

OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

Mrs. Hahn's 8th Grade ELA Classroom



Dear Parents,

We have segued smoothly into the academic instruction portion of the school year, so most newsletters from here on out will be divided between my two ELA classes.

Advanced LA (ALA)

We laid the foundation for critically analyzing text and holding intelligent conversations about said text by learning how to annotate. Annotating is simply the process of delving deeply into a text by writing out connections, predictions, questions, reactions, and thoughts. I understand that the students find it to be a laborious (vocab word!) task, but in the end, I KNOW they are thinking more deeply than if I just simply said, "Read this and be ready to talk tomorrow."



Students spent the last month learning how to annotate, practicing annotating, providing feedback on their classmates' annotations, and deciphering "on the surface" annotations from "below the surface" ones. I am immensely proud of their effort and work. And while some may hate it, I'm thankful they keep putting forth their best effort and stretching their brains. (I should also note that some students love annotating--it makes them feel smart, which I obviously love. A few students even approached me early this week to tell me they had a text conversation going about their assigned reading. Made my entire week.)

We are using selected chapters of Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers: The Story of Success* to practice our annotation and conversation skills. We have been honing our conversation skills over the past couple of weeks, and will continue to do so throughout the year. In my experience, eighth graders in general struggle with keeping a conversation going. As a result, we've done a series of lessons and exercises to enhance our conversation skills. This can be practiced at home, too: when you converse about something in the news with your child, can he/she keep the conversation going by adding thoughtful comments or asking relevant





questions? Does your child get so excited about what he/she wants to say that he/she interrupts whoever is talking? These are common kinks that we are currently trying to work out in our small group discussions.

Students' summative assessment for this unit will be to trace the lineage of success of a well-known, successful figure, past or present. Which, if any, of Gladwell's theories apply? What other factors contribute to his/her success? This will be coming the week after next.

Finally, AR points and novel projects will be due on October 28. I have attached the assignment sheet to this newsletter so you are aware of what is expected each quarter.

ALA Passion Projects

A couple weeks ago, I presented each class with the opportunity to create their own long-term class project. The 1/2 class decided to create a school newspaper! We began the process last

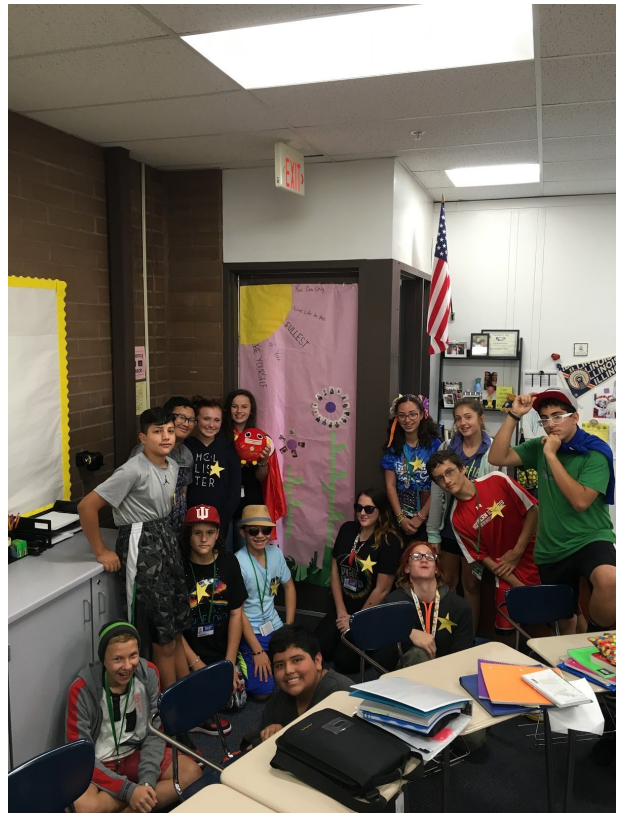
week by deciding on a name (*Firebird Feed*), choosing roles (ask your child what he/she will be contributing for the October edition), and suggesting sections for our paper. This week, we are doing some reconnaissance work by inspecting both high schools' papers and building the skeleton of our own. We are all SO excited to see our ideas come to fruition with the publishing of our first issue.

I have been sworn to secrecy about the project the 4/5 class chose. All I can tell you is that it involves creative writing and teamwork. I am as equally excited to see this project come to life, most likely at the end of the school year. If you have any connections or can offer any services to see this project through, please contact me.

Language Arts (LA)

I am so thankful to have these fourteen individual students in my class. They are friendly, hard-working, and kind to each other.

Did you read S.E. Hinton's classic *The Outsiders* when you were a kid? It is one of my all-time favorite books, and I'm so excited to be sharing it with your kids. The EQs for this unit are as follows:



1. How do humans form opinions of each other?
2. What stereotypes exist within our society, and how do we break them?
3. How are details necessary to understanding essential elements of literature?
4. How do good readers interact with text while reading?
5. How do readers generate good discussion questions?
6. How do readers/writers use textual evidence to backup their claims?

