

ODYSSEY JUNIOR

ORACLE



Contents

Adventurers.....	2
Explorers.....	10
Jumpstart.....	16
Odyssey Families	20

Thanks to the following staff and volunteers of Odyssey Junior:

Odyssey Junior Coordinator: Karen Dreyfuss karen.dreyfuss@wisc.edu

Jumpstart: Erendira Giron Cruz; Fabiola Garcia; Karla Holguin; Amy Basel (volunteer)

Explorers: Maigon Buckner; Brian Benford '07; Milli Lau '14; Marisol Gonzalez '17; Kanesha Freiberg, Christina DeMars, Maria Victoria Gonzalez (volunteer), Savion Castro

Adventurers: Will Glenn Sr.; Qiana Holmes-Abanukam; Albert Watson '08 Leigh Button (volunteer); Karen Dreyfuss

Guests: Takeyla Benton; Literally Arts staff; Stanley Sallay; Prenicia Clifton, UW Director of Precollege Programs; Read to a Dog; Madison Reading Project, Natalie Holdahl

Karen Dreyfuss, Odyssey Junior Coordinator
Emily Auerbach, UW Odyssey Project Director; Oracle Editor
Beth McMahon, Oracle Designer

karen.dreyfuss@wisc.edu
emily.auerbach@wisc.edu; 608-262-3733

ODYSSEY ADVENTURERS



WORDS MATTER

Last month, Adventurers explored the power of words discussing the West High incident involving staff member Marlon Anderson, who was fired and later reinstated because of his use of words. Students engaged in a thoughtful discussion about context and intent before they reflected on how words matter in their daily lives.



Words can be good or bad. It depends on how you use words and how words are perceived. A time when words hurt me was when I was called a lard a** n**** in the 5th grade by a white girl, who I'm actually friends with now. She doesn't remember calling me that, but I've never forgotten it! **(Albert)**



Some people's words have an amazing impact on my life, but sometimes other people's words have a negative impact. When I hear negative words, I try not to let it get the best of me and try to move on with my day. Even after I hear negative words and choose not to do anything about it, deep down it does really hurt. I just try not to let it show. **(Juan)**



I do not think words affect who you are personally or I don't think you should let them affect you. I believe everyone should think highly of themselves even if they don't want to or don't truly feel like that. You shouldn't look for comfort or happiness in anyone else's words. You should find that in yourself. I have been hurt by words before but at the end of the day, someone will always think bad of you or disrespect your hustle. You should always have faith in yourself! **(Ruhqayyah)**



I really don't care about what people say. Words may hurt other people but not me. I really can't care less if they are just saying something, as long as they are not going to touch me. I use kind words sometimes and mean words sometimes. So if people say something mean to me I am going to say something back and if people are nice then I don't say anything mean. What you put in you get out. Words can hurt someone's feelings sometimes and they can make people happy. In order to adjust my behavior, I walk away to take a breath. **(Angel)**



Words can make you feel agitated or happy. When people say I'm good at math and I think I'm good at math, that makes me want to do math more. **(Noah)**



I think words are going to hurt. People are always going to talk about you or talk behind your back. Words hurt when you say things you don't mean. **(Kimari)**



Words can be rude and mean, especially the "n" word. There are lots of fights at my school over the "n" word. Our principal does nothing about it. **(Neveah)**



A time I realized the power of my words is when my friends and I were in an argument and we said hurtful things to each other. We talked about it, then realized that the things we said were hurtful.

Even after we apologize, we would still think about the things we said to each other because even though we apologized to each other we still can't take back what we said.

(Illiana)



I use my words respectfully.

They can sometimes hurt people even when I said it in a jokeful way.

I think that I can take words the wrong way sometimes.

In order to adjust my behavior I think positive. I believe I should adjust my behavior. **(Reyna)**



I use my words by thinking before I talk and being respectful. I think my words impact others because sometimes they can think I'm meaning something bad but I mean something nice. Sometimes I don't think about

how my words are received, but when I'm really saying something, I know I can get into trouble if I don't correct my wording. My behavior isn't all that because I get good grades and I don't try to talk about people that much. I think I can get better, but I don't think my behavior needs to be adjusted.

