

## NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

Mrs. Hahn's ALA/SS Classroom



Dear Parents,

I have always said that once Halloween hits, the year starts to fly by. And with a jam-packed November and December quickly approaching, it'll be 2015 before we know it.

I am so pleased with a myriad of things your children accomplished this past month. I was astounded by many of your kids' first quarter novel projects. Not only were many of the written assignments remarkably well done, the creative projects were extraordinary! Students had a chance to showcase their musical, artistic, linguistic, and technological talents with these projects. Ask your child about some of his/her favorites from the unit—there were many standouts and I am excited to see what the kids come up with this quarter with their nonfiction books.

We have been reading and analyzing *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* this month, and I was so proud of the kids when I was looking over their chapter 10 annotations today. I guarantee that you will be impressed if you see how much work and thought your kids are putting into these. The comments, gists, and questions were so thought-provoking; they lent themselves perfectly to our Socratic seminar today. Speaking of which, we have been experimenting with a new form of discussion: Socratic seminars. Ask your kids to describe this student-centered process for you. Basically, the kids facilitate their own small group discussions (between 11 and 15 kids) based on a common text. I do not interject or interrupt them at all, and while they don't hit all the important points of any given chapter, their discussions have been solid. Take a look at this short video for a quick tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG64GWpE9Jo>. Your child, I'm sure, will be quick to point out that our seminars have been much better than the one in the video! We will continue strengthening our discussions skills with more seminars when we begin *A Christmas Carol* next week. Finally, we have been looking at rhetorical appeals throughout the course of this text: logos, pathos, and ethos. Students can now define, identify, and write these appeals, and we will build on these skills when we focus on argumentative writing later in the year.

We will round out our *Frederick Douglass* unit with our first literary analysis paper. This assignment has been "backwards designed" (the district's focus for the year). Our essential question for this entire unit has been: *What were the defining moments in Douglass's life that brought him from slavery to freedom?* The students have been annotating in preparation for this paper; tomorrow I will walk them through the steps of how to cite textual support, and they will practice. Next week we will learn a form of introductions called the "funnel method." This is the basis for the type of introductions they will write in high school. We will take these "baby steps" through the writing process of this kind of paper, with the final assessment being a full-fledged essay.

In social studies the students have been diligently working on and presenting their Civil Rights unit newspapers. Research shows that kids become experts on a topic when they are asked to teach someone else what they know, and this is exactly what is happening during this unit. Their presentations have led to some great discussions that are centered around



their curiosity. Our essential question for this unit has been: *How do people like us change the world?* It's a great way for me to impress upon the kids that people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malala Yousafzai were once people just like us who, with a few strong beliefs and various attributes, changed the world for the better. Our next unit will be another backwards-designed one where the final task will be to create an original invention. Those of you that were at open house might remember my spiel about the Invention Convention. Well, it's back, and I can't wait to see what your amazing kids invent! For those that are unsure of what I'm talking about, check out this video of last year's event: <http://vimeo.com/81399043>. There will be much more info to come, but I

wanted to let you know in advance in case you and your child want to start brainstorming ideas for inventions that will improve society.

One final thing: my website, <http://friendship.ccsd59.org/teachers/hahnkristin/> has become a hub of photos and videos of your kids "in action." As you know, they love seeing themselves! I hope you will check them out. Additionally, I post a couple photos a week on my private Instagram page, so if you're so inclined, please send me a "friend request" (or whatever it's called...I'm not up with the "lingo") at mrshahnfjhs.

### Important Dates to Remember:

- 10/31: Report cards were posted online—were you able to access yours on Skyward?
- 11/8: Explore (high school) Placement Test (I gave the kids sample tests last weekend)
- 11/14: First school dance
- 11/15: Explore test make up
- 11/25: 2:05 early dismissal
- 11/26-28: No school--Thanksgiving holiday
- 12/11: Field trip to the Goodman Theater
- 1/20/15: Invention Convention, 6-8PM FJHS big gym

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Kristin Hahn*

[hahn.kristin@ccsd59.org](mailto:hahn.kristin@ccsd59.org)  
847.593.4350

