



Teaching *for*  
**TRANSFORMATION**

# **Reading Pen Pals with El Padul Christian School**

## *6th grade English Language Arts*

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NCAI



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## Deep Hope:



## Long Term Learning Targets:

- 🎯 I can courageously build community through effective discussion.
- 🎯 I can strengthen my reading skills in order to serve others.



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## Curricular Outcomes:

RI.6.2/RL.6.2	summarizing texts
RL.6.3	describing plot and character development in a story
SL.6.1	engaging in effective collaborative discussions

*Note: This FLEx was a collaborative effort between English Language Arts and Spanish. This presentation mainly reflects the ELA portion of this FLEx.*



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## Habits of Learning:

### Gracious Communicating

Students wrote in Spanish to their penpals each week for 9 weeks. They practiced gracious communicating by:

- *Including an appropriate greeting and closing to each entry*
- *Asking questions and responding to questions in order to build relationships*
- *Sharing about their reading in a meaningful way*
- *Celebrating common interests*

### Joy-Filled Collaboration

NCAI's 6th grade students embraced the challenge of encouraging their penpal to build good reading habits. They understood that their individual effort played a valuable role in meeting El Padul's learning objectives.



## See God's Story:

### RESTORATION:

#### **Restoration in Education**

- *Colegio Cristiano El Padul* follows the traditional Nicaraguan system of learning that depends on copy work and rote memorization. An independent reading program strengthened by pen pal correspondence nurtured students at the mission in meaningful reading and writing; building skills necessary for all other learning.

#### **Restorative Relationships**

- The pen pal correspondence was a means of building relationships between students of different race, culture, and economic status. Students found commonality and developed friendships that challenged deep-set prejudices. This FLEx saw a piece of God's Restoration Story realized.

# Dare to build

*Encourage one another and build each other up*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

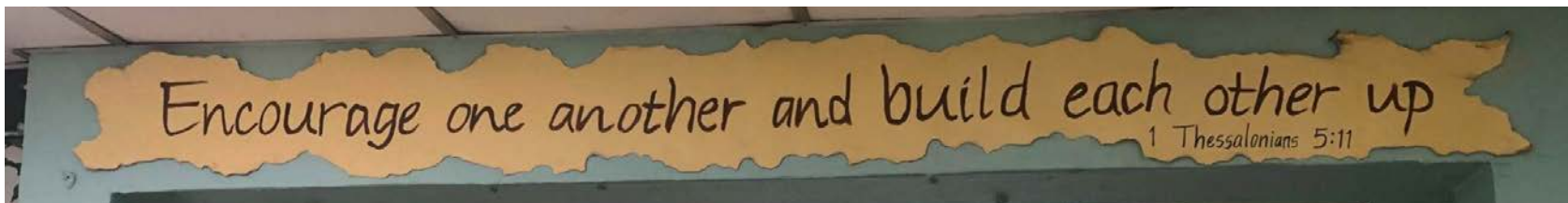
## Storyline:

Students build their own English reading, summarizing, and discussion skills

Students are courageous in writing to a stranger.

Students build meaningful relationship with another student.

Students are courageous in encouraging another students in their learning.







## Throughlines:

### Community Building

Students build friendships with other 6th graders

### Servant Working

Students use their own time, learning, and abilities in order to support the learning of others. In this way, they are serving individuals, serving the *El Padul* mission, serving their community, and ultimately serving the Lord.





## Formational Learning Experience:

**Real needs:** To strengthen the elementary education program in an inner-city mission school

**Real people:** Twenty-five 6th grade students at a local mission school in Managua, Nicaragua

**Real work:** Weekly correspondence with a local 6th grader: accountability for independent reading progress

## INVITE

**January, 2025**

- Students saw a short video about the local mission school, *El Padul*, discussed their observations, and came up with a list of questions they had about the school and its needs.
- Students interviewed Jennifer Ibarra. Mrs. Ibarra is an alumni of *El Padul* and currently teaches English as a Foreign Language at *El Padul*.
- Students brainstormed ideas on how to best support the mission school



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- Brainstorming questions for our guest
- Interviewing Jennifer
- Brainstorming ideas for our FLEx

When does the school year begin?

