Dear families,

I want to go in detail in this letter about Arts & Letters’ Kindergarten admissions pilot to promote socio-economic diversity. Over the past three years we have asked for a controlled choice mechanism that would allow us to prioritize admissions to families that qualify for free and reduced lunch for 40% of the remaining Kindergarten seats after siblings are admitted. I am happy to say that we got much of what we asked for. Grit is incredibly important for change to happen. I am grateful to be a member of Arts & Letters’ persistent, compassionate and smart community.

I have had some important communication to share that comes from the Enrollment Office that will run the Kindergarten admissions for the pilot. I hope that my summary of it will provide more clarity as to how the admissions process will go for our fifty Kindergarten seats. First of all, each year the Enrollment office reserves five seats for special education students. From the 45 remaining seats, siblings are then admitted. At this moment I do not know how many siblings will be coming into the Kindergarten class but the number has ranged over the years between 16 and 28 young ones. The next part of the admissions process is lottery based and opens up to District 13 residents and students who qualify for free and reduced lunch are prioritized until 40% of the remaining seats are reached. Siblings that meet the free and reduced lunch criteria are counted toward the 40% number. The next and final step in the admissions process is a lottery for the left over seats open to the rest of the District 13 applicants.

Some of you have asked me about what the ‘pilot’ status means. Sadly, this small step toward creating greater socio-economic diversity in New York City public schools will in part be subject to the political climate in which we find ourselves. Given the recent press around a number of Supreme Court Justices response to arguments about an affirmative action case there is reason to be concerned that the pilot may be short lived. My hunch is that the pilot will be at least five years. I hope that it will be much longer, but I know that keeping it for the long run means that we will need to continue to push this issue so that all schools in District 13 better reflect the incredible diversity that exists in its neighborhoods.
I hope that our community will continue to embrace this challenge and push for greater socio-economic diversity in more and more of our public schools. We need more small victories or “little bits of good” like ours to create momentum. If we get greater energy around this issue we will be able to push larger scale desegregation policies that will more thoroughly address the educational inequities inherent in the segregated New York City public school system.

-John

Thursday’s Book Talk
with Ms. Ballantine

Glory Bee
by Augusta Scattergood

A Mississippi town in 1964 gets riled when tempers flare at the segregated public pool.

As much as Gloriana June Hemphill, or Glory as everyone knows her, wants to turn twelve, there are times when Glory wishes she could turn back the clock a year. Jesslyn, her sister and former confidante, no longer has the time of day for her now that she’ll be entering high school. Then there’s her best friend, Frankie. Things have always been so easy with Frankie, and now suddenly they aren’t. Maybe it’s the new girl from the North that’s got everyone out of sorts. Or maybe it’s the debate about whether or not the town should keep the segregated public pool open.

Augusta Scattergood has drawn on real-life events to create a memorable novel about family, friendship, and choices that aren’t always easy.

Word of the Week
Momentum

Definition:
- the strength or force that something has when it is moving
- the strength or force that allows something to continue or to grow stronger or faster as time passes
- physics: the property that a moving object has due to its mass and its motion

Celebrations for 12.11

5th Grade: Marley Drakes- Clarity
            Sam Pruitt- Creativity
            Arianna Yagel- Courage

6th grade: Michelle Mejia- Clarity

7th Grade: Wyatt Jeffries- Clarity

8th Grade: Grace Christiansen- SHOW

Staff: Mr. Garcia- Compassion
      Ms. Shuart- Confidence
After our gallery walks and hallway exhibition for the student led conferences, we have begun our second unit in each grade. For our first unit students worked in drawing, painting and collage, for our second unit we are finally opening the long awaited for….Construction Center!

Artists Collaborate!

In this unit, Kindergarten looked at artist and children’s book creator, Eric Carle as an inspiration for our collaboration of the Kindergarten Zoo. Students created painted paper and cut out shapes to create zoo animals and their habitats.

First graders will be looking at the work of Peter Fischle and Eric Wiess. Their video the way things go is an inspiration for our first graders to experiment in the newly opened construction center.

Artists Re-purpose!

Second Graders have looked at the work of Tara Donovan, Nam June Pike, and Tom Friedman as examples of artists who re-purpose materials. A big conversation in our work around repurposing is transforming the art material into sculpture.

Artists Share Themselves!

In grade 3 we have looked at Tim Hawkinson who creates sculptural self-portraits. We will be looking at the work of Pepon Osorio as an artist who shares himself and his culture through narrative art installation. We are creating masks and self-portrait paintings for our project.

In grade 4 we are going to look at Tyree Guyton’s The Heidleberg Project, Felix Gonzalez Torrez, and Mierle Ukeles as artists who share themselves. These are artists who share themselves on a social sphere.
Lafayette launched their Bird Unit last week by looking at various bird images. We will discover over the course of the unit different habitats of birds, as well as what makes birds so unique. Students explored these images by walking around the room and writing down what they SEE, THINK and WONDER.

Last Monday, as part of our launch of our new unit, we had Kate from The Wild Bird Fund (on the Upper West Side) come to visit our class. The Wild Bird Fund is a non-profit organization that rehabilitates wild birds that are injured or sick, so that they can return to the wild, if possible. Each month for the rest of the year, Kate will come in and talk about a different aspect of bird life. This ranges from where they live, how they survive and what we should do to protect and help them in our city.

At the end of the year we will be visiting the Wild Bird Fund, where we will get a tour of the sanctuary where they rehabilitate birds.
A & L HAPPENINGS

Winter Craft Fair 12.12.15
Winter Craft Fair Open Mic Performances
Staff vs. Parents Basketball Game/Fundraiser 12.5.15
Recess Corner-