

Preface

For 180 days each year, children go to school in the United States of America. But how many children really notice the building or even know the story of the place where they spend many hours each day? What is the meaning of the school's name? Who designed the building? When was it built? What architectural details give the school style? Is the school a significant landmark in the community, city, or nation?

These questions are worth answering because the more students know about their school, the more likely they are to care about it. We hope that this book encourages teachers everywhere to integrate a study of their school into the STEAM curriculum, thus creating an interdisciplinary unit with connections to science, technology, art, and math—plus social studies and language arts.

When the curriculum is connected to the students' real world, learning becomes relevant and memorable.

What Is This Book About?

This book is about bringing Pittsburgh Colfax to life through a special educational program created by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (PHLF), at the request of Erin Dulak, third-grade ELA (English Language Arts) teacher.

PHLF involved five classrooms of students in one-hour workshops during the month of October 2016. Each group of approximately 20 students walked outside to look closely at the main entrance of Pittsburgh Colfax, and then returned to the classroom to complete an art activity and a creative writing assignment. Each student added patterns and personality to a drawing of Pittsburgh Colfax and wrote a story about *being* the school. Those stories compose the five chapters of this book and are illustrated with some of the student drawings.

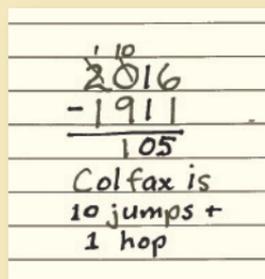
Pittsburgh Colfax Comes to Life honors the third-grade students' creativity and work—and serves as a compelling testimony for place-based education. Each student was given a book, and a digital copy is archived in the third-grade library of reading materials.

Techniques

for bringing your school to life

Explore

1. Start with the present, with what you can see and touch now. What materials is your school constructed of? Notice the details that give your school character and style. Teach architectural vocabulary: *naming* is the beginning of *caring*. Explore your school: visit the boiler room; ride the elevators; climb the stairs; see the views. Talk about the professionals who created and constructed your school: architects, engineers, electricians, carpenters, etc.
2. “Jump” or “clap” the age of your school to feel how old it is compared to your age: one jump or clap equals 10 years (a hop is five years)!
3. Relate a building to a person: façade = face; door = mouth; windows = eyes; steel frame = skeleton; electrical system = nervous system; plumbing = digestive and excretory systems; ventilation = respiration.
4. Introduce the three goals of architecture that are helpful goals for people too: a building, just like a person, needs to stand up (building structure); be useful (building function); and look good (building appearance).
5. Teach the value of diversity by showing the different “skin colors” and features of your



school and neighboring buildings. Imagine: if every building looked the same, you wouldn't know where you were. Similarly, if every person looked the same, you wouldn't know who was who. It is our differences that give us character, that make us stand out in a unique way.

Character and diversity make a place distinctive and special.

Research

6. Find photographs, maps, and architectural drawings to show how your school and neighborhood have changed over time.
7. Interview people who have been associated with your school for a long time.
8. Search online. Visit your school library, local library, historical society, and historic preservation organization. Ask for help in researching the past.
9. Find out who designed your school. Is it a historic structure? For whom is it named?

Create

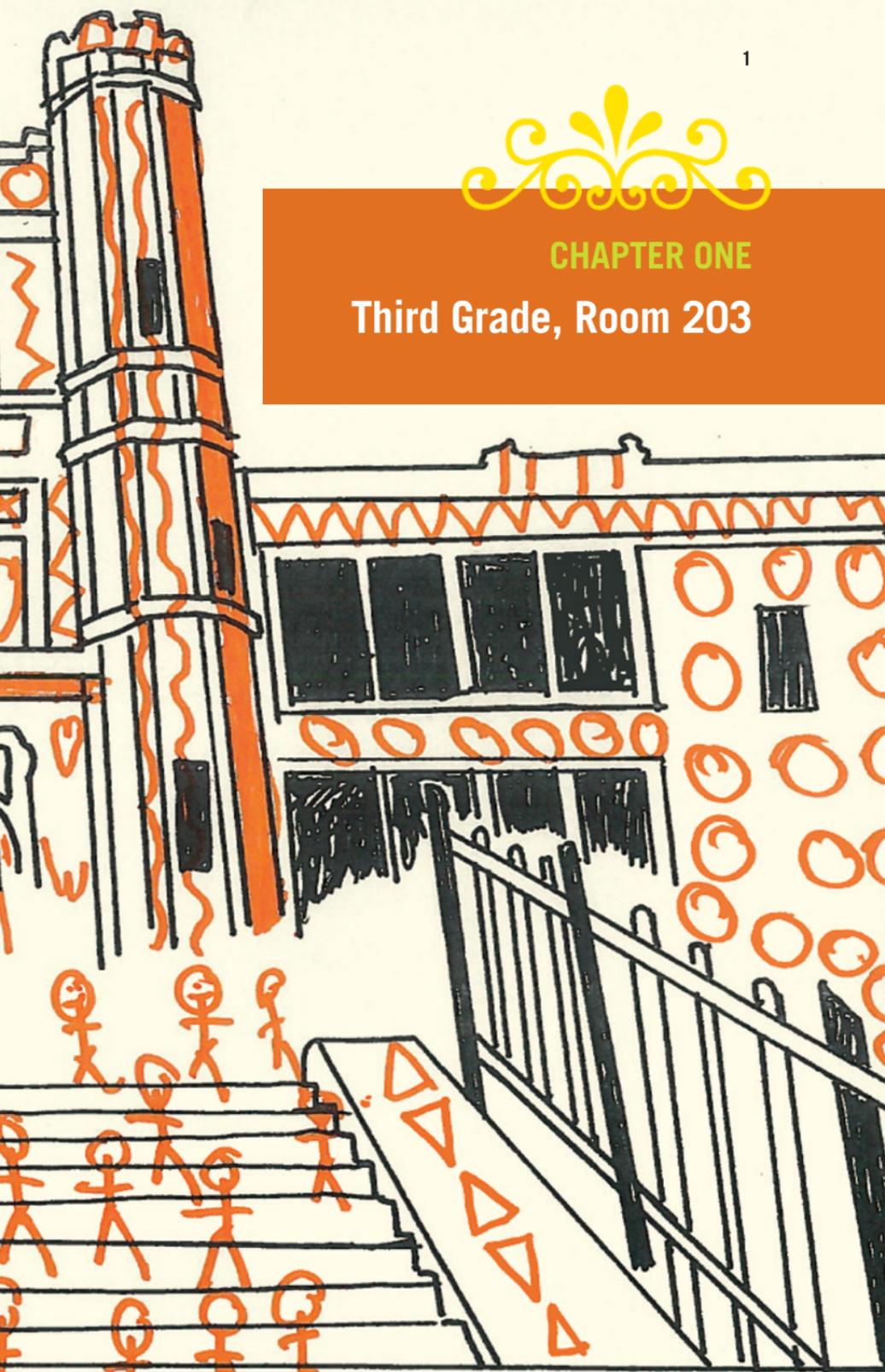
10. Describe your school. Write a poem or story about *being* your school using personification. Publish your work!
11. Associate “character-building” words with your school: for example, the architectural style of your school might suggest that it is “robust, dignified, and impressive.” Or, perhaps it looks “welcoming, creative, and ingenious.”





