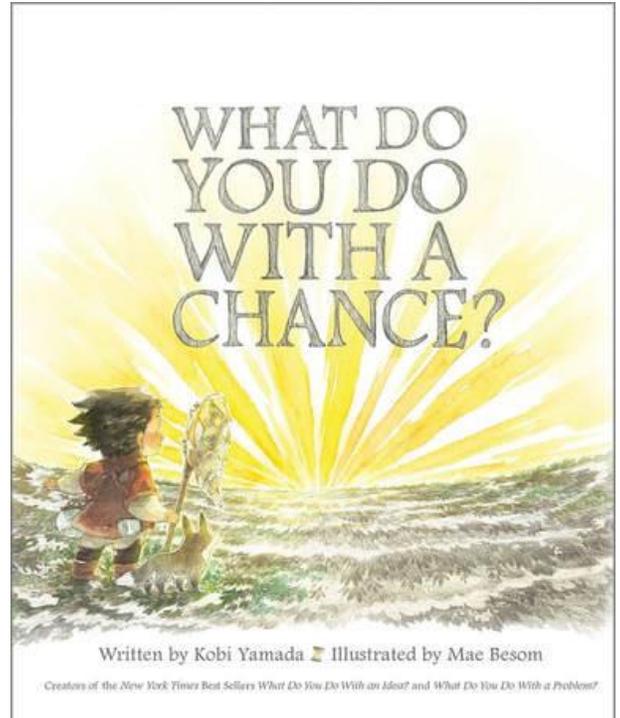


When art touches us, it bridges the gaps between our senses and our emotions, and brings us into spaces we never thought possible. We are all role models for each other. If art moves us, we model our best selves when we take the time to share the connections art is making for us. Truly, there are few greater joys in life than being moved by the art of great writing, and we can think of no better way to frame this update letter than by telling you about how a book from a familiar series has recently captured the essence of the moment.

Over the years, Kobi Yamada has unknowingly authored the simple narrative of our work in service of the children of District 26. In previous Update Letters, we have turned to his books as a reference point, so that readers of all levels can connect to the big ideas and problems with which we productively struggle daily.



One day, I got a chance.

It just seemed to show up. It acted like it knew me, as if it wanted something. I didn't know why it was here.

"What do you do with a chance?" I wondered

Taking advantage of a chance takes courage. It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we share the highlights of the past few months within our District, but before we do that we want to honor the courageous actions of all the chance-takers in this District. We recognize the high levels of trust, communication, planning, and teamwork that make the risks associated with taking chances much more manageable; as such, we have too many instances of positive, productive chance-taking to put into this letter. It is inspiring how the chances you have taken with us to ensure an emotionally intelligent approach to leadership has created so many amazing opportunities for all members of our community.

I don't know how to explain it, but the second I let go of my fears, I was full of excitement. It wasn't that I was no longer afraid, but now my excitement was bigger than my fear.

On Thursday, March 8th, the District 26 Student Leadership Project hosted their School Service Project Presentation Night at PS 221. Participants included student government executive officers, staff members, and families. Since November, student leaders have been strengthening their leadership skills and focusing on the three C's: Communication, Commitment, and Character. During the event, Student Leaders had the opportunity to celebrate their hard work and put those leadership skills on display for the entire District 26 Community to see.

A year ago we launched [our District's STEAM Framework](#) as a way to empower our students to not sit idly by when they are presented with a problem. A year later we are at a total loss for words for how our community has taken chances with their innovative approaches to solving the problems of our modern world. On Tuesday, March 27th the best and brightest minds from our schools gathered at MS 67 to celebrate at our First Annual District STEAM Fair. The Fair represented the collective work and collaboration of students, parents, teachers and administrators across District 26, highlighting innovative STEAM projects from 16 schools representing Kindergarten through 8th grade, and over 170 students showcasing their talent! Whether they surfaced novel approaches to automating everyday tasks or inventive approaches to harnessing and storing energy (and everything in between), it has never been more apparent that the future is here and it is best accessed through experiences that challenge students to take an inquiry stance.



