

ELLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2016

DISTRICT AREAS OF FOCUS:

Mastery Based Learning

At Center School, classroom teachers have completed their initial round of universal assessments. Students have been assessed on their independent reading levels, knowledge of spelling patterns and first unit math pre-assessments. 78% of students are meeting the grade level expectations across the grades. This data is compiled and used to inform appropriate instruction for students. Data teams have been established in each grade with an intervention teacher as their facilitator. Goals have been set for the first cycle of data analysis and planned instruction.

In support of mastery based learning, Crystal Lake School teachers use the data team process to administer common formative preassessments to inform their instruction. Through the data team process teachers set goals for students' mastery and form small instructional groups to meet students' needs. Additionally, students set their own goals for learning in a variety of content areas.

In the first week of school, the Windermere Leadership Team reviewed data from the spring of 2016. Students who scored below grade level expectation were screened by our team. It was then determined who would receive intervention services during the month of September. These groups are temporary until the fall 2016 data is complete in order to form intervention groups. The screening data was shared with classroom teachers so that they could begin planning for their assessments and individual work with students. The Windermere Leadership Team met several times this past month to review the school's SRBI process which will be rolled out to the whole school next month.

In July, four members of the middle school staff attended a three-day conference in Norwood, MA that was sponsored by the League of Innovative Schools. **Danielle Leone, Buffey Harris-Fogarty, Jeffrey Sparano** and **David Pearson** participated in the 'Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified' seminar that explored approaches to instructional planning and practice that will support equity, rigor, and personalization. Their learning sessions included modeling, practice, collaboration and peer feedback. Teams developed strategies for sharing their knowledge with their EMS colleagues, and to sustain a culture of continuous instructional improvement in our school.

Throughout the month of September, student advisory sessions at Ellington Middle School were held supporting the school's mastery learning approach with topics like understanding the newly revised PRIDE effort expectations, tips on goal setting for 2016-17, and steps to set up a digital portfolio.

At Ellington High School, all staff members were provided a copy of the Board of Education's new Vision, Mission, and Core Values and Beliefs. Teachers were provided time to review this document and provide insights as to how this may impact their instructional practice. All high school teachers completed a mastery-based instruction self-assessment survey. This self-assessment survey helps teachers to reflect on the essential components and practices to support mastery-based learning. As a result of completing this survey teachers will be able to identify areas of strengths and needs. Moving forward high school teachers may be strategic about

planning a collective approach to mastery-based learning initiatives. Teachers will use the results of the survey to develop their professional practice goals for 2016-2017 school year.

At the Ellington High School Open House **Mr. Rinaldi** and **Mr. Wursthorn** presented concurrent sessions with parents on the new homework and the newly developed redo/retake policy at the high school. Parents had an opportunity to ask questions regarding these policies. Since that time there has been significantly more parent feedback supporting these policies than against. Opportunities were also provided for the faculty to share their implementation practices of these policies at a September faculty meeting.

Mr. Rinaldi also shared the same policies with his Students Advisory Council. The students were supportive of these initiatives and cited many positive outcomes. Collectively the students felt that these policies were a positive step in advancing student opportunities to achieve. One of the agreed-upon challenges across content areas is providing time for the redos and retakes. The plan is to share the best practices at the next faculty meeting regarding this issue.

Katharine Lanz, Ellington High School art teacher, has developed a mastery-based assessment model for high school art classes. This mastery based model was presented to Mr. Rinaldi and plans are to present this model to the faculty in the near future.

Equitable Opportunities

At Center School, a whole school block schedule identifies times per grade when students can be pulled from the classrooms for interventions. In this way, no students miss the Tier I literacy and/or math instruction. Intervention teachers schedule push-in times in each grade to support student learning inside the classroom. In this way they may provide small group instruction, supportive one-on-one pre- or re-teaching, or coaching in to the classroom teacher's lessons.

Using the collected reading and math data along with last spring's SBAC data, the intervention teachers have analyzed the performances of students to determine instructional needs. Students have been identified for Tier II and Tier III interventions. Learning targets have been set for students receiving interventions, and plans have been outlined for ongoing monitoring. The first SRBI meetings occur in October to monitor student progress.

