come up. You tried not to make me cry. You gave me a heartfelt hug, and talked me out of it. You made me laugh in class when I most needed it. Each step I took you were on my side, no matter what happened between us. I feel my confidence building up when you are with me. I learned today that each person needs a friendly person on their side or a friend to help them get through the trauma. I love you to the moon and back, and I hope we know each other in adulthood to spend time with you. I really adore too much!

XOXO, yours truly Camila

From: Camila

May 11th, 26

Dear Dania

I'm very grateful to have you in my own life!
Thank you for supporting me in the difficult
times I have faced this year. Today on
May 11th, 26, You have made me feel
special when I had a challenge come up.
You tried not to make me cry, you gave
me a heartfelt hug, and talked me out of
it. You made me laugh in class when
I most needed it. Each step I took you
were on my side, no matter what happened
between us. I feel my confidence building
up when you are with me. I learned
today that each person needs a friendly
person on their side or a friend to
help them get through the trauma. I love
you to the moon and back, and I hope
we know each other in adulthood
to spend time with you. I really
adore you so much!

- XOXO, yours truly Camila

To My Coach

Hazel

For my coach,

Thank you for helping me improve. The little things you did for me really helped me grow and get better at my skills. I will never forget the All Star tournament. When you were encouraging me from the sidelines I felt powerful like nothing could stop me. But then something did stop me we lost but you helped me learn from that so I can do better next year. Thank you for all you do.

From,

Your student

May

11th

Hazel



Brain Storm

Basketball Coach

Allstar

For my coach,

Thank you for helping me improve. The little things you did for me really help me grow and get better at my skills. I will never forget the All Star tournament when you were encouraging me from the sidelines I felt powerful like nothing could stop me. But then something did stop me we lost but you helped me learn from that so I can do better next year. Thank you for all you do.

From,

Your student

To Ms. Blond

Daniel

Dear, Ms Blond

Thank you for teaching and helping us for everything we reviewed over the maths, long division, area model, area and perimeter, and angles. I feel like a math magician now. Thank you for everything. Thanks also for letting us do i-
Ready to learn too. Reading is tough, but math is way better. Thank you for everything.

Daniel

Dear, Ms. Blond

Thank you for teaching
and helping us for everything
we reviewed over the
maths, long division, area model,
area and perimeter, and angles.

I feel like a math magician
now. Thank you for everything.

- ~~Daniel~~ Thanks also for letting
us do I-ready to learn
too. Reading is tough, but
math is way better. Thank
you for everything.

- Daniel



To Mr. Valinski

Arturo

Dear Mr. Valinski,

This teacher lets me see myself & mistake unlike other teachers that tell at you if you're wrong. Though the moment you helped me is when you notice mistakes but also helps me after class to work on my material to get to my next rank. Even if you're tired or doesn't get paid. You still come to help me every Friday in karate. It was a pleasure to be with you too. I can see you as a friend to me. Thank you for getting me from my white belt to brown belt

From your friend: Arturo L.

Antonio L

Dear Mr. V/ Valinski, this teacher lets me see myself & mistake unlike other teachers that yell at you if your wrong, though the moment you helped me is when ~~you~~ ^{you} noticed mistakes but also helps me after class to work on my material to get to my next rank, even if ~~has~~ ^{you're} tired or doesn't get paid. ~~He~~ ^{you} still comes to help me every Friday in Karate. Thank you for getting me from white belt to brown belt.

from your friend: Antonio L (Mr. Lazaro)

It was a pleasure to be with you to, I can see you as a friend to me.

To Ms. Luciano

Leila

Dear Ms. Luciano

Day after day I learned something new from fractions to multiplication and even division, from letters to fantastic words that explode my writing in every way, to enjoy a successful year at school and make this year a better memory than it was going to be, for me coming home with more good news than I can explain, and lastly a great year at school.

Leila

Dear Ms. Luciano from Leila

Day after day
I learned something new
from fractions to multiplication
and even division,
from letters to fantastical
words that explode my writing
in every way,
to enjoy a successful year
at school
and make this year a better
memory than it was going to
be, for me coming home
with more good news than
I can explain, and lastly a great
year at school.

Leila



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