



WMRSD Leaders and Learners – Your Community Connection **White Mountains Regional School District**

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At the Whitefield School

October at Whitefield Elementary School brings another opportunity for students to explore the power of stories, creativity, and confidence. Following September's focus on courage and making a mark through Peter H. Reynolds' *The Dot*, the school is turning to another of Reynolds' beloved books, *Ish*, for October.

Throughout September, students and staff explored *The Dot*, a story about Vashti, a student who believes she cannot draw. With encouragement from her teacher, Vashti makes a simple mark on her paper. That one dot becomes the beginning of something much bigger as she experiments with dots of different sizes, colors, and patterns. Along the way, she discovers that she is capable of far more than she initially believed.

The message of *The Dot*—start somewhere and see where it takes you—provided a fitting theme for the beginning of a new school year. Students were encouraged to think about their own “dots”: the first step, first attempt, or small act of courage that can lead to growth. The book also provided an opportunity to talk about how encouragement can help someone find confidence and discover abilities they may not yet recognize in themselves.

The school carried the theme beyond the classroom throughout the month. *The Dot* served as the inspiration for the September Back-to-School Barbecue and Title I Family Night, where students and families participated in literacy and math activities, games, and creative experiences connected to the story.

October's book, *Ish*, builds naturally on that message. The story follows Ramon, a young artist who loves to draw. His confidence takes a hit when his older brother makes fun of one of his sketches. Ramon becomes so focused on making his drawings look “right” that he eventually stops drawing altogether.

Ramon's younger sister, Marisol, helps him see his drawings differently. Instead of expecting his pictures to look exactly like the objects he is trying to draw, she encourages him to think of them as *vase-ish*, *tree-ish*, or *boat-ish*. That small shift in perspective frees Ramon from the pressure of perfection and allows his creativity to return.

For Whitefield students, *Ish* offers several important lessons about confidence. One is the impact that criticism can have. A single negative or careless comment can sometimes cause a person to question something they once enjoyed. At the same time, the story demonstrates how encouragement and a change in perspective can help someone reclaim confidence and joy.

The story also connects to a growth mindset. Effort, creativity, experimentation, and emotional expression matter far more than flawless execution. When students believe there is only one “right” way to complete a task, they may be reluctant to take risks. When they understand that learning involves trying, revising, making mistakes, and trying again, they are more likely to engage and persevere.

This idea will be particularly relevant as Whitefield students encounter opportunities to share their creativity throughout October. The annual Scholastic Book Fair will take place October 13–16, giving students and families an opportunity to explore new books and build their home libraries. The week will also lead into one of Whitefield’s favorite fall traditions.

On Friday, October 16, the school will host its annual Pumpkin Walk and Family Trivia Night. The Pumpkin Walk provides students and families with an opportunity to see the creativity and imagination of the Whitefield community, while Family Trivia Night brings families together for an evening of fun, teamwork, friendly competition, and some really cool prizes.

These October events reflect an important part of school life at Whitefield: learning is not limited to what happens during the school day. Books, family events, traditions, creativity, and opportunities to connect all contribute to a strong school community.

As students explore *Ish* throughout October, they will be encouraged to consider where they may be holding themselves to an unrealistic standard. What might happen if “perfect” became “good enough to try”? What if a drawing, answer, idea, or first attempt could simply be *ish*?

Together, *The Dot* and *Ish* offer a powerful progression for the school year: have the courage to make a mark, and then have the confidence to let that mark be your own. For students and adults alike, the message is simple—growth happens when people are willing to begin, take risks, make mistakes, and keep going.

