

**ELLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT  
DECEMBER 2015**

**1.0 Status of Initiatives**

**Grade 1:** Bridges Unit 2 – Focusing on Developing Fact Strategies Post-Assessment Data

<b>Level:</b>	<b># of Students:</b>	<b>Percent:</b>
Exceeds	50/194	26%
Meets	110/194	57%
Approaching	27/194	14%
Significantly Below	7/194	4%

**Grade 2:** Bridges Unit 2 – Focusing on Place Value and Measurement Post-Assessment Data

<b>Level:</b>	<b># of Students:</b>	<b>Percent:</b>
Exceeds	22/194	11%
Meets	1128/194	66%
Approaching	37/194	19%
Significantly Below	7/194	4%

**Grade 5:** Bridges Unit 2 – Focusing on Adding and Subtracting Fractions

<b>Pre-Assessment Data</b>	<b>Post-Assessment Data</b>	<b>Overall Growth</b>
Class Average = 32%	Class Average = 86%	+ 54%

<b>Level:</b>	<b># of Students:</b>	<b>Percent:</b>
Exceeds	44/214	21%
Meets	135/214	63%
Approaching	27/214	13%
Significantly Below	8/214	4%

Elementary school parents met with their children’s teachers in early December to review student progress and discuss the reporting of academic achievement. Parent involvement in these face-to-face meetings is a strong indicator of how our community creates an environment that encourages learning at home and at school. We are grateful for this valued partnership.

The Center School PTO organized a successful Holiday Shoppe for the students. Children demonstrated the holiday spirit by thinking of others and practiced their money skills while visiting the shop to select gifts for their many family members. We gathered as a school for a Holiday Sing-Along with **Tim Adams** leading our students and the fourth grade chorus in song. Fourth graders **Reese Bader, Grace Bontempo, Eva Derench, Nathan Galligan, Jack Lomot, Ryan Sakos** and **Zion Vernet** shared information about Light Festival traditions from around

the world. The PTO surprised the Center School staff by re-decorating the staff room for their holiday gift to all. Their efforts made it into a cozy nook for gathering.

### **Crystal Lake School Data Team Work:**

The kindergarten data team is beginning work on data team cycle focused on the learning of sight words. The grade one data team is working on a data team cycle focused on informational writing.

The grade two data team recently completed a data team cycle focused on writing conventions. The team's SMART goal was, *The percentage of students scoring at mastery or higher in using proper end punctuation will increase from 53% to 85% as measured by an on-demand teacher created writing assessment.* Post assessment results indicate 87% of students demonstrating mastery.

The grade three data team is working on a data team cycle focused on math problem solving. The teams' SMART goal is, *The percentage of students scoring at mastery or higher in math problem solving: explaining mathematical thinking will increase from 37% to 75%.*

The grade four data team recently completed a data team cycle focused on writing conventions. The team's SMART goal was, *The percentage of students scoring at mastery or higher will increase from 7% to 70% as measured by a teacher created assessment.* Post assessment data indicate 73% of students demonstrating mastery.

Rachel Rothman from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project worked with K-2 teachers on phonological awareness activities to incorporate into writing, whole class conversations about reading and interactive read alouds. K-2 teachers also had extra time on Tuesday, December 15, to discuss "hard-to-move" students and brainstormed strategies to use with these same students. Grace Chough from TCRWP worked with Grade 3 and 4 teachers on using student work and tools to promote self-assessment. Teachers also learned how to assess growth and have students set goals and work on an action plan to reach those goals. Katy Wischow from TC worked with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers on strategies for modifying the reading units to meet the needs of the struggling readers. Katy also shared with the teachers several different small group lesson plan formats that the teachers could use to plan small group work.

**Ms. Palasek**, our library media specialist, continues to update and strengthen our instructional habits in the area of technology and library use. She facilitated to the Hour of Code. Students in grades 1-6 participated in Computer Science Week by coding while in the library. There was some cross-age collaboration as 5th and 6th grade students helped out 1<sup>st</sup> to 3rd graders. The students were excited to be participating in a global event! The students at Windermere showed such enthusiasm during the Hour of Code. It was wonderful to see the perseverance and collaboration when they visited the library!

Our guidance counselors, **Mrs. Marshall** and **Mrs. Toback-Reveley** continue to focus on preparing our fifth and sixth graders for middle school. They initiated academic goal setting, weekly lessons and Student Success Plan development for all sixth grade homerooms in December. They helped to develop a Behavioral Intervention Team process review at BIT

meetings and conducted twenty-five peer mediation groups resulting from office/staff referrals. They helped plan and organize our PBIS Town Meetings which included presentations by the Ellington Youth Services (Decide to be Kind Campaign) and organized a drive for the Ellington Animal Shelter and CT Humane Society.

