

# National Merit Finalist

Congratulations to Mineola High School senior Neilah Rustemi who has been named a finalist in the 2019 National Merit Scholarship Competition. Neilah is one of 15,000 students nationwide, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors who qualify as a finalist in the 64th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.



About 1.6 million juniors in more than 22,000 high schools entered the 2019 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2017 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which served as an initial screen of program entrants. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for one of the 2,500 National Merit Scholarships worth \$2,500 each that will be awarded in the spring.

Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies. Winners are expected to be announced in March.

# Sophomore Wins \$50K Scholarship

Congratulations to Mineola High School 10th-grader Yesenia Hanif who was named the grand prize winner in the Univisión/ACT Contest, Sweet 15: A Dream Achieved Contest. Hosted by Univisión's "Despierta América" morning show, the purpose of the contest was to inspire girls to showcase their academic skills and to provide financial assistance to help students realize their postsecondary dreams. Yesenia was the grand prize winner, which earned her a \$50,000 scholarship.

After meeting application qualifications (including a minimum GPA of 3.5)

and completing a series of challenges, Yesenia appeared on the program several times throughout the fall and earned one of the top three prizes, which was a paid Quinceañera. Hers was held Dec. 7, 2018, at a local venue and hosted by Univisión. She was announced later that month, live on air, as the show's grand prize winner after answering the question: If you were invincible for a day, what would you do?

"I'm very excited and grateful to know that I have a financial security blanket to allow me to achieve and pursue my goals without fear of college debts," Yesenia said



of the prize. "Everyone here in Mineola was so supportive, even as I frequently had to fly to Miami to be on the show."

Her mom heard about the contest while listening to "Despierta América" at home one morning and urged Yesenia to apply.

# CHALLENGER BASKETBALL

Basketball has proven no challenge for members of the district's Challenger basketball team. Coached by retired teacher Martin Joyce, the team is in its third year at Mineola High School and consists of approximately 15 male and female players who don't participate on varsity teams.

The team meets from February to April and participates in six games against other Challenger teams. The home games really draw a large crowd and the entire school community comes to support the team, including cheerleaders cheering at the games and performances by band members. Members of the school's other athletic teams will also volunteer their time to help train members of the Challenger team, run drills with them and keep them motivated throughout practices and games.

"I have always said, the strength of Mineola is that everyone is accepted," Coach Joyce said. "This team really allows all of our students to feel connected and to share in the school spirit."

Participation on the team has many advantages for the students involved, including:

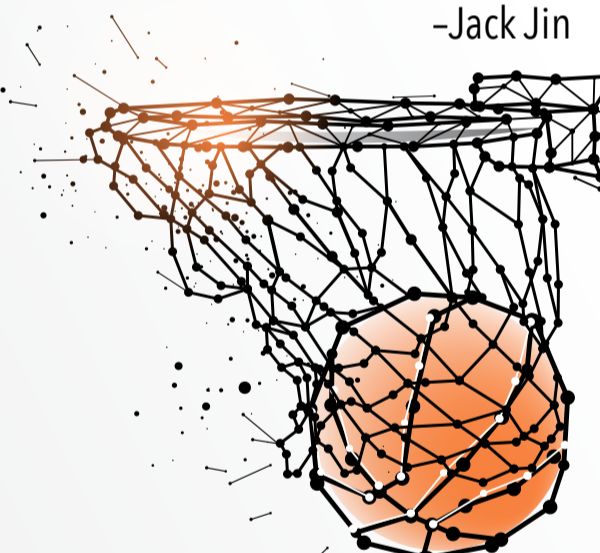
- Learning the skill of basketball
- Teamwork
- A little bit of competition
- School spirit/connection to school
- Increased socialization

*"I feel like it's a great experience for me. I've grown close to all my teammates, and we always show good sportsmanship. And one thing I've learned is that when I'm playing, it lets me get all my stress out."*