One time I hurt my brother's feelings because I said "you're a rascal" and I said "you're a rat."

I think I should have said "I'm sorry," but I can never take those words back. So I just left it alone. I think my words hurt him because he went to tell my mom, but I was just like I'm going to stay in my room. **(Zawadi)**



Words affect people in different ways because of what they have gone through and experienced. Words never hurt me because nothing hurtful has been said to me. People know better than to say stuff to me because I will give them my hands. Curse words make me mad.

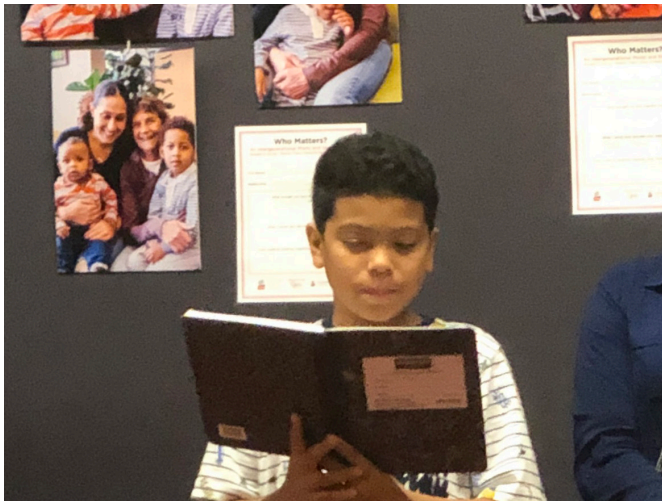
I use words in a positive way. My impact on words is to use them in a good, not a bad way. I rarely think about how my words are received. I think about my game being taken away any time if I do something stupid, so I don't get it taken. Yes, you should adjust your behavior.

A time when I knew my words were powerful is when somebody talked about my mom. I told them not to talk about my mom and I gave them a speech not to say it again.

Your voice has power!
Your words have power!
Your story has power! **(Jacary)**



MOMENT OF COURAGE



My moment of courage was one of the first days of Odyssey. I stood up to read my story when nobody else would. **(Michael)**

My moment of courage is talking in front of people. I read a story in front of my classmates. It made me feel brave. **(Neveah)**

A moment of courage was when I saw a new student. I started to talk to him because he looked scared and we became friends after that. **(Jayvon)**

Kids in my class were volunteering to present their projects. It gave me a moment of courage to present mine as well. **(Miraya)**



When I have a basketball game I am sometimes nervous, but once I get on the court, my nerves go away. Most of the time when people are nervous, they think so much about what other people think of them, but the reality is that those people are just as worried about what you will think. Just have confidence. **(Zawadi)**

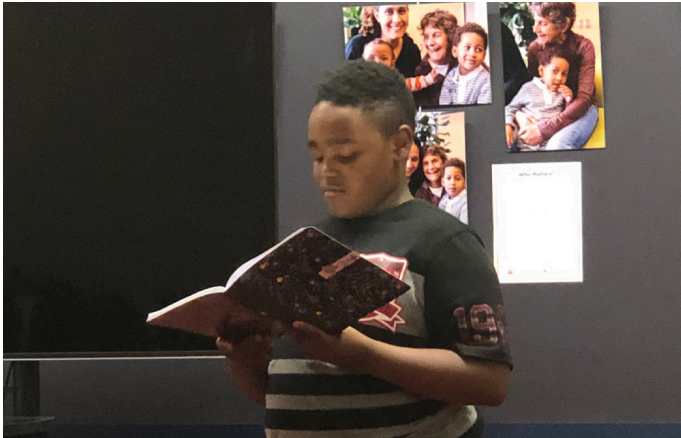
A moment of courage was when I decided to move to Madison for a job. I arrived knowing two people and had to find a place to live and build new community. Now Madison is my home. **(Leigh)**

My moment of courage was helping a kid when people were making fun of him. I told them to stop and I asked the kid if he was okay. **(Reyna)**