The master schedule at Crystal Lake School has been created to ensure that all students receive core instruction from their classroom teachers and that any intervention instruction is provided as a supplement. This structure ensures equitable access to core instruction for all students and additional instruction for those students who require it. In September, all students are administered assessments to identify their current readiness levels and intervention groups are formed accordingly.

The Windermere Intervention Department met to plan SRBI dates for the 2016-17 school year. Windermere will conduct its first SRBI meetings in October, and interventionists will work with classroom teachers and support staff to create SMART goals for each student based on instructional needs.

Dr. LaPorte and **Mrs. Haberern** are working with building administrators to discuss SBAC results and develop plans of improvement in the area of ELA. To include carefully planning of interventions by the classroom teacher, reading consultants and special education teachers.

Students in grades 6 and up are invited to attend their Planning and Placement Meetings. This gives students in active voice in their education and helps the team to create goals, objectives and plan for accommodations.

Mrs. Haberern shared data for the Gifted and Talented Pool with all three elementary schools and Ellington Middle School. She met with new members of this process and reviewed the identification process.

The Programs for Alternative Learning (PAL), Student Achievement for Excellence (SAFE) and Multiple Abilities Programs (MAP) in the district continue to think outside of the box and plan strategically for student success. Dr. LaPorte and Mrs. Haberern continue to facilitate Planning and Placement Meetings, Team Meetings and Special Services Meetings to support teachers in this process.

College representative visits are underway at EHS. Over the next several months college admissions counselors from area colleges and universities are scheduled to visit Ellington High School. All students are welcome to attend whether to express interest in a college they are considering or to learn more about a college with which they are unfamiliar. The visitation schedule is on the EHS website, as well as on the bulletin board outside the guidance office. All students are encouraged to sign up for these sessions.

The Ellington Community Scholarship Association provides equitable opportunities for all students in their pursuit of higher education. The Association annually awards thousands of dollars of scholarship money to graduating Ellington seniors.

Innovative Practices

Innovative for Center School at this time, the beginner band has been established. Students from the high school came to introduce instruments to the fifth grade students and share their personal history of music instruction, interest and enthusiasm. From this experience, 67% of the students in fifth grade have signed up for an instrument. Lessons have been scheduled; instruments have been delivered to the school. A plan is in place to have the fifth grade band join in the Winter Concert along with the fourth and fifth grade chorus concert.

The Makerspace is a popular learning setting in our media center. **Becky Wentworth** has introduced the use of the space, and provided the original lessons in all classrooms. A handbook has been created, with maps for material storage to help students take ownership of appropriate use and clean up of materials. Six classes per week have been signing up to engage in collaborative activities, such as tower building, designing and building a boat. Pam Whiting's second grade worked as engineers to design a seed with adaptations for travel based on their science instruction in the plant and seed unit.

Thirteen classrooms at Center School are participating this year in the Global Read Aloud during the month of October. **Becky Wentworth** has taken the lead to provide the books and connect classrooms with others across the country or in Canada.

Crystal Lake School continually seeks to innovate and engage our students through a variety of strategies. Some of the innovative practices currently in place include our Makerspace where all students, K-5 have an opportunity to build and create. Throughout the month of September each Crystal Lake School student had the opportunity to visit our new Makerspace and engage in various engineering challenges, creative building projects and activities with the materials in the Makerspace, even making music!

Many Crystal Lake classrooms have been designed with innovative, flexible seating options available for students. Additionally, several Crystal Lake teachers schedule Genius Hour in their classrooms to provide students with a personalized learning opportunity.

An innovative practice affecting the professional learning community of Crystal Lake School is the formation this year of four faculty study groups. There is one faculty study group for each of the district's four focus areas. In lieu of traditional faculty meetings, Crystal Lake teachers will meet with their faculty study groups to grow their expertise on the respective areas of focus. **Christine Marshall** and **Colleen Bava** are co-facilitating the mastery based learning study group. **Nancy Connolly** and **Jessica Giroux** are co-facilitating the innovative practices study group. **Brie Malone**, **Lisa LaForte**, and **Erica Morgan** are co-facilitating the personalized learning study group. **Lori Purcaro** and **Michael Glasgow** are co-facilitating the equitable opportunities study group.

Mindful meditation has been around in some form or another for thousands of years. Recently, though, science has started looking at its effects on our minds and bodies. One study, for example, suggested that mindful meditation could give practicing soldiers a kind of mental armor against disruptive emotions, and it can improve memory as well. It can improve a person's attention span and focus. To this end, Windermere will pilot the use of a *Mindful Moment* space in our new *Support Suite*. This will be used in lieu of or in conjunction with detentions and suspensions.

