PAW PRINTS

March 2015

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FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT
Dr. James P. Longo

Every March we must test all grade three through eight students using Connecticut's state mandated standardized tests. Standardized tests are a hot button issue, and many wonder if they are useful, or worth the expense, time and effort. We believe that we have implemented a valuable and beneficial way to use test scores to improve instruction at Ashford School. We use the data that these tests provide to help us design individualized educational plans for all of our students.

Over the years teachers and administrators have spent considerable time and energy trying to develop the best way to help students improve their performance in school and be better prepared for life. We continue to develop new programs in reading, mathematics, writing science and behavior management. The government even mandated standardized testing to insure that no child was left behind. Connecticut has gone through four generations of the Connecticut Mastery Test, a state mandated, standardized test administered every spring to determine how the schools were doing in meeting the challenges of teaching mathematics, reading and writing. Science testing was added a few years ago, and testing performance took over curriculum development in most Connecticut communities. Test scores are compiled annually by subject, school, and community, to demonstrate which schools and towns are doing a better job teaching the four basic subjects of math, science, reading and writing. Testing has become a driving force taking over school budgets, daily schedules, curriculum development, and have imposed a sense of annual dread among most teachers.

Rather than going away under the pressure of parental protest and expanding budgets, testing advocates have been successful in mandating a new form of testing that will replace the Connecticut Mastery Test with a test that must be taken on a computer. This new test is called the Smarter Balanced Test because it is responsive to the test-taker's answers and is much more sophisticated than the old Mastery Test. It is clearly an improvement over the old tests, and it will definitely provide us with useful data regarding our student's level of achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and science. It is a test with great promise. Whether it delivers on this promise remains to be seen. This is the first year most communities will be giving the new tests, and a period of analysis and comparison will have to be endured before a base line of performance standards are developed, and the data can be optimally used.

So where does this leave us? We have a plan at Ashford School that will help us use the tests to improve the way we serve our students. We have purchased the computers, we have prepared our students based upon our best understanding of the new tests, and we are now ready for our first round of this new Smarter Balanced Testing.

March starts the testing cycle for every student in grades three through eight all around the state. Is this a major intrusion into our schools, or is it a resource that will ultimately benefit everyone? Only time will tell. The one thing we can control is how we react to the inevitability of testing, and use the results that they provide. That is where the educator's expertise and the administrator's planning come in. Here is how we intend to make the most of our testing, and our test results, in Ashford School.

The new Smarter Balanced Test promises to supplement the data that we have accumulated with the Connecticut Mastery Test with more effective, individualized data. We will not only be able to continue to use the results of the test to inform our curriculum development, and instructional strategies, but we will better know how every student is doing in reading, writing, mathematics and science compared to other towns, as well as to the new state curriculum standards.

This data provided by theses tests will become a tool that helps us to insure that every student is getting the best possible education that we can provide, largely because the data is now individualized. Test questions change based upon the answers that a student gave to previous questions. The test is responsive to a student's ability level and test performance.

The faculty and administration of Ashford School will make the most of this testing, and use it as a tool to improve the education that we provide your children because "every student matters in Ashford School." We implement this promise and philosophy with the development of individualized education plans for every student at Ashford School. We do this with sound teaching strategies and data driven instruction. Standardized tests are a valuable source of the data that we use.

Our teachers have time built into their weekly schedules to review test data along with data collected through classroom activities. Standardized tests provide a significant source of data, but not the only source of data utilized to design individualized educational plans for

every student in Ashford School. Teachers will analyze daily performance in class, weekly tests, quizzes, observation of students, and virtually all of the data that they can collect over the course of the school year to determine what is working and what is not working in their classroom for every student. That is, every student will enjoy the benefit of a personal review on a regular basis that will help the teacher know where extra effort has to be directed, and how to best serve their specific learning needs. This approach has been evolving for the past several years, and we believe that we have a great system in Ashford School for insuring that every student benefits from the data that these standardized tests provide, along with all of the classroom data available, so that every student gets what they need to succeed in school as well as later in life.

