Dear families,

This week I wanted to write a bit about our recent student-led conferences. We had incredible parent attendance and the vast majority of you left with big grins on your faces, so I am feeling pretty proud of our young ones and their teachers.

Shifting from the traditional parent/teacher conference to one where the student facilitates the group’s conversation has taken a great deal of planning and thinking. It has been well worth the work. This routine helps our young people develop their voices; it requires them to be thoughtful about their education, and to take responsibility for their own learning. There is a lot of potential elegance in these SLCs.

I say potential elegance because as with every initiative here at Arts & Letters we will be tweaking and refining this practice in the years to come. There are a number of best practices in running student-led conference that we have use and will continue to use as guideposts to make this process stronger. We believe that SLCs need to:

- focus on classwork that is tied to learning targets (meaningful and kid-friendly descriptions of Common Core Standards)
- provide time to discuss student progress toward meeting standards
- provide time to discuss the social and emotional growth of students
- be a forum where adults let students take charge
- be an opportunity to support students’ growth as learners
In the coming weeks A&L staff will be revisiting all of the learning targets, benchmark assessments, and student and parental supports we used to ready ourselves for the SLCs.

Thanks to a number of you who agreed to be videotaped during the conferences, we also will get a chance to review the process in action, and make refinements based on what we observe. What we learn will help us make the next round of SLCs even more effective and meaningful.

I also want to acknowledge that there were a number of families who expressed confusion about the practice and felt that there was not enough communication from me about what was about to happen. I have gotten a lot of really helpful and specific feedback from a number of you. I know that by the second round, coming in a few months, I will be able to address these concerns, and keep you up to date on any revisions we’ve decided to put in place.

I hope that you have a restful and food-filled few days.

-John

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**CELEBRATIONS**

**8th Grade:** Sade Warren- Compassion, Madison Estrella- Compassion & SHOW

**6th Grade:** Stevie Sinclair- Courage, Asha Colquhoun-Clarity

**7th Grade:** Jordan Hagood-Clarity, Gisele Placeres- Clarity

**Staff:** Ms. Casey- Clarity

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**THURSDAY’S BOOK TALK WITH MS. BALLANTINE**

**Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: The Story Behind an American Friendship**

From the author of Lincoln: A Photobiography, comes a clear-sighted, carefully researched account of two surprisingly parallel lives and how they intersected at a critical moment in U.S. history. Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass were both self taught, both great readers and believers in the importance of literacy, both men born poor who by their own efforts reached positions of power and prominence—Lincoln as president of the United States and Douglass as the most famous and influential African American of his time. Though their meetings were few and brief, their exchange of ideas helped to end the Civil War, reunite the nation, and abolish slavery.
3rd Grade Humanities
with Ms. Clevering

The Wax Museum of Change-makers, Peacemakers and Notable People

Students in Lafayette and Myrtle immersed themselves in the writing process with an initial focus on collecting and organizing their ideas for informational writing. At the same time, students explored what it means to be in a community in their classroom, and made connections to how other communities have been shaped by inspirational people throughout history. At the end of the unit, students dressed up as the person they studied.

**The Task:** Pick out a person of interest to you and explain in one paragraph or more why that person is a change-maker, peacemaker or inspirational person.

During the process, students covered the following learning targets:

- I can read independently for twenty minutes
- I can differentiate between significant and insignificant details
- I can take notes of significant points from the text
- I can organize my ideas in graphic organizers with support
- I can transfer my ideas to a rough draft
- I can revise my draft asking myself the question “Do all my supporting details match my topic sentence?”
- I can peer edit a classmate’s paper looking for grammar mistakes.
- I can present my topic summarizing the paragraph I wrote.

While visiting the different “statues”, guests could tap them on the shoulder to hear students articulate reasons that they are notable, and other interesting facts they discovered during their research.
Dear Families,

Willoughby is working on their “Me On The Map” unit. This unit spotlights the communities where students live, from big picture to small, from their world to their home, school and neighborhoods. It allows students name, describe (and to literally hold in their hands) all of the places they can call ‘home’. This week, students drew themselves in their bedrooms, homes and neighborhoods.

Here are some samples of their room and neighborhood drawings.
Carlton 2nd Grade
with Ms. Boyle and Mr. Aguilar

Carlton second graders are working on reading and writing every single day during our “daily five”. The “Daily five” is when children choose 5 ways to practice reading and writing strategies. The five choices are: read to self, read to someone, listen to reading, word work and work on writing. Students at A&L get to practice these daily choices since first grade, so they have a lot of experience. Our job is to make learning new words, reading and writing as much fun as it can be. Here are some ways that we do this:

Some students use the pointer to create sentences from the sight word wall. This helps students practice using their new words in their vocabulary. Students build new sight words with magnet letter tiles to practice their word work.

Other friends choose to listen to reading on starfall.com. This website helps students practice their reading strategies such as fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. Of course students always love reading to self too.

Finally we have some students who like to work with a buddy while they learn. Two girls choose to write a story together as they work on writing. Other children are reading second grade brain quest questions to each other to practice reading and have fun learning.
K-8 Student Led Conferences
Thanksgiving Feasts