

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

District Data

Data from Kindergarten Inventory- Baseline administration

Skill assessed	Performance	
Language Arts		
Identify upper and lower case letters	Average number of known letters = 40 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	108/164	66%
Count to 10 (1:1 match)	134/163	82%
Count backwards (10 to 1)	105/163	64%
Identify numbers 0 - 10	129/164	79%
Identify shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle)	132/162	80%

Baseline data- Fall Reading Assessments

Grade	Percentage of Students Achieving Benchmark Independent Reading Levels			
	Significantly Below	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
1	6%	20%	44%	30%
2	11%	20%	38%	32%
3	15%	11%	40%	34%
4	16%	7%	37%	41%
5	5%	16%	38%	41%
6	5%	16%	46%	33%

DISTRICT AREAS OF FOCUS:

Mastery Based Learning

Across the grades, Center School data teams have set their first cycles for the year:

- Kindergarten: Students will increase their phonemic awareness.
- Grade 1: Students will improve their fluent forward counting.
- Grade 2: Students will increase their automaticity of basic addition facts to 18.
- Grade 3: Students will improve their strategies for solving multiplication story problems.
- Grade 4: Students will increase multiplication strategies for two-digit computation.
- Grade 5: Students will increase their interpretation of fiction text themes.

The Crystal Lake School data teams are working on the first data team cycles of the year:

- The kindergarten data team completed its first cycle focused on phonemic awareness, with students reaching 87% at mastery.
- The grade one data team is working on a data team cycle focused on writing conventions.
- The grade two data team is working on a data team cycle focused on math computation strategies.
- The grade three data team will be launching its data team work with a cycle on writing about reading.
- The grade four data team has completed its first cycle focused on reading comprehension with students reaching 83% at mastery. The grade four data team is working on its second data team cycle with a focus on writing conventions.
- The grade five data team will be launching its data team work in November.

In **Mrs. Donovan's** grade six class at Windermere, students are using pre-assessment data on math unit tests, writing prompts, and reading assessments to formulate SMART goals for themselves. They evaluate their own work using a rubric or model writing piece and then determine an area for improvement. The plan is to have students reflect upon their progress as related to their individual goals and then set new goals. They will also use these SMART goals during student led conferences to explain to parents about their growth-what they are doing well and what they can continue to work on improving. They will be able to quickly reflect on their progress for the digital portfolios as well. The progress which Mrs. Donovan saw from the "write about it" from the first math lesson to the second time they were asked to "write about" their math was tremendous.

Mr. Rogers has initiated Student-Centered Learning/Collaboration/Reflection/Assessments specific to the unit of studies in his grade five class at Windermere – activities such as students charting students' own progress, peer-to-peer editing/discourse, peer reflection/assessment and review and personalized learning foci for the district. Students use Teachers College learning progressions and pre- and post-assessment scoring rubrics to evaluate their own responses as part of the assessment. After Mr. Rogers scores their work using the same rubrics, his students compare their score with the teacher's score to see how close they were. Then students reflect on these results and write goals for "next time". They have had practice with these procedures in whole class instruction and partnerships.

The middle school continues to build a mastery-based feedback system. Using a continuous improvement model, several departments modified their report card standards and their trimester learning expectations based on recent updated state and federal standards as well as local curriculum work. A large number of middle school teachers new to the district attended a Rick Wormeli conference in Amherst, Massachusetts. At the conference, these new teachers to Ellington heard the philosophy concepts of redo's and re-takes, separating effort from academics, the role of homework, and the conversion of providing students with more mastery-based feedback (exceeds, mastery, or not yet) rather than alpha/numeric grades.

From Ellington High School: Examples of Mastery-based Learning (MBL)

Principle number ten: Students are given opportunities to make important decisions about their learning:

EHS held mini conference night on October 6. Students were invited to attend these conferences along with their parents in an effort to make the conferences more student-centered. Culinary arts students provided a variety of foods that they prepared and presented.

MBL Principle number eight: Students are given multiple opportunities to improve their work when they failed to meet expected standards:

Ellington High School teachers are implementing and refining the development of the redo/retake initiative. Time has been devoted at faculty meetings to share and discuss best practices and innovative ideas.

MBL Principle number seven: Academic grades communicate learning progress and achievement to students and families:

Mid progress reports were issued on October 3 through the high school portal and first quarter grades were issued on November 4.

All EHS faculty members completed a mastery-based learning self assessment survey that was produced by the League of Innovative Schools. Teachers then used their self assessment to develop their professional practice goals. Mr. Rinaldi also produced the collective responses in a Google form to assess the faculty readiness moving forward with the school's MBL work. The curriculum assistants and curriculum specialists will use this data to drive agenda items for the future.

