You cannot be a writer unless you see yourself as one. Each middle school program begins with an exploration of ourselves as writers, creators, and communicators. Some work is created by the individual, and some work is a collaborative effort among several people.

Enjoy youth pieces from Podium partners at:

1. Nextup - Elkhardt Thompson MS
2. Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club
3. Higher Achievement - Binford MS
4. Nextup - Lucille Brown MS
5. YMCA STAR - Quioccasin MS

Identity and Voice

Dominique S.
Elkhart Thompson MS

My voice is confident because I can stand up for my rights. Women did not used to have the same rights as everyone else. Everyone should have the same voice and have confidence.

Ric'Kara C.
Lucille Brown MS

Ric'Kara is a sassy person who attends Elkhardt Thompson MS and is in the 7th grade. She uses her voice to command the room and to give people the respect they deserve. Ric'Kara can be extra if she wants to but always tries to be kind to others.

Abdoulatif F.
Lucille Brown MS

Abdoulatif is a gamer at heart, but he doesn't only play games. He also plays violin, solves Rubik's Cubes, plays soccer, and is full of energy.
My family adopted a dog recently. There were many dogs at this place, but there was only one that I wanted. I wanted to convince my family that this dog was the right dog.

I told my family that this dog needed a home, and that we could be that home. I told my family that I could help take care of this dog, and they agreed.

All dogs deserve to have a home, and more people should step up and adopt more dogs.

Haiku!

Storms
Jada F.
Lucille Brown MS

Lightning storms give peace.
Life is not as beautiful.
Sleeping through the storm.

Cat Haiku
Kevin G.
Binford MS

I liked my good cat.
I had my cat for a while.
My cat is now dead.

Animals
Ric’Kara C.
Elkhardt Thompson MS

Animals can fly and swim.
They can hunt prey, but
Animals are also prey.

My Accomplishments
Phoenix D.
Binford MS

Solo in dance class
I broke my wrist and didn't cry.
Making friends.
Happiness
Dominique S
Elkhardt Thompson MS

I like to play with my dogs.
I also love math.
These things bring me happiness.

Childhood
Sophie B.
Lucille Brown MS

Preserve childhood.
Do not let it go to waste,
Or you’ll lose your chance

TRY IT! Write your own Haiku!

Haiku is a form of structured poetry with 3 lines and 17 syllables.

The first line has 5 syllables
The second has 7 syllables
The third has 5 syllables

Line 1 (5 syllables) ________________________________

Line 2 (7 syllables) ________________________________

Line 3 (5 syllables) ________________________________
I got a better grade on a test than I expected.
I flew on a plane.
I traveled in a plane.
I started becoming more extroverted.
I got second place on a quiz that I struggled with.

I was in my math class, and we had to take a mastery quiz. I tried my best, and some of the questions were difficult. Instead of giving up I persevered and tried my best. When my teacher called off the top grades, my name was second. I was very proud of myself.

Dancing is extremely important to me because ever since I was young, I always wanted to dance and step out of my comfort zone. I wanted to grow in my perspective from dancing. I first started dancing when I was about 5 or 7. It was only for fun because it made me happy; but now, I dance because I feel like it is my passion. It helps me express how I actually feel and helps a lot with my emotions. I think it’s my second happy place. I also feel confident in what I do. My dancing makes other people happy, which makes me happy.

I had a quiz in English class, and it was about reading. I was worried about this quiz, but I studied, so I became less worried. I felt fine when I was taking the quiz. I felt confident. I felt good after I took the quiz. When we learned our grades after the quiz. I got a 100% and felt perfect. I was proud of myself for doing well.
Spanish Midterm
Jada F.
Lucille Brown MS

One big-ish accomplishment was that I didn’t fail my Spanish midterm. I didn’t have my Spanish -English dictionary, and for that reason, I wrote some words in English instead of Spanish. But most of it was in Spanish. I got the best friend prompt which was easy. My teacher hasn’t graded it yet, but I know it wasn’t an F. Soon, I have to do the second part which has multiple choices. The only bad part is that we only get 40-min to finish 80 questions.

School
Dominique W.
Elkhart Thompson MS

Going to school is my greatest accomplishment. If I didn’t go to school, I wouldn't be able to meet any new people, and I would be lonely. I wouldn't be able to see my friends, and I wouldn't be able to pass and arrive at some of my goals. Now, I know that I can be anything I want to be. There’s nothing different I would do to change it. It makes me feel better to be in school.

