

**ELLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DISTRICT AREAS OF FOCUS
MONTHLY REPORT
FEBRUARY 2016**

1.0 Status of Initiatives

District Data: January Reading Assessments

Grade	Percentage of Students Achieving Benchmark Independent Reading Levels			
	Exceeds	Meets	Approaching	Significantly Below
1	37%	34%	17%	12%
2	49%	32%	7%	11%
3	44%	38%	8%	10%
4	31%	50%	12%	7%
5	39%	51%	5%	5%
6	29%	59%	6%	5%

Center School P.T.O. room parents hosted valentine parties for all of our students in the classrooms. Each student made a heart-felt valentine to be given into the community. Over 300 student-made valentines were given to the Meals on Wheels program bringing a smile to the elderly and homebound on Valentine’s Day. Students in first and third grades also participated in the Valentines for Troops through the Big Y. Thanks to **Darlene Baeudry** for her efforts in distributing the cards. Our PTO continues to provide a wide range of high interest activities and events to engage all our students and families over time. Their vision and support of the school community is appreciated.

Center School is also grateful to **Deb Ellis** for coordinating a Science Fair. Classes visited the fair during the school day, and a large enthusiastic crowd came in the evening to view the projects. Over 85 students explored their own curiosity by working on self-selected projects in preparation for the event. Each student received a participation ribbon to recognize their efforts. Students applied their newly learned skills in non-fiction reading to provide them with the scientific understanding they needed. We are proud of the accomplishments of our children and families who worked together to create the excellent exhibits. **Lauren Kindall** organized the Reading for Fun store for student readers.

Becky Wentworth held a Nutmeg Luncheon for fourth grade readers. Fourteen students had each read two of the Nutmeg Winning books and met for a Book Club conversation. The Center School choice for the Best Nutmeg Book will be announced later in the spring. **Steve Bernard** escorted three students, **Elise Catlett, Brooke Bahler, and Victoria Martinez** to the Art at the Capital recognition in Hartford.

The Crystal Lake School data teams are all in the midst of data team instructional cycles. The kindergarten data team is working on a data team cycle focused on sight word acquisition. The grade one data team is working on a data team cycle focused on fact fluency. The grade two data team is working on a data team cycle focused on inferring character’s feelings and providing text evidence to support their inferences. The grade three data team recently completed a data team cycle focused on math problem solving. The grade four data team is currently working on a data team cycle focused on sentence structure.

Mr. Welch created a new student recognition program at Windermere to recognize four students in a particular classroom who have been academically and/or socially focused in the classroom environment. The teacher is asked to distribute specialized tickets when he/she recognizes a student following the classroom rules, exerting academic/behavioral effort, demonstrating positive characteristics, etc. At the end of three weeks, four students with tickets randomly chosen from the ticket jar will have lunch with Mr. Welch in his office, awarded with a "My Principal is Proud of Me" pencil, and have their group picture taken to be displayed in the main hallway on the Lunch for a Great Bunch bulletin.

Mr. Murphy and **Mrs. Schumacher** organized a meeting with the Windermere bus drivers to thank them for providing a safe bus environment as they transport students to and from school. On Friday the 12th, Mr. Murphy, Mrs. Schumacher, and Mrs. Warriner delivered hot chocolate, coffee, donuts, and a tootsie roll goodie bag to the drivers in case they could not make the meeting. Valentine's Day cards created by students were also delivered to all of the drivers.

Ms. Palasek introduced WeVideo as a tool for students to use when creating or presenting work. Students were able to test out the different features or explore the more advanced features if they had used it in the past. She also created YouTube playlists of book trailers for books that we have in the library. Some of the upper elementary students were very excited to check out the newer picture book selections based on the trailers. She organized the theme days for Read Across America Week.

Ms. Dhandapani continues to assist the Windermere staff with all-important technological ideas and structures. She presented at our separate elementary and intermediate faculty meetings on digital portfolio updates and resources to support the portfolio. She has been collaborating with other professionals and especially Mr. Welch to begin planning for the repurposing of the Windermere computer lab into a Makerspace.

