

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

1.0 Status of Initiatives

Kindergarten Unit 3 Checkpoint 2: Working with Numbers

This Unit Checkpoint assessed the following Kindergarten Common Core Standards for Mathematics:

- Write numbers from 0 to 20
- Count forward from a given number, rather than starting at 1
- Count backward from any number in the range of 10 to 0
- Represent addition with objects
- Represent subtraction with objects

Level	Meets the Standard	Approaching the Standard	Significantly Below the Standard
Number of Students	160/162	1/162	1/162
Percentage of Students	99%	0.5%	0.5%

Grade 4: Bridges Unit 2 – Focusing on Multi-digit Multiplication and Early Division

Unit Post-Assessment Data:

Level	Exceeds the Standard	Meets the Standard	Approaching the Standard	Significantly Below the Standard
Number of Students	13/212	132/212	51/212	16/212
Percentage of Students	6%	62%	24%	8%

Classrooms and cross-grade reading-buddy classes at Center School acknowledged Martin Luther King Jr. Day in many ways. Teachers read Martin’s Big Words and an edition of Scholastic News for information which had a video on how the changes he helped to bring about influence our lives today. Some classrooms read My Brother Martin and watched a virtual tour of his boyhood home. Some students made books comparing themselves to Martin Luther King Jr. Some students wrote “I have a dream that one day...” and filled in the rest to tell what their personal hopes are. Some classrooms watched the Reading Rainbow presentation for more information about Martin Luther King Jr. Students discussed things they could do/say in their everyday lives to “keep the dream alive.”

Weather has impacted the ability of the Crystal Lake School data teams to meet consistently. The teams are working on administering post assessments on topics such as: writing conventions, written response to text, multiplication strategies and sight word development.

In support of Crystal Lake School’s on-going implementation of Responsive Classroom, the faculty completed a book study on The Language of Learning. One of the core components of the Responsive

Classroom approach is the use of positive teacher language. Teachers applied some of the principles of The Language of Learning to literacy lessons on argumentation and debate, including agreeing and disagreeing respectfully, adding on to someone's comments and extending conversations.

Michael Larkin met with teachers providing reading and math intervention services to students in January to review caseloads and achievement targets. All students currently receiving Tier 2 and 3 interventions were reviewed, assessment data was analyzed and achievement targets that had been developed in the fall were either confirmed or revised.

On Friday, January 23, specialists and administrators from the districts of Hebron, Bolton, Somers, and Vernon came to Windermere School to learn about our SRBI process. **Ms. Bienkowski, Ms. Ducharme, and Ms. Duff** presented this process. The presentation explained how we schedule SRBI throughout the year, how students move in and out of tiers and intervention, the paperwork used throughout the process, progress monitoring, and our behavior intervention program. The area school leaders were impressed by the organization of our process and requested to use our documents to support their students through this process.

Rachel Rothman, a staff developer from Columbia Teachers College met with grade 1 and 2 teachers on information writing and realistic fiction unit respectively at Center School. Both groups brought current work from their students and reflections on making connections across balanced literacy components. Time was also spent planning upcoming units. **Ms. Loubier** and **Ms. Warner** helped to administer the Fountas and Pinnell running records. They ordered enrichment books for Lunch Bunch Book Club (which begins the week of February 9).

Our Instructional Technology Specialist, **Ms. Dhandapani** designed four lessons around digital citizenship for students in grades 5 & 6; topics include "What is a Digital Citizen?", "Creating a Positive Digital Footprint", "Online Communication", and "Copyright and Fair Use." She taught one-two lessons thus far in each of the 5/6 classrooms. In addition, during our grade level meetings, teachers shared how iPads are being integrated into the classroom, ideas for instructional use of iPads, and educational apps that have been successful with students. The Instructional Technology Specialists shared the EPS Recommended Apps document with teachers as a collaborative resource for finding apps for a variety of needs. Also, they shared the Technology Competencies Continuum with teachers and explained its background, rationale, and work completed, currently. Teachers were familiarized with the technology skills and competencies assigned to their specific grade level. Windermere staff continued work on the Technology Competencies Continuum; they designed shared learning experiences for students at their specific grade level, integrating curriculum and technology skills. Lastly, our Instructional Technology Specialists continued work on the development of a grades 3-12 digital student portfolio. A group of grade 3-12 teachers met in January to provide feedback and help plan for implementation; **Ms. Jackopsic**, representing the Intermediate School, provided valuable feedback for the elementary/intermediate portion of the portfolio. All of this work clearly aligns with the Multi-Year academic plan to create regular opportunities for students to demonstrate learning using technology and to provide professional development on system-wide programs and resources.