My Accomplishments
Tiesha S.
Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club

I accomplished...
- Going through the whole day without eating almost every other hour!
- Getting out of bed this morning.
- Stopping myself from doing something that might have gotten me in trouble today.

I accomplished going through the whole day without eating every other hour! I forced myself not to bring snacks to school, so that I can complete this goal. I eat a lot because it relieves stress for me and makes me happy! Many people say I don’t look like I eat at all, but actually I eat way too much! Teachers and school can be very stressful. So I eat the stress away. At least I'm not gaining too much weight.

Hold up, wait a minute! I never bring drinks. I should start. Imagine if I ate a Popeyes biscuit. Wow, I could choke because of how dry they are without a drink! I’m bringing snacks tomorrow.
**Advocacy**

*In Podium programs, youth learn about the importance of standing up for those who might not be able to stand up for themselves.*

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**Adopt Animals at the SPCA**
Nakia A.
Elkhartd Thompson MS

- Reasons to adopt or go to the SPCA:
  - You can play with the dogs.
  - The animals get to see people.
  - You can give the animals food and a bed.
  - Animals deserve a loving home to go to where they can eat steak.

To help these animals, I would bring them food, beds, and toys. I want people to take care of dogs and not abandon them because dogs can't stand up for themselves. I think it's cruel for people to hurt animals. My final goal is to increase adoptions and raise money for the SPCA! With more money, they could help more animals.

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**LGBTQ Rights**
Kristjan D.
Binford MS

My advocacy is about LGBTQ rights. Some people don't like LGBTQ people. That's okay because it's their opinion, but at the same time, it's wrong because you have to accept people for who they are. Don't call them offensive names and use correct pronouns.

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**My Teacher**
Amon T.
Lucille Brown MS

I want to speak for my dead teacher. She was the best teacher ever, and she was the nicest person ever. This was a result of drunk driving, so I think people should drink less.
Women's Equality  
Kevin G. and Zander S.  
Binford MS

We would advocate for women's equality. For every dollar a man makes, a woman gets 70 cents. This is a good example of unequal rights for women. Men are more likely to get better paying jobs than women. There are often more men in the military than women. To raise awareness for equal rights to women, we can contact government officials. They can solve the problem better than we can.

Gun Violence  
Abdoulatif F.  
Lucille Brown MS

Did you know that hundreds of people die from gun violence every day? This should not be the case. Killing people doesn't help. Somebody who was killed today could have been a doctor tomorrow. When you kill somebody's child, their parents and family get depressed. It hurts many people. For example, when people die from gun violence, their deaths affect many people, and even people they didn't know.

People die for all sorts of reasons, but we can prevent gun violence. I would like to encourage people to vote for politicians who stand against gun violence.

#RescueTheDogs  
EJ V.  
Elkhardt Thompson MS

Step up and help all dogs. Dogs are being treated badly, so we should step up for them. Ways to start are to donate money to GoFundMe, so I can build a shelter for dogs for people who don't want their dogs and/or stray dogs. I will also make a clothing line for people who love and care about dogs.

Student Advocacy  
Leilani J.  
Lucille Brown MS

Being a student is terrible, because we get a lot of work. There are too many grades. Most of my grades are good, but in some subjects, they're not so good. That's why we don't need school. Also, some teachers don't like teaching, and they stay annoying.
Advice Columns

Sometimes, we need to reach out to someone we trust for help. It’s okay to ask for advice when we need it!

Danica D.
Lucille Brown MS

I’ve been learning three languages, Russian, German, and Swedish. I do know that I must tone it down on them all; however, I like to learn multiple languages at once. I’ve been losing motivation lately. I haven’t popped into class in awhile, and my German and Swedish skills are depleting.

-Tankie

Maybe you should try to inspire yourself. Calm down on the amounts of languages you’re learning. Just try your best to keep your linguistic learning to a minimum and inspire yourself.
-Annarkiddy

Dominique S.
Elkhart Thompson MS

Dear Jennifer,

I am in a big love triangle, it makes me want to scream. I am married and have another boyfriend. My boyfriend also has a wife! I just found out my husband got another girl pregnant with twins. What should I do? How should I tell my husband I know his secret? How should I tell my boyfriend I know the truth?

