

Arts & Letters

PARENT BLAST

May Events

May 1st: Willoughby States of Matter Share

May 2-4: NYS Math Exams

May 5th: Career Day for Grades 5-8
Lower Grade Family Sing 915
Parent Coffee Social 845
Parent/Teacher Basketball Game 5pm

May 9-11: 7th Grade Boston Trip

May 10-11: 8th Grade DC Trip

May 12: A&L Professional Development Day (No School for Students)

May 17-19: 6th Grade Frost Valley Trip

May 18-19: 5th Grade Frost Valley Trip

May 20th: SpringFest

May 29: Memorial Day (No School)

June 2nd: A&L Gala 6pm



Dear Arts & Letters families,

All through my teenage years I enjoyed playing football and baseball. The teams were made up of a racially diverse group of young men with very different ideas and life experiences. Despite these differences we got along well and had a really strong sense of unity. Some of my most

vivid memories come from when we played away games. The hallways, the locker rooms, and the fields always felt so palpably foreign from the familiar territory of our "home" school. The stands and fans were not ours.

Playing away games was an opportunity for us to demonstrate our character, as individuals and as teammates -- to practice how we might assert ourselves and compete in an unfamiliar space. Despite the strangeness, we knew the importance of playing well, playing together, playing fairly and being respectful of our opponents. We had to live up to the high expectations of our coaches, parents, and school, and at the same time we knew they had our backs.

I have been thinking a great deal about these experiences as it relates to the current political context, and the opportunities for learning that "playing away" could offer. Just as there are rules about playing games like football and baseball we have a number of rules that guide us when we engage with our students about politics. In any classroom there are lots of opinions and viewpoints and we know that a discussion or a curriculum is richer when

the room is full of this difference. The New York City Department of Education stipulates that teachers and administrators must maintain "a posture of complete neutrality" with respect to politicians and political viewpoints. I like to think that this rule is in place in part to remind us to approach our work with young people with open minds. We know that imposing our own beliefs too forcefully can diminish the vitality of the thinking in a classroom. We want to be running classrooms that make note of our political differences, discover where they originate, and look for commonalities and compromises. Classrooms like these need to have times when each one of our students feels as if they are "playing away" even when at "home."

That said, I/we have not been perfect in maintaining "complete neutrality." As many of you might imagine, it has been particularly challenging as of late. The national political winds blow in opposition to much of our school's vision and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Arts & Letters is by design a sanctuary school from this divisive storm. I think that an important first step in asserting our sanctuary status is recognizing when wrong is wrong and then raising our voices to say, "Enough is enough." Continued exposure to hate speech and fear mongering is toxic for all of us, especially young people, and we must be clear with our students that we don't condone threats to their well being.

Another important step for all of us is to figure out what got us here, to this divided place. We need to put our young people and ourselves in safe situations where we see, feel, and experience the world from different perspectives. Raising the flexible thinkers we need to sustain our democracy means that they have to practice leaving their comfort zones and putting themselves in other peoples' shoes. These experiences will ensure that as our students interact with the world outside they are able to take not only their academic learning but their mindfulness to the many, many "away games" that await.

-John



Thursday's Book Talk

with Ms. Crouch

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key by Jack Gantos

Joey Pigza's got heart, he's got a mom who loves him, and he's got "dud meds," which is what he calls the Ritalin pills that are supposed to even out his wild mood swings. Sometimes Joey makes bad choices. He learns the hard way that he shouldn't stick his finger in the pencil sharpener, or swallow his house key, or run with scissors. Joey ends up bouncing around a lot - and eventually he bounces himself all the way downtown, into the district special-ed program, which could be the end of the line. As Joey knows, if he keeps making bad choices, he could just fall between the cracks for good. But he is determined not to let that happen.

IN THE CLASSROOM

8th Grade Science with Ms. Lowenstein

Eighth graders have begun their second round of debates about outer space. The first topic debated was whether or not humans should embark on space exploration. Students researched pro and con arguments linked to the cost, resources, effects on health, risk, peace, security and the human calling for exploration. Each class was divided into different groups: Pro, Con and Judges. The Pro and Con teams then were divided into two groups, the debaters and the “on the fly” researchers. Students were so engaged in the research and presentation of their assigned side and the judges worked out their own protocol to determine who won.

