



October 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Last year, with the support of Windom’s Shared Decision Making Committee, Windom launched the Schoolwide Read Aloud Series. Three times a year, Fall, Winter, and Spring, every child will have the opportunity to hear the same text read aloud, regardless of age. The goal of these texts is to provide every child at Windom a shared experience – for all children and adults to experience the same text together and to have the opportunity to discuss the book as a class.

This shared experience of text allows children to see themselves reflected in print. More likely, it is an opportunity to see someone unlike themselves, but like someone in their class. Literature is a powerful gateway to developing empathy and compassion for people, places, and things that are dissimilar to ourselves but that are very likely experienced by many members of our Windom community. Dr. Rudine Simms Bishop says, “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the book they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are valued in the society of which they are a part.”

During the next Olweus Classroom Meeting, the class and Olweus Buddies will read and discuss the latest book, the first installment of the 2019-20 school year. The goal is for all students to hear the text – the conversations that follow will be unique to each classroom community and age level.

The first title in our series is Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You by US Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor. The book seeks to inspire readers not to make assumptions of others but instead to be curious, to ask about what makes them unique. The book jacket helps us understand why this book is relevant and important for the students of Windom:

“In this warm and inclusive story by US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, inspired by her own childhood diagnosis of diabetes, readers join along as differently-abled kids use their strengths to work together and learn about each other... this book shows us that differences are wonderful – and that all you have to do when you don’t understand something is JUST ASK!”

We look forward to continuing this project in the coming months and will continue to inform families of book titles. We hope that this “Schoolwide Read Aloud Series” provides an answer to the question, “What did you do in school today?” Perhaps a question can now be, “Did you read the book Just Ask today? What did you think?” We hope you have rich conversations and thank you and your family for helping our students take those first steps.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip M. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Phil Johnson
Principal

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