

APRIL NEWSLETTER

Mrs. Hahn's 8th Grade ELA Classroom



Dear Parents,

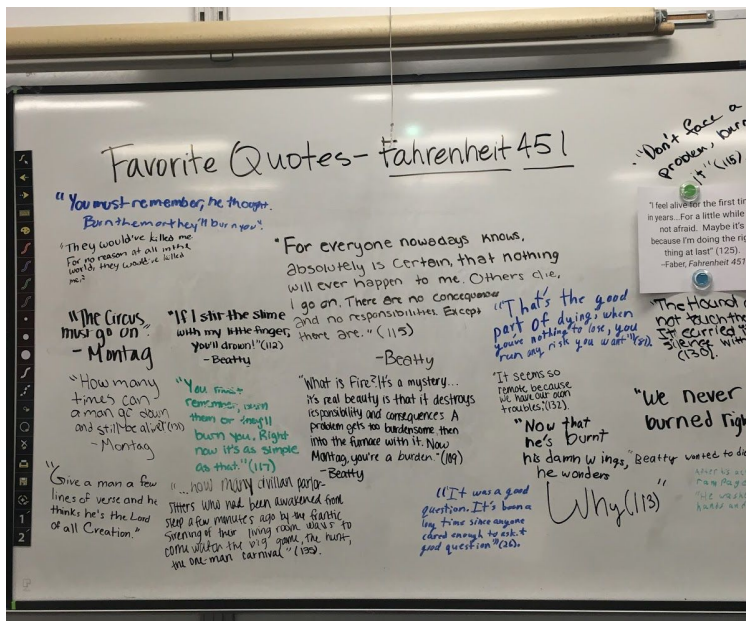
Happy Spring! Whether you're traveling next week or not, I wish you and your kids a fun, relaxing break. Once we get back, the year is going to fly by. Here's what we've been up to in 210B this past month:

Advanced LA (ALA)

Because I had heard last year that this group of 8th graders would be up for a challenge, I decided to bring *Fahrenheit 451* to my students for the first time in my teaching career. I'm deeming it a success! Students' summative task was to answer (in multiple, organized paragraphs with text citations) the question, "What am I taking away from this unit?" Responses varied from "I'm taking

away a stronger ability to critically think and extract symbolism/deep meaning from what I read" to "I'm taking away a greater awareness about not letting technology take over my life as well as a greater realization of how important human interaction is." Based on a scene in the book, students also chose and shared what book they believe should be preserved for all of eternity--ask your kids what they chose--there were some great explanations shared yesterday!

Students also turned in their argumentative essays this week. I will send those home, graded, after the quarter ends. My favorite moment of the entire unit came at the end, when students were "dot to dot"



editing their drafts. This was a strategy I taught them to guarantee they found as many errors in their work as possible. Anyway, students were *so into* editing their papers. I like to think it's because they recognized that a whole quarter's worth of effort was in that paper and they wanted to do it the justice it deserved. I feel confident that students will be moving on to high school with strong essay composing and organizing skills.

We will spend the week after break presenting our Q3 AR projects (book talks and creative projects), and then we will move into our final unit of the year which will center on Holocaust literature. Due to popular demand, we will read "The Diary of Anne Frank" play together as a class, and the students will engage in book clubs with another Holocaust-related text.

Language Arts (LA)

We had a great, productive unit centered around Wendelin Van Draanan's *Flipped*. Students honed their summarizing, annotating, and critical thinking skills. I introduced the practice of Socratic seminars during this unit, and the kids did great! In two small groups, on two separate days, students gathered in a circle and led a discussion about two chapters of the book. I

contributed very little during these conversations--the kids monitored themselves and participated (mostly) equally and thoughtfully. My favorite moments were when they came up with an idea in the moment that no one had ever thought of before.

There's a sweet moment in the book when the main character, Juli, is talking with her dad, who tells her how "a painting is more than the sum of its parts" (Van Draanan, 34). Throughout the course of the book, Juli wrestles with whether or not her crush, Bryce, is "more or less than the sum of [his] parts." In an effort to connect to this concept, I asked the students to think about the things in their lives that are more than the sum of their parts. They wrote about these items, sketched pictures of them, and then painted them on canvases. We had so much fun dabbling in the "arts" of "language arts," and these masterpieces will be coming home after spring break. I hope your kids will cherish their painting for many years and that it will serve as a reminder to appreciate the little things in life.

This group will also end the year with a Holocaust unit based on the play adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. We will study the Holocaust both in LA and SS. Next to the Bible, the *Diary of Anne Frank* is the most widely read piece of nonfiction of all time, so I'm excited for your kids to join the millions of kids worldwide who have read it.