Our strong and present WPTO organized and led our traditional Holiday Boutique. Students from all grades were able to purchase small gifts for their family members. The PTO parents worked tirelessly to decorate the front foyer for this event. Long hours and creative planning transformed Windermere into a winter wonderland, with smiles on the faces of students, staff, parents, and guests as they walked through the front entrance of the building.

Students participated in the Seasonal Sharing Drive in which students brought in items for senior citizens who get assistance from the Ellington's Human Services Department. Students brought in practical items that were delivered to the seniors to help brighten their holiday season. Students in grades 5/6 competed to see who could bring in the most items. Ms. Morse's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class collected the most (120), and gets a reward after the holiday break.

Our December Windermere faculty meetings focused on yoga and mindfulness in the classroom. Information was presented to staff from the conference **Mr. Welch, Mrs. Bordieri, Mrs. Warriner, Ms. Bostiga, and Mrs. Faraci** attended in November. Dr. Nicol attended both meetings and participated in basic yoga moves and a meditation.

December was an extremely busy month at the middle school. After almost two years in the planning process, the middle school implemented student-led conferences during the second week in December. Leading up to these conferences, all middle school students worked closely in advisory groups on developing an extensive digital portfolio of their student work, crafting conference scripts, practicing public speaking, and providing each other with advice and feedback in preparation for this new conference format. During these 20 minute conferences (with parents, siblings and their teacher advisor as an audience), students facilitated introductions, highlighted strengths/weaknesses, shared multiple examples of student work, responded to parent or advisor questions, and finally began the process of developing personalized goals.

Using data from parent surveys, student interviews, and teacher focus groups, initial feedback on this significant shift in practice to student-led conferences is very positive. On the parent exit survey, 86% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*The student-led conference gives me a better idea of my child's strengths and weaknesses.*" Ninety percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*Creating a portfolio in planning for the SLC gave my child more insight into their own learning.*" When asked if they needed a follow-up meeting with a teacher after the student-led conference, only 9.1% of parent respondents requested a follow-up conversation or meeting with a teacher. With this shift from the traditional parent-teacher to student-led conference model, it was anticipated parent participation rates would increase. Indeed they did, going from 36% (parent /teacher conferences) to a remarkable 98.8% (student-led conferences).

Beyond the new conference model, it was a productive month in the area of curriculum and learning. Highlights include the language arts teachers working with the TC consultant to develop learning progressions in the area of reading. Social studies refined and re-administered its' nonfiction/primary source reading assessment. In addition, the department found it needed to increase the rigor of their writing rubrics. This is good news, as students' performance levels on pre-assessments indicate many are reaching mastery levels much earlier than previous classes.

In science, the department continues to develop teaching practices that support the shift to the new NGSS standards. These new teaching practices begin to incorporate "three-dimensional learning" into science classrooms. This approach promotes learning by having science students building models, designing investigations, developing explorations, and making evidence-based arguments.

Finally, the middle school once again hosted several schools during December who were visiting to replicate some of the best practices at EMS. This month, teachers and administrators from Region 15 and Region 10 visited EMS classrooms to investigate implementing readers/writers workshop at the middle school level.

Mr. Chris Lehman, who has been providing professional development for the high school staff over the last two years, worked with the EHS science and math departments on December 1 and 2. Mr. Lehman shared reading literacy strategies that would be useful in science and math classrooms.

The high school informed parents that the 2016 Statewide SAT Administration Date during school for all grade 11 students is Wednesday, March 2, 2016. EHS is planning to coordinate the junior SAT administration with the sophomore administration of Science CAPT and freshman administration of the Science CAPT practice test. Plans are currently in progress for senior activities on that day that will focus on college and career readiness and other activities of interest for seniors.

The Opening Knight Players presented a live version of the classic television cartoon, A Charlie Brown Christmas. Many parents and children enjoyed this event. This event was also a nice way to get elementary students into the high school for a glimpse of the future.

The Ellington High School Music Department presented their Winter Choral Concert featuring the Vocal Ensemble, Treble Chorus, and Chorale on December 10. A record crowd was in attendance to listen to great choral literature and holiday favorites. The concert concluded with an audience sing along.

The Winter Concert featuring the Concert Band, Jazz Band, Wind Ensemble, and Steel Drum Band was held on December 17. Several instrumental ensembles performed included the very popular Steel Drum Band. A variety of music was performed including some holiday standards to the delight of concertgoers.

The EHS Hands Creating Hope Club ran a hygiene drive for the Cornerstone Shelter throughout the month of December. They accepted items such as soap, hand sanitizer, shampoo, toothpaste,

toothbrushes, deodorant, tissues, and etc. They also collected lightly used and unused mittens for donation as well. All mitten donations could be dropped off in collection bins, or placed on a mitten tree in the foyer of the high school.