Our school counselors, **Mrs. Marshall** and **Mrs. Toback-Reveley** completed the conflict resolution weekly lessons including two lessons from Second Step program in all sixth grade classes and began the career awareness unit. The two counselors also began a Grief Support Group for fifth grade students and provided lunch bunch groups for fifth and sixth grade students. They coordinated student presentations for the Town Hall Meeting on ORT (waste mindfulness) process, learned at The Discovery Center, to be implemented at Windermere. They provided educational lesson to sixth grade classroom on Alopecia due to a recent student diagnosis and attended Anxiety Disorders in Children professional development workshop as well.

February was a terrific month at the middle school. Students in language arts at both grade levels worked on literary essays. This format of writing require students to deeply analyze two separate novels and then write a comparative analysis using concepts like theme, character development, and author's craft. In addition, in social studies students worked on different styles of writing during the month of February. Grade 7 students finished a narrative writing piece where they investigated critical issues related to Mesopotamia and current events in the Middle East early in the month. They then had an informational writing project providing students a choice of topics related to Africa.

In grade 8, students took part in a historical writing project which allowed student choice of format (informational or argumentative). In science, students in eighth grade completed a unit on genetics. In addition, towards the end of the month students reviewed key issues taught in science classrooms from grades 6, 7, and 8 in preparation for the March administration of the science CMT. In mathematics, eighth grade students took feedback from the recent major midyear exam to plan areas of focus for the second half of the school year. Overall performance on this midyear exam had 81% of students reaching proficiency levels. Seventh grade students completed a geometry unit titled "Sizing up

Solids.” On the post assessment, students performed extremely well with 93% of pre-algebra students meeting or exceeding standard.

In February, the middle school hosted several professional development opportunities including workshops on topics like the role of student reflection in the classroom, effective uses of instructional technologies, differentiated instruction, and developing effective advisor/advisee programming. In this month, the middle school also hosted the Teachers College consultant where language arts and special education continued their exciting work on developing reading and writing continuums.

Ellington High School celebrated National School Counseling Week 2016, "School Counseling: The Recipe for Success." National School Counseling Week highlights the tremendous impact school counselors can have in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career. We are fortunate to have a skilled and dedicated staff of counselors who strive to help our students understand and achieve success after high school.

On February 4, Superintendent Nicol attended the high school Student Advisory Council meeting. Dr. Nicol helped students process through a problem of practice related to initiatives that would make Ellington High School an even better experience for students. Dr. Nicol was actively involved in student discourse and assisted the students in processing through a great deal of reflective thoughts on this initiative.

The high school conducted their quarterly Student Spotlight Breakfast. Numerous students were identified for outstanding contributions in the classroom. The highlight of the award ceremony is announcing which class had the largest number of students on the high honor roll. The freshman class won this recognition for the second quarter with 33 out of 199 (16%) students on the high honor roll.

Chris Lehman, nationally recognized expert and author on developing close reading skills, provided two days of professional development on close reading strategies with the high school science department.

On February 16, the high school administration conducted two professional development sessions on implementing student led conferences. This session was mandatory for all high school teachers to help them prepare for student led conference is that will begin in December 2016. Additional professional development on student led conferences will be provided to the high school staff in the fall.

A student run committee for the Relay for Life conducted a presentation at EHS on the Relay for Life, how to get involved, and importance to our community. Ellington High School was recognized by as the 2015 Nationwide Top Ten Per Capita Award.

Kristy LaPorte and **Melissa Haberern** met with the Director of Special Services in Windsor Locks. During the site visit, Kristy and Melissa visited their Transition Program for students aged (18-21). The program is housed in a rented home off school property. While Ellington maintains their Transition Program at Ellington High School, our program mirrors Windsor Locks. All students are provided opportunities for students to learn adult daily living skills through transition goals and objectives. Additionally, all students are provided time in the community and opportunities to build job skills in job placements.

Farmington Public Schools' faculty members visited our Program for Alternative Learning program at Windermere and Center School's Student Resource Intervention (SRI) program. The purpose of their visit was to learn more about how our programs support students with behavioral difficulties which impact their ability to learn in the regular education setting. **Sarah Anderson** and **Valerie Baigert**

provided a tour and details of strategies, supports and faculty and staff needed to support these programs.

The last Evening Parent Conversation Workshop was held at Windermere School. **Dr. Marshall Gladstone** presented information on Executive Function Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder symptoms and strategies to support parents in assisting their children in organizational skills.