A time I had a moment of courage is when I transferred to my new school and didn't know many people. Then I began to make friends. **(Illiana)**

A time I had a moment of courage is when my football team wasn't scoring, so I had to find a way to score. A team member handed me the ball. My heart was beating fast because this was our first game. My hands were sweating. The quarterback said "hike." He gave me the ball. I ran super fast to the outside, and I scored an 80-yard touchdown. Everybody was yelling and screaming cheers of happiness. That was my moment of courage. **(Jacary)**



A time I was courageous is when I had to read out loud and I was nervous. I swallowed my fear and just did it. **(Derek)**

During the 2019 sound season, we only had three marching horns and I was one of them. Throughout the season I was all by myself. The other horns were having medical issues. We were approaching the middle of part three, and I could tell there was something special about to happen. At the time the epic horn part was all for me to take on by myself. I slowly made my way around, and slowly said in my head "10,11,12" then took a breath and played my heart out into that solo. After my solo, I looked at my tech and saw a smile on his face. I knew that he was very proud of what I was able to do in my short little spotlight moment. **(Juan)**

Having a baby takes real courage. Showing up at the hospital is one thing, but choosing to bring a child into the world, that's another story. It's beautiful, but terrifying too. Holding a new baby, your child, a person you are now responsible forever--that was a real moment of courage for me. **(Ms. Karen)**

I had to make a play for the 6th grade class. I'm not into plays so I made sure I didn't go to school that day. Turns out I had the whole week to make the play for the 6th graders. I am happy that I did it because I don't like doing things in front of people. Now I don't care if I do things in front of people and my fear of performing in front of others is gone. **(Nyjua)**

When I was on a basketball team there were

people playing in the 1st quarter. When the 1st quarter was done, my coach called my name. I was nervous to go on the court. When my teammate passed the ball to me, I was scared to shoot. So I pump faked the ball, then I went to take a layup. My shot got blocked. **(Nasier)**



One day my friend called me and I could tell there was something wrong. I asked what happened. She said, "Angel, I am giving up." I said, "on what?" and she said on herself. I asked, "What can I help you with?" She talked and I listened. I told the social worker at school so she could contact her for help. **(Angel)**

My mom's ex hit her and I hit him with a chair. And another ex was hitting her and I hit him with a screwdriver. **(Noah)**



FINDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE COURAGEOUS

For me, being courageous means speaking confidently to people in my class during a presentation. Today, I had a class presentation and I remembered Ms. Clifton's words and made it through my presentation. Later my teacher told me I did amazing and my group was the best. **(Zawadi)**

I will challenge myself to be courageous by standing up to bullies. I stood up for somebody who was getting talked about. **(Jacary)**



I will challenge myself to be more courageous by being appreciative of those who support me. I have started saying Thank You whenever I receive help. I see lots of smiles on people's faces. **(Juan)**

I am going to challenge myself to be more courageous by being nicer and being friends with everyone. There was a new girl at school that I had beef with, and I dropped the beef, after we talked. **(Reyna)**

I will challenge myself to be more courageous by getting more information on culinary programs. In the meantime, I have been practicing cooking more. **(Jayvon)**

I am going to challenge myself to be more courageous by helping others and remaining true to myself. I will stand up for people when they are being bullied. **(Angel)**

I am going to challenge myself to be more courageous by looking for opportunities to help people. I haven't found a good time to start yet but hopefully I will. **(Miraya)**

I am challenging myself to be more courageous by checking in on people more. I ask people how they are doing and if they are okay. **(Illiana)**

I will challenge myself to be more courageous by treating others the way I would want to be treated with respect. **(Michael)**

I will challenge myself to be more courageous by helping others. I can help others younger than me with their homework. **(Nyjua)**

I am going to challenge myself to be more courageous by standing up to bullies. There was a kid being made fun of because of his haircut and I stood up for him. **(Noah)**

I will challenge myself to be more courageous by being on time for class and practice. I have started to pay attention in class and be on time for basketball practice. **(Nasir)**

I will challenge myself to be more courageous by speaking up for people who are being bullied. I have not started yet. **(Derek)**