Ms. St. John continues to work with classroom teachers to rotate through the health education program. During the month of January, Ms. St. John completed round two of her rotation with the 5th grade classrooms and now begins round three with grades 1 and 2.

Intermediate School Counselors, **Ms. Toback-Reveley** and **Ms. Marshall**, began the process of creating individual academic success goals with students. Each class was guided through a series of classes to prepare the process of writing a SMART Goal. As part of Students' Success Plans each student will create their academic goal and input the information into the Naviance web-based program. Ms. Marshall and Ms. Toback-Reveley are currently involved in presenting our Conflict Resolution/Bullying Prevention workshop to all sixth grade students. This consists of four lessons in each room during social studies classes. In addition, they initiated the Friends of Rachel Clubs, including thirteen clubs which take place either during recess or after school. Over 200 students signed up to participate in a club. Ms. Marshall and Ms. Toback-Reveley are designated leaders for four different clubs taking place during recess.

Many Windermere classrooms have initiated a Morning Meeting segment to the school day. This is part of the Responsive Classroom model that is utilized in many schools across the country. Some teachers use morning meetings primarily for socio-emotional development and others focus entirely on academic skills, while other teachers address both areas to varying extents. In early childhood classrooms, class meetings are often called Circle Time, and consist of a greeting song, calendar, weather, a review of the daily schedule, class news, and sometimes a group team-building activity. However utilized, Morning Meeting is an opportunity to connect with our students, prepare them for the school day, and begin each day on a positive note.

Due to the amount of snow days and late openings, January was one of those stop and start months. In the area of language arts, eighth grade began work on a new literary essay unit. Students completed on-demand writings at the beginning of the unit, using grade level checklist, students developed individual writing goals they will use to guide writing process through this sophisticated unit. In seventh grade, students completed their latest round of book clubs with an analytical review which they published in a video blogging format. The books used for this book club will be linked to an upcoming writing unit.

In mathematics, eighth grade algebra students took midterm exams with the mean score of 82%. In the area social studies, students in seventh grade continued refining their nonfiction reading assessments and begin work on a new unit focusing on the cultures, customs, politics, and current issues of the African continent. In eighth grade, students are beginning their third writing project of the year with the analytical analysis of early American speeches, tying them thematically to contemporary issues. This particular unit will be leaning into historical book clubs next month.

Beyond the above curriculum work, EMS hosted another area school district looking to replicate some of the best practices at the middle school level. For this month, a large group of educators from the Region #10 Regional School District (the CT towns of Harwinton and Burlington) visited the EMS to examine the standards-based approach to grading and feedback the middle school has recently implemented. The day included classroom observations as well as roundtable discussions with administrators, teachers, and students.

Mrs. Cirillo and **Mrs. Cole** presented a professional development session at the high school's January faculty meeting. The professional development session focused on following through on the next steps in the data-driven decision-making assessment process. The objectives of the professional development session were to provide support and how to implement an effective data cycle. Opportunities were also provided to practice using data assessment tools to analyze student work. Using and becoming familiar with tuning protocols was a focus area for the session. Teachers will now implement some of the

protocols that were presented at upcoming PLG sessions. High school administrators will be offering feedback based on upcoming PLG observations.

The high school student Unified Leadership Committee gave a presentation to Mr. Rinaldi regarding plans for a “U-Knighted” week. The week will focus on the high school’s unified programs in an effort to bring recognition to the challenges and accomplishments of the high school’s unified student programs.

Ellington faculty has completed the development of their own Dyslexia guidelines and practices through the Dyslexia Committee. PPTs are using the referral guidelines and the checklist to determine Dyslexia v. Specific Learning Disability. These guidelines which include recommended assessments and programming have been thoughtfully developed over the three months using state guidelines and various faculty input.

Kristy LaPorte is developing a procedural manual to ensure all schools are using the same PPT and 504 process throughout the district. Administrators, school counselors and all special education faculty will receive an updated binder by mid February.

