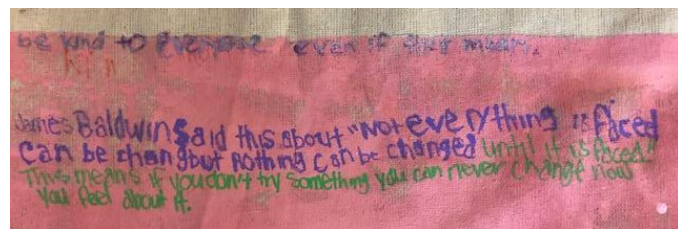


As you can see from the class unity flag we created to reflect on our learning and growth as individuals and as a community committed to kindness and justice, the students gave thought to what they learned through our activities and how it changed them and their mindsets. They painted their reflections onto the outside border of the class unity flag. Here are some of their reflections:

- a. "Treating others how you want to be treated is important to treating others kindly. I will strive to spread this trait by being helpful";
- b. "I've learned that we not only have to show respect to others but respect to ourselves as well. This means that not only we have to know how to act but be respectful to yourself because that's more important in order to also have self-love";
- c. "To be beautiful means to be yourself, you don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself. This means that you don't have to fit anywhere. Just be yourself and love yourself";
- d. "Something I've learned is that we should never judge other people...we should respect their decisions and support them in any way";
- e. "Coming together for a cause has taught me how strong we can be when we all work together, leaving our differences aside";
- f. Perseverance is important because it helps us try harder to get what we need and what's best for us. Tolerance helps us not judge others."

The unity flag will be displayed in the courtyard butterfly garden we've grown this year, and then it will be moved into our bldg. 5 hallway where we will continue to add to this flag with our transformative and reflective butterfly mural next year).