Mrs. Bordieri attended a half day conference at CAS on September 30 focusing on restorative practices and positive school climate. This overview session focused on making connections (Windermere's theme this year) and shifting from a reactive to proactive approach to addressing student behavior. An important take away from this morning session was the idea that we do not suspend students for not knowing their multiplication facts, however, we may consequence them for not making positive behavioral choices. Behavior and social learning should be just as much of a focus as academics. Restorative practices along with mindfulness and meditative practices will continue to be a focus this year to help our students succeed.

Nancy Powell attended professional development at CREC to learn more about current best practices for integrating CCSS into elementary math curriculum. The 'PB and Math' presenters shared innovative materials to assist with student growth towards achieving mastery of word problems aligned with CCSS. One take-away Nancy had from this seminar to bring back to Windermere was integrating multiple visual representations (ex. ten frames, bar diagrams, numbers lines, etc.) to help students solve problems. This choice allows students to use multiple strategies and to find what works best for them and allows for differentiated instruction in a Tier 1 setting.

Many classrooms have visited Windermere's Makerspace, to learn about how this new area of our school functions, and to try out new lessons that promote innovation and team building. Classes have done challenges to build the tallest tower, create structures that will hold a certain amount of marbles, and creative engineering with household items such as tin foil and cardboard. Both students and teachers are enthusiastic about their first month in school with our new Makerspace.

The one-to-one implementation of Chromebooks for freshmen at Ellington High School has been completed. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors have access to over 400 remaining Chromebooks. A new software program, *Hapara* is now being utilized at the high school. This program allows teachers to see what students are working on when they are on their Chromebooks. This gives the teachers the opportunity to instantly tell whether students are cognitively engaged in appropriate work.

There are also new district subscriptions available to high school teachers. *Britannica* supports research, *WeVideo* supports creation, *Newsela* supports differentiated reading, while *Front Row Ed* supports differentiated mathematics, and *Discovery Ed* provides multimedia content.

Personalized Learning

Center School students are learning to use their assessment data to set goals for their learning. Some students are using their Fountas & Pinnell records to identify fluency and self-correction rates, or their comprehension strands that need further improvement. Students use their own writing samples, in writing a response to their reading or completing a small moment, to measure their growth against established learning progressions and rubrics to set their goals for continued improvement. Math assessments provide strong feedback on computation, conceptual understanding and application through problem solving.

Choice time and/or Genius Hour activities are being implemented in classrooms. Primary classrooms from pre-school to grade three are implementing practices learned from the Purposeful Play professional development opportunity this summer. Other classrooms have bent the definition of standard classrooms by providing flexible seating and more student choice in learning activities or settings in the room.

Genius Hour has been launched in Crystal Lake School classrooms! Genius Hour provides students with one hour per week to pursue a passion!

Academic Choice continues to be one of the core components of the Responsive Classroom approach to elementary teaching that Crystal Lake School teachers are implementing. In Academic Choice students choose what they learn or how they demonstrate their understanding or mastery of a skill or concept. In an Academic Choice lesson students move through a three step process, planning, working and reflecting.

As part of whole school goal (making connections with students and parents) **Mrs. Fitzgerald's** sixth graders created personalized postcards to send to their parents on a regular basis. Her class used technology for creating these postcards which will eventually be mailed home.

Mrs. Mercier has created a Science Playlist from the questions the students asked about sound before they began the specific unit. Each question has resources for students to choose from; they can read about it, watch videos, or do an experiment. In that playlist they are also keeping notes. There are check ins that they have to do by a certain date that encapsulate that information, however, they can repeat those learning activities as much as they need to learn the information and answer the question. It will start with a mini-lesson, students will work independently or with partners (their choice) and then they'll do a whole class wrap up in the last 5 minutes to share learning and understanding.

