

**ELLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DISTRICT AREAS OF FOCUS
MONTHLY REPORT
October 2015**

1.0 Status of Initiatives

Data from Kindergarten Inventory- Baseline administration

Skill assessed	Performance	
Language Arts		
Identify upper and lower case letters	Average number of known letters = 38 Range = 1 - 54	
Name sound for given letter (21 letters used)	Average number of known sounds = 12 Range = 0 - 26	
Mathematics	Number of students who demonstrated this skill in September	% of students
Rote count to 20	103/146	71%
Count to 10 (1:1 match)	125/146	86%
Count backwards (10 to 1)	98/146	67%
Identify numbers 0 - 10	103/146	71%
Identify shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle)	132/146	90%

Baseline data- Fall Reading Assessments

Grade	Percentage of Students Achieving Benchmark Independent Reading Levels			
	Significantly Below	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
1	11%	22%	40%	27%
2	17%	19%	31%	33%
3	15%	12%	35%	39%
4	12%	10%	39%	40%
5	6%	12%	44%	37%
6	6%	22%	43%	29%

Firefighter **Brendan Burke** presented the Fire Prevention Assembly during Fire Prevention Week where children were able to review home safety procedures and observe the firefighters wearing full equipment for familiarity and assurance. Each student received a hat and badge, and take home materials to promote home engagement.

Families are gathering for the four weekly Parenting with Love & Logic Evenings with Principal **Trudie Luck Roberts**. Conversations concerning solving typical family problems and power struggles are facilitated in the relaxed setting of the media center. Babysitting was arranged and organized by **Diane Lasher-Penti**.

A highly successful PTO Book Fair was held in October at Center School. **Darlene Beaudry** organized over 30 volunteers to support the Scholastic Book Fair. The community was further involved when the ever popular Dads & Donuts sale brought fathers in before school to purchase books with their youngsters. Thanks to the PTO for their efforts to continually improve upon this early morning tradition. **Angie Moser** organized a pie sale from Lyman Orchards. **Darlene Beaudry** organized the PTO Book Fair which was fabulously successful this fall. Proceeds from this book fair will go to support the purchasing of two SMART Boards for Center classrooms.

Third graders went on a field trip to the CT Recycle Recovery, also known as the “Trash Museum.” Fourth grade students participated in an in-house learning expedition led by the Mystic Aquarium. Center School’s traditional Harvest Parade and Party was held on the afternoon of Halloween. Many families, residents and local business folk lined the pathways around Arbor Park with cameras and smiles all around. The Reading for Fun store opened in October, supporting student reading at home. Center students will be able to attend the store as reward for logging hours of at-home reading time. **Lauren Kindall** organizes this favorite event.

Many thanks are offered to the Center School PTO for a Welcome Back Luncheon of a delicious salad bar banquet for teachers on October 7. The staff felt fortunate to be so richly appreciated by our parent community.

Each classroom at Crystal Lake School is working on our school’s priority social-emotional standards of Cooperation, Advocacy, Respect, Empathy and Self-Control (CARES). These characteristics have been identified by Responsive Classroom as essential skills for both academic and social success. Each Crystal Lake School teacher has identified a way to recognize students for independently demonstrating these characteristics. Our first CARES groups met in October to discuss what these things look and sound like across the learning areas of our school. The CARES groups are small multi-age groups of students who meet monthly with a staff member facilitator.

All Crystal Lake School teachers met with Mr. Larkin to establish professional goals for the year. Our school’s Parent Feedback goal this year will be clearly communicate student learning results to parents. Teachers spent time at the October faculty meeting brainstorming strategies to help us achieve our goals in the areas of reading, math, and positive behavior.

Dr. Nicol visited Crystal Lake School classrooms on October 23. Dr. Nicol’s visit gave him an opportunity to see our school in action and participate in learning activities.

Kudos to **Mrs. Duff, Mrs. Ducharme, Mrs. Bienkowski, Mrs. Lewis, and Ms. Loubier** for all their collaborative work in modifying and fine-tuning our SRBI process and subsequent paperwork which was presented with our whole school goal at the October faculty meetings. Each staff person received a binder that includes: an explanation of the process, clean forms, and an area of the binder designated to keep student data. They also observed the K-4 SRBI process to ensure consistency across the school.

Ms. Palasek continued using a schedule on Google Sheets for students in grades 5-6 to help in the library. Recently the intermediate students have helped the younger students create their Code.org accounts and start the first few lessons on the website. Ms. Palasek also assessed students in grades 4-5 on the topic of digital citizenship. She is collaborating with **Ms. Dhandapani** to create modules that can be used to teach digital citizenship topics to students in grades 4-8.