In one class the pro side won and in the other the con side. Students will be completing two more debates. The first, “Who should be an astronaut?”, will have them debate that their applicant should go to space versus the opposite team’s applicant. The final debate will be about the decision to colonize Mars. It’s been a great experience for students to increase their scientific reading and ability to argue opposing positions.



Lafayette 3rd Grade with Ms. Clevering and Ms. Schray

Students have been busily finishing up their biographies on their changemakers and peacemakers. Students organized their work into the following tabs in their notebooks:

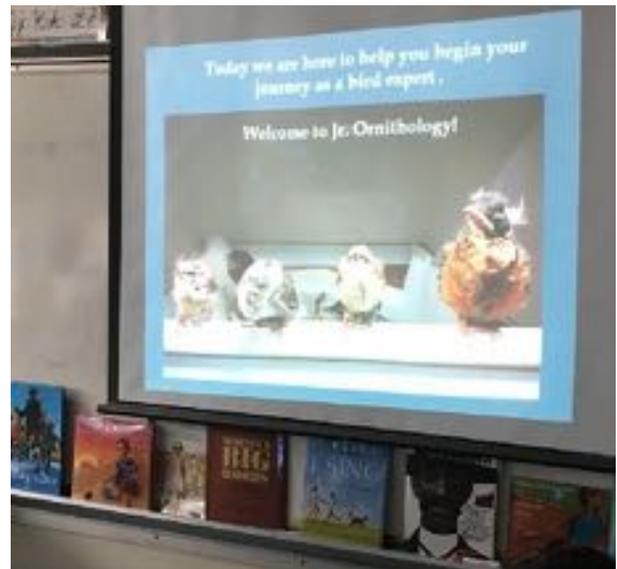
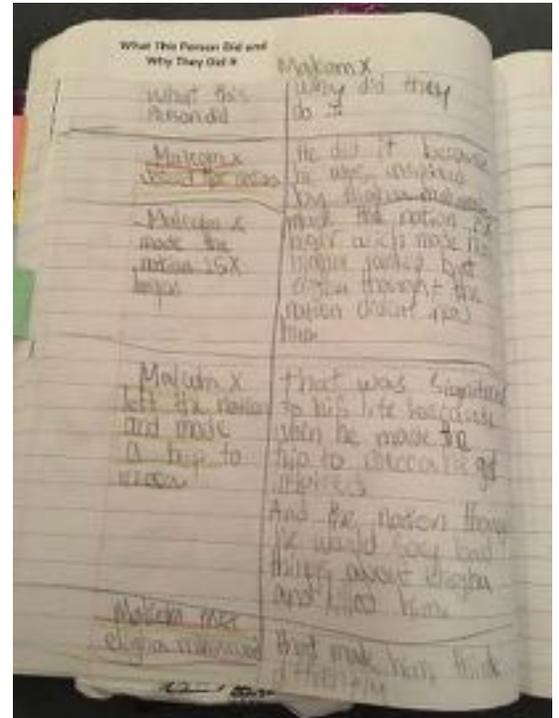
- major life events
- what this person did and why they did it
- character traits/evidence
- changes that were made as a result of this person's work
- other facts
- history notes

Then students began color coding their notes to organize them in four key paragraphs

1. Introduction
2. "The life of.." (a paragraph about the early life of their person of study)
3. What the person is known for
4. Why are they a peacemaker or changemaker

In Science we wanted students to be given some opportunities to work by themselves if they chose to. So much of Arts and Letters work is done collaboratively and sometimes working with a partner all of the time can be difficult. So if students wanted their could either choose to work independently or in a pair. The assignment was to create their own plant based off of features they learned about in whatever biome they were studying. Students studied either the tundra, desert or rainforest. You will see their creations and explanations for their choices this Friday at the share

We also got a visit from our Michelle who is the educator at Wild Bird Fund located in the Upper West Side. We work with this organization every year and they are fantastic! They come in approximately eight times and teach us about different components of birds such as nests, migration, how trash affects birds and wildlife etc. At the end of the cycle, we go up to the sanctuary to visit some of the birds that the Wild Bird Fund takes care of in their rehabilitation center.