What do you like about your job?

What are the challenges?

What are your hopes for the students?

What are their learning challenges?

What areas are you getting the students to grow in?

## FLEx

Real people      the students at Colegio Cristiano El Padul

Real needs, Real work

Donate materials: uniforms, shoes, soccer balls, books

Raise funds for: a breakfast program, a playground, a reading space or library

PenPals

Host a mini field trip

Visit the school:

Read to students

Help set-up a library

Worship together

Teach students about Kindness, Dare2Share, Prayer

Teach students English

Help students with schoolwork/homework



## NURTURE

### February-March, 2025

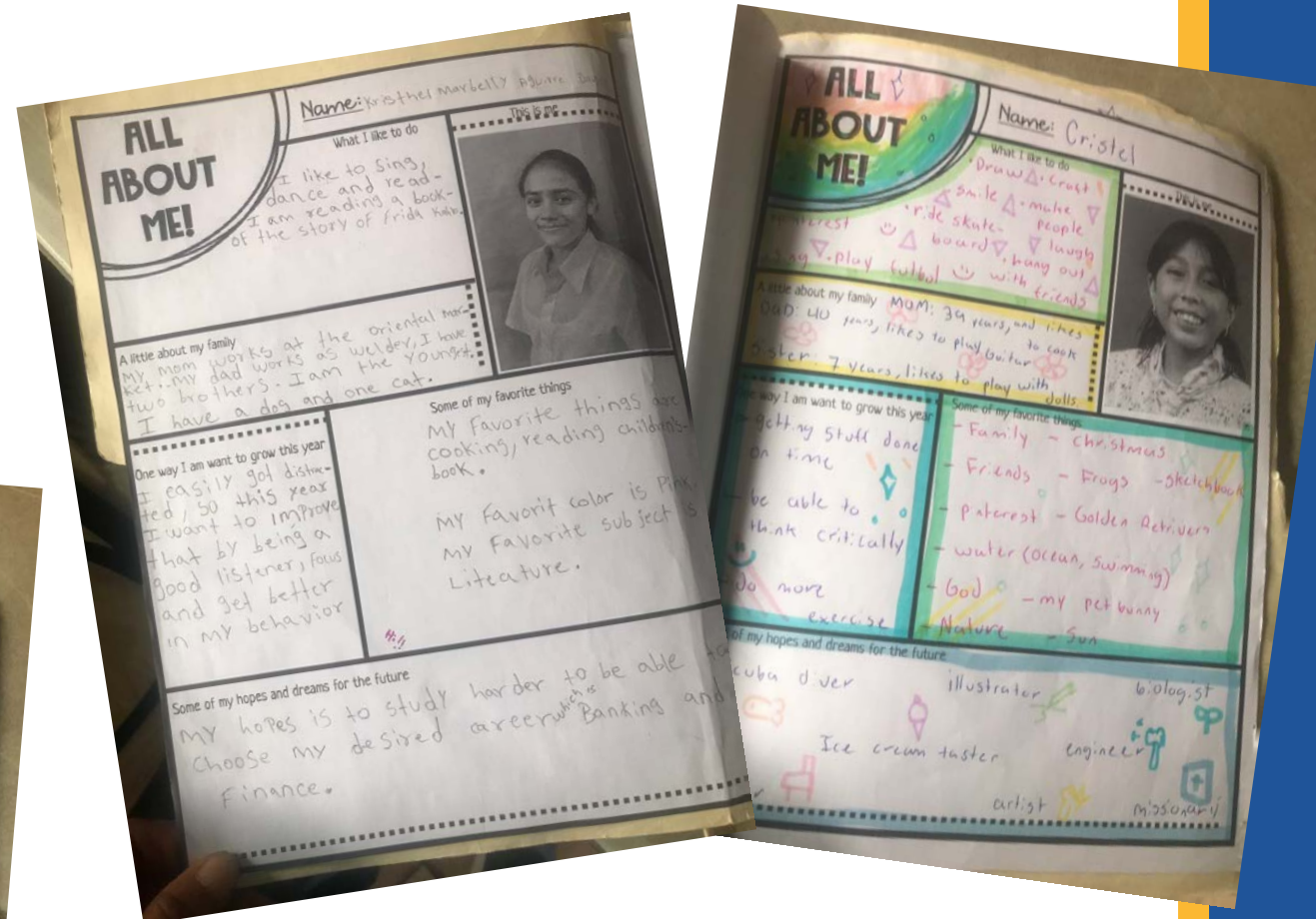
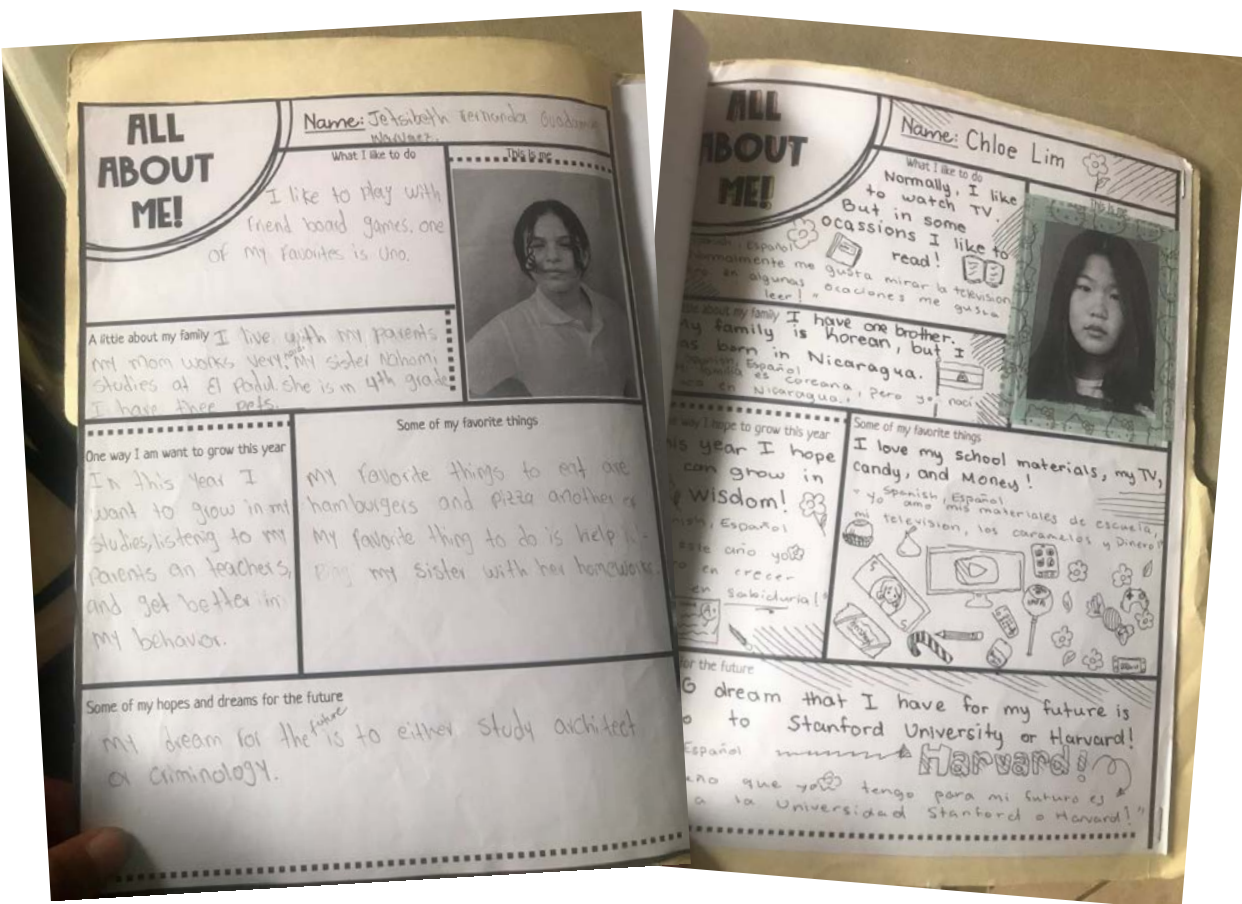
- The students introduced themselves in a 'All About Me' page that included a picture of the student. The El Padul 6th grade class made their own 'All About Me' page. These became part of a reading log/correspondence journal shared by each set of pen pals.
- In ELA, students were held accountable for their independent reading (AR) by writing weekly summaries. These summaries were the basis for grammar and writing work.
- The journal was transported between schools on a weekly basis. Students read the entry from their penpal and responded. Often, while responding, real time photos were exchanged between the two 6th grade classes and displayed on the overhead projector.
- Students reflected on growth and challenges of the FLEx in a personal Reflection Journal.
- Students met in small groups to discuss the growth and challenges.