GRATITUDE

I am thankful for my family. I am thankful for the house I live in. I am thankful for my friends and everyone. **(Angel)**

I am thankful for my family & friends. I am happy that I have people in my life to help me and give support when I need it. I am also thankful for a roof over my head. **(Miraya)**

I am thankful for good food. I am thankful for my family. I am thankful for water fountains at school. **(Michael)**

I don't like Christmas. But I am thankful for Halloween because it's scary. I'm also thankful for my mom because she made me. **(Nyjua)**

I am thankful for friends and family this holiday season. **(Noah)**

I am thankful for myself & my family this holiday season. **(Nasir)**

I am thankful for my family. I am thankful for my friends. I am thankful for my mom. **(Derek)**

I am thankful for family. My family has always been there for me. I am also thankful for my life. I am very fortunate to have such amazing people in my life. **(Zawadi)**

I'm thankful for my family and everybody who does for me. I'm also thankful for all the food God provides us with. I'm also thankful for all my friends, cousins, uncles, aunties, grandmas, and teachers. **(Jacary)**

I'm thankful for my friends and family. I'm thankful for all the wonderful opportunities that I have been given. Also, I'm thankful for all my skills and talents because they have helped me get where I am. **(Juan)**

I am thankful to see another year. I'm also thankful for having a nice family. Another thing I'm thankful for is everyone in my life right now. **(Illiana)**

I'm thankful for my mom. I'm thankful for my sister. I'm thankful for my friends. **(Reyna)**

I am thankful for a home. I am thankful for food. I am thankful for my video games. **(Jayvon)**

We are very thankful for our curious thoughtful students. **(the teachers)**



A WOMAN OF COURAGE

My mom is the most courageous person I know. I think her stories are amazing and brave of her. It makes me feel inspired. I would tell my mom that I appreciate her so much and I love you mom. **(Zawadi)**



Josephine Lorya, Zawadi's mom, came to the U.S. as a refugee from war-torn Sudan. She graduated from the UW Odyssey Project in 2008, became a U.S. citizen, earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from U.W.-Madison, and landed a job as a social worker, all while raising her family.

ODYSSEY EXPLORERS



WISHES



I wish for
The poor to have homes and food and money and for everyone to have good health.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for everyone that is in a hard situation.
I want this wish more than anything because
I want everyone to not suffer.
To let them know that I care and they are always thought of. **(Alex)**



I wish for
Seeing my dad.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for
My dad and me, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
HE'S MY DAD and it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Damien)**



I wish for
The best of luck in growing up.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for
My baby nephew, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
He is absolutely the best and it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(D'Angelo)**



I wish for
All of us to get a Lamborghini and ten—no—one HUNDRED billion k dollars.
There is nothing I want more.
I make this wish for my family, the people I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
We want to buy a Lamborghini and it is how I show my love.
To let them know that I care and they are always thought of. **(Devvin)**



I wish for
My mom to have less work.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my mom, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
I almost never see her and I want to play with her because it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Emily)**



I wish for people to come back alive,
Like Papa, Shay, and Granny Pat.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my baby brother Kashton,
The person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
I wish he grows up and stops annoying people.

I give my brother kisses

And it is how I show my love.

To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Essence E.)**



I wish for my mom to have an easy life.
There is nothing I want more.
I make this wish for my mom, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
Sometimes she works doubles at both her jobs and we don't see her until night.
I want to see her more because it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Essence S)**



I wish for my brother to get a PS6.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my brother, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
It's the newest, especially the 2K5 or 2K10 version.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(KK)**



I wish for
My sister to have a grumpy cat.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for
My sister, the person I most adore.
She listens to me and is nice.
I want this wish more than anything because

It is how I show my love.

