

WMS and NHS Students Have Virtual Meet Up With Former Somalian Refugee and Author Omar Mohamed

January 3, 2023 -- In a virtual visit on December 21, 2022, students from Woodbury Middle School and Nonnewaug High School welcomed Omar Mohamed, the author and main character of "When Stars Are Scattered" the young adult graphic novel about his experience growing up in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya.



Pictured with Omar Mohamed are members of the WMS Book Club Sheree Worden, Brianna Poliquin, Sophie Mehegan, Colton Fengler, Maddy Taylor, Mia Mendez, Jayda Gladding, Harriette Bayliss, Taylor Timko, Dani Martino, Ethan Testone, Caleigh Palmer, Morgan Willis, Ava Hirlman, and Elliana Obolewicz and Caroline South, 6-8 Instructional Leader for Literacy and WMS Library Media Specialist Aimee Shuhart.

Mohamed joined the students virtually from Africa and spoke about his time in the refugee camp with his younger non-verbal brother and how the events there would be shaped into the idea for the novel. He answered some of their questions and challenged them to practice kindness and be grateful, especially for the ability to go to school.

Mohamed spoke to the student about his international fundraising organization “Refugee Strong” that helps to empower, inspire, and embolden students who are living in refugee camps to continue their studies. While in the Dadaab Refugee camp for over 15 years, Mohamed said he knows what it's like to be without resources and his organization aims to change that.

WMS sixth grader Jayda Gladding said she was thrilled to meet Mohamed and hear personally about his journey. “It was so interesting to hear about his experience in the refugee camp and what he has done since,” Gladding said. She added that she is looking forward to bringing the “Refugee Strong” fundraising effort to WMS with members of the Book Club later this year.

The graphic novel, a National Book Award finalist, follows Mohamed's journey as a Somali refugee, as told to bestselling author and artist Victoria Jamieson. WMS students read the book as part of a Book Club sponsored by the Woodbury Public Library.