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- An 'All About Me' page allows pen pals to introduce themselves







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- Weekly independent reading summaries. These were often revisited for grammar and writing lessons.
- The students translated these summaries into Spanish as they wrote to their pen pals about their reading.

Name Marissa 26th

Title Hank the cowdog its adogs life

Page Number: 119 - Finished

2.5

## AR Reading EXIT TICKET

Author Jhon B erickson

Hank the Cowdog starts of his day with going to bed because he had the night shift. So he goes to bed. But then his sidekick Drover wakes him up, screaming. Drover yells "Hank, Hank, Hank, 'It's the end of the world' what are you talking about!" said Hank. "END OF THE WORLD!" No it's not Drover yes it is, no it's not. Check the calendar. How it's in the house said Hank. Fine, I'll check. Hank goes to the window cuts a hole in it.

Good!  
can I use this to  
teach dialogue!?

↑  
not finished

Name Jhasleen #24

Title Diary of a Wimpy Kid Big Shot

Page Number: 27 - 30

## AR Reading EXIT TICKET

Author Jeff Kinney

There is this kid called Greg. Greg thinks that he will never be good at sports. Greg's dad asked Greg if he wanted to go to see the American football game. Greg accepted, so they went. Greg was super ultra mega mad cause he could not see the game cause every body was standing up. The good thing is that Greg saw something called Jumbotron. Greg wanted to be ridiculous because when it was brake time, they use the Jumbotron to make fans laugh. For example there was the kiss cam that if the put you in the Jumbotron you had to KISS.