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Golden Gate High School  
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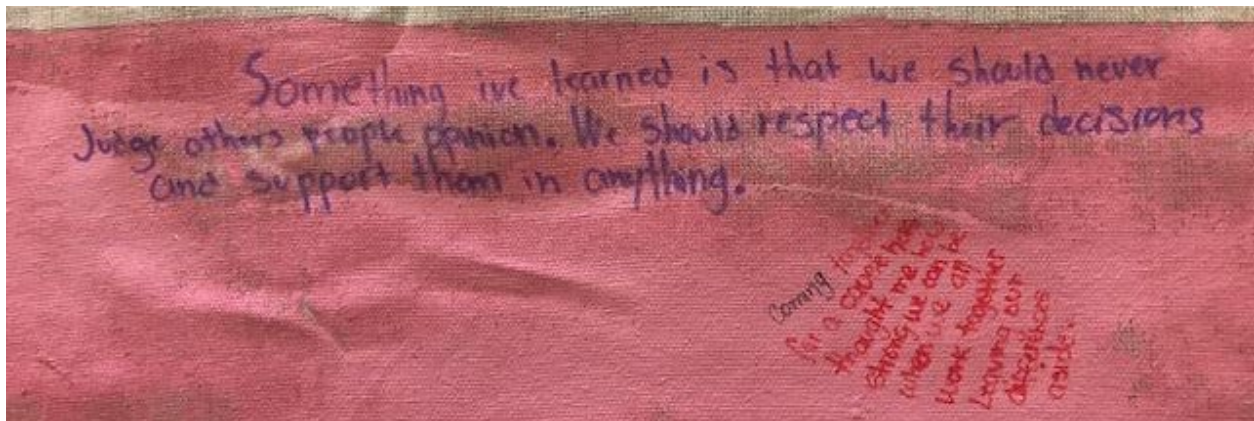
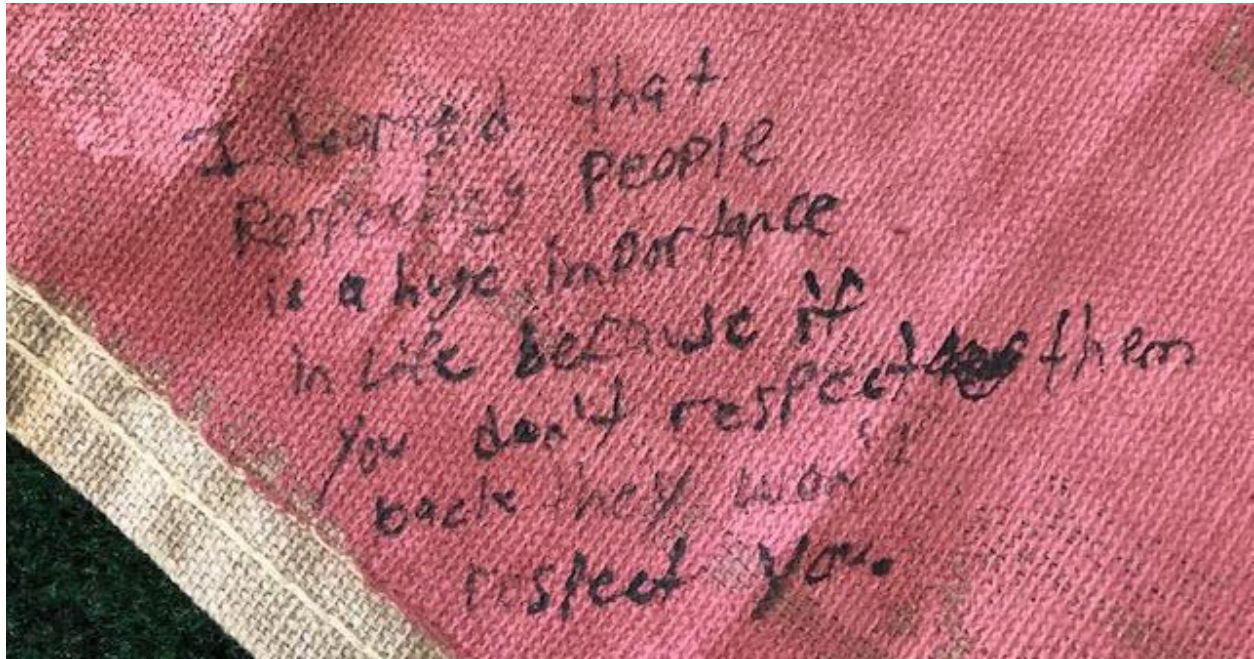
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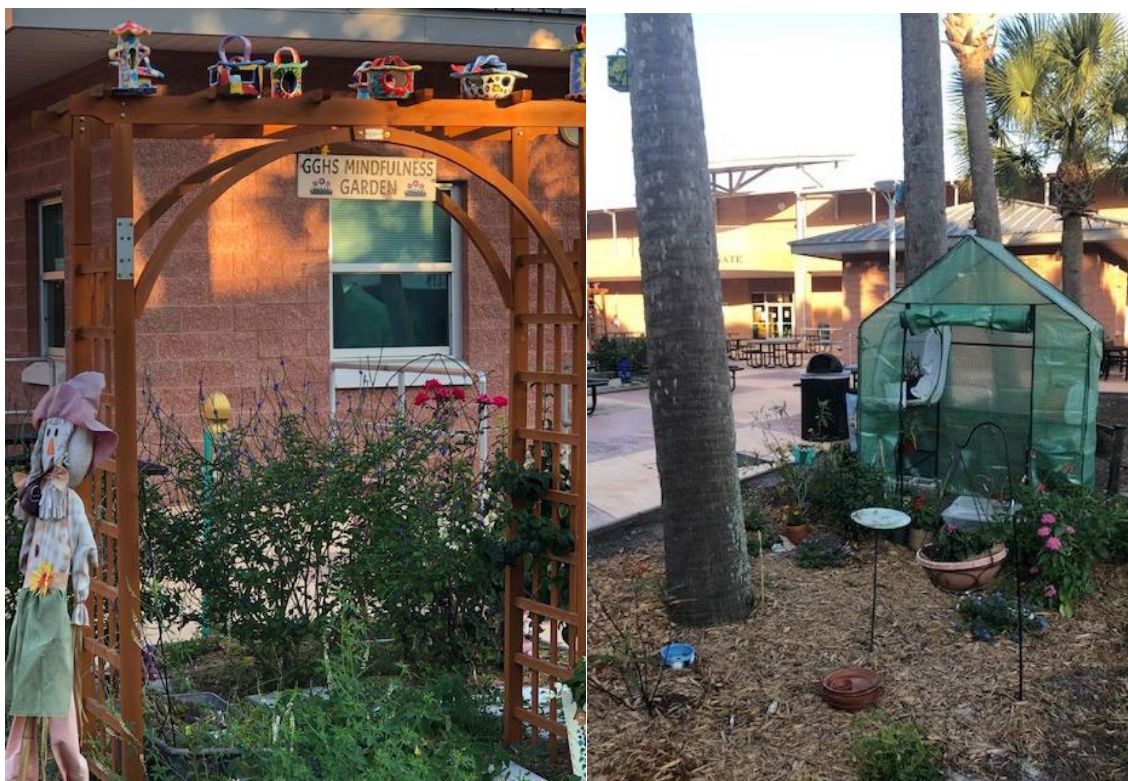


My students are not only reflecting and writing about their learning and personal transformations, but they are reflecting and ACTING on their transformations; they're doing something about them to make their world a better place, to stand up for justice, to right the wrongs (and promote the rights) they see and feel and experience. That's what learning is all about!

Last year our students felt that we needed to discuss more mental health issues and come together to support one another; together they created the GGHS Mindfulness Garden in the center of our school plaza for all to enjoy and find peace in throughout the day. Individual students, as well as whole classes, enjoy the inviting space we created. This year my students were studying ecosystems and the importance of pollinators; from that they created our butterfly garden as a way to promote pollinators such as bees and monarch butterflies (which have been

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our symbols of growth, interconnectedness, and change all this year). The learn, they think, they reflect, they act.



