

## SECOND QUARTER NEWS

Sorry for the late update, but time escaped us! October just slipped away and suddenly we are in the second week of November.

Reading - We had an exciting month as we discussed character traits and questioning through the book *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. If they have not been chatting up the book, be sure to ask your child about the factions or groups in the book and how citizens are sorted. Ask them to tell you what the names of the factions are and what each means. (Here's a hint for the grown-ups...follow this [Divergent](#) link to our resources page!) The bits and pieces we shared of the first 5 chapters were very exciting and left many kids begging for more. SUCCESS! If they are interested in reading the rest of the novel, be aware that it follows the same tone of the *Hunger Games* series. I have not read the rest of the trilogy, but I'm sure the kids will fill us in soon enough. As students share what they have learned about each of the factions, be sure to ask them to PROVE their ideas with text evidence. Simply ask, "What did the character say or do to make you think that?" It is highly important that students site specific evidence from the text to prove their ideas. We will continue to ask they cite text as we progress through the year. Also, be sure your child can tell you a character trait, not a feeling or emotion. You can follow the link here to view our classroom anchor chart on [Feelings vs. Traits](#). Character trait questions are always good to use in fiction novels and would be great practice at home.

We have moved into non-fiction (finally) and worked on first asking good questions before and during our reading. Again, it is not as simple as asking, "What questions do you have about...?" With questioning, students are expected to show what prior knowledge they have on a topic as well. This is slightly different from what we expected of students in the past (think Common Core changes!). For example, some students recently read an article about oil production in Canada. In the past, students could simply say, "Is there any damage to their environment?" Now, we are asking for a bit more information. A new response could have looked like this: "I know that oil can be damaging to the environment, so I am wondering if the oil production in Canada is causing any damage to their wilderness areas." We are pushing them to think more deeply about the text AND their own ideas. We will continue our non-fiction and questioning focus as we head into the second marking period.

Writing-The first marking period focused on fictional narratives and there will be a fairly easy transition into personal narratives for the second marking period. This time, students will retell an actual event from their own lives instead of creating a made-up one. We are finding that students struggle in two main areas: 1-developing a small moment and 2-giving enough detail. We are addressing both by discussing "watermelon topics" – the big ideas versus "seed stories" – the specific incidents. A watermelon topic would be "my dog" or "vacation" while a seed story would be one specific incident under that topic. Examples could include "my dog's first trip to the vet", "my dog's new crate", "our sand castle at the beach", and "the log flume at the amusement park". We have a new planning document to help students think through their writing and include as much detail as possible for their personal narratives. This may look confusing at first, but as we work with the students, we are finding richer, deeper details in their stories.

Looking Ahead...

We are excited to start one of our favorite novels *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry. Students will be analyzing the plot and tracking their inferences throughout the book. Before we can jump into the WWII novel, we will use some non-fiction passages to build background knowledge. This topic always draws

some interest from students and we will have many other fiction and non-fiction texts available for them to read and discuss. Be sure to ask them about the "Plot Roller Coaster" that we will introduce and use to follow the plot over the entire novel. The Plot Roller Coaster is also a helpful tool for you to use at home when discussing books with your children. Follow this link to find an explanation of the [Plot Roller Coaster](#).