Name Chloe Lim #25

Title The Lost Hero

Page Number: 1 - 200

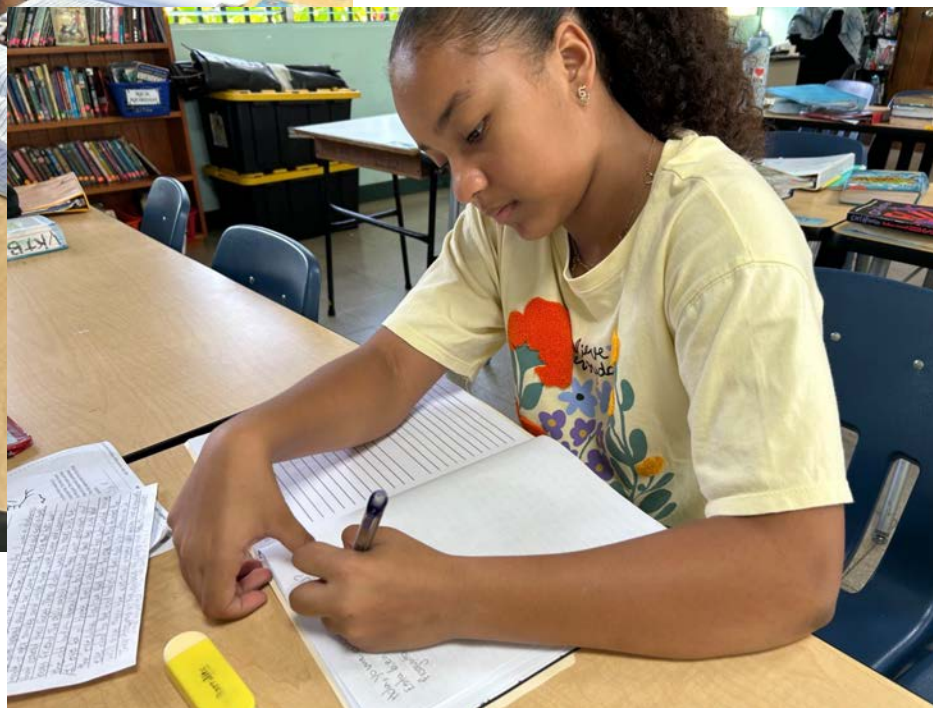
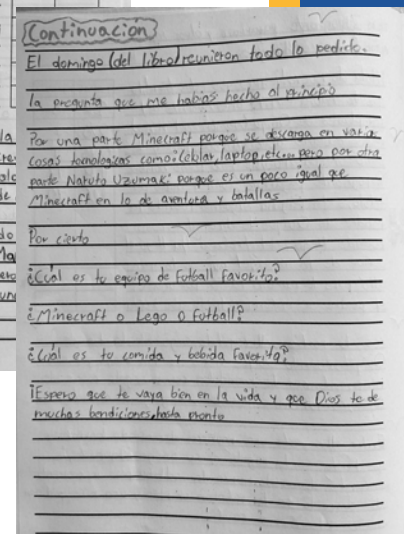
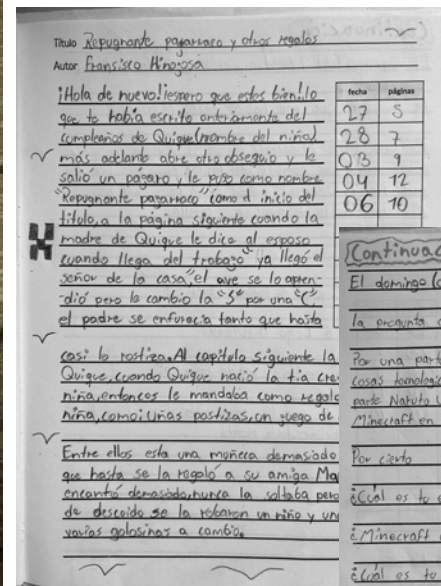
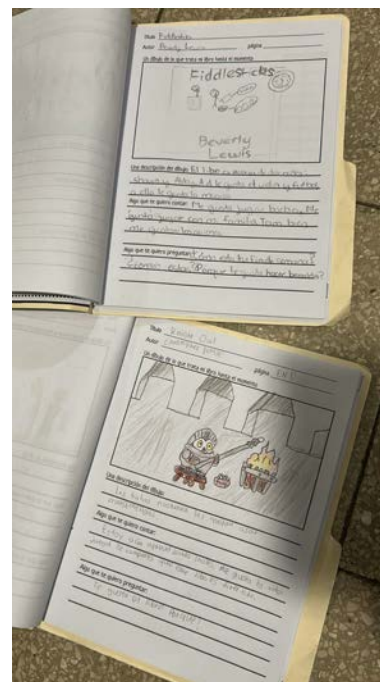
The story begins with Jason, Leo, and Piper who he is or where he's at. Ten years later on, they are facing a powerful monster. Then Annabeth comes and rescue taking Jason, Leo, and Piper to camp half-blood. As soon as they got there, Leo got claimed by his father, Hephaestus. The day goes by and as they all gather around in the campfire, Rachel, the Oracle, announces that the great prophecy was begun. Jason has been claimed by Zeus, and Piper by Aphrodite. Jason has to pick 2 people to come with him on the quest: a Hephaestus child and an Aphrodite -





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- Writing to pen pals in a shared correspondence journal
- An entry from an El Padul student
- Two sets of pen pals were paired because of language or learning difficulties. These students had a modified journal format.







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- (right) El Padul students beginning their reading journey during their first week of school. Independent reading had never been a routine for these students, and is uncommon in Nicaraguan schools in general.
- (below) El Padul students drafting their reading summaries. These pictures were taken 'real time' and shared with NCAI's students on the projector, as NCAI's students were writing their responses to a previous journal entry.







**ReFLEXion** Look back at your previous journal entries. Reflect on new challenges and areas of growth. Continue to journal about your FLEX journey below.