During the month of September, the middle school had quite a bit of activity related to the four district initiatives. Midmonth, a new faculty advisory was developed with a focus on developing a new approach to school-wide professional learning. Using a combination of learning walks and 90-day cycles, the middle school will be launching opportunities for teachers to participate in teacher-led classroom walk-throughs, where they will make observations and collect data which will be used to plan aligned professional development activities throughout the year. The focus of the learning walks will be on personalized learning, and will use the recently released Proficiency Based Learning self-assessment from the New England League of Innovative Schools as a framework for this year's work. The 90-day cycle comes from the Carnegie Foundation for Advanced Teaching, and is an approach to helping organizations (like schools) to develop innovative approaches to support practice improvement.

Coupled with learning walks will be new personalized learning inquiry groups. These groups are self-selected groups of teachers, who will work together during year-long inquiry groups on four core principles of personalized learning. Investigation topics include 1) Varied Content: Materials and Methods of Instruction, 2) Grouping Students: Investigating Conferencing and Small Group Instruction, 3) providing students with more Student Voice and Choice in their learning and 4) Varied Pathways: Designing Lessons with Varied Pathways to Common Ends. The third part of this approach to school-wide professional learning includes a companion book club series. Again, with a theme of personalized learning, the fall book club will be on the text Role Reversal: Achieving Uncommonly Excellent Results in the Student Centered Classroom (Mark Barnes). The winter book club will shift to a classroom strategy text called Making Learning Personal: The What, Who, How, Where, and Why (Barbara Bray and Kathleen McClaskey).

Dr. LaPorte and Mrs. Haberern met with High School Special Education Staff to share SAT and PSAT data and discuss the use of Khan Academy during seminar time. Each student who took the PSAT will create an account with Khan Academy and use this site to further develop their skills.

Students in the Vocational program at Ellington High School have started their work at their job sites. The Transition Coordinator, **Mrs. Smith**, assisted students with obtaining a job site that they attend throughout the week supported by a job coach. This job is linked to an area of interest for the students and the job coach provides them with support as they navigate the new work experience. Students are also being taught essential skills for after graduation including grocery shopping and banking.

Mr. Rinaldi has met with several faculty members to design a set of advisory lessons to help students and advisors prepare for the December Student-Led Conferences. These sessions will help students prepare materials and organize their parent presentations in a meaningful way to highlight their academic, social and civic accomplishments to date.

Student Recognitions:

Congratulations to the following students who were elected to serve as officers for the Robert W. Murphy chapter of the National Honor Society.

President: Emma Johnson

Vice President: Jenna Hartnett

Secretary: Elizabeth Canavan

Treasurer: Jessica Jones

On Friday, September 30, the Ellington High School team of **Nick Cantin, Jenna Hartnett, Olivia Palmer, Randy Philavong, and Grace Hinckley** competed in the Community Voice Channel High School Feud Game Show. Supported by knight mascot, **Rinor Selimaj**, the team soared to victory first against Bolton and then in the championship game against Tolland. Congratulations to the team! The show will also be available on demand at www.cvcct.org.

There was a great turnout of Student Council members (over 30 students) acting as School Ambassadors at the EHS Open House. Student Council members helped greet our parents, direct them to their Advisory locations, and classrooms. In some cases, door-to-door service was provided.

On September 22, 2016 Ellington High School's UConn Early College Experience (ECE) Physics students competed in the 6th annual Cardboard and Duct Tape Boat Races held at UConn's Avery Point Campus. A total of 80 ECE Physics students, spanning four classes (entering four boats), competed in the event. The rules: boats can be made from cardboard and duct tape only, boats may not carry more than two persons. That's right, the boats had to be engineered to carry one or two people in the ocean around a course about 300 yards long. Our brave Aquatic Knights rowed to victory taking first place in each of two heats and winning grand champion in the third final heat. ECE Students, as a class, divided up into teams for; design, parts fabrication, assembly, decoration and documentation. Their teacher, Mr. DeCormier, was present to offer guidance and advice through this student led project. Congrats to all ECE Physics students!

Staff Recognitions

Mr. Matt DeLassus directed the band at many local, annual performances during the month of September such as the Ellington Firemen's Parade, the Four Town Fair Parade, and The Big E where they participated in both a stand-still performance and the parade. The Marching Band will compete in the Rockville Marching Band Competition of October 15 at Rockville High School. This will mark the first time ever that the EHS bands will perform in a marching competition.

Mrs. Debra Ward, along with her Baking and Pastry Arts students, prepared and served refreshments at the EHS open house.

A great deal of behind-the-scenes PSAT planning has been underway with guidance, special education, and the high school administration working collaboratively to ensure a successful testing experience for all grade 9, 10, and 11 students.