Passion Projects



1/2: The March issue of the *Firebird Feed* was well-received, and the social experiment article sparked a school-wide discussion about "doing the right thing." We are working on our April issue now. It will be an "online only" issue, and we hope it will encourage readers to visit our outstanding website (which is 100% designed and maintained by our students--I literally don't even have the password to log on!). We'd love to hear your comments and/or suggestions, too! Submit them to firebirdfeed@ccsd59.org or on the Contact Us page on our firebirdfeed.weebly.com site. Also, if you drop the website address in Google translate and choose a language, it will translate the entire site for you!

4/5: **Mark your calendars to come see *When Stars Collide*, an original play by the 4/5 Class of 210B, on **Wednesday, May 31, at 6:30PM!****

This week, many students spent portions of their evenings collaborating to finalize our script. We realized that once we merged the five stories, a few

holes existed. While there were many students who jumped on the doc here or there, I want to especially thank Lexie, Natalia, Kaylyn, and Ambiya for the *hours* of free time they put into the script this past week. Once we return from break, we will cast the play and begin rehearsing!

6/8: Our Hydration Stations have been installed and are being used like crazy! As a school community, we have already (in about three weeks' time) saved almost 2,000 bottles from ending up in landfills!

All students were given a checklist three weeks ago to help them plan for the completion of their AR project. As of Monday, most everyone was behind the schedule he/she set. Please check in with your kids over break and encourage them to work on their creative project and written work and practice their book talks before returning to school on 4/3.

Important Dates to Remember:

- 3/27-4/2: Spring break--NO SCHOOL
- 4/3: AR projects due, all classes
- 4/4: PTO meeting, 7PM in teachers' lounge
- 4/7: End of Q3; AR points due
- 4/8: D59's Got Talent (Harper College), 6:30PM
- 4/10, 4/11, 4/13: PARCC testing
- 4/13: Report cards sent home with students
- 4/14: No School

Sincerely,
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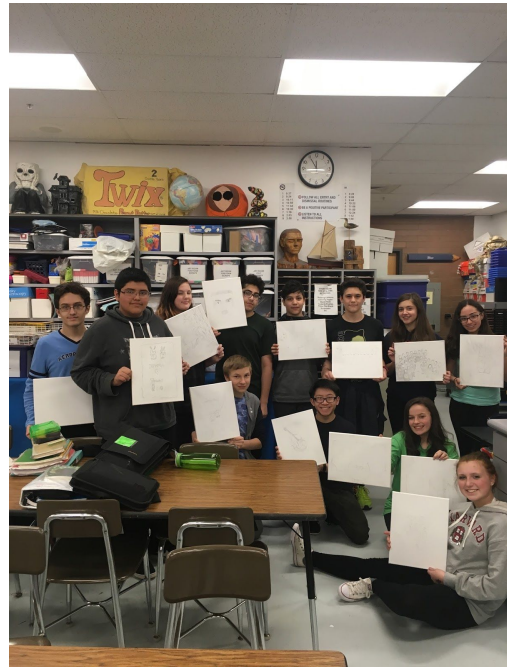
More pictures below!



I "struck a pot of gold" with this group!



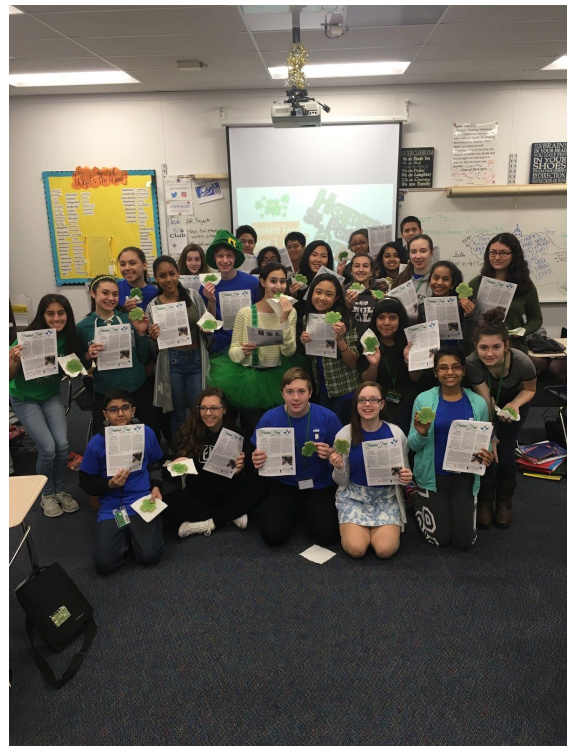
Painting the "sum of our parts"



Before...



After!



I am truly so "lucky" to work with these kids each day.