**13/3/25**

Kingdom Seeking is an obstacle for me because I always have to think about what I am going to compliment Jireh on. Will it be what she wrote or how she felt that day. Sometimes it just could be that she isn't having a great day. I hope that Jireh and I can have amazing conversations.

I learned that I don't paraphrase the other people's ideas and make them think about what they wrote.

**DISCUSSION TRACKER**

Paraphrase ideas and questions	Ask questions to clarify and probe	Clearly explain own ideas	Respond to questions with details	Respectfully compare different perspectives
✓	✓			
2.5	✓	X	X	

**Dare to build** Encourage one another and build each other up. | Verses: 10

**13/3/25**

I have grown by talking more to my Pen pal and challenging each other like who will win Ronaldo or Messi. I need to challenge myself is write more asking more questions write clearly and to use my Grammar writing. I am challenging myself to read more so my Pen pal can read my words clearly. These things reflect our through lines because we are building relationships and

**13/3/25**

Building a community is challenging because people will hate you or help you it depends who you talk to they might tear you down or help you. If you struggle just like I am pray to God to help you. I can calm not blowing into a conversation and not argue with others

**ReFLEXion** Look back at your previous journal entries. Reflect on new challenges and areas of growth. Continue to journal about your FLEX journey below.

**13/03/25**

I'm seeking God's kingdom by looking for #1 stuff to talk about + #2 trying to look for ways to encourage my penpal.

One way I am building community is by talking to a complete stranger and sharing interest AND just talking about our own life, interest and talking about what I am reading.

Building community is hard b/c sometimes I just have to make up a conversation + read more b/c I have to tell someone what I am reading.

**I AM CHOOSING TO BE PART OF GOD'S KINGDOM + SERVE OTHERS**

**DISCUSSION TRACKER**

Paraphrase ideas and questions	Ask questions to clarify and probe	Clearly explain own ideas	Respond to questions with details	Respectfully compare different perspectives



Note: The Spanish department collaborated in this FLEX, and the correspondence with pen pals was done during Spanish class, under the supervision of NCAI's Spanish teachers.

- Students reflect and discuss growth and challenges during ELA.