Mrs. Schumacher initiated a school wide quote contest. Every week, a new motivational quote is read during the Friday announcements. The quotes are posted in the hallway for students to read as they walk by. After a month’s worth of weekly quotes, students have the opportunity to choose a

quote that means something to them and create a written piece about how they have used or will use the meaning in the quote to help them become successful in their daily lives. The winning piece is shared at either a town meeting or over the announcements. **Justin Szrenja** won for the quote, "Every day may not be good but there is something good in every day." **Shannon Carbonell** won for the quote, "Be like a postage stamp and stick with something until you get there." **Sakura Butler** won for the quote, "Do not go where the path might lead, go instead where there is not path and leave a trail." Student winners will share their written pieces with peers, get their picture taken with **Mr. Welch** and receive a free homework pass.

Doughnuts for Dads was held during our annual WPTO Book Fair. Hundreds of dads and significant role models attended the event and were greeted with smiles, stories, and books! It was an important opportunity for dads to spend some time with their child in school. The book fair is always a popular event and dads were cajoled into buying books for their son/daughters.

Mrs. Schumacher and **Mr. Murphy** welcomed back bus drivers this past month. Drivers were treated to bottled water and donuts. PBIS tickets and Whale Done Rewards sheets were distributed to the drivers. Mr. Murphy and Mrs. Schumacher also shared the bus expectations that were taught to students at school. They also shared the new bus incentive rewards that the students can win during weekly and monthly raffles.

Newly introduced this year, The Discovery Center experience invited our Windermere sixth graders to participate in a two-night, three-day excursion at Camp Woodstock in Woodstock, Connecticut. Over 80% of our sixth grade population attended in three separate trips - all in October. Students were integrated with students from magnet schools in Hartford. Many of our Windermere students brought back valuable, informative, and positive life-enriched experiences. The students were engaged in diversity activities and team-building. From the climbing wall to thematic skits at the campfire, from dancing after meals to team chants, and from meeting new friends to adopting important values, our Windermere sixth graders were the pioneers in an experience we hope will be part of the curricular, experiential fabric in Ellington!

The first Special Service Breakfast for community and family members was a success. Several parents and community members attended the breakfast. **Leslie Mancuso, Robin Kline, Deb Hillemeir,** and **Mark Wursthorn** were some of the staff members that also attended. The breakfast provided an open forum for parents to meet with **Kristy LaPorte** and **Melissa Haberern** as well as other staff members. Parents were able to ask questions about the SRBI and special education process. Reading and math programs were displayed as well as information on special services. Two more breakfast meetings will be provided for parents to attend. Additionally, an evening of Parent Conversations will be hosted by the Special Services Department on November 17, 2015 at Windermere School from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) will present on the PPT process with suggestions to help parents navigate that process.

Kristy LaPorte and **Tracy Smith**, the transition teacher at the high school, visited an adult program for students with special needs. This visit provided the opportunity to view programs that will service our students once they leave our program at the age of 21. Ms. Smith will continue to visit off site programs to assess various opportunities for families and students. Tracy has also attended training with the Connecticut State Department of Education to ensure Ellington Public Schools is offering all available services to families and students with special needs at the high school and transition level.

During October, the middle school held a book club on "Ditch the Textbook" by author Matt Miller. This weekly lunch time conversation was well attended and focused on instructional strategies that maximize the use of instructional technologies in the classroom. Led by three teachers, this innovative book club also had a corresponding blog where participants (and nonparticipants) could share ideas,

reactions to the book, and teaching strategies. Continuing this theme of teacher led professional development, the October faculty meeting at the middle school was once again in an “EdCamp.” In this format, teachers lead discussions on topics teachers had as areas of interest, or areas of expertise, they would like to share. A sampling of topics included cross content reading strategies, exploring a wide range of Google education apps, developing student portfolio systems, and a Q&A on implementing the upcoming student-led conference model.

Finally, Ellington Middle School held its first learning walk during the month of October. In this format, teachers and administrators collectively walked through many classrooms in five minute mini timeslots looking for patterns of instruction and student learning. Using a protocol for reflection, the participants then debriefed after the observations with an eye towards identifying areas for future professional development. During this initial learning walk, the professional conversation amongst the participants was outstanding. The priority areas identified for future professional development include: developing better opportunities for student reflection and self-assessment, creating more common language around student learning and expanding the use of school-wide rubrics, and finally, exploring universal note-taking strategies across content areas. Based on these positive outcomes, the middle school plans to continue this learning walk model throughout the school year.