For this to succeed we need certain conditions. We need relatively new computers to take the tests on. Old, outdated machines and software just won't work with the new tests. We also need time in the teacher's schedules to analyze the test results, and develop individualized instructional plans. And we need relatively small classes so that teachers can divide the day up, and spend time with every student to deliver the instruction that has been individually designed. Because of sound planning and amazing community support, we have all of this at Ashford School. We have been on a technology replacement plan that has prepared us to take the test, we have time in our teacher's schedules to analyze the data, and we have class sizes that allow for a lot of individual attention. We have worked together to insure that Ashford School is effective in providing an exemplary education to every student.

School districts all over the state are scrambling to prepare for these new standardized tests, and find the time to utilize the data that they provide. Many communities are struggling with the sudden awareness that the new tests have arrived, and they must administer them this month. We are proud of our school faculty and administration, and the fact that they have planned and prepared for these tests in a timely fashion, and are ready to administer them. We are also thankful that our community has supported us in this effort with sound budgeting practices and community support of the school.

Because we hold the philosophy that every student matters in Ashford, we can proudly state that we are ready to administer the tests, and furthermore, we are ready to utilize the data that they provide to insure that every student gets the education that they need and deserve. Every student will be treated as an individual, and we promise that your support has been well applied to make Ashford School a school that can honestly say "Every Student Matters."

FROM THE PRINCIPAL
Troy C. Hopkins

Dear Ashford School Families,

For a long while, it didn't seem like it would ever happen. The cold weather, snow, more snow, and new snow, has finally left us, I hope. Our students are getting outside more, messy as it is with the mixture of moisture and earth. Thank you to our custodians who are working extra hard on keeping the mud out of the school so the children can get the energy out of their bodies. Thank you to our staff and families who supported the students to keep the pace of learning up throughout a fragmented winter season.

Over the past couple of years, we have been transitioning to teaching new learning standards called the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Connecticut renamed these standards the Connecticut Core Standards, but they are really the same. These standards focus heavily on critical thinking and problem solving skills that will help students be successful beyond middle school. The phrase "college and career ready" is frequently used in relation to these new CT Core Standards. Along with the new standards comes a new assessment system called the Smarter Balanced Assessments. The Connecticut Department of Education (CSDE) warns that the initial results of these assessments will likely show a drop in performance compared to the CMT. This is based on the fact that the bar is set higher for these new assessments. The CSDE use Kentucky, a state that implemented the new learning standards early, as an example. Scores increased, from just 38% passing in the first year to 62% passing in the fourth year, on tests designed to measure college and career readiness. At Ashford School, we are preparing students to handle the challenges of the Smarter Balanced Assessments and encouraging students to persevere in putting forth their best effort.

There are two different assessments for both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

1. Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) – The CAT test in ELA (English Language Arts) and Mathematics adjusts in difficulty in response to student answers. These tests will be administered over 2 test sessions.

2. Performance Task (PT) – The PT test in ELA requires students to read passages and produce typed responses. The PT test in ELA will be administered in two testing sessions. The PT test in Mathematics requires students to solve problems and input answers on the computer. The PT test in mathematics will be administered in one test session.

While the Smarter Balanced Assessments have replaced the CMTs in ELA and Mathematics, the CMT is still used as a measurement of learning in science.

STEM CMT Day

Ms. Imhoff, Ms. Manfre, Mrs. Knotts, Mrs. Burnham, Mr. Horn, Miss Schneider, Ms. Rhubin and Mrs. Backhaus teamed up to run a CMT Science review day, Monday, March 16th, for all students in grades 5 and 8. Students rotated from teacher to teacher to perform hands-on activities on specific science standards such as landforms, erosion, ecosystems, technology in food production and preservation, cell division, animals organ systems for maintaining internal balance, energy transformations, sound and light, solar system, forces of motion, and design of structures and tools to benefit human life. Our well-prepared students in these grades took the CMT Science assessment on Wednesday, March 18th.

