

Dear Administrators and Teachers,

You know of the importance I place on the use of picture books in the classroom, and so I am pleased to write this note to you.

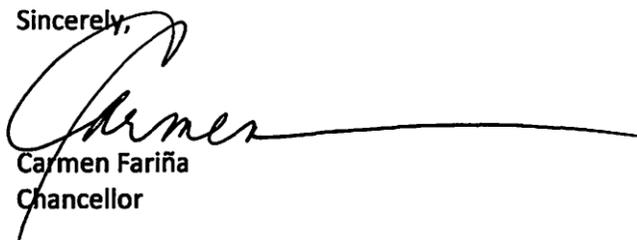
For the past 30 years, the Department of Education has offered the annual Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition to New York City public school students in all five boroughs, inviting them to use the language arts and visual arts skills they acquire in the classroom to write and illustrate their own picture books. This remarkable competition, open to grades 3 to 12, encourages students to reflect on the observations, experiences, hopes and dreams that make them unique individuals and channel them into original, thoughtfully illustrated literature.

The information on bookmaking provided to educators on the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation website, and the bookmaking resources provided on the website of the Office of Arts and Special Projects are aligned with the Common Core capacities of literate individuals, and can be fully integrated into any school's curriculum. Through their author studies and book development process, students enhance their reading comprehension, writing, research, and communication skills, all integral parts of their academic foundation and long-term success. The competition promotes self-expression, self-exploration and emotional growth.

Whether a student's book is selected as the school's winning entry to the competition or the book remains at the school to be shared with peers, each student who engages in bookmaking has worked hard to create a tangible product. This is equally true for gifted and talented, general education students, English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and those who fit several of these categories. All students can advance at their own speed, improve their skills and complete their books with equal satisfaction.

The Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition, makes a tremendous contribution to advance the work educators are tasked to do in classrooms every day. For educators interested in participating in the 31st Annual Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition, everything you need to participate is available online at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/initiatives/ezra-jack-keats.html>

Sincerely,



Carmen Fariña
Chancellor