What’s Your Story?  
Seeing Through Another’s Perspective

Background: Harper Lee is not the only author or public figure to discuss perspective and empathy in writing and speeches. These themes are important in literature, nonfiction, and in the lives we lead. Please read the following quotes to understand some different points of view about perspective and empathy.

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”  
– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story”

“Learning how to think” really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think. It means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience.”
– David Foster Wallace, This Is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”
– Martin Luther King Jr., A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.”
– Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

“Hate can only be conquered by ordinary people willing to promote tolerance. For all our differences, we share one world. To be tolerant is to welcome the differences and delight in the sharing.”
– Tools for Tolerance (Tolerance.org)

Purpose: We would like you to have an opportunity to walk in someone else’s shoes. This project will be a way for you to practice seeing the world through another’s perspective and see what happens when we look beyond our own views.

The Plan:
1. The teachers from Fairmont and West Junior High Schools will pair you up randomly with a student from the other junior high school.
2. You will use Google Docs to get to know your partner. It will be important for you to use respect, patience, empathy, and integrity as you work with your partner. This needs to be a positive experience for all, and you will need to consider other’s feelings and perspectives as you get to know your partner.
3. As you get to know your partner, you will be looking for their story amid the information they send you.
4. You will write a poem, from your partner’s perspective, telling their story. It will be important for you to capture their voice, emotion, and point of view in the poem. Your poem will be truthful and have the approval of your partner.
5. There will be a poetry reading during the evening in 3rd quarter, where you will be able to read your poem and meet your partner in person.