2.0 Next Steps

The results of Center School mid-year assessments in kindergarten-grade 4 will be analyzed for instructional planning purposes. Instructional targets will be reviewed with proposed modifications to intervention support services as needed.

Teachers will complete written mid-year reflections to share their progress toward their Student Learning Objectives and Professional Practice Goals with their administrator.

Center School students will each make a valentine card to be distributed to local Meals on Wheels, convalescent homes and hospitals, and veteran and senior centers. **Amy Olender** will deliver the valentines in time for the holiday. Room parents will plan classroom parties where students will share valentines with their classmates.

Crystal Lake School fourth graders will be participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in February. Crystal Lake School was randomly chosen to participate in this assessment, commonly referred to as the “Nation’s Report Card.” Students will take a paper and pencil test in reading, writing, math or science. Representatives from NAEP will be on hand to administer the assessments which should take a total of ninety minutes, including directions and preparations.

Crystal Lake School teachers will be participating in book study groups during faculty meetings for the remainder of the school year. Teachers in grades 1-2 will be reading and discussing Reading Wellness by Jan Burkins and teachers in grades 3-4 will be reading and discussing Notice and Note by Kyleene Beers. Louise Kelly and Penny Hughes will facilitate the book study groups.

Windermere’s fourth graders will be participating in the NAEP assessment the morning of Friday, February 20, 2015. Parents were notified of the testing on January 23, 2015 by mail. Students will be taking the paper and pencil test in their classrooms with the exception of those needing the accommodation of an alternate setting.

The Smarter Balanced and CMT testing schedules have been determined:

- Grade 3 and 4 will take Smarter Balanced May 11-22
- Grade 5 will take CMT Science March 16-20
- Grade 5 will take Smarter Balanced April 22-May 7
- Grade 6 will take Smarter Balanced March 23-April 10
- Grade 8 will take CMT Science March 9-13
- Grade 7 and 8 will take Smarter Balanced April 22-May 13
- Grade 10 will take CAPT Science March 23-27
- Grade 11 will take Smarter Balanced May 18-22

Students will be taking these assessments in their classrooms on the Chromebooks with the exception of those students requiring an alternate setting for testing.

The literacy team at Windermere will be piloting our revised WIT process next month. Classroom teachers volunteered to be part of the pilot. This revised process aligns with state guidelines and has been modified to be current, user-friendly, and more informative. Thank you to **Ms. Hatt, Ms. Garrow, Ms. Warriner, and Ms. Hall** for volunteering to pilot the use of these new forms. The literacy teachers in K-6 will meet again to refine the WIT process so that there is consistency throughout the school as all five educators and the Principal continue to meet to build consistency between K-4 and 5/6 grade levels.

In the month of February, EMS will once again welcome Katy Wischow (TC consultant) for a full day of professional development. The first half of the day, social studies teachers will examine student writing and developing high-yield teaching strategies to be implemented into classrooms. The second part of the day, language arts teachers will share examples of student work (from the literary essay unit), and examining the effectiveness of using student checklists as a tool to encourage a more differentiated and personalized learning environment. The February faculty meeting is slated to continue the conversation on student centered accountability and implementing structures like student led conferences. Later in the month (on the February professional development day), teachers will be able to choose from a wide range of topics including inquiry-based questioning techniques, preparing for SBAC testing, a wide range of topics related to instructional technology, and using small group instruction at the secondary level.

David Pearson and **Kristy LaPorte** met to discuss the steps in transitioning students from the middle school to the high school. A meeting will be scheduled in February with high school counseling staff members, administration and specialists to review student data and possible services and interventions needed for 2015-2016 school year at Ellington High School.

3.0 Recognitions

The Homework Club in connection with Ellington Youth Services began its second series of eight sessions at Center School with **Cindy Desrocher** organizing grades 1 and 2 and **Katie Herrity** organizing grades 3 and 4. Middle students serve as tutors for students in this valuable after-school program.

At Center School, **Valerie Baigert** spearheaded a school-wide recognition of National No Name Calling Week to celebrate kindness. This week that focuses on kindness in a school was started in 2004

by children who read a book where the students in a school started a No-Name Calling Week to bring attention to how kids were being unkind to each other. The students who read the book, The Misfits by James Howe, thought it would be a good idea to start their own No-Name Calling Week to celebrate kindness in their school. Our students also brought attention to how important it is to be kind to others, and to celebrate kind acts. Students had the opportunity to give a ticket to someone demonstrating kind gestures. Over the week, students were offered tips and ideas on how to give compliments, encourage their friends, and say something nice to someone every day.