Deb Hillemeir led the Dyslexia Committee in reviewing new and current research in supporting students with Dyslexia in the school setting. Kristy LaPorte, Melissa Haberern, Deb Hillemeir and Robin Kline were asked to present next fall at the Farmington Marriot ConnCASE state meeting.

Kristy LaPorte and Melissa Haberern attended a Bureau of Special Education Site Visit at two separate private special education facilities to assist in determining ongoing approval. Kristy attended the Intensive Education Academy (IEA) in West Hartford while Melissa Haberern attended the Learning Clinic in Brooklyn, Connecticut. During the visits, they assisted Colleen Hayes from the Connecticut State Department. The team observed teachers' methodology and instructional strategies, met with faculty and staff to interview them on current knowledge of programs and the teacher evaluation process, while providing feedback to the school's directors on strengths and recommendations.

2.0 Next Steps

Parent Conferences will be offered the last week of March to share and review student progress. Meeting with parents is an opportunity build strong parent-teacher partnerships—partnerships that are necessary to reach the common goal of helping each child get the best education possible. Student led conferences will be implemented in the classrooms of several teachers in grades 3-6 who attended the Student-Led Conference Summit with Dr. McGurk in preparation for piloting this approach.

The library/media center will host a Book Fair during Parent Conference week. **Becky Wentworth** and **Allison Morris** planned many schoolwide celebrations for Read Across America Day on March 2.

L.U.K. (Let Us Know) Boxes will be introduced at Windermere March Town Meetings. Four such units have been strategically mounted in areas of the school. Students who feel uncomfortable or cannot find an adult to report a situation can always submit a concern in writing and drop it into one of these boxes which will be checked by staff several times a week. As good school citizens and responsible individuals, if we "see something, say something."

For the month of March, eighth grade students will be taking the science CMT. A small part of the month's time in classrooms will be spent preparing and reviewing for April's SBAC assessments. March will also be student led conference month. Students have been working on their digital portfolios and scripts in preparation for successful conferences.

Grade 8 students will have an opportunity to hear thoughts and ask questions to the Hartford/Tolland County UCONN Admissions Officer, Kristina Rivera, who will be hosting a town hall style assembly. In addition to this assembly, during March there will be several College Power visits onto area college campuses. College Power is a locally created college and career program which has high percentages of EMS students attending college preparation events.

3.0 Recognitions

Our Hundredth Day Celebrations acknowledged being together for 100 days this school year, being 100 days smarter! **Maura Kleszczewski** created a school-wide bulletin board of 100 Ways We Love Center School.

Valerie Baigert championed the No Name Calling Week – Celebrating Kindness week celebrations. Students had the opportunity to give PBIS tickets to their peers, recognizing their classmates for their positive behavior. **Allison Morris** led the Notice and Note Non-Fiction book club for staff members before school, providing strong evidence for the adult learning culture at Center School.

Tomi Raver, Becky Wentworth, Belinda McGehee, Valerie Baigert, Sandy Scully, Audrey Quimby and **Deb Hillemeir** attended the second Safety and Security Meeting of the year. The committee discussed a table-top review of our fire drill procedures. **Becky Wentworth, Allison Morris, Cristine DiVenere, Deb Hillemeir, Sheila Byrne,** and **Valerie Baigert** facilitated professional learning sessions in our February Teacher In-service. We are grateful for their sharing their expertise with district colleagues.

Ashley Caputa, Abbey Menard, Maura Kleszczewski, Taylor Parker, Amy Borio, Abby Hoffman, Katie Herrity, and **Katelyn Moule** hosted visitors from East Granby as they observed Bridges Math and Number Corner instruction. **Ronni Rucki** and **Cristine DiVenere, Ashley Caputa** and **Deb Hillemeir,** and **Amy Borio** and **Allison Morris** hosted visitors from Mansfield Schools to observe reading workshops in action.

Center School participated in a half day of Learning Walks with Rachel Rothman from Teachers College. Teachers opened their classrooms for the teams to visit to notice and wonder about our work. This valuable protocol has much to teach us about our schoolwide practice.

Finally, Center School thanks **Sandy Scully** and the Social Committee for planning our school celebrations. These events are the glue that holds us together, and are important for our community.