To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Rogelio)**



I wish for my mom to have a good birthday this December.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my mom, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because she's been going through a lot.
I'm going to give her this pillow I made because it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(RJ)**



I wish for my family to be together more.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my family, the people I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
I love them and it is how I show my love.
To let them know that I care and they are always thought of. **(Jessica)**



I wish for love.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for all the people I adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
They need it and it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Z)**

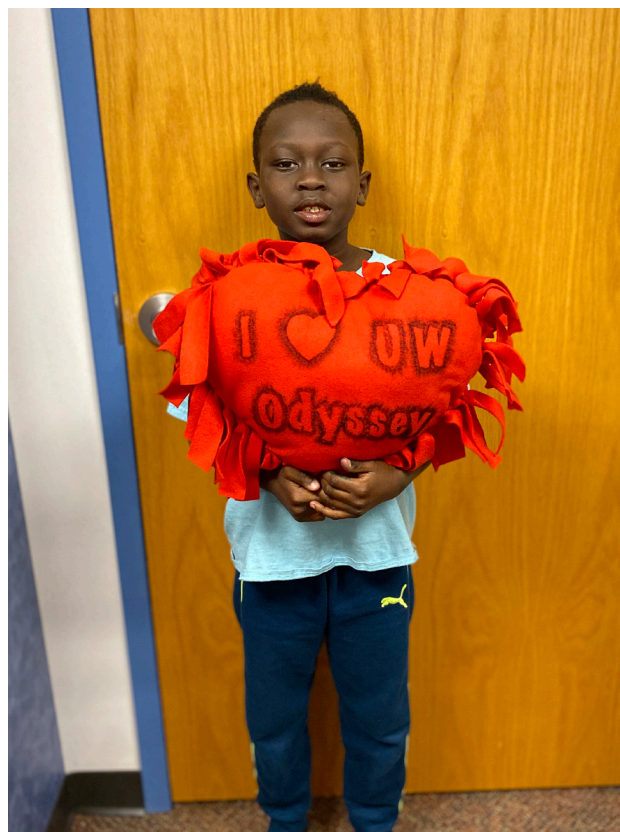


I wish for a Minnie Mouse that can sing and dance.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my sister Zariah, the person I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
I love to dance and sing with her
And it is how I show my love.
To let you know that I care and you are always thought of. **(Zaria)**



I wish for my parents to have this pillow I made—
The blue side for my dad and the red side for my mom.
There is nothing that I want more.
I make this wish for my mom and dad, the people I most adore.
I want this wish more than anything because
It's Christmas time and I want to give them an early present
And it is how I show my love.

To let them know that I care and they are always thought of. **(Zion)**



COURAGE



My mom has courage because she wrote a book that was political. **(Emily)**

My mom is a woman of courage because she fights for social justice. She says sorry when she gets mad at me. She is trying to publish her books and it takes a lot of courage to do that. **(Alex)**



My mom taught me how to cook and I think that is courageous. **(Z)**

I have courage because I went on a roller coaster even when I was scared. **(Jamyla)**



I'm a woman of courage because I don't get in discussions with my friend about race. I ignore her because she is mean to me and kicks me out of things. **(Jessica)**

In the book, Malala had courage because she got shot in the head and she was a survivor. She had a bad life because she couldn't go to school and she did not learn much. **(Essence S.)**



My mom taught me division. She is a woman of courage because is not easy to teach your own children. **(JT)**

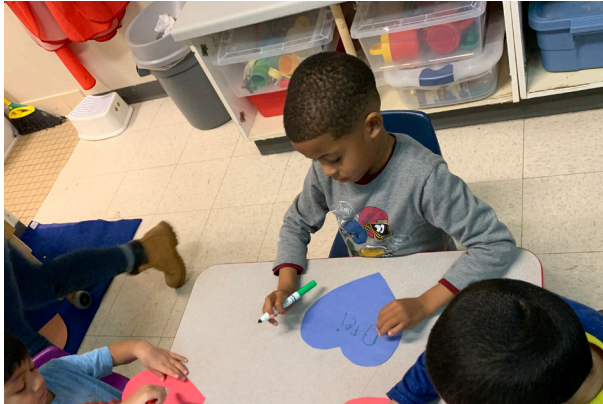
I'm proud of my mom for helping her clients at work. **(Essence E.)**



ODYSSEY JUMPSTART



HOW DO WE SHOW KINDNESS?