The Center PBIS Team organized a whole school celebration in acknowledgement of students earning 10,000 Tickets. This was our second celebration of the year. Together the Pre-K through fourth grade students gathered to watch a Reading Rainbow performance of *The Snowy Day* in our gymnasium (from Season Six, Episode One). Afternoon kindergartens celebrated with their class in the same way. Students and our staff wore their pajamas, or purple, to show their school spirit for the event. Congratulations to our students for demonstrating *PAWSitive Choices!*

Pam Whiting will be presenting two enrichment programs this winter, both the Young Inventors and Robotics programs. **Abby Hoffman** and **Ashley Caputa** are piloting new units of study for the upcoming Teachers College publication of new units of study.

The annual Crystal Lake School Grade Four Wax Museum was held on January 9. Students culminated a unit of study on biographies by representing a famous person as a wax statue. When visitors to the Wax Museum approached the statues, they came to life to report about their lives.

The Crystal Lake Safe School Climate Committee met in January to plan for the CARES groups held on January 22. The members of the committee decided to focus the CARES group session for the month on how to demonstrate Cooperation, Advocacy, Respect, Empathy, and Self-Control on the bus. Students discussed various school bus scenarios and how they might respond to those scenarios appropriately. This year **Lisa LaForte, Martha Terrion, Michelle Patenaude, Colleen Bava, Chris King, Lynn Seypura, Michael Larkin** and Parent Representative **Renee Mayne** are all serving on the Climate Committee.

Michael Larkin, Trudie Luck Roberts, David Pearson and **Erin McGurk** attended the Teachers College Principals as Curricular Leaders conference on January 21. The day included a keynote by neuroscientist David Rock, a session with Lucy Calkins on non-fiction reading, and a closing by Teachers College staff developer Cornelius Minor.

The *Tireless Teacher Awards* for the month of February will go to **Mr. Pechie**, grade 4 teacher and **Ms. Donovan**, grade 6 teacher. Although both work tirelessly with our PBIS program at Windermere, and both are PBIS Coaches, they also go above and beyond their teaching expectations to promote positive staff morale and assist with grade level town meetings and faculty meetings as well.

The monthly *Spec-tech-ular* work award goes to two individuals who continually show great patience and persistence when furthering technology integration in the classroom. The two teachers in the two separate faculty meetings who will be recognized this month are **Ms. Boehm** and **Mr. Rogers**.

We would also like to recognize all of our K-6 teachers for their open minds toward the Technology Competencies Continuum and their work to contribute to its development. In particular, the following teachers went above and beyond expectations to integrate technology in their classrooms and with their colleagues and students:

- **Ms. Palasek** - Technology Integration during her intervention block to enrich student learning; Beth's students have created video book trailers for their independent reading books. She is also preparing to launch a "Tech Camp" style block to help students learn a variety of publishing options (including Google Sites, Prezi, and Thinglink) while reviewing academic topics of interest.
- **Ms. McKeegan, Ms. Satagaj, Ms. Stroly, and Ms. Korona** - These intermediate teachers launched Genius Hour in their classrooms. Many students will invariably create video projects on a topic of their choice.
- **Ms. Palasek, Mr. Pechie, and Ms. Bashaw** - These teachers launched blogs in their classrooms to provide an authentic purpose and audience for student writing.
- **Ms. Warner and Ms. Derby** for their willingness to collaborate on a project for the "Rachel's Times" Friends of Rachel Club. Students in the club will create a news website highlighting Windermere happenings and information about the activity of other clubs.

In our ongoing efforts to recognize and thank staff members for their relentless and consistent assistance to students, staff, and parents at Windermere, a new award has been created: the *Prize Para Award*. Each month, Principal Welch recognizes a paraprofessional in the building with a certificate and lapel pin as a way to say "Thank you, for all you do!" Our recipient this past month was **Ms. Antonaras** who assists with our grade 1 students in all academic areas is praised by multiple teachers for her exemplary work. Our aides, paraprofessionals, and tutors are vital to the success which epitomizes Windermere School!