-Elise

Dear Elise,

You should tell those men you’re done. You should get a divorce and break up with your boyfriend. You should find a new man who has no kids, no wives, and no husbands. And that’s it. Don’t worry about those men and just focus on yourself.

-Jennifer
Poetry

Needed
Aiden T.
Binford MS

I always spend my time
On one, little person,
But in the end
It's not even worth it.
Sometimes,
I don't like the way I am treated.
Why do I always need to be needed?

Imagination
Daisy R.
Lucille Brown MS

Imagination is only a word. Unless you give it a meaning,
but the meaning you give it is only to your pleasing.
One can be an evil mastermind all over the world,
or be a fairy princess or queen of your own world…
Knowing imagination can be scary,
you can see things that are not there and be scared.
But, you will use it wisely.
Imagination is an opportunity,
and this is a warning, you only get one.
You better make it count.
Now you have been warned and alarmed,
and remember it's an opportunity,
so don't take it too far.

Good Vibes
Nakia A.
Elkhardt Thompson MS

The gates of the garden shivered open when the wind blew.
The wind is giving oxygen to the flowers and fruit.
Strawberries and dandelions dancing with the wind.
I am there too.
Giving water to the flowers and fruit. The sun is out, shining.
Underneath, I play music to the flowers and fruit.

Happiness
Cedric M.
Lucille Brown MS

Happiness is something you use to
bottle up emotions.
The thing you regret most
is when you use it in rapid motion
Jasmine’s Accident
Ric'Kara C.
Lucille Brown MS

Jasmine used to cry all day and night. She had friends, but she still felt alone, so she usually didn’t hang out with them. Sometimes, when she felt sad, she went to her backyard, until one day when she was bitten by a snake. She didn’t know what the snake was, but she thought it was okay. The next day, she started to feel dizzy, so she told her older sister. Jasmine said it was a purple and white snake, and her sister told her what type of snake it was because she knew a lot about snakes and other animals. Later, she passed out, and her sister took her to the hospital.

When Jasmine awoke, she was in a hospital bed, and her sister, brother, and Mom were there. They were all crying. The doctor hadn’t come yet, but they hoped she’d be ok. When the doctor came in, she had a sad face on. When the sister asked if she would be okay, the doctor said that Jasmine has been bitten by a poisonous snake. They didn’t have a cure for it, so the doctor signed her up for a trial to try her best to help her. The next day, they found a cure. They did some surgery and gave Jasmine medicine. She was able to fully recover.

Florida
Ashley C.
Elkhardt Thompson MS

When I was 8 or 9 years old, we went to Miami, Florida. I carried a dolphin, and it made a loud noise like an ambulance or a fork scratching a plate. The dolphin kissed me, and I kissed the dolphin. It was way too salty, like pistachios.
Biography
Ja’Nyla J.
Lucille Brown MS

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Ja’Nyla. When she was born, she had a lot of surgeries. They made her stronger. She went to therapy every two weeks. At first she felt weak, but she learned how to get better. She worked really hard on it. She was very determined to keep going so she could get stronger. Then, she had another surgery that she needed to get through. She couldn’t bend her knees well, so she went to therapy again. After a few weeks, she became stronger again! She was very resilient!

The next surgery is in April. It’s a little scary, but Ja’Nyla knows that she is strong and can get through it!

Smile Review
Jackie S.
Binford MS

Smile was about a girl who didn’t learn to love her smile until high school. I liked the book because it was based off of a true story and was interesting. Once you pick it up, you can’t put it down. Smile is a 4 out of 5 rating.

The Wish
Tiana T.
Elkhardt Thompson MS

A sad girl lived in a village with only one wishing well and tents to sleep in. The girl wished she had a spell book and a magic wand. On a cold night, standing on a bridge under the moon, she saw a shooting star and made her wish. In the morning, she woke up to a spell book with a lock and an abacus key. She opened the spell book with the key and found a magic wand with a question mark. She followed the clues and ended up near a beehive. Stung by a magic bee, she developed powers to fly and transform into any animal she wanted. And the sad village wasn’t sad anymore.