Crystal Lake School held its annual Family Math Night on February 4. Students and families participated in math activities throughout the school, including Bridges Work Place activities. **Martha Terrion** coordinated Family Math Night.

The Windermere *Tireless Teacher Awards* for the month of February went to Grade 6 teacher **Mrs. Reiss** and Kindergarten teacher **Mrs. Hurlburt**. Both work tirelessly with our Teachers College initiatives and programs to assist colleagues at Windermere, and go above and beyond their teaching expectations to promote positive staff morale and assist with grade level town meetings and faculty meetings as well.

Our *Amazing Aide Award* was given to **Mrs. Donna Hurlburt** this past month. Mrs. Hurlburt's recognition was met with an enthusiastic and even raucous congratulatory respond by our lunch students. She continues to do a wonderful job connecting with our students and demonstrates that pitching in and working as a team is always a win-win!

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 **Mrs. Susan Gessay** who assists with our multiple disability 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!

At our most last Town Meetings, several of our fifth and sixth grade students wanted to share a presentation of their own creation. Having learned about wasteful habits when it comes to discarding leftover food at the Discovery Center camp experience, **Jeffrey Gordon** and **Alex DiRenza** highlighted an idea about actually weighing the amount of food waste after lunches at Windermere, specific to grade 6. This is a pilot concept and will be implemented in the near future due to the

passion, thoughtfulness, and drive exhibited by Jeff and Alex. Helping with area animal shelters and with a strong desire to help abandoned and/or abused animals, students from grades 5 and 6 provided us with a PowerPoint presentation. Special thanks to **Kyleen Spivey, Hannah Spivey, Julia Sikora, Samantha Norton, Angelina Miller, Hannah Grimes** from the fifth grade and from the sixth grade **Brionna Koehler, Jillian Donie, Piper Small, and Danika Martin**.

To date, over 120 students have received the *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. For example, a student helping another student without an adult prompt, or a student demonstrating any of the *R.I.S.E.* tenets are recognized by a teacher or staff member. Students receiving this award get a picture with the principal and the student's parents receive a celebratory phone call.

Special thanks goes out to our Grade 3 teachers (**Mrs. Dwyer, Ms. Dimmock, Mrs. McEleney, and Mrs. Gentilcore**) for piloting the Everyday Arrays Math/Technology project as part of the pilot of shared learning experience for the Technology Competencies Continuum.

On Monday, February 1 EMS Guidance Counselor **Joyce Agnew** and twenty-two 8th grade students visited St. Joseph University in West Hartford. During their College Power field trip the students learned about life on a small college campus, visited classrooms, and held round table discussions about the benefits of a college education.

On Saturday, February 6 the EMS Math Counts team, coached by 7th grade math teacher **Marissa Boucher**, competed at the University of Hartford in the 2016 Math Counts Chapter Competition against 27 schools and over 250 mathletes! Our mathletes included 8th graders **Joey Champeau, Marissa Chow, Kylie Elsass and Ashka Patel** as well as 7th graders **Ayushman Choudhury, Chanakya Maddineni, Michael Wearne Jr. and Mitchell Whelan**. We are extremely proud and excited to share that the team of Joey, Ashka, Mitchell and Ayushman have placed in the top 25% of all schools and have moved on to the state competition for the first time!! In addition, Ayushman received an incredible honor of placing in the top 16. Ayushman had the opportunity to participate on stage in the “countdown round”, which is a buzzer beater style tournament against the top mathletes. What a tremendous honor for all mathletes involved and best of luck in March at the state competition to our EMS Math Counts Team!

On Friday, February 26 EMS Guidance Counselor **Joyce Agnew** and 7th grade social studies teacher **Scott Raiola** chaperoned a second College Power field trip, this one to University of Connecticut in Storrs. The thirty-two 7th and 8th grade students met with UCONN staff and students to learn about the school, have lunch, and participate in a walking tour of the university campus.

EMS art teacher **Kelley Griffin**, students **Ainsley Armstrong, Joseph Champeau, Grace Dubiel, Zachary Elsass, Cassandra Frechette, Trinity George, Channakya Maddineni, Isabel Mund, Kayla Panagrosso and Jeremy Zahner** went to Hartford for the Art at the Capitol event. Their artwork has been chosen for the annual exhibition at our state capitol building. Students and their families toured the capitol, and attended a reception with our state legislators.