On January 7 **Joyce Agnew**, School Counselor, accompanied eight students to the CAS Middle Level Student Leadership conference. At the conference the school advisors met for a round table discussion of student success plans, school climate, and student college visits. Following the conference the student participants met with the peer mediators and positive leaders at school to share ideas and strategies learned at the conference.

Music teacher **Barbara-Anne Angelica** conducted the Ellington Middle School Winter Chorus Concert on the evening of January 15. The successful performance was well received by EMS families and friends.

EMS teachers **Buffey Harris-Fogarty, Sherryl King, Christina Roy** and EHS teachers **Caitlin Masopust** and **Ken Gardiner, David Pearson, Neil Rinaldi, Erin McGurk** and **BOE Member Andrew McNamar** attended the League of Innovative Schools Network meeting in Norwood, MA on January 23. At this meeting, they attended a variety of workshops such as assessing literacy using scoring criteria, formulating learning targets and formative assessments, and integrating technology using differentiated instruction. This conference provided them with new tools for formative assessments, as well as a greater understanding of how to create learning targets that align with their instruction. Additionally, they participated in workshops that helped them to better understand the different ways technology can be incorporated into classrooms to help promote student success.

On January 30, representatives from every school in the district joined **Mike Nash, John Collins** and **Jenna Dhandapani** to discuss ideas surrounding digital portfolios. **Rachel Dio-Rand** and **Krista Brogle** represented EMS. The committee formed a vision statement, goals for students and teachers, and some ideas for implementation. The digital portfolios will begin in second grade and go through twelfth grade. The idea is that students in all grades will have a place to showcase their individual

personal and academic growth and have the opportunity to reflect on the items they submit. They will set goals, share interests and passions, and build a positive digital footprint.

Mr. Charlie Macunas, Interim Assistant Principal at Ellington High School, has made a smooth transition to the high school community. He greeted the faculty at the January faculty meeting summarizing his educational background and qualifications. Mr. Macanus has been highly visible to both students and staff. He has scheduled mid-year conferences for his assigned teachers and has reviewed their student learning objectives and parent/student feedback goals. Mr. Macanus has also visited numerous classrooms to observe both teachers and students in the educational process.

The high school's highly successful and very popular steel drum class/band played for students during all three lunches for an additional performance opportunity and to promote and encourage participation in this musical ensemble.

On January 31, the EHS Jazz Band competed at Berklee College of Music Jazz Festival in Boston, MA for the first time. The Berklee Festival is one of the oldest and most revered Jazz Band Festivals in the country. Bands from throughout New England and east coast states as far as Florida participate in this festival. This year, the EHS band came in 14 out of 14. However, our students are very excited to return after hearing the winning groups perform in the evening. Numerous students were inspired by the performances and anxious to do better next year.

Student Recognition

Ten AP Environmental Science students, accompanied by Mrs. Zampini, spent Saturday, January 17 at CT River Academy in East Hartford, CT to participate in an Aquatics workshop. Students participated in workshops run by professionals from CT DEEP, Yale University, UCONN, The Maritime Marine Aquarium and NOAA. Workshops ranged from non point source water pollution impacts to wetlands and waterways, aquatic invasive plants, fresh and saltwater fishes of CT, and amphibians of CT. It was a wonderful educational experience for the AP Environmental Science students.

Members of the Ellington Rescue Post 512, **Gabriela Ewald**, **Julia Scavetta** and **Megan Chamberland** undertook a community service initiative to advocate for CPR training as a graduation requirement for Connecticut High School students. This initiative was in support of legislation signed by Governor Dannel Malloy (Connecticut Public Act 12-198) to include the availability of CPR and AED training materials in high schools. The team worked during the late spring and early summer of 2014 to prepare information and presentations to local Connecticut state representatives and the State Board of Education. They coordinated and planned the project with John Bailey (American Heart Association Government Liaison), Bruce Hoffman (an advocate for health education and a volunteer at Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps), and Charles A. Jaskiewicz (a Connecticut State Board of Education member).

Ellington Rescue Post 512 members continue to work with Connecticut Senator, Tony Guglielmo, to push the current legislative session to pass the resolution into law. All individuals from Ellington Rescue Post 512 recognize the importance of having the ability and knowledge of administering CPR as an important life skill that all people should have. The three individuals that started this journey to get CPR a mandatory graduation requirement in the State of Connecticut focused throughout the whole process on how the approval of this requirement into law would not only increase public awareness, but will also improve our community.