New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) Presentations

On Monday, March 23rd and 24th, we were represented at the NELMS Annual Conference in Providence, Rhode Island by the following staff that presented workshops directly relating to our STEAM initiative.

Ms. Aubrey - *Promoting 21st Century Skills Through Interdisciplinary Planning*

Miss Silverstein - *Music Technology*
Mrs. Lindsay - *Tech Tools for the Advanced Beginner*
Students – Kate Lindsay and Lindsay Irvine assisted Mrs. Lindsay with this presentation
Mr. Hopkins - *Student Motivation and Engagement – Ideas that work!*
Ms. Imhoff and Ms. Manfre – *Try a STEM Homeroom*
Ms. Manfre and Mr. Hollister – *Let's Get STEAMY! Science, Engineering and PE Together*

Our spring sports are getting underway and include baseball, softball, and new this year, track and field. Sign ups indicate that many students will be representing Ashford School out in the larger community.

Here are some coming events at Ashford School:

Mon., April 6th - PTO Meeting - 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Thurs., April 9th - Small Ensemble Concert - 7:00pm – 8:00pm

Mon., April 13th-17th - Spring Vacation

Mon., April 20th - Baseball and Softball Games vs. Canterbury - 3:30pm

Tues., April 21st - Track Meet at EO Smith - 3:30pm

Mon., April 27th – Baseball and Softball Games vs. Putnam - 3:30pm

Mon., May 4th - PTO Meeting - 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Tues., May 5th - Track Meet at EO Smith - 3:30pm

Mon., May 11th - K Orientation - 5:00pm-6:00pm

May 11th -14th – PTO Book Fair

Thurs., May 18th - Baseball and Softball Games vs. Lisbon - 3:30pm

Fri., May 15th – Varity Show – 7:00pm

Tues., May 19th - Track Championship Meet (Field Events) – Griswold - 3:00pm

Wed., May 20th - Track Championship Meet (Track Events) – Griswold - 2:30pm

Thurs., May 21st - Spring Concert - 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Fri., May 22nd – Baseball and Softball Games vs. Parish Hill - 3:30pm

Wed., May 27th - Swings

Wed., May 27th – Baseball and Softball Games vs. Pomfret - 3:30pm

Mon., June 1st - PTO Meeting - 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Tues., June 9th - Celebration of the Class of 2015 - 7:00pm

Fri., June 12th - Graduation Dance - 7:00pm – 9:30pm

Wed., June 17th - Holiday Hill 8th Grade Class Picnic - 8:30am – 2:30pm

Thurs., June 18th - Eight Grade Promotion / Class Night - 7:00pm

Fri., June 19th - Last day of School - Half Day

PRE-SCHOOL
Mrs. Longo and Mrs. Lusa

In Preschool, we have been exploring the concept of motion as part of our STEAM approach to learning. Through investigations, we are encouraging the children to explore, observe, ask questions and predict what they think will happen next.

We are helping our students to develop scientific skills by posing open-ended questions and facilitating as they use a variety of materials including ramps, blocks and carts.

Most recently, the children have been provided with paper towel tubes, tape, balls and cars. They have been constructing longer tubes and are experimenting with what happens, how things change and how to make the objects roll as far as possible. They have really been enjoying this activity and we are seeing an increase in their problem solving skills.

KINDERGARTEN
Mrs. Connolly, Mrs. Dingler and Mrs. Ross

In the spring, the kindergarten students at Ashford School will be learning about various life cycles, which include plants, frogs, and chickens.

To explore the life cycle of a plant, the students begin by planting seeds. After observing the stages of plant growth, students document their observations in a plant journal. Children also participate in a variety of art projects to learn about the parts of a plant. Math is incorporated as the students count, sort and measure with seeds.