Help them **(Sha'nyah)**

Share and caring **(Grace)**

Hug, "how are you feeling?" **(Jade)**

Nice **(Falyn)**

By playing **(Dominique)**

Hugs and kisses **(Gemini)**

Drawing **(Alex)**

Kisses **(Zaria)**



WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THANKSGIVING FOOD?



Turkey (**Dominique**)

Corn (**Aria**)

Chicken Nuggets (**Imani**)

Broccoli (**Taraji**)

Apple pie (**Sha’Niyah**)

Chocolate cake (**Falyn**)

Vegetables (**Zaria**)





ODYSSEY FAMILIES

Jayvon and Michael,

Hey, babes. I'm writing this letter to both of you guys, so put them phones away and pay attention. When you guys first started coming to Odyssey Junior, Jay, you were so closed off to almost everyone, and Michael, you just didn't want to come to Odyssey Junior. You only came because Jay came. Now that you guys keep coming, I see you guys in the Oracle, and I see how you guys are opening up more and more, but not to just each other, but to others in your class. I love how you guys are opening up and to me too.



I hope you guys can see that there is more to life than just video games, and there are people who care about you guys and want you guys to do and be better. I want people to know that my boys are more than what you see. They are very smart, very handsome, and very caring young men. Once you get to know them, there is no way you won't love them. **(Margie Barajas)**



To my oldest, **Derek**, the most loving, caring, understandable son: I want you to know that first and foremost, I love you more than life itself. I'm very proud of you and where you're headed in life. I want you to know that no matter how hard anything is, always ask for help. Joining this Odyssey Junior program, I want you to become more open and to know that you're not alone. You're a warrior, son, and very smart and handsome. You are very helpful, funny, loving, caring, and shy. But most of all, you have a heart of gold.

Shaniyah, my baby girl, the air I breathe: you're so smart, outgoing, and full of life, and you are the prettiest girl I know. You make me so happy, and I'm glad you're all mine. I'm blessed to have a daughter that loves and cares for

everyone so much. Baby girl, you make my heart smile. I just want you to know you can be anything you put your mind to. **(Tiffany Dixon)**

My daughter **Nyjua** loves learning about China and one day hopes to live there. My son **Nasier** loves basketball. He has a sweet jump shot and OK defense. **Rasaki Jr.** is a sports fan and a great friend. One day he'll be able to play on T.V. K.K. is a very loving and funny lil' guy. He's always going to make everyone smile all his life, so that's his superhero power.

I'm very happy my kids share my joy in Odyssey every week in Odyssey Junior. My kids and I share meaningful moments of inspiration weekly and try to apply it daily. (**Rasaki Emmanuel**)



I would like my daughter **Neveah** to know that I see her as a very smart, free-thinking, sassy little young lady. I hope you have gotten the best experience out of Odyssey Junior, that it keeps you wanting to further your education, and gives you hope for the future to be whatever you want to be.



I would like my son **Imani** to know how much he amazes me every day. I feel you are the smartest five-year-old I have ever met. I'm glad Odyssey Junior is something you look forward to every Wednesday. I hope you get the chance to play, make new friends, and dance your little heart out.

I would like my classmates and staff to know that I have never seen my children so happy to attend a class with a school-like setting; they love being in Odyssey Junior, more than they like going to school in the morning! ☺
(**Tina Marie Martinez**)

Dear **Jade and Noah**,

Jade, you light up every room you are in with your smile and sweetness. I am so proud of you for always being kind, loving, helpful, and funny. I hope at Odyssey Junior you have fun and make friends. You are so smart, learning your letters, numbers, and sounds so quickly, and your art work, drawing, and pictures are so beautiful. You are such an incredible little girl. I love you.

Noah, you have always been my best friend and my rock through all of the challenges we have experienced together. You are my inspiration. I strive to do better and be better because you deserve better. You are strong, loving, compassionate, and funny (though sometimes your jokes drive me nuts 😊) You are so much smarter than you realize. I hope that Odyssey Junior shows you how fun learning can be because I feel that my Odyssey class has done that for me. I am so proud of you each and every day. I love you.