My students are reflecting on who they are, the transformations they're going through, and how they can help others with their transformations. For example, just yesterday in class we were talking about dress code and how there seems to be an unfair number of girls receiving dress code violations in our school compared to boys. They see this as a gender discrepancy and something that should be addressed (standing up for injustices they feel and experience around them). A group of my students came up with the incredibly thoughtful idea: "Let's start a school store where we can buy clothes and things we need!" I then brought the idea up to the FGCU students I teach at night, and they want to partner up with my high school students to donate items to the boutique which our GGHS students can use. They are working together, in the classroom, in the community, and beyond!

When I taught middle school in Immokalee for fourteen years, I wrote a grant through the Education Foundation to create a Holocaust History travelling trunk similar to the one lent out by the Houston Holocaust Museum. We borrowed their trunk and then purchased items just like them: novel sets of books such as MILKWEED and MAUS; the "Forget Me Not" project where my students wrote letters to children who were victims of the Holocaust (such a powerful project, many a student was brought to tears); and The Butterfly Project resources. I am sad and disappointed to admit that when I moved to the high school level six years ago, this wasn't a part of our curriculum and I did not engage in these activities. This most recent project in creating our class unity flag (what you see with the symbolic transformative butterfly and the student

reflections) reminded me that these lessons MUST occur in our high school classrooms as well, and I need to continue them. While my students are using the butterfly to symbolize their growth as individuals and within the community, the Butterfly Project uses butterflies as a remembrance for the child lives lost during the Holocaust, as well as resilience, hope, and social responsibility. Used in those ways, they are powerful and create change both within my students and our community both in and out of the classroom. These lessons need to be taught together, and that is my mission and obligation to my students and to history. I'm so thankful for this reminder; it's kismet.

As the students were creating our class unity flag, they were asked to reflect on the many character traits quotes (inspiration quotes from authors, historians, writers, world leaders, etc. centered around a character theme such as "kindness," "tolerance," "effort," "responsibility," and so forth) we've discussed and tried to embody this year through our lessons. Here are some of the comments my kiddos made to demonstrate their thinking and reflection and personal growth (this came from an online reflective discussion board in our learning portal Canvas about the impact and effectiveness of our daily character trait start-up quotes and discussions where students summarize the quote and explain how they can relate it to their lives in some way):

- a. JC: "I like how [these lessons] help us interact with each other. [Our character trait lessons] help me take responsibility for my actions."
- b. JG: [The daily character traits] let us "talk about something and doing these traits gets me in the mood for working. I think about what I do more and how I can help others. Kindness [is important] because it's something we should always do. It's no right or correct to hurt someone."
- c. KRG: "I like that it starts class with a positive message. These character traits help me realize what I can do to be a better person. [The most important trait we've discussed is] kindness one because no one will respect you or wanna listen to you if you're rude. [I will show kindness by] holding the doors for others or just be nice in general, one nice thought can make someone's day."
- d. AGF: "I like how you can reflect on yourself and reflect on others. You can see how other people know the struggle you are going through. Kindness have been the most important to be because kindness is all around us and if you are kind to someone who is having not such a fun day... you can make their day. [I can continue to] help other people with their homework, or open the door for someone. you never know who's having a bad day."
- e. NH: "I like that you get to hear or learn about a different character trait each week and that we start our day if something good, they help me reflect on myself by making me think about how I can relate to them. Kindness has been the most important to me bc we always should be kind to others. I will help others, and hold the door for other this is important bc it helps people spread kindness."

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After showing my students products from The Butterfly Project from around the world, they felt inspired and plan on continuing with the following activities for the remainder of this year and into next:

- a. Continue to engage in our daily character trait education quotes and discussions, for students state they enjoy reflecting on ideas they aren't always exposed to and traits that they should embody;
- b. Work with our art department to get these daily character trait quotes (the ones we found most inspiration) painted on the bldg. 5 hall wall for all to see and feel inspired by;
- c. Work with the art department students to create clay butterflies filled with words of our intentions for change and transformation and tolerance to be placed on our butterfly mural in bldg. 5;
- d. Enroll our classroom community in the Butterfly Project Now initiative:  
<https://thebutterflyprojectnow.org/get-involved/enrolling-your-community/>
- e. Continue to expand our school butterfly garden which stands as a symbol for growth, change, love, tolerance, diversity, reflection, and a sanctuary of peace for our students and the actual butterfly population we are adding to;
- f. Continue to read and engage with novels such as TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD and SEEDFOLKS (awesome book about a group of strangers, all with different backgrounds, who accidentally come together to create and grow a community garden), as well as add these chosen titles: "First They Came" by Niemoller; Wiesel's "The Peril of Indifference"; First Lady Hillary Clinton's address to the United Nations Fourth World Conference; Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize lecture; Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb" and "Change Sings"; as well as others as we find them. I will work closely with my administrators to try to obtain these resources, as well as the *New York Times Upfront* student monthly magazine which will keep my students up to date on world events which is so integral to their growth as global citizens and change agents. They can't stand up for justice if they aren't aware of what's happening around them! This is my pledge to my students and to myself.

These young people are doing great things in the world, and I'm so proud to work alongside them.