Cumberland 4th Grade with Ms. Adams and Ms. Shah

Today, Cumberland met with their kindergarten buddies in Adelphi for the first time! (Clinton will have their first visit with Clermont next week). They could hardly contain their excitement as they prepared for their first visit. Each student picked out a special picture book they wanted to share with their buddy. They brainstormed warm greetings and questions that would act as icebreakers as they get to know their buddies.

Their first visit was absolutely heart-warming. Some Adelphi friends were nervous and some had a lot of energy! We were so proud to see such strong role models in our 4th graders as they greeted their buddies with warm smiles, showed genuine interest in what they had to say, and moved around the room with little ones who had a bundle of energy! After 4th graders read aloud to their buddies, many kindergartners picked one of their favorite books to share, including books they wrote themselves. When we returned to our classroom, Cumberland circled up to share experiences with each other. Here is a snapshot of what they had to say:

Jared: My partner's said his favorite color is red and my fav color is red.

Gabriel: I want to pinch their cheeks. We were talking and it was so awesome and she said spider in a really cute way.

Xena: My partner was much like me when I was little. She has curly hair and likes the colors pink and blue. She didn't really want to keep stopping to discuss, she just wanted to read more and more books!

Vinnie: My partner was pretty funny to me and I made her laugh a few times.

Sterling: My partner is really nice and she loves reading. When we were done she said, "Let's read my book." And they actually have their own books that they wrote! It was at the end so I told her we would start with her book next time.

Brandyn: My partner was really curious about the pictures in Curious George. She had a lot of questions!

Pearl: I noticed my partner was a little shy at first, but once we started reading she warmed up.

Tallulah: First my buddy was shy, but then I asked him what his favorite color was and he said, "All of them." So I said, "Rainbow!" and he said, "Yeah!" Then I asked him if he like spiders and he said, "Only one kind - tarantula!" (talked about how much she loved how he pronounced "tarantula").

Jaden: Well, at first my partner was just staring at me, so I started asking her a bunch of questions so that she didn't just stare at me! I learned she likes My Little Pony. At the end she kept saying, "Goodbye! Goodbye! Goodbye!"

Zane: My partner was very shy at the beginning so I asked my partner A LOT of questions! When I started reading the book about the crocodile, he started running all around the room like a crocodile! It took me awhile, but I finally got him to come back to me.

Samang: We had a connection with our partner because our favorite color is pink!

Isa: My partner was super shy at first but then we started talking and she was so sweet!

Milla: My partner was so adorable! He kept making predictions and at the end I heard him talking to his friends and he said, "I had very much fun with my buddy!"

Nico: My partner noticed a lot of things in the story. After I finished a page, I asked her if she had any questions. We got through a lot of reading!

Dev: I think the book I picked was too hard b/c my partner starred around the room while I was reading. So I think next time I want to switch up the book and pick one from her classroom.

Oscar: My partner was a little shy. I read my book and she really liked it. When we were done, she asked Mr. Allgood if she could pick out a book from her bin. She thought this book was really funny.

Elijah: My partner's favorite color is pink and I told her that was one of my favorite colors, too. When I was asking her questions, she was very sweet and adorable! I read her a book about a dragon prince and on the second page she said, "I think the snake is the dragon!" And at the end she gave me three hugs.

Pema: My partner was shy but she still talked a lot. She kept moving the bench we were on, but then I was like, well, she's a kid!

Sadie: We read a book about bats and in the beginning, we asked our buddy if he had any predictions and he told us what he knew about bats. Then he was making a lot of connections while we were reading the book.

We are excited for Clinton to have their first meeting with Clermont next week and can't wait to learn more about our buddies and continue to build these special relationships.

A & L HAPPENINGS

2nd Grade Frog/Fairy Tale Share



Kindergarten Dance Share at Lower Grade Sing



Visual Art Elective



Students participate in GLSEN's Day of Silence



STEM Event After School in the Library



Author Visit from Michael Hearst



3rd Grade Wax Museum



Kindergarten and 4th Grade Reading Buddies