EHS Fall Sports Awards Night was held on December 7. A record number of students were recognized as scholar athletes. Coaches ran breakout session for their team and parents to highlight the fall sports season and recognize student accomplishments.

During the recent conference days at the Elementary, Intermediate and Middle School level, professional development was offered to all paraprofessionals in the district. The presenters were **Sara Spak**, district BCBA, **Mike Nash** and **Jenna Dhandapani**. Session 1 provided paraprofessionals with information on how to support students with Autism with a focus on ABA and DTI and session 2 provided information on supporting students with the use of Chromebooks.

**Dr. LaPorte** planned a training called “SIT for Autism” created by Southern CT State University. The Ellington Community was invited to attend this training at Windermere on the evening December 8. This training was designed for child care providers who babysit for students with Autism and other disabilities.

**Dr. LaPorte, Deb Hillemeir** and **Robin Kline** were invited to present on our district SRBI and Dyslexia process at the CT Forum.

**Mark Wursthorn, Suzanne Markowski, Michele Cirillo, Erin McGurk** and **Peter Corbett** visited Conard High School in West Hartford to observe the AP Research Class, part of the AP Capstone Program. AP Capstone is an innovative diploma program that provides students with an opportunity to engage in rigorous scholarly practice of the core academic skills necessary for successful college completion. AP Capstone is built on the foundation of two courses — AP Seminar and AP Research — and is designed to complement and enhance the in-depth, discipline-specific study provided through AP courses. It cultivates curious, independent, and collaborative scholars and prepares them to make logical, evidence-based decisions. Students who earn scores of 3 or higher in both of the AP Capstone courses and on four additional AP Exams of their choosing receive the AP Capstone Diploma™. Later in the year, additional teachers from the high school will visit Hall High School to observe the AP Seminar Class. Both visitations are part of the process for Ellington to consider adoption of this rigorous program.

## **2.0 Next Steps**

Grade level teachers, special educators, reading and math support teachers at Center School will meet in collaborative teams to review student assessment data from the first completed data cycle to review progress toward achievement targets and plan for support services for students needing additional assistance or intervention. Teachers will also administer mid-year assessments to identify progress in reading and word study and determine instructional needs.

Crystal Lake School teachers will conduct their second Learning Walks of the year in January. The Teachers College Learning Walk protocol is used to collect data about the literacy learning

happening across K-4 classrooms. The January Learning Walks will also be used to track progress toward school goals that were established based on earlier Learning Walks.

Both Rachel and Grace, our TC presenters, will return in January and February to continue the important TC work utilized by all of our teachers. Our reading specialists (K-6 Literacy Team) and principal will continue to meet monthly to bridge the gap and subsequent work with the elementary and intermediate staff. These monthly meetings will also be utilized to review school goals and assess our new WIT Progress K-6.

Our instructional technology specialists will meet with elementary and middle school library media specialists to collaborate on the creation of online, self-paced courses for grades 4-8 covering Digital Citizenship and Web Research skills. Students will complete the training to fulfill a technology certification, which we hope to make a requirement in the future. Our instructional technology specialists and grade 4 teachers will have students self-assess technology skills and will pilot assessment checklists aligned with the Technology Competencies Continuum Profiles for Technology Literate Students.

We continue to review and modify the current configuration of room assignments in our building plan while preparing for the loss of five 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes and the potential addition of full day kindergarten. Space is also being considered for future Makerspace for our students. Ongoing collaboration between administration, building custodial staff, and the Director of Facilities has focused on the changes within the building for 2016-2017 school year and beyond.

The month of January will kick off with a middle school faculty meeting focusing on teaching strategies that support students' listening comprehension skills. This professional development session is in alignment with the school's goal to improve SBAC scores in this identified area of listening comprehension. Later in the month, eight students from EMS have been selected to present their book reviews at the American Library Association National Conference in Boston, MA.

Midway through January eighth grade algebra students will take their midterm exams, like their counterparts at the high school. This alignment of the middle school/high school exams is part of the districts' initiative to have middle school students receive high school credit for courses taken in math and world language at EMS. Finally, January will be the month that EMS hosts a combination art show/music performance on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>. This is the first time in recent memory that the music and art programs have combined their efforts to showcase exemplary student work in a combined arts event.

### **3.0 Recognitions**

Music teacher, **Tim Adams**, led fourth grade students from Center School and Crystal Lake in a chorus performance of holiday songs during the Winterfest celebration on the Town Green, as well as the Winter Concert at Center School.

Center's PBIS Team, **Tomi Raver, Katie Gelsomino, Deb Hillemeir, Sandy Scully, Valerie Baigert** and **Trudie Luck Roberts** met with CREC Advisor **Cynthia Zingler** for a PBIS Tiered

Fidelity Inventory. Our successful progress toward established goals was reviewed and new targets were determined, along with strategies learned to support forward growth.