CHAPTER ONE

Third Grade, Room 203



People like you, readers, are made of flesh. I am not. Why? Because I am the school, Colfax. I love hearing education being shared. Over the years I have seen wonderful and terrible things—the terrible bullying and wonderful children standing up for the victims of horrible bullies. I am Colfax, made of stone and brick.

Young children learn inside of me. I cannot talk, but I do rumble. Only Manny can understand me. He wrote what I rumbled! I was alone. Now I am not. My younger “New-Building” brother is attached to me by a bridge.

Learning is great! I love my students and teachers equally. I am a proud building. Why? I educate children. I am on the important places list and I am a warm, welcoming school.

—*Manny*

Hello, my name is Colfax. Did you know there are teachers and students inside of me? There are also gym teachers, art teachers, and all types of teachers. It feels so nice to be a school because you can hear the noise of children laughing and playing around, and you can hear teachers teaching, birds tweeting outside, and trees swaying in the wind.

—*Jasmine*

I spy with my eyes, something red brick with pale stone and twin towers. I'm not a house. I'm not a palace. Yes, I'm a school.

Inside of me there are classrooms, students learning, wonderful teachers, gyms, and much more. I have a new building and an old building. I'm always ecstatic to see students learning new things.

It makes me very proud to see how everything goes on. It makes me feel like the best school in the world. Maybe I could read something about you next time.

—*Matei*

Hello, my name is Colfax. I have my name written on my face. I am red brick and white stone. I have big ears that stand out and lots of window eyes. I can see you, so do not hide.

Come up my stairs—do not be scared. Come in my door. Look at all the amazing wonders I hold. I am a school loved by all, and inside of me you will see I hold classrooms big and small with all manner of math, science, reading, and more. Come find your class and let's learn on!

I am proud because I help you, and without me you would be empty-minded and dumb. I teach and I am proud to do so. Let's get this party going and let's learn. The bell has rung. I repeat: the bell has rung. Goodbye for now, the day is finally done. Goodbye, and see you tomorrow.

—Abigail

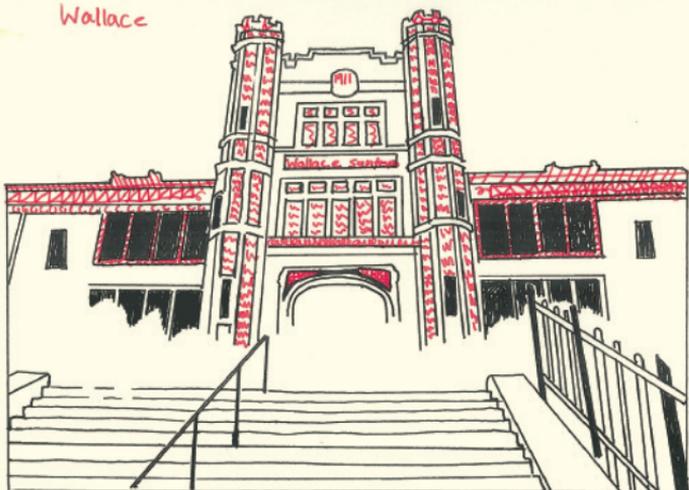
Hi, I'm Colfax School! I was built in 1911. I am made out of red brick and white stone. Some of my windows are stained glass. On the back of me is where the garden and the playground are.

On the inside of me are children who are taught by teachers. My favorite student is Wallace. He is in Mrs. Musyt's class. When he gets in, he always stops at his locker and gets his stuff that he needs to get started for school. By the end of the school day, he gets his stuff at his locker and then he goes to his dismissal room.

I love to be Colfax! It is so much fun to get to look at the children when they are at school. I always like to talk to the teachers and to Wallace. I also like my design on the outside of me. I would not like to be any other school.

—*Wallace*

Wallace



Abigail