Love ♥,

Mom (**Krista Mellott**)

Dominique,

Mommy's big boy, you are growing so much. I'm so proud of you and the big boy you're becoming. Mommy hopes you love Odyssey Junior. I hope you can make friends, learn new things, and grow from them. I pray that you grow up to be better than Mommy. Whatever you do, Mommy will always be proud of you. I love you so, so much. 😊 (**Natia Saffold**)



Falyn, Falyn, Falyn!

Ohhhh, girl, you are one in a million! Don't you ever forget that **YOU ARE LOVED!** You are the light in everyone's life that you meet. Your spunky personality, bright smile, and glistening eyes are only a little of what I love about you. I am so proud that despite all our chaos at home, you never lose who you are! I am so proud of the young lady you are becoming. Taking it upon yourself to learn Spanish on your journey in Odyssey Junior is something I can't wrap my head around. Don't you ever forget how proud you make Mommy and Daddy day in and day out.

All my love, forever and always!

Mama (Shiloh Simonsen)



Illiana and Reyna,

You are my motivation and inspiration and the reason why giving up is never an option. I hope that you girls know that life hasn't been easy for you but that we will always get through anything as long as we never give up. I will do my best to reassure you that there is a solution to everything, that if you give it your all and never stop trying, hard work will pay off.

As we continue on this new journey in life, I hope that you see that anything is possible and that life is what you make of it. If you do nothing, you'll have nothing; if you want something, you go out and get it. No matter how hard and impossible it seems, there will always be a way. I hope that through these hardships you see that I will do anything I have to in order to make sure that we make it through this because you girls deserve that.

I hope that I as your mother raise you two to be strong-willed, independent women who will follow your hearts and do what makes you happy, and that you know that I'll always be here to love you, guide you, support you, and push you when you feel like you have no strength to carry on.



I know life has been rough from the start, but thanks to Odyssey, things are turning around. It has given me the strength and motivation I need to do the best I can for you, too. I also notice how much it has helped you and how much you enjoy going to Odyssey Junior class now, even if you didn't like the idea at first. It gives you an opportunity to communicate, learn, and enjoy being around others just like you. I feel that we are blessed to be a part of this and know it will be our key to succeeding in life. It will help me follow my goals/dreams so I can show you to do the same. Actions speak louder than words, so let's do this! I love you girls with all my heart. Always your mamma ♥ **(Savannah Torres)**

Dear **O'Shawn,**

I feel happy knowing that you are behaving yourself in Odyssey Junior and not throwing a fit. I know you are a crybaby, a bit hot-tempered, and shy, like I am, but seeing and hearing that you're not being like that in class makes me proud of you. Keep up the good work.

Dad (**O'Shane Wilmoth**)



Dear **Alex,**

I want to tell you that I am very happy to have you in my life. I know how you get excited every Tuesday when I say to you, "Tomorrow is Wednesday and we will go to Odyssey." I know you love to see your friends, and you talk about them during the week and about what you all do together in the classroom.

I want to tell you that what I want the most is that you succeed personally and academically, and that through your effort and perseverance you will overcome the obstacles that arise in your life. I know it's a blessing to have found the Odyssey Project. As in Plato's "Apology," Odyssey is going to be for you the stimulation of a gadfly. If

God wants, I will be here for you to support you, to give you my advice, my example, and my love. I know you will succeed. I love you Alex. (**Carmen Tinajero**)



Dear **Damien,**

I admire your eagerness to learn and your love for animals. You make me so proud everyday, and I love watching you grow. I want you to know that you will always be enough and deserve the same love you give to others. I hope you continue to be sensitive, caring, and curious. The world will see great things from you, Damien.

Love,

Mom (**Nina Salisbury**)

Dear **Essence,**

You are smart, courageous, and most definitely a beautiful Essence made of love and brilliance, a big part of your little body yet bigger than the world personality. Go for it--that's whatever you want and desire in life. Let nothing, not even you, stop you.

What I would like for her peers to know is that she's a smart, little lump of love, wrapped in love hugs and kisses from those who love her. (**Arkeia Cameron**)