For a hopping good time in Kindergarten, the students also learn about the life cycle of a frog. Tadpoles are brought into each classroom science center, and children get to observe how a tadpole develops into a frog. Students learn about the stages of frog development by reading non-fiction stories and relating them to what they are observing in the classroom aquarium.

We will finish our life cycle unit by observing the growth and hatching of chicken eggs. Each student will have the opportunity to see the baby chicks growing inside their eggs through the use of a “candling” device. Students will hopefully be in the classroom to witness the chicks hatching from their eggs. They will also write about the stages of the chick’s development and will use a calendar to estimate when the chicks will hatch.

Exciting things are happening in Kindergarten!

FIRST GRADE
Ms. Benton, Mrs. Horn and Ms. Marshall

First Grade was very busy this winter. In the month of February, we celebrated 100 days of school. For a special homework assignment students created a meaningful representation of “100”. We displayed the projects in our classrooms. First grade students had the opportunity to view each other’s work. That special day was a great way to integrate all academic areas

while celebrating the 100th DAY OF SCHOOL!

On March 2nd, First Grade participated in Read Across America. We read many Dr. Seuss books and tried to be "Seuss like" in all we did. We were also visited by the Cat In The Hat himself and got to listen to one of his favorite Dr. Seuss books.

With the coming of spring, First Grade will be gearing up for some very exciting events. We will be visiting LegoLand at the end of March, participating in the 3rd Annual Earth Day Event sometime in April and attending a theatrical performance in May.

We are looking forward to an amazing spring and plan on making the rest of our year together a great one.

SECOND GRADE
Miss Anderson and Mr. Busse

Winter has been a wonderful season of learning and exploration for second grade. For example, in a recent STEAM class, students had the opportunity to learn how maple syrup is made. It is amazing to think that it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup! Students have also been learning about water conservation and saving sea turtles in the classroom. They have been using this information while studying and writing expository texts.

While students have had a fun-filled winter of learning, they are also looking forward to the spring. Many students are excited about the upcoming field trip to the Children's Museum in West Hartford. Here students will have the opportunity to take part in a "crime lab" classroom workshop and participate in a planetarium show about extreme weather. We will then be looking forward to our final field trip of the year – a visit to Roger Williams Park Zoo in May.

THIRD GRADE
Mrs. Klock, Mrs. Turcotte and Mrs. Wood

In science class, third graders built model Mars Rovers. They are currently investigating our solar system. Ashford third grade students went to the ECSU Wickware Planetarium in the beginning of March. A special thank you, Dr. Zoran Pazameta for leading an informative presentation about the solar system and the spacecrafts that have orbited several planets. How fun and interesting!!!!

Any third grader could tell you this is true - four times eight is thirty-two. That is because students are hard at work studying their multiplication facts. They are also beginning lessons involving conceptual understanding of fractions.

FOURTH GRADE
Mr. Hills, Mrs. Parisen, and Mrs. Zotti

It has been a busy winter in fifth grade. In Science 5th graders studied how light travels and interacts with objects. Students completed inquiry based activities demonstrating reflection,

refraction and absorption. Each student used mirrors and milk cartons to make their own periscope. Recently they completed a cow eye dissection to see how the eye works.

In Writing class, students kicked off 2015 by making several New Year's Resolutions in writing before plunging back in to their unit on memoir. Students have studied mentor texts by master authors such as Patricia Polacco, Elise Greenfield, Jane Yolen, Carmen Lomas Garza, and Donald Crews to better understand what makes memoir such a unique genre of writing.

This semester in social studies students completed a unit on early European explorers and investigated the first colonies in the New World (including the mystery of what happened to Roanoke). As we studied Salem they put on a mock witch trial, students used the evidence the Puritans had used to decide if the accused was actually a witch. Putting themselves into the shoes of early colonists, they studied the 3 regions and decided which region of the colonies they would have wanted to move their families to if they were Europeans immigrating to the colonies.