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## EMPOWER

The class took a field trip to the mission school

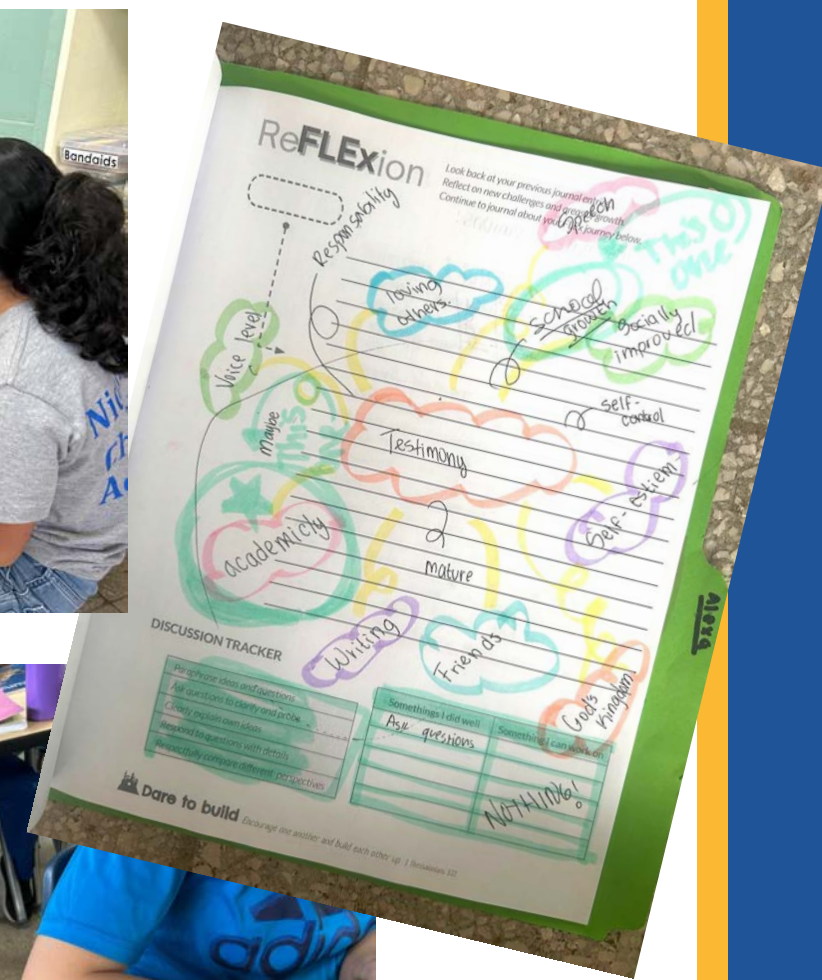
**March 26-April 2, 2025**

- In preparation for the field trip:
  - Students reflected on their growth and learning, and prepared a personal testimony.
  - Students chose a Spanish children's book from their school library.
  - Students practiced engaging children in reading with the Kindergarten class at NCAI.
  - Students collected books to donate to the mission school.
  - Students wrote a goodbye card to hand deliver to their pen pal.

**Thursday, April 3, 2025**

- During the field trip:
  - Students got to know their pen pals through collaborative games.
  - Students paired up with their pen pals and read and colored with younger students.
  - Each penpal pair got into a small group with two other pairs and shared testimonies of growth and learning.





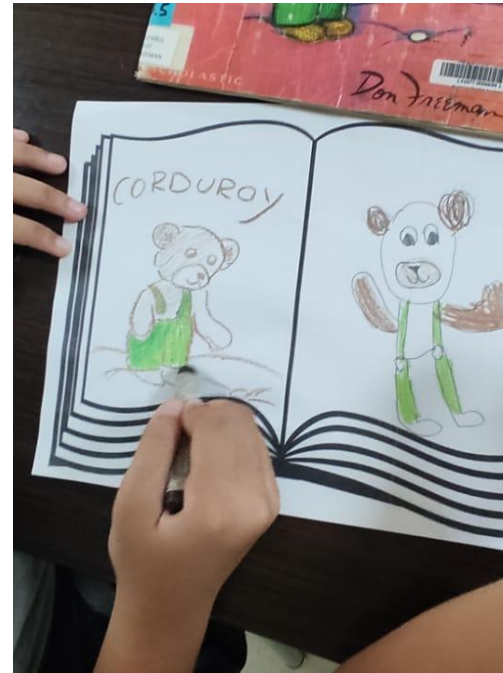
- Brainstorming for testimonies
- Discussing testimony ideas in small groups
- Preparing testimonies and goodbye cards





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- Reading buddy practice with the Kindergarten Spanish class. Students explore methods for supporting younger students in their reading comprehension.





- *The pen pals finally meet! Ice breaker activities between the two 6th grade groups.*







- *Three sets of pen pals form a team for competitive games*







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- Fifty 6th graders divide into 4 groups and go to 4 different preschool, Kindergarten or 1st grade classrooms. Each 6th grade and his or her pen pal work together to read to several younger students.















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- *The forming friendships are evident as students return to the central meeting area after reading to younger students.*





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- *Sharing testimonies in small groups*





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• Pen pals!





