November 2nd, 2018

Dear Evergreen Pod Families,

This letter is being written on behalf of the English Language Arts teachers involved in the Pod system to address some concerns which have been raised about the Book Club project that was due this week, correct some misunderstandings and outline what will happen moving forward.

The Book Club project was first assigned on Friday, September 28th to all pods by Ms. Page, Ms Wood or Mrs. Aikman-Smith, switching other subjects around or grouping classes to ensure that no one group had an advantage due to the schedule. Copies of the books involved in the project were shown, the backs of them were read and the full assignment discussed with students. They were asked to provide 3 choices for books that day or at the start of the following week. Once books were assigned, students were also given a few days to switch titles by writing a paragraph and submitting it to any of the ELA teachers if they felt their book was not a good fit.

Students were given between 6 to 8 periods in class devoted to this project alone (the Eagles Pod had two extra sessions that other pods did not because of the Thanksgiving Monday Holiday). Two more periods were student choice periods where they were also allowed to work on their Social Studies project after many raised concerns that they were behind on the work. This week, based on feedback from both parents and students, the Radio Drama project (a school based project only) was pushed back to create an additional 4 work periods during ELA time. Two classes of Eagles Immersion students also asked that they be allowed to work on their ELA projects during Social Studies time since their English period fell on a Friday and they were behind.

In addition to class time, Room 224 has been open every Thursday at lunchtime for extra help and as a work space where students may work on any assignments under Mrs. Smith’s supervision. Indoor recesses saw several students request copies of their books to read. For the past two Fridays, space was also made available on Friday afternoons for Book Club time. The first was voluntary, but last week, any student who had not been able to demonstrate that they were on track during the class check ins on October 18th or during last week’s ELA sessions was told to report to at least one of the 4 sessions that day.

Today, during Pod Time with their Homeroom teachers, every student was asked to show or turn in whatever parts of the 50 points (or individual target) they had completed by the deadline. Students who met the deadline were noted so they can be given first choice of the Fabulous Friday activities in 2 weeks’ time to reward their time management skills and the initiative they have shown in taking charge of their own learning. Students who have not completed the full target of points assigned to them will have until next Thursday (November 8th) to submit outstanding projects. After that, parents will be contacted and all students who have not completed this assignment will be expected to give up two lunch hours a week, with a teacher present to help before they can participate in Fabulous Friday again. No marks are being deducted for time, but students must complete this assignment, or any others that are outstanding, before participating in enrichments activities offered.

The ultimate goal of the Pod system is to help Evergreen students learn the skills to manage their time and student workload before high school. With the move in New Brunswick to the Global Competencies and learning real world life skills, responsibility is key to success, as is learning to stay on task in class whether learning a new skill or working on a project.

Moving forward, we will ensure that projects continue to be presented to pod groups as a whole by Ms. Page, Ms. Flynn or Mrs. Aikman-Smith. Assignment specifications and their deadlines will also be posted as files to the Weebly site (epspods.weebly.com) as well as the dates clarifying when the projects are assigned or check-in dates.

Once again, no academic penalties are being applied to this project if items do not meet the deadlines, but students will also be expected to complete any and all assignments given to them this year to the best of their own ability.

Thank you for your support,

The ELA Teachers of Evergreen Park