In math, the fifth graders have completed a unit on multiplication and are now practicing division. To remember the steps of division we use the mnemonic DMSBR. In addition to learning how to correctly multiply and divide students made sense of new concepts and showcased their new knowledge by creating posters and writing songs explaining how to apply the algorithms. During these units students practice the mathematical practice of attending to precision. Much of correctly applying the algorithms for multiplication and division hinges on correct use of place value and basic multiplication facts.

On January 9th students had STEAM day where they rotated through a variety of activities aimed at incorporating science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics. This was an interdisciplinary way to help prepare them for the Invention Convention, which turned out to be a great success. Thank you for your support.

FIFTH GRADE
Mrs. Burnham, Mr. Horn and Ms. Schneider

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SIXTH GRADE
Ms. Compton, Mrs. Knotts and Mrs. Mielniczuk

Our classes have been doing "close" reading about wolves to learn how to navigate through difficult text to pick out key words and phrases that help them understand the meaning of the text. Students are enjoying learning about their school mascot. In writing students are practicing how to self-evaluate their writing using student-friendly checklists and pushing themselves to become better writers who are more aware of their writing abilities.

Students worked hard to complete their science fair experiments, which was a 2-month long independent project. They practiced the steps of composing a question, making a hypothesis, gathering materials, devising the procedure, experimenting, making observations, collecting data, and drawing conclusions. They were proud to display their hard work at Science Night on February 27th. In class this trimester they were focused on weather concepts.

Africa is the topic students are studying in social studies. They have learned the locations and physical features of African countries and are exploring a country of their choice through a long-term, in-depth study that focuses on the culture, symbols, and attractions in their African country.

Mathematically speaking, the class started out their fraction unit mastering least common denominator and greatest common factor. Students are also mastering turning mixed numbers into improper fractions and vice versa. All of this ties into adding and subtracting fractions with uncommon denominators.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES
Mrs. Backhaus, Mrs. Bryce, Ms. Manfre and Mr. Kiefer

Science
In 7th grade science, the students just completed extremely creative projects demonstrating the organelles of the cells and the differences between plant and animal cells. Next, the

students will begin exploring the human body. We will be explore the insides of bones, create respiratory experiments, and dissect sheep hearts!

In 8th grade science, the students just finished the genetics and cell division unit. The students demonstrated mitosis by square dancing as a class and created meiosis "cell-fie" iMovies. We will start Earth, sun, and moon interactions next.

Social Studies
In social studies, eighth graders are focusing on Reconstruction and the problems that arose out of the post-Civil War era. Learning about segregation and the Jim Crow Laws will lead to a unit about the Civil Rights Movement in America. Seventh graders have been learning about Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, and will soon be examining life in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

GEO Bee
Alissa Recchia's knowledge of geography and love of reading helped her clinch the 2015 Geographic Bee championship at Ashford School. The sixth grader knew that Jack London's classic novel, *The Call of the Wild*, takes place in the Canadian province of Yukon, enabling her to come out ahead in the championship round. Alissa faced tough competition from runner-up Ryan Ignatowicz, a seventh grader. Eighth grader Nathan Metsack placed third.

In addition to the finalists, other young geographers included fourth grader Molly Rourke, fifth grader Nicholas Botti, sixth grader Hannah Crowley, seventh graders Isaac Almquist Gaeta and Miguel Rodriguez, and eighth graders Matthew Renna and Jonathan Varga.

The Bee is a program of the National Geographic Society for students in grades four through eight. Bee questions address the physical and cultural aspects of both United States and world geography. Test your geography knowledge with the exciting GeoBee Challenge, an online geography quiz at www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee, which poses ten new questions a day, or by downloading the "National Geographic GeoBee Challenge" app, with more than one thousand questions culled from past Bees, available from the App Store, the Android Market, or for NOOK Color.