The high school administration reports that all teacher goals for 2015-2016 school year have been completed. Collectively the high school goals will work toward building capacity of teachers and administrators as lead learners, work on mastery based learning concepts and encouraging all students to achieve at their fullest potential.

The high school has conducted several meetings with the new teachers as part of the orientation process. At the most recent meeting in October new teachers were provided professional development on the use of BloomBoard to enter their student learning objectives, parent goals and student goal.

Neil Rinaldi and **Mark Wursthorn** conducted a pizza lunch for teachers who wanted to learn more and provide feedback about the most recent revisions to the school’s school-wide rubrics. The meetings were very productive and provided an informal atmosphere to solicit teacher feedback as major stakeholders in this process.

A record number of fans turned out for the football and soccer games that were held under the lights in October. The Knights came away with the victory in football. However, we were not that fortunate in the soccer game. Halftime football performances included the cheerleaders, the dance team, and the high school marching band that now numbers over 100 students strong.

The high school started a new initiative of holding regular meetings with administrators, guidance and school psychologists. The meetings were planned an effort to improve the lines of communication and collaboration amongst all stakeholders dealing with student support services.

Spirit Week was held at Ellington high school from October 26-30. Mr. Rinaldi reports that all students did an excellent job with managing the excitement of spirit week and attending to their studies and academics. The highlight of spirit week culminated in a pep rally that was held on Friday, October 30. The junior class won the coveted "Keeper of the Night" plaque that is given to the class who shows the most school spirit and is the winner of the relay races that are held in the gym. The spirit week also brought in a large amount of canned food that will be donated to the food pantry.

2.0 Next Steps

Plans are in place to welcome veterans to the Center School Take a Veteran to School Day program. A reception for the veterans is planned by the P.T.O.

The Windermere K-4 Literacy Specialists will work with teachers on professional development day to gather materials for guided reading. They are trying to make a resource of short texts for teachers to use during guided reading. They intend to work with teachers on professional development day to align phonics skills with reading levels. This will give teachers an explicit guide to use when teaching small groups in guided reading. The K-6 Literacy Team intends to meet for discussions centered on the new SRBI process. As always, they will continue to collaborate with classroom teachers with regard to small group instruction, TC new learnings, and information to bolster classroom instruction.

Ms. Palasek will work with **Mrs. Dymkowski** to help students capture their artwork as a component of students' digital portfolios. The two teachers plan discussions around displaying student artwork in the library. Windermere School will be a participant in the upcoming global Hour of Code initiative through Code.org. This will take place during Computer Science Education Week, December 7-13. After polling the grade 1-6 teachers, Ms. Palasek is working to get classes signed up on Code.org and teaching some basic ideas about coding.

Coordinated by **Mrs. Marshall** and **Mrs. Toback-Reveley**, the Rachel's Challenge (Rachel's Story) Assembly will be held on Thursday, November 12. Following the assembly that day, there will be two student leadership training sessions – one for 100 fifth grade students and one for 100 sixth grade students.

Our Windermere Veterans Day celebration is planned for November 11. A number of veterans are scheduled to present information and their service experience to students at Windermere. Each year, we are excited and honored to host this program on Veterans Day. The WPTO has once again scheduled Gobble, Gobble Bingo. A huge tag sale will held in the school gym to raise money for our school. An assembly is planned for our K-4 students. Brad Zupp, a former Barnum and Bailey Circus clown will present a fun and informational program about finances to our students.

On November 20, students in grade 6 will take part in educational presentations and performances which include music and slideshow presentations with International themes and content in celebration of our International Day. They also will enjoy a buffet lunch with foods from around the world, provided by Noodles and Company. Additionally, students will be given a T-shirt to wear that day in lieu of dressing up which was the custom for Immigration Day in years past.

In November, the month will kick off with a full professional development day on Election Day. At the middle school, all of the professional development sessions will be facilitated by the principal and/or teachers in an effort to continue our philosophy of the building capacity internally. For Veterans Day, the school will hold its annual Veterans Day ceremony which will include student speakers and student musical performances. This year, a new twist will be that a representative of the veterans will be speaking to the students directly, offering a first-hand account of his military experience. Finally, the month of November will be a busy month with four separate school district visits to EMS who want to replicate the middle schools exemplary practices in the areas of readers writers workshop, library/media programming, and effective teaming practices.