-Aidan Bongiorno, Grade 12

*"I made a lot of friends on the team. I love getting the ball into the net."*

-Jack Jin

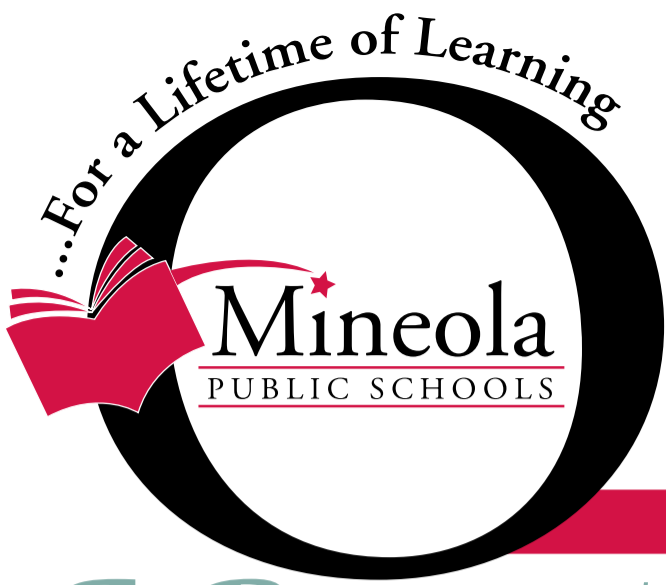


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# Outreach

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## A Presentation of Knowledge

With the adoption of an integrated curriculum for grades K-7 (featured in the September 2018 Outreach), instructional leaders also adopted a different approach to assessing student understanding of the work in each unit. Called an Application of Knowledge Assessment, or AKA, it allows students to present their understanding of a unit's "essential question" in a way that allows for choice in expression.

For example: For the grade 6 essential question: How do turning points lead to change? A student can create any of the following as an AKA to show comprehension of the concept:

- Written paper
- Oral presentation
- Creation of a model
- Creation of a video
- Use of an app
- Artwork
- Sitemap

"We are trying to get students to apply what they know and connect disciplines in a creative

way that is not limited to just passing a multiple-choice test," said Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Matthew Gaven.

AKAs are unique to Mineola School District and were created by the district's instructional leaders, together with Mr. Gaven and Dr. Moriarty, to create options and opportunity for increased achievement and understanding. Students are not graded on the presentation itself, but on their growth throughout the unit and how well they comprehend the essential question.

"It's a creative way to demonstrate true understanding of a rigorous concept," Director of ENL Dr. Nicole Moriarty said. "When you provide that application, all students are successful. It really taps into the idea of multiple intelligences and prepares our students for the level of thinking required at the high school level, in life in general and beyond."

*"It's all about – how can we excite the students? School should be excitement and wonder."*

– Nicole Moriarty, Ed.D., Director of ENL



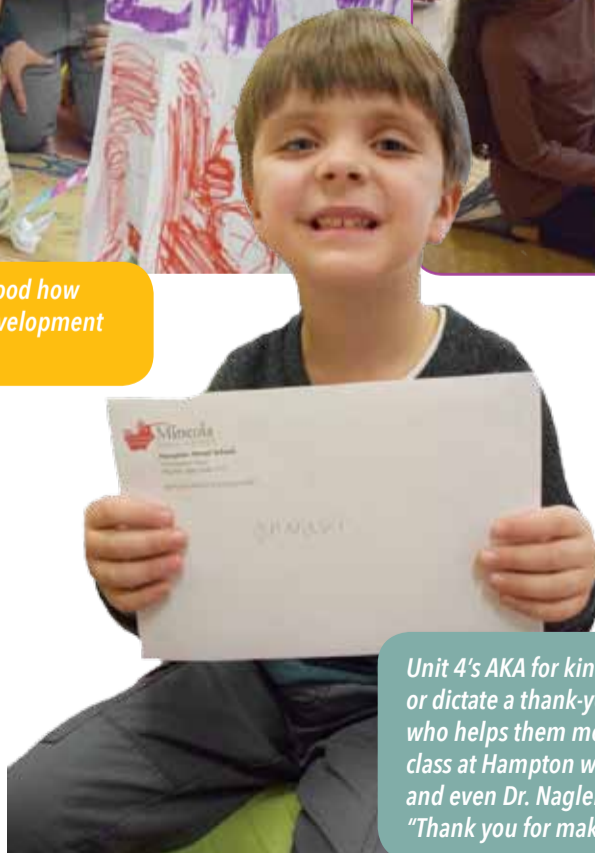
Second-graders culminated their unit on communities by showing that they understood how communities change over time. Each of the classes created maps that showed the development of their community.



To culminate their Unit 2 lessons, sixth-graders had to create a project that illustrated their understanding that turning points lead to dynamic change. Ms. Clifford's Dual-Language Class presented their projects in a gallery walk that featured artwork and iMovies. Pictured here, this group performed a skit from *The Grinch* that illustrated the turning point in the movie.

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Unit 4's AKA for kindergarten asked students to write, draw or dictate a thank-you letter to a person or community helper who helps them meet their needs. Students in Nicole Oddo's class at Hampton wrote to the custodians, nurse, gym teacher and even Dr. Nagler. Pictured, Christian Eliades wrote: "Thank you for making school safe. I love when you visit us."