While it is important to celebrate the outcomes of these wonderful events, it is equally important to honor the leadership responsible for the planning and support provided to our students, so they could feel safe in taking these huge chances. Without the leadership of Denise Gilrane (PS 173), Paul DeSimone (MS 74), and Karen Strauzer (PS 221), in conjunction with all of the Student Leadership Liaisons in our schools, our student leaders

Tonight the D26 community came together for our 1st Annual STEAM Fair. The room was filled with incredible energy, collaboration, innovation & a shared vision for D26 Excellence in Education!



would not have been able to make the most of this chance to make a lasting, sustainable impact on their communities. Similarly, the collaborative power of Taso Lampoutis (MS 67), and STEAM leads within our schools has created a powerful platform for students to take chances as they endeavor to solve the problems of tomorrow. To all involved with these (and all our other District Projects), THANK YOU! Because of you, we can measure the emotional readiness of our district through the volume and types of chances we are taking.

So, what do you do with a chance?

You take it... because it might be the start of something incredible.



District 26
@D26Team

ALL WE REALLY NEED TO KNOW WE NOW LEARN IN PRE-K! TY to our D26 PreK teachers for sharing best practices & providing robust learning experiences for our youngest learners! ★ Student Engagement & Ownership, Authentic Student Work, Curiosity & Inquiry ★



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Community Education Council members, District Leadership Team members, and invited guests to develop a deeper understanding of our district vision for these initiatives. The most profound outcomes from these conversations was a shared sense of what the right, best chances are for us to take to ensure that this work comes alive in all our schools, for all our kids.

Nowhere is the evidence of chances well-taken more apparent than in the schools we visited as part of our ongoing Equity & Excellence Spotlight Series. During our January College Access for All visit to MS 74, we explored classrooms to experience learning in action and see how all children are working to investigate and solve identified problems as 21st century thinkers. In February, our visits for Universal Literacy took us to PS 159 and PS 173. At these schools, we explored classrooms to experience learning in action and to see how all children are working to read, write, speak and listen with rich academic language across all literacy genres. Most recently, our March Pre-Kindergarten for All visit to PS/IS 178 took us inside the journey of teachers and parents as they move from a traditional pre-k program to a high-quality pre-k program that promotes developmentally appropriate practices.

A common thread to all our visits was the comfort students and teachers displayed in welcoming us and how excited they were to share their work. At the close of each visit our school leaders were outstanding in facilitating discussions with

Then I thought, "Maybe I don't have to be brave all the time. Maybe I just need to be brave for a little while at the right time."

I realized it was up to me.



Throughout this letter we have leaned on the idea that no great chance can be taken without the support of those around us. For our team it is no different. While it goes without saying that the greatest, most powerful sources of support for our work are those most committed to the work of our district, we could not close this letter without taking a moment to honor a singular, driving force of support and trust that has enabled us to take these chances.

Thank you, Chancellor Fariña, for taking a chance by coming out of retirement and leading us these past four years. Indeed, your bravery came along at the right time for our work. Timing our courage alongside your thinking has set us on a path of true, transformative work that is driving deep towards the core of what every child deserves to experience.

In that spirit, the work endures, and to that end, thank you, Chancellor Carranza, for saying YES to the chance to carry the torch of leadership for our city. We look forward to continuing our work, and taking the right, best chances for our community.

As I got closer, I could see that this was a really huge chance!

But this time I was ready.

As it came by, I reached out and grabbed it. I held on with all my might.

It felt so good to soar, to fly, to be free!

I now see that when I hold back, I miss out. And I don't want to miss out. There's just so much I want to see and do and discover.

Daylight savings is over. The days are getting longer. It is almost unbelievable that we are about to enter the home stretch for the year. As we think about the remainder of this school year, ask yourself: What ideas are still left unexplored? What problems do I want to solve? What chances do I want to take?

Value this special time in our lives. As you get closer to the answers to these questions, we would love to hear about it. If something from your corner of the district is unlocking the potential of our students, Tweet it to us [@D26Team](https://twitter.com/D26Team) so we celebrate your courage in taking a chance!

Whether it's in the field or in the district office, we look forward to the next time we see you as we continue our journey. Until then, have a great Spring!

Sincerely,
Danielle Giunta and the District 26 Team