Equitable Opportunities

The first SRBI meetings were held in October to monitor students' academic and behavioral progress. Twenty-five students in grades K-5 were brought forth as requiring Tier III interventions. Learning targets were set for these students, and plans outlined for ongoing instruction and continued monitoring.

During the month of October, a team of twelve Ellington teachers, administrators and a representative of the Ellington Board of Education attended the Leading for Equitable Classrooms Institute offered by the Connecticut Center for School Change at the Amistad Center for Art and Culture at the Wadsworth Athenaeum.

The Ellington High School faculty recently completed an in-depth analysis of the new homework policy and identified the following implications for practice: ensure that homework is meaningful, encourage students to complete the work, provide immediate feedback to students, encourage students to self advocate, make sure that homework links to skill development, create more opportunities for students to reflect on their work outside of the classroom, differentiate homework based on student needs, and always consider the quality over the quantity of homework.

Innovative Practices

The Maker Space continues to be an active part of the Center Media Center. All classes have visited the space at least once this month. Mrs. Becky Wentworth provides an over view of the space to each class, exploring the potential with them.

Primary grades at Center continue to explore the concept of Purposeful Play and Choice Time in the classrooms. Students are learning to increase their social interaction skills, such as compromise and conflict resolution, as they engage in constructive, creative, or imaginative play.

Mrs. Varga utilizes the Maker Space consistently. Her grade two class at Windermere has completed "challenges" with straws, cups, and other items that have led to conversations around flexibility and persistence. Students are working with a partner/small groups and are realizing the need for compromise and the need to keep trying when things don't work out as planned.

Ellington Youth Services has begun enrichment-type programs for students to voluntarily participate in during recess. They include: Zentangle design, theater games, bracelet making, Zumba, yoga, kindness clubs, and various arts and crafts opportunities.

Mr. Welch, Mrs. Gentilcore, Ms. Korona, Mrs. Dwyer, Mrs. Philbrick, and Mrs. O'Brien attended the second annual CREC *Mindfulness: Health, Wellness, and Emotional Well-Being of Children, Youth, and Families* Conference held at CCSU. The learnings from the various workshops offered with regard to mindfulness led to a number of teachers collaborating to present at the upcoming November teacher in-service day.

During one particular lesson observation in **Mrs. Warriner's** second grade class, students were engaged in growth mindset learning which involved concepts and ideas related to Dweck's Growth Mindset theory. When individual students were questioned about their growth mindset work, they uttered responses such as, "Mr. Welch, I keep trying and trying and soon I figure it out!" Another page in the booklet encouraged students to complete this thought: Instead of saying, 'It's never going to work,' I will say..." Their enthusiasm with this work was palpable and students were highly engaged in the lesson.

In schools, can you have a vibrant culture of learning and risk-taking for students without first having one for the adults who teach them? The structures outlined in the personalized learning initiative have been created at the middle school, and this is considered an innovative approach to developing a high-performing professional learning environment. At the heart of it, teacher-led learning walks and professional inquiry groups have been developed to encourage teachers to try new ideas in their classrooms, based on the most recent research on personalization.

By working together in an inquiry-based environment where curiosity and risk-taking are encouraged, the middle school believes that not only is this an innovative approach to professional development (and teacher evaluation), but ultimately will result in new innovative practices in the classroom, and in the end will have a direct and positive impact on student achievement. Beyond the learning walk and professional inquiry groups, area schools continue to request visits to the middle school. Most recent requests came from towns around the state, including Stafford, Simsbury, South Windsor, Somers, and Milford.

All Ellington High School faculty members will participate in a book study. Faculty members will each read one or more of the following texts: Excellence Through Equity, Fair Isn't Always Equal, Mindset, and Role Reversal. The purpose of the book study is to develop a strong learning culture and a shared understanding of mastery-based learning so the faculty can be united as they move forward with their work on MBL.

The high school administration formed a student focus group to help develop a shared understanding of school initiatives and promote an inclusive and positive school culture. During the month of October this group researched tardy policies from other schools and developed a recommended revision for the school's tardy policy. Based on the student recommendations, the proposed policy was brought to the faculty for approval which was received. The new tardy policy will go into effect at the beginning of the second quarter.

The high school administration will provide parents with opportunities to participate in the parent advisory meetings that will be offered in the morning and evening on the same day. This initiative has resulted in a higher number of parents participating in these advisory meetings. This practice will continue throughout the school year.

Personalized Learning

Center's 30/30/30 Tour hosted seven visitors from the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen, meeting with six students in third and fifth grade. Students shared their experiences with goal setting for personalizing their learning, especially as related to math instruction. Visitors then went to third and fifth grade classrooms to observe Bridges math instruction before meeting with the teachers over lunch to continue the conversation.