Mr. Robert Williams has been named by the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) as the Distinguished Friend of Education. He has served for many years as the Technical Director of the Opening Knight Players (OKP) and in several other volunteer OKP roles. Nominated by Mr. Prenetta, Mr. Williams was selected from among a very competitive pool of nominees. Mr. Williams will be honored at the upcoming CAS Volunteer Recognition Banquet.

Neil Rinaldi attended the National Association of Secondary Schools Principals (NASSP) Ignite 2016 Conference. Mr. Rinaldi attended sessions with Rick Wormeli, Todd Whitaker and other nationally recognized educational experts in professional development that concentrated on strategies to close the achievement gap of subgroups, build teacher and leadership capacity and enhance stakeholder engagement.

Thanks to **Kristy LaPorte, Melissa Haberern, Tina Klopfer**, and **Megan Edwards**, who assisted Unified Coach **Dylan Schroth** through the basketball season.

Student Accomplishments

The National Merit® Scholarship Program has announced that Ellington High School Senior **Kyle Fitzgerald** has been named a Finalist in the competition for National Merit Scholarships to be awarded in the spring. Kyle was identified as a Semifinalist in the fall and subsequently fulfilled several requirements to advance to the Finalist level of competition. The selection of Merit Scholarship® winners is now in progress. Congratulations and best wishes to Kyle!

Two performing arts seniors will be honored at the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) Twenty-first Annual Arts Awards Banquet at the Aqua Turf Club in April. **Colby Villeneuve** and **Emily Walder** were selected by the Ellington High School fine arts teachers and principal for their outstanding accomplishments in the performing arts.

Seniors **Kyle Fitzgerald** and **Leah Gervin** will be honored at the Connecticut Association of Schools 33rd Annual Connecticut High School Scholar-Athlete Awards Program to be held in May at the Aqua Turf Club. Kyle and Leah were selected for their academic and athletic accomplishments along with their demonstration of integrity, self-discipline and courage with personal standards which serve as a model to others. These students exemplify the Ellington High School Core Values and Beliefs and we wish them continued success.

Madame DeMarco's French IV students went to La Petite France in West Hartford for a true Parisian experience on Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday). Students ordered their meals in French and ate delicious baguette sandwiches, salads, and croissants. The festivities concluded with the crowning of the Queen for the day, **Ciara Dobrowolski**, who found the baby trinket in her slice of the Galette des Rois, a famous French dessert served on Mardi Gras.

U-Knighted Week culminated with a pep rally that focused and demonstrated the strength and uniqueness of our entire student body. The week-long celebration was completely student led by the U-Knighted Leadership Team - **Eric Amundarain, Ryan Browne, Ashley Cioto, Danielle Markowski, Erin Meaney, Eric Nordmark, Olivia Palmer, Randy Philavong, Brian Pho, and Erin Wardrop**. Congratulations for making EHS a place Where Students Come First!

On Saturday, February 27, 50 American Studies students participated in the 2016 CT History Day District Contest at Manchester High School. Congratulations to the following students who won awards and have advanced on to the statewide competition on Saturday, April 30 at Central Connecticut State University.

Group Performance

1st Place – Nick Cantin, Olivia Gionet, Grace Hinckley, and Olivia Palmer – “War of the Worlds: How an Encounter that Never Happened Drove the Country to Mass Hysteria”

Individual Performance

1st Place – Brianna Fraser – “Exploration of Rock Music: Exchanging Ideas to Change a Society”

Group Documentary

1st Place – **Elizabeth Canavan, Logan McDonald, April Phelps, and Kate Walder** – “Marie Curie and the Exploration of Radiation Therapy”

2nd Place – **Danielle DelPiano, Isis Pierce, and Ashley Resnik** – “Bennett Omalu: Pioneer of CTE Research”

3rd Place – **Caitlyn Daly and Charlotte Davis** – “The Exploration of Art Through Pablo Picasso”

Individual Documentary

1st Place – **Randy Philavong** – “Marvel Comics: Superheroes Encounter with Society”

2nd Place – **Dan Bocchino** – “Exploring Endurance Running: The Tarahumara Tribe”

3rd Place – **Helen Roets** – “The Emergence of the Brown Swan”

Thanks to everyone who assisted the students and encouraged them along the way!