Students are reading and discussing in a book club format, for the most part. We are honing our annotation and conversation skills in this class, as well, in an effort to delve deeper into the books we read.

One of the things I've been most impressed by with this group of students is their enthusiasm about reading. We read and respond to our reading for about 20 minutes a day. They are doing an outstanding job with this. Not only do they stay focused during their independent reading time, they talk openly about what books they love and cheer each other on when someone finishes a book. I hope this adoration of books will help your kids meet their AR goals (points are due on November 4) this and every quarter.

Conferences

Goal-setting conferences are next Wednesday (3-7PM) and Thursday (12-8PM, with a dinner bread between 3-4). Because conferences are drop-in, we teachers will be able to spend about five minutes per family, especially during the traditionally busy evening hours. Please have your child show you his/her goal setting slideshow before you come, and bring the computer with you to conferences.

Important Dates to Remember:

10/5: Goal setting conferences, 3-7PM

10/6: No school for students; goal setting conferences 12-8PM (dinner break from 3-4)

10/7: No school

10/10: No school (Columbus Day)

10/14: PTO movie night, 7PM

10/24-10/28: Red Ribbon Week (spirit days all week)

10/28: ALA AR points and project due

10/28: High school placement test (PSAT) at your child's HS (you should receive info about

this in the mail)

11/4: LA AR points due

Sincerely,

Kristin Hahn

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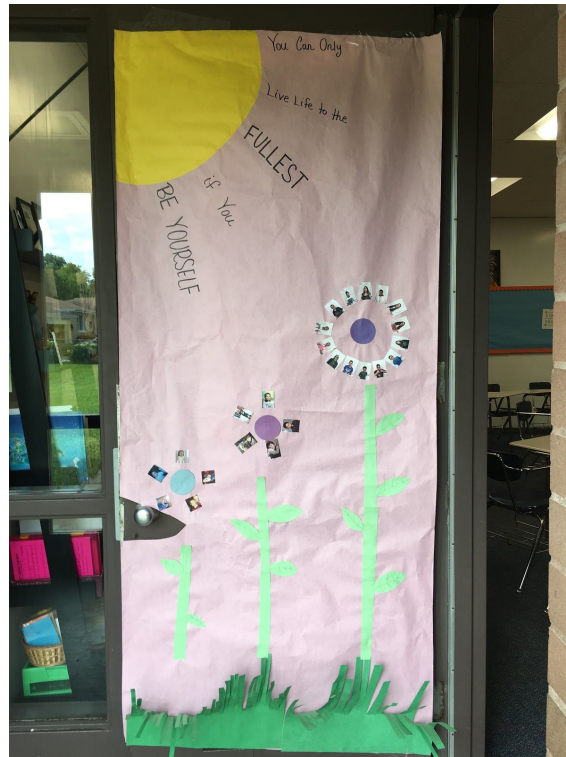
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Follow me on Instagram and Twitter: @mrshahnfhhs

Pictures

As mentioned through my September emails, Stargirl Caraway Day was a great way to kick off our 8th grade year. If you didn't have a chance to see the photo album, click here: <https://goo.gl/photos/PW5VyWCYh6SNvrGQ7>, and if you didn't have a chance to read the article written about us in the D59 newsletter, click here: <http://www.ccsd59.org/news/friendship-students-star-in-a-special-spirit-day>. All in all, it was a great way to celebrate our individuality.



8th Grade ALA Independent Reading

Here are the details:

1. You will be asked to meet an individualized AR goal. You may read any age-appropriate book that is **five or more** points.

My Goal: _____



2. Where do I look if I need a great book?
 - a. First, check your Someday list.
 - b. Next, look to your classmates. Have you looked at the “Spotlight Reads” board? Asked a friend? You might even consider doing a “book club” of sorts where you and a friend read and discuss the same book.
 - c. Look to your librarians. Bring them the “reading inventory” that is taped into your notebook and ask for a suggestion.
3. Near the end of the quarter, you will choose your favorite book from the quarter (on which you passed an AR test) to present to the class. Presentation requirements include:
 - a. A ten-sentence **written summary** of your book. We will practice this skill early in the year so you are prepared by the end of 1st quarter.
 - b. A 1:30-2:00 minute **book talk** that includes a summary and review of your book (no spoilers!).
 - c. A **creative interpretation** of your book.
 - i. Do something creative to **show your understanding of your book**. Play to your talents! The creative project needs to show off your skills and display a depth of understanding about the book/character/theme, etc. [You MUST get your idea approved by Mrs. Hahn.](#)
 - ii. Creative project [SAMPLES](#)
 - d. A half-page **written explanation** of **what** you created, **how** you created it, and **why** you created it in relation to the book.
4. AR points and all components of the presentation are due on the following dates:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Quarter 1--October 28, 2016 | Quarter 2--January 20, 2017 |
| Quarter 3--April 3, 2017 | Quarter 4--May 26, 2017 |

5. Extra credit is available for students who exceed their goals. One extra AR point = 1 extra credit point; ten points maximum.
6. **Note: While students are encouraged to read the same books, no two students in the same class may present the same book throughout the year.**