Dear families,

Last Friday, we hosted nearly thirty educators from around the city in our first Showcase School visit. The theme of this visit was “Fostering Student Voice, Ownership and Independence through Inquiry-Based Instruction and Student-Centered Structures”. After a brief welcome, we split into several groups and led each group through a series of classroom observations. Often, schools will focus these tours on 3-4 different classrooms, but in planning this first visit, we opted to include as many classrooms as possible. That morning, twelve different classrooms were showcased and sixteen different teachers were observed. Visitors had a chance to see a 7th grade Socratic seminar in action, Kindergarteners and 3rd graders engaging with the same thinking routine called “See, Think, Wonder” and 4th graders and 6th graders both utilizing feedback routines to give their peers “kind, specific and helpful” feedback on their written work.

In the hopes to illuminate the hard work that teachers put into these observed structures, we ended the event with a teacher panel discussion/Q&A. This gave participants an opportunity to ask questions directly to the teachers that bring these practices to reality in our classrooms. One of the questions that made the greatest impression on my experience of that day asked teachers how they managed to “speak so little” during the lesson. This question brought about an interesting discussion of “airtime”, or the proportion of time that an adult is speaking versus the time that students are speaking in meaningful ways. As a teacher, or an adult in general, many of us catch ourselves in these moments of airtime domination more than we’d like to admit. It’s easier to fill the space with our own voices than to create thoughtful spaces for young people to speak. The creation of these spaces takes shared
discipline, trust and patience from all the parties involved - the teacher/facilitator, the student, the administrator and the parent supporting from home.

This Thursday, Arts & Letters will add yet another layer to our shared spaces for student voice and ownership in our first round of K-8 Student-Led Conferences. As the adults in this process, we will demonstrate this trust, patience and discipline, as we allow our students the space to describe their strengths and goals in each subject without interruption. This practice will demonstrate our fundamental belief that, as thoughtfully articulated by one of our teachers on the panel, the person who is best equipped to speak about a student’s learning is the student herself/himself. And in the process of ceding airtime to our students, we (the adults) will have created the space where our students can drive the discussion and we can learn from them.

Hope you’ve enjoyed your weekend!
-Pia

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**CELEBRATIONS**

**8th Grade:** Sally Diallo - Courage,  
Kayla Harvey - Confidence,  
Julien Tornelli - Compassion  
Paloma Estess - Compassion  
Tyginae Wright - Compassion

**7th Grade:** Cecely Garcia - Clarity  

**6th Grade:** Aziza Cazaubon - Courage  
Hajar Kayed - SHoW  
Kevin Williams - Compassion  

**Staff:** Mr. Wardle - Compassion

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**THURSDAY’S BOOK TALK WITH MS. BALLANTINE**  
**A Black Hole is Not A Hole** by Carolyn Cinami DeCristofano

What is a black hole? Where do they come from? How were they discovered? Can we visit one? Carolyn Cinami DeCristofano takes readers on a ride through the galaxies (ours, and others), answering these questions and many more about the phenomenon known as a black hole.

In lively and often humorous text, the book starts off with a thorough explanation of gravity and the role it plays in the formation of black holes. Paintings by Michael Carroll, coupled with real telescopic images, help readers visualize the facts and ideas presented in the text, such as how light bends, and what a supernova looks like.

**A BLACK HOLE IS NOT A HOLE** is an excellent introduction to an extremely complex scientific concept. Back matter includes a timeline which sums up important findings discussed throughout, while the glossary and index provide a quick point of reference for readers. Children and adults alike will learn a ton of spacey facts in this far-out book that’s sure to excite even the youngest of astrophiles.
7th Grade Math and Science
with Ms. Swift

The students in 7th grade science have finished their first unit of study, which was Geology, Inquiry and Investigation. To culminate the unit, students created clay models of the earth’s crust. For this activity the students had to use a combination of Math and Science skills. They first researched the different layers of the earth crust then decided on an appropriate scale for their models. The students worked in groups of four. As a group they had to divide the responsibilities of creating the model creating descriptions for each layer and creating an appropriate scale. On Friday after each group completed the activity students in both Park and Greene voted on the models to decide which group had a model that most closely meet the requirements. Winners will be announced on Tuesday November 18.

Teachers are hard at work preparing for conferences this week.
Check back next week for more updates!
A&L HAPPENINGS

In the Schoolyard
Visit from Author Doreen Cronin

Assistant Principal Institute Visit
6th Grade Field trip to BBG and Egypt Museum