

“The writing I’ve completed for PBW has offered a fantastic creative outlet. One specific piece, which I dubbed “I used to be smart,” especially helped me process my issues at the time. Our PBW volunteers tasked us to describe an emotion without stating what it was, so we could work on “showing not telling.” If we chose to share, our peers could then guess the emotion we chose. For this exercise, I described personal experience. I got used to compliments and achievements and floods of validation, to the point where I needed them to survive. But, as I sat with the seconds ticking down on the clock until I had to turn in a test, I could not figure out one of the problems, and it was enough to make me feel not only that I was no longer smart, but that I was no longer worthy. I was stupid, lesser than everyone else, deserving only scorn and trapped in failure. As I wrote, I felt a weight lift off my shoulders as I funneled the stress from my brain to the paper. By trying to capture my emotions, I understood them. I got a more objective look, and saw that maybe missing a few points on a test didn’t make me inherently worthless. Sharing my work- something I created from my distress- gave me relief. PBW was such a great experience. Many of my other clubs became another thing I had to worry about; I had to spend hours on them in addition to doing my homework, and others were counting on me to get things right, so we wouldn’t fail at competitions. However, with PBW, I looked forward to every meeting. It was a much-needed break, where I could engage in my favorite hobby with super cool people. Everyone was super encouraging, making PBW a place where passion could thrive. It brought me the joy I needed.”

— *Evelyn Timmerman, Grade 11*

“My piece for the magazine was very therapeutic to write. It means a lot to me as it brings awareness to a somewhat common but not well known mental health concept. It was great to just be able to replicate my experience in writing. PBW definitely helped my social life. Our community made me happy and I was especially proud of our work.”

— *Ava Tjemeland, Grade 11*

“Journaling in the morning helps me a lot feel heard and calmer throughout my day. I think this helps my mental health. It helps me be more agreeable and selfless when interacting with others. I think the writing I did for PLBW was a great way for me to express myself to others. It meant a lot to me because I can share and remember what I did with family and friends! I think the community at PLBW was fun and enjoyable. I definitely want to stay in contact with the people already there.”

— *Johnny Hawkes, Grade 11*

“Writing makes me feel like I have purpose. It helps me digest anything I’m having problems with. Writing or Art let me release feelings I sometimes don’t realize I had bottled up. PBW was an outlet for me to write. An hour a week where all I had to do was sit down and write or think about writing and share. It was because the community I didn’t know I needed. I have a hard time sitting down and writing because there’s always something to do. I make myself think I’m too busy to write. PBW helped to let me have the creative outlet that didn’t need me to pick up some art material and think about what I’m making. Think about if I’ll be happy with it or if I’m doing it right. Writing is honestly easier than art sometimes.”

— *Alexis Jansma, Grade 12*