3.0 Recognitions

Over 230 students at Center School are participating in the Global Read Aloud. Eleven classroom teachers, **Abby Menard, Sumitra Ratneshwar, Kara Modzelewski, Ashley Caputa, Taylor Parker, Pam Whiting, Amy Borio, Abby Hoffman, Katelyn Moule, Katie Herrity** and **Tomi Raver** are reading books with their classes and students are using technology tools to share their thoughts with other students across America.

The SRBI teams at Center School are working collaboratively to help their colleagues identify appropriate, specific interventions to improve student academic and behavioral achievement. Center School's Positive Behavior Intervention Support has been supported by **Marisa LaRocca** and the **First Student Bus Company**, where students are acknowledged for their commitment to following school behavior expectations on the school buses. **Tomi Raver** and **Katie Gelsomino** met with new teachers **Kara Modzelewski, Taylor Parker, Katie Kranz, Kandace Murdock, Belinda McGehee** and **Aimee Boehm** to review the philosophy behind and school-wide procedures for our Positive Behavior Intervention System.

Renee Fox and **Sandy Scully** organized a Denim Day for Breast Cancer with staff members contributing donations to the cause and wearing pink to show their support.

Crystal Lake School hosted Curriculum Night on October 1. Parents had an opportunity to visit classrooms and hear teachers discuss classroom procedures and to hear curriculum presentations. The night was very well attended with many teachers reporting all parents present.

The annual Crystal Lake School PTO Halloween Party was held on October 23. Parent volunteer **Joann Scott** organized this event with an army of volunteers supporting her. The parents transformed the school into a festive environment for hallway trick or treating and seasonal games in the brand new gym! The Crystal Lake School mascot, Stripes made an appearance at the party as well! A special thank you to **Aidan Caron**, Ellington Middle School 8th grader, for helping make Stripes come alive!

Crystal Lake School recognized Fire Prevention Week in October with a visit by the **Crystal Lake Fire Department**. Firefighters shared important fire safety tips with students in grade level assemblies.

Colleen Bava presented the Smarter Balanced Assessment results to parents at the October meeting of the Crystal Lake School PTO. Mrs. Bava provided an overview of the components of the Smarter Balanced assessment as well as our students' performance on the spring 2015 administration.

Over 54 students at Windermere were recognized with the Whale Wonder Award. Their pictures are displayed on a huge bulletin board in the front foyer. As is our protocol, parents are called and notified of their son/daughter's award and our pride in their son/daughter's accomplishment.

October's Tireless Teacher Awards were presented to **Mrs. Armes, Ms. Lowe, and Mr. Murphy**. 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. Although all of our Windermere teachers demonstrate such professional prowess, each month a specific teacher is honored with a special pin, certificate, and decorative symbol for the classroom.

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 was 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.**

Melissa Cintron who assists with our elementary students and is praised by multiple teachers for her exemplary work. Our aides, paraprofessionals, and tutors are vital to the success which epitomizes Windermere School!

Our new Amazing Aide Award, recognizing a lunch aide who is connecting with students, supporting our PBIS program through incentives, and working her "magic" during lunch and recess with the students was presented in front of the students during one of our lunch waves. Congratulations to **Mrs. Mary Ann Milligan** for the month of October.

On October 14, EMS teachers **Lisa Polack** and **Jen Larkin** attended the Tri-State Children's/YA Book Buzz in New York, NY, where they met with authors, publishers and teachers to discuss reading trends, new books and book club titles.

School librarian **Lisa Polack** also attended the CASL/CECA Annual Conference on Sunday, October 25 and Monday, October 26. Mrs. Polack was a presenter at the conference, and discussed building networks and student success with the Nutmeg Book Award.

Congratulations to the following students who have been elected to serve as officers of the Robert W. Murphy Chapter of the National Honor Society:

Ryan Browne—President

Nicole Hazzard—Vice President

Danielle Markowski—Secretary

Erin Meaney—Treasurer

On Friday, October 23, students in the Honors Accounting II class travelled to the University of Connecticut in Storrs for the CTCPA High School CPA Careers Conference. The conference addressed the skills that new and young professionals need to become successful leaders in the accounting profession, as well as skills needed for success at the college level.

On Saturday October 17, **Tim Ross** attended an Envirothon Workshop on Soils. At the workshop, there were soil scientists from NRCS, a UCONN professor, and a wildlife biologist from CT DEEP. Tim also participated in the breakout sessions to learn about how to map soils on computers, learn about invasive earthworms, soil assessment demonstrations, and described and interpreted soils in a soil pit.