

Hi, my name is Kiana.

When I first came to PNA in August, I was a very shy person. Where I am from--Kasigluk, which is near Bethel-- is a place with not that many people, traditional Yup'ik values in learning, and different languages. I did well in school there, but when I came to PNA, I had more opportunities. In Kasigluk, most of the time we spoke Yup'ik. My friends, my teachers--not all teachers-- my classmates, my relatives, and other people spoke Yup'ik all around me.

At the beginning of the year when I came to PNA and while I was at other schools, there were times when I couldn't present in classes without having a big panic attack. I spoke quietly, I slouched, I hid in my big hoodies. There was no hiding it, my overall appearance showed that I was shy. I was shy because when I was young- like in preschool and kindergarten- I didn't have the chance to talk to people my own age because during the time I was recovering from chemotherapy. I was only 2 to 4 years old when I had cancer. I had a rare cancer known as Wilms tumor which occurs in the kidneys.

But then, at PNA, teachers, friends and family started noticing I was less wiggly, less fidgety, I spoke up more, and I was less meek. I would even get in trouble for talking too much a couple times. As time went on, I started to believe in myself more. I could now understand English. Well, at least more than I used to.

This year is the year when I have also grown the most academically. For example, last year I didn't understand math very well, but when I came to PNA, the teaching *and* environment were different. I didn't have any goals for math, it was just another subject I was in. Ms. Ferry made math easy to learn, she made it fun, and wasn't giving us way too much homework. Ms. Ferry takes the time and makes sure everybody understands math and pushed me to make goals for myself in this subject. She cares, so now I do too - which is another reason why PNA is different from other schools that I have been in.

This year I am proud to say that I have finished my first chapter book, even though I'm 14 years old. *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. I learned that I really like dystopian themed books. I find dystopian books really interesting because I feel

like I connect with the characters in a way. I wouldn't have read the book if I didn't attend PNA. I first discovered the book a couple months before Aiden and I had to read it as partners. I started to read the book, and then for those couple months, I gave up on reading it. Then, when Aiden and I were reading it together for our dystopian book club in class, I had someone to talk to about this book, which made it seem way more interesting and fun to read. I didn't like reading, I didn't understand it, I didn't see why people found it fun and entertaining, I read slower than others- it was just a big pain. But when I was given the chance to read a book with someone, it helped me understand books more.

PNA is different from other schools. The classes are smaller, the teachers are nice and they care so much about us, and they have high expectations, which is why I feel like PNA has got me prepared for high school. I can now present in front of people without having a big panic attack, I now speak up more, I am more confident, I understand English better than I used to, I understand math and other subjects better, I enjoy reading which I understand more, and overall PNA has helped a lot to help me move forward in my life of education and social skills. I now have skills to write essays, read and annotate, think critically, solve problems, use my time wisely, how to be social, etc. All these skills are going to be helpful for when I enter High School and move on in life. I have made so many friends this past year. Getting all these new friends, helped.