Center School fourth grader **Tim McMenam** was recognized for his first place Fire Prevention Poster at the Selectman's meeting in the Town Hall on December 14.

Crystal Lake School fourth grade teacher **Nancy Connelly** presented to her colleagues at the December faculty meeting on Powerful Read Alouds that support the Connecticut Core Standards. Mrs. Connelly shared some resources with her colleagues and modeled a read aloud/comprehension lesson.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Crystal Lake School Pancake Breakfast was held on December 15. It was the final pancake breakfast in the original Crystal Lake School cafeteria! As always, Crystal Lake School faculty and staff served pancakes to students upon arrival at school, keeping alive a wonderful seasonal tradition. Another enduring tradition at Crystal Lake School is the Coin Drive to support the work of the Crystal Lake Food Pantry, located at the Community United Methodist Church. A check from the proceeds of the CLS PTO Coin Drive was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Greene, managers of the Food Pantry. Students donated \$1850!

Several Crystal Lake School teachers (**Lisa LaForte, Jessica Giroux, Erica Lombardi, Colleen Bava** and **Christine Marshall**) recognized Computer Science Week, December 7-11 by participating in the Hour of Code, an hour in which their students learned about computer programming.

The December faculty-to-faculty recognition at Windermere went to **Mrs. McEleney**. Support staff has reported that they have had the privilege of working with Mrs. McEleney over the past couple of months regarding different students and it is always apparent how thoughtful she is about each of her students. She truly gets to know them and treats them with the utmost respect, taking the time to notice little things and then using this to help build relationships and make each of her students feel valued and appreciated.

December's *Tireless Teacher Award* was presented to **Mrs. Purcaro** and **Ms. Bostiga**. This award is given to a teacher who continually demonstrates tenacity and demonstrates leadership qualities by going beyond the parameters of contractual and building-level expectations.

The recipient of the *Prize Para Award* in December was **Mrs. Bridget Birmingham** who assists with our intermediate students in the area of math and is praised by multiple teachers for her exemplary work. Our *Amazing Aide Award* was given to **Mrs. Julie Calhoun** this past month. Mrs. Calhoun has taken it upon herself to be the organizer and liaison to the second wave lunch aides. She has done a wonderful job and demonstrates that pitching in and working as a team is always a win-win!

To date, over 145 students have received the newly-created *Whale Wonder Award* and their pictures are proudly displayed in the school's main foyer on the Whale Wonder Wall of Fame. The Whale Wonder Award is for students who "step up to the plate" in some form or way.

Students receiving this award get a picture with the principal and the student's parents receive a celebratory phone call.

Kudos to **Mrs. Donovan, Ms. Maghini, Mrs. Menard** and **Mrs. Purcaro** for their enthusiasm and willingness to experiment with video projects using the new WeVideo accounts with students for their U.S. Regions and Bangladesh sweatshop projects.

On December 4 EMS math teacher **Karin Perkins** presented at a conference for Kendall Hunt Publishing in Lapeer, MI to mathematics and special education teachers from grades 6, 7 and 8. This day long workshop provided teachers with instruction in the inquiry based pedagogy inherent in Math Innovations, as well as hands on activities to prepare them for implementing this rich mathematics curriculum in their district.

Ellington Middle School Student Council conducted its annual food drive to benefit the Crystal Lake Food Pantry. EMS students collected over 1,000 non-perishable food items, which will assist families from Ellington and the surrounding towns. Thank you to all of the middle school families for their support of our food drive.

EMS staff held a fundraiser day to benefit the organization Common Hope. In addition to donations from the staff, 7<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish teacher Elizabeth Overton and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish teacher Jeffrey Sparano collected donations from their students, resulting in a grand fundraising total of \$1,180.00. This money will be used to help educate Guatemalan students, and also help families with the purchase of stoves, seeds, and livestock for self-sustenance.

On Saturday, December 5, seven students from the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) ran a green screen photo shoot at Hall Memorial Library for Winterfest. FBLA President **Tim Ross** organized the community service activity with help from **Anthony Chamberlin, Jonathan Conte, Zach Judson, Melanie Makula, Matthew Mayne, and Alyssa Thibodeau-Grivois**.

On Thursday, December 10, members of FBLA attended a Dress for Success presentation at EHS. The business group welcomed three representatives from Men's Wearhouse for the hour-long presentation. In addition to job interview advice and proper interview attire for men and women, the presenters also stressed the importance of a first impression. Students were involved with demonstrations of hand-shaking, responding to interview questions, and the appropriate fit for business suits.

Congratulations to **Jacob Schlenner** who was selected to represent EHS at the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Seminar. One sophomore from each high school in Connecticut is given the opportunity to attend a three day conference which focuses on leadership skill development and community service.

**Vinny Bifolck**, EHS head custodian, decorated the main foyer in holiday style for the enjoyment of all students, staff and visitors during the holiday season.