During "20-time" in **Mrs. Parker's** grade six class at Windermere, students participate in self-selected personalized projects (modeled after 3M's and Google's 20% philosophy - the idea that employees should work on projects of their choosing for 20% of their time, which resulted in the invention of sticky notes!) Examples of student projects include: creating musical soundtracks that are ideal for studying, raising money and awareness for the World Wildlife Fund, starting a small business selling handmade crafts, collecting supplies for a homeless shelter, etc. These projects cover critical real world

communication skills in the form of letter writing, proposals, phone conversations, persuasive speaking (all students must give a 60 second pitch), and ultimately a *TedTalk*.

In **Ms. Blum** (now **Mrs. Philbrick**'s) grade one class at Windermere, one particular lesson connected to personalized learning. In this lesson, students are asked to reflect on and create goals based on their individual reading needs. The lesson is basically based on the students' reading and reflecting on their own reading goals. Students are encouraged to actually analyze their own work as it applies to their reading progress and discuss it from a growth perspective.

At Windermere, *Genius Hour* has been a tool teachers have been utilizing to promote personalized learning. One fifth grade student knew that he liked cars, but didn't know much about them. He researched different types of cars, their speed capabilities, and other features. One student wanted the soccer field at Windermere to be re-seeded with grass to make playing safer and easier; research was done on why fields need to be re-seeded, how it's done, and the expected success rates of various techniques. This culminated with a letter written to **Mr. Welch** with research embedded to help the cause. Another student wanted to build a safe for Legos, and made a design for the 3-D printer to create it.

After significant preparation, the middle school held its first teacher-led learning walk where one third of the faculty gathered together and walked through all classrooms at the middle school. The learning walk focused on the area of personalized learning. More specifically, it used "Element Three" from the Great Schools Partnership's Proficiency Based Instruction Self-Assessment Tool. Element three is titled Varied Content, Materials, and Methods of Instruction : *ideas, information and material are explored in varied ways so that a wide range of learners can find access points*. Learning materials are selected and available to engaged and accommodate all learners. Teachers walked into classrooms, doing four-minute observations with a lens of examining the instructional mode of the class (whole class, small group, individual conferencing), looking to see if students have voice and choice in their learning, and noting instructional materials to see if they accommodate a variety of learners. The data points from this teacher-led learning walk are being used to design professional learning opportunities that will create greater personalization in all classrooms. Also during the month, all teachers signed up for professional inquiry groups. These inquiry groups (aligned with teacher evaluation and professional development) mirror the learning walk [personalized learning focus areas of the areas of varied methods and materials, student grouping (including small group instruction conferencing), designing lessons that provide for student voice and choice, and finally designing lessons where students can create their own learning paths to common ends.

Ellington High School has been busy preparing for the first student-led conferences that will be held in December. At the October faculty meeting several freshman students demonstrated their student-led conferences. The freshman class is currently the only class in the high school that has experienced student-led conferences. This unique opportunity provided the EHS faculty a greater insight to what the student-led conference will actually look like. The freshman students did an outstanding job and truly impressed the high school faculty. After the student presentations the high school faculty debriefed their observations. These observations will be used to structure the professional development sessions that will be held on November 8.

EHS hosted a Connecticut Youth Forum meeting on October 12. Approximately 200 high school students were in attendance from several school districts to discuss and share their experiences with student biases. Discussions were based on, "isms" that existed and what effect they had on individuals and shared personal experiences were a key part of the forum.

Student Recognitions

The Ellington High School annual spirit week was an outstanding success. Mr. Rinaldi credits the high school students for demonstrating when to work hard and went to play hard. The senior class won the coveted, "Keeper of the Knight" plaque. This class also won the plaque last year as the junior class.

The following students demonstrated what a student led conference look like to the high school faculty at their October faculty meeting: **Clara Mattson, Jim Maznicki, Adi Chakravarthy, Aaron Hinze, Ashka Patel, and Nick Sivo.**

On Saturday, October 8, five AP Environmental Science students (**Stella Pontius, Samantha Judson, Sawyer Morrow, Dylan Rellis, and Ryan Weitz**) attended a Forestry workshop at Goodwin College to prepare for the Envirothon competition in May 2017. The students learned about forest ecology from Dr. Robert Fahey from UConn, and Forest and Soil Health from James Hyde, a NRCS scientist, and then the students had some hands-on activities to learn how to measure trees and logs using Biltmore sticks and identify trees from their leaves and bark. It was a great educational opportunity for the students!

On Saturday October 22, three AP Environmental Science students (**Sawyer Morrow, Samantha Judson, and Stella Pontius**) attended a Soil Workshop at Tolland Agricultural Center in Vernon, CT. The workshop began with presentations from professionals from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), UCONN, and the Northwest Conservation district in CT. Students learned about CT Soil Landscapes and Parent Material, soil properties, and water quality in agricultural systems and the importance of soils, and the role of government and non-profits in assisting with conservation. Students then broke into groups and rotated through four hands on sessions: Soil Pit – Description and Interpretation, Conservation planning activities (slope, soil sampling, nutrient management, compaction), map reading, soil surveys, aerial photography, and soil texture, color, gravel, invasive worms, etc.. It was a great educational opportunity for the students.