Several teachers have taken on advisorship roles to support student interest in establishing new clubs such as skiing (**Mr. DeCormier**), Spike ball (**Mr. DeLassus**), badminton (**Mr. Stiles**), computer programming and game design (**Mr. Nash**), gardening (**Mr. Gurnon**), and robotics (**Mr. Waine**).

Mrs. Anderson and **Ms. Baigert** provided Physical Management Training (PMT) for new paraprofessionals and an the required refresher course for teachers and administrators.

Mrs. Smith is providing ongoing support and Professional Development to special education staff in the area of transition supports available.

Mrs. Hillemeir and **Mrs. Kline** provided a professional development to special education teachers on DIBELS for use as a progress monitoring tool.

Mr. Scott Raiola (EMS), **Mrs. Jessica Marshall** (Center School and Windermere) and **Mrs. Marilyn Toback-Reveley** (Windermere and Crystal Lake) have been appointed as the Gifted and Talented point person in each building to facilitate the identification of Gifted and Talented students.

Erica Morgan and **Jessica Giroux** provided a Responsive Classroom professional learning opportunity for paraprofessionals and staff new to Crystal Lake School on August 30. Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Giroux led the group in a Morning Meeting, one of the core components of the Responsive Classroom approach to elementary teacher. They also covered Logical Consequences and the Hopes and Dreams process with participants.

The Crystal Lake School Spirit Committee met in September to launch the school year. **Erica Morgan, Lisa LaForte, Colleen Bava, Christine Cannon** and **Krista Brogle** are all participating on the School Spirit Committee. This year we will launch a school wide "Earn Your Stripes!" positive behavior recognition system.

The first Crystal Lake School Town Meeting assembly was held on September 26. CLS second graders led the meeting with a focus on growth mindset stances. The second graders shared definitions of the mindset stances and examples of how they had used them in their work. Thank you to Mrs. Giroux and Mrs. Johnson's classes for a great start to the Town Meeting Assemblies!

Crystal Lake School fourth graders are continuing a tradition of community service with monthly visits to the Evergreen Nursing Home in Stafford. Thank you to **Ms. Christine Marshall** and **Mrs. Nancy Connolly** for continuing to incorporate this important opportunity into our fourth graders' experience!

Windermere continues to recognize and thank staff members for their relentless and consistent assistance to students, staff, and parents at Windermere with the *Prize Para Award*. For the month of September, Windermere administrators recognized a paraprofessional in the building who has been very important in helping in our support room with significantly impacted students. We are indebted to the work of **Mrs. Webber** who was awarded a certificate and lapel pin as a way to say "Thank you, for all you do!" Our aides, paraprofessionals, and tutors are vital to the success which epitomizes Windermere School!

In addition, we have added our Lunch Aides to the list of those we will recognize on a monthly basis. It is important for our students (and staff) to understand the important role these individuals play in the lives of our students - as any adults do - as models for our children and guiding them through lunch and recess on a daily basis. **Ms. Oliva** was awarded our *Amazing Aide Award* during a lunch session in front of our students and awarded a certificate and *Whale Done* pin for her support of our PBIS initiatives and efforts to help make lunchtime and playtime a pleasant experience for all.

The *Tireless Teacher Award* for the month of September 2016 was awarded to **Ms. Palasek**. She worked tirelessly over the summer painting, remodeling, and assisting with the modernization of Windermere's Library Media Center. Ms. Palasek has made a commendable effort to support technology initiatives at Windermere School. It is clear that collaboration with teachers and Instructional Technology Specialists is a priority for her as the Library Media Specialist. During library time, students are engaged in book selection and learning new technology skills. Chromebooks are being utilized for instructional purposes regularly.

The literacy team at Windermere has been extremely helpful in terms of helping the new math interventionists acclimate to their new roles. We have met as an intervention team to discuss whole-school goals, the SRBI process, and coordinating schedules.

Beth Shaw mentored positive leaders **Emma Audet, Tyler Bennett, Ethan Biggs, Natalie Chamberlin, Nick Forst, Sydney Gale, Emma Kloter, Rachel Mangold, Tyler Millen, Claire Palmer** and **Olivia Wright** to act as guides and greeters at our annual Open House that was held on Tuesday, September 6.