- *Exchanging goodbye cards, saying farewell*



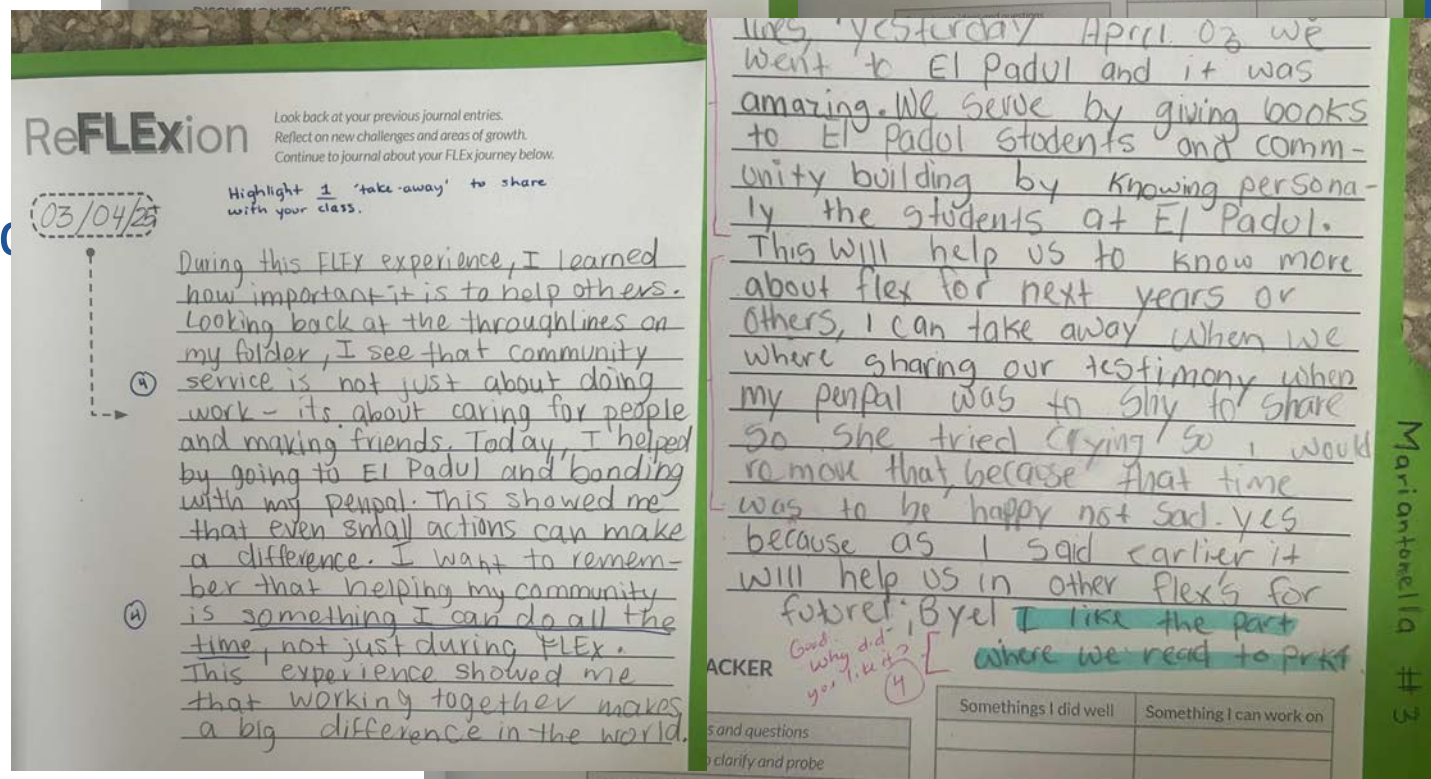




After the field trip, students reflected in their journals, then met in small groups to discuss their reflections.

As a whole class, we looked at our brainstorming slides from January, and celebrated all that we were able to accomplish through our FLEx.

Finally, we each shared our greatest 'take-away' from our FLEx.





## Teacher Reflections:

I have served at the El Padul Mission School for many years, so it was a natural place for a FLEx. I wanted to find a way to draw out the common ground between the students from the two schools, and I thought it might be possible for the students to come alongside each other in their learning.

Although my 6th grade class would only correspond with El Padul's 6th graders, the FLEx was the impetus for a reading program throughout the entire elementary.

Students at both schools took the work seriously and looked forward to the weekly correspondence. They listened carefully to teacher feedback and worked to improve their reading and writing - conscious of the real person who waited on their response.

Careful preparations were made before the onsite visit so that all students would feel equally invested. Both groups of students chose children's books to read to the younger grades. 6th graders from both schools prepared testimonies to share in a small group and a good-bye card for their pen pal. This teamwork between the two schools paid off! The final visit left a big impression on both groups of students. For the El Padul class, it was a new experience to interact with a student body of mixed races and cultures. They went home to share with their families about how they got to work alongside kids from Canada, Korea, China and the US. For my NCAI class; even months later, many students said that meeting their pen pal was their favorite experience from 6th grade.