My Grandmother
Jadon M.
Lucille Brown MS

I help my grandmother cook, and I cook for her. She has a respiratory infection, so I help her clean and wash the dishes for her, so she doesn’t have to work as much and not be stressed out.
Personification Story
Jada F.
Lucille Brown MS

One day on Donald Duck Drive, there was an end of Summer party with M&M, French Fry, Chips, Watermelon, Skittles, and Chicken. Everyone was having a lot of fun eating food, playing games, and jumping in the pool. French Fry saw Chicken and M&M in a room alone, and mind you, Chicken and Chips were dating. French Fry told Chips, and Chips was FURIOUS! Chips busted open the door and yelled “What are you doing with my boyfriend?”

M&M sat there in silence, looking at Chips with fear rushing through her veins. Chips looks at M&M like she was about to murder her. You see, in movies with dramatic plots, the mean girl always dates the athlete.

Then, French Fry walked in on Chicken and Chips arguing with M&M in the corner and watched it all. French Fry decided to record the conversation, and a few minutes later, French Fry posted it online. People commented things like, “Break up of the summer” and “Wow!!!” Back to Chicken and Chips fight though.

Chips decided to slap him across the face and leave the scene crying an entire whole ocean. M&M sat there with a depressed look in her eyes and said in her nice sweet voice, “I’m sorry for causing all this.”

Chicken said, “It's okay. She was annoying and toxic to me anyway.” Then he laughed, which made M&M laugh too. Watermelon walked in and asked them both, “Are you okay?”

They say together, “Yes!” Watermelon sends them out and later bumps into Skittle. They lock eyes. What happens next is amazing... TO BE CONTINUED!

Like a Bird
Ashley C.
Elkhartd Thompson MS

I feel like a bird, or a monkey, and also a sloth! I feel like a bird because I like to travel. Specifically, I’d be a goose because they’re wild and crazy, like me!

I am not a huge fan of bread, but I do like sweet bread. Pon putsecone pulse vojo en medio. It’s one of my favorites! It has cinnamon, oatmeal, sugar, candy, and wheat!
Growing up
Gregory S., Daniel S., Ender B., Gregory P., Lavinia O., Marisabel T., and Abdiel G.
YMCA STAR - Quioccasin MS

Cons
- Too much responsibility
- Having families and buying stuff for them
- Paying bills
- The stress and anxiety of high school
- Too much homework and projects

Pros
- Independent
- You can have babies when you're married
- You can have a family
- You can play high school sports

What if all of the pro's come true?
When we are independent, we will take care of ourselves and buy the things we need. When we work, someone, maybe our boss, will tell us what to do. Someone may tell you what to do, like your brothers, but you get to decide. Maybe we will have kids, between 1 and 2 kids. Maybe we will get married. Maybe we will have pets. Hopefully, we will have stable homes and work. We want to have jobs as an electrical engineer, a financial manager, a soccer player, and maybe, a basketball player.

Like A Wolf
Abby B.
Elkhardt Thompson MS

I love my dogs, and I love music. I am like my dogs because I am like a wolf! I am like a wolf because I am a leader, mean, independent, scary, and rude.
The sun charges the tree.

Then the tree printer starts printing money.

Then you say the password and get the money.

The password is your initial and your address.

You can only do it in an emergency. You still have to work.

This is better because you don't have to struggle.
Invention: Homework Machine
Group Piece
YMCA STAR - Quioccasin MS

Problem being solved: we have too many homework assignments, so this would help us do some! “If you don’t want to do your homework, Do this!”

1. The Homework Machine does all kinds of work: math, science, history, and English!
2. It has a printing machine, but it’s smaller.
3. You put your homework in the machine, scan it, and then it does your homework (drawings and colors are unique to everyone).
4. It writes everything in your handwriting, so that your teachers think it is your own.
5. This is different from a computer because it prints out automatically and connects to any device!
6. We sell it at our school and at different schools nearby:
   a. $10 completes 1 subject, and you can buy different ones for different subjects.
   b. $1 million does everything!
Each of us has an expressive voice. In Project Write Now and Teen Scene, amazing middle schoolers team up with their friends and mentors to learn new skills and techniques to become more confident writers.

Youth have fun exploring the world of words and create this literary zine filled with their thoughts, opinions, hopes, and dreams.

Are you an aspiring writer? Connect with us @podiumrva on Instagram

To learn more, visit us at www.podiumrva.org!

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