The Ellington High School marching band participated in its first ever marching band competition at the Rockville Festival of Bands. The students put on an impressive field show presentation. The marching band also performed at the evening football game that was held under lights on October 28.

Staff Recognitions

Tomi Raver, Amy Borio, Valerie Baigert, Deb Hillemeir, Sandy Scully, Becky Wentworth, Audrey Quimby and Neil Ducharme are the core component of our Security and Safety Committee this year. The focus of the team's work this year will be planning for emergency egress drills and crisis response drills when students are in unstructured periods of the day, such as lunch and recess. **Tomi Raver** and **Katie Gelsomino** presented professional learning on the school's PBIS framework for all new staff. **Jessica Marshall** met with fifth grade teachers on the process for identifying students as Gifted and Talented.

Allison Madru and **Pam Whiting** are participating in the year long Teacher Led Study Groups with the TCRWP. Their leadership in this area is valued, and their insights will be very helpful as we continue to move forward. **Amy Borio** attended the Saturday Reunion at Teachers College in New York City. **Kara Modzelewski, Erin Hallisey, Lauren Smaglis, Krista Hespeler, Abby Hoffman, Amy Borio, Jeanne Davis** and **Rachael Cerutti** attended calendar day workshops at the Teachers College in New York. **Ashley Caputa, Katie Gelsomino** and **Ronni Rucki** hosted guests from Mansfield observe our students involved in Readers Workshop. They were totally impressed and inspired to roll up their sleeves and begin the work with their students. **Ashley Caputa** and **Tim Adams** represented Center School at the district workshop to create a Vision of the Graduate.

Sandy Scully sponsored our Wear Pink for Breast Cancer Day. As a staff, we donated \$207 to this important cause. **Becky Wentworth** has taken on a leadership role, helping our students and staff as we learn together in the Maker Space. **Amy Borio, Lauren Smaglis, Abby Hoffman, Allison Madru, Krista Hespeler, and Tiffany Pegolo** opened their classroom doors for our town officials on the Board of Ed, Board of Finance, and Board of Selectmen to observe Bridges instruction and student goal setting this week in our first 30/30/30 Tour of the year. **Sumitra Ratneshwar** and **Erin Hallisey** hosted a visitor from Cromwell Schools to observe Bridges instruction in their classrooms.

The Crystal Lake School Climate Committee met on October 4 to plan for the year. The committee discussed the work on our school's CARES groups and how to launch the groups for the new year. **Lynn Seyapura, Christine King, Lisa LaForte, Colleen Bava** and **Michael Larkin** are all serving on the School Climate Committee this year.

Michael Larkin presented to a group of fifth year Master's students at UCONN on October 14 on the topic of Responsive Classroom. Mr. Larkin shared Crystal Lake's experiences over the past seven years implementing the core components of the Responsive Classroom approach with fidelity.

Representative from the Crystal Lake Volunteer Fire Department presented fire prevention assemblies to the students at CLS on October 14. Special thank you to **Chief Chuck Pippin** and **Assistant Chief Brian Pippin** for organizing these important assemblies.

On October 18 Crystal Lake School proudly hosted a Community Open House for members of the greater Ellington community to see our brand new school. Crystal Lake School fifth grade students **Sophia Bourgoin, Alexis DeLisle, Morgan Stimson, Angelica Cone, Emily Charbonneau,** and **Ryan Kaczmarek** all served as tour guides for our special guests which included Board of Education members, Permanent Building Committee members, Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen members, retired Crystal Lake School teachers and staff members, alumni and former parents.

On October 21 Crystal Lake School primary grade teachers **Colleen Bava, Lisa LaForte,** and **Michelle Patenaude** hosted visiting teachers from the Windham Public Schools who are working to implement Reader's Workshop. Windham teachers visited classrooms and had an opportunity to ask teachers questions about this work.

The Crystal Lake School Shared Leadership Team met on October 28. The team reviewed the District Improvement Plan and began to create our School Improvement Plan. The team also worked to plan their continuing faculty study group work which is focused on the district's four areas of focus. **Colleen Bava, Lisa LaForte, Jessica Giroux, Erica Morgan, Christine Marshall, Nancy Connelly, Brie Malone, Michael Glasgow,** and **Lori Purcaro** are all serving on the Shared Leadership Team.

The highly anticipated annual Crystal Lake School PTO Halloween Party was held on October 28. Over 200 children attended the party which included a trick or treating hallway with CLS teachers and games and activities in both the gym and cafeteria. The school was transformed into a Halloween paradise by a legion of parent volunteers. A very special thank you is owed to the CLS PTO for this tremendous undertaking which brings together the school community.