Alissa has qualified for the state Bee by completing a challenging written exam. She will travel to Central Connecticut State University to compete on March 27. One winner from each state and territory will advance to the national championship in Washington, D. C., where the first-place prize is a $50,000 college scholarship and a trip to the Galápagos Islands. Journalist Soledad O'Brien will moderate the finals in May. Good luck, Alissa!

English – Language Arts
A lot of exciting things have happened in 7th and 8th grade English & Language Arts these past few months. It is hard to believe that the third trimester is upon us! During the second trimester, students had units on creative writing and the writing process, as well as poetry. Students were provided with the opportunity to research and write about any topic of their choice; some students chose to tell stories, while others created how-to-guides or wrote informative essays on topics that interested them. Throughout these weeks, students were also provided with numerous samples of writing with which to explore and respond to ranging from songs to articles to short stories. With these samples, students also worked on

identifying main ideas, as well as comparing and contrasting the information provided in multiple sources; to close off this unit, students wrote an essay arguing for or against the use of cell phones in schools, based on information from four provided articles.

As we shifted gears towards poetry and poetic devices, students had the opportunity to read and analyze poetry by Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Gary Soto. Students worked with not only identifying, but creating, samples of poetic devices such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, personification, and simile/metaphor. To close off the unit, each student planned and produced an individual, personal poem about a topic that they felt a connection to.

Currently, students are beginning their next class novel. In 7th grade, we are reading *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry*. In 8th grade, we are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The unit will culminate with a viewing of the filmic adaptations of these novels, followed by an essay comparing and contrasting the two.

Math
Grade seven students are presently studying proportional relationships. A focus has been on identifying and using scale factors and constants of proportionality. In addition, seventh grade students are using algebra tiles to explore how we can use variables to represent areas and perimeters algebraically.

Grade eight students have expanded their strategies for solving equations. Students are using the distributive property to help simplify expressions to solve equations, and students are also working with equations that include fractions. Students have begun to solve systems of equations by graphing and algebraically by using the Substitution Method/Equal Values Method.

READING
Mrs. Cunningham

Morse Code, Polybius Squares, and Scytale Ciphers are among the examples of secret codes, and their uses throughout history, that were investigated by students this past semester. Students experienced this avenue of communication by encoding and decoding ciphers developed by fellow students. This allowed students to gain more insight into secret code connections to policies that affect societies. Going forward, the emphasis will include how character traits define accountability, courage, and decisive actions, as students work to improve their reading and critical thinking skills. Both grades will have the opportunity to form and support opinions about the rights and responsibilities of individuals. Collaborative projects, as well as leadership roles, will continue to help students achieve the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills required by the Common Core Standards.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS
Miss Dotson and Miss Silverstein

The middle school choir will be traveling up to EO Smith in a few weeks to sing with choirs from Willington, Mansfield, and EO Smith! They have been working very hard to prepare songs for this trip. The 5th graders just completed a project about blues composers, in which

they compiled research and gave wonderful presentations in front of their peers. The 3rd graders have learned 5 notes on the recorder so far and are doing an amazing job playing their songs! The 6th grade students have been using some of their favorite pop songs to do a project on song writing and lyrical meaning. We have two new bulletin boards outside of the music room! Keep an eye on them to see what we are working on!

HEALTH NEWS
Mr. Hollister

Students in 3rd - 6th grade health class have been busy stacking and building as they improve their dexterity with classroom fitness challenges. Along with these fun, competitive tasks our students have been exploring topics such as Mental Health, Growth and Development, Disease, and Addiction. The 7th and 8th grade students have done an outstanding job presenting their final projects. They have learned how to manage their classroom time appropriately to meet deadlines.

CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH WRITING
Mrs. Lindsay

Students taking computer tech continue to develop proficiency in a variety of software programs. In addition to studying Microsoft Word, students learn about creating graphs in Excel. Adding pictures to these graphs really personalizes the data. In PowerPoint, students practice creating slideshows that contain music and run independently. We are also exploring Prezi in both classes.

In Research Writing, students have selected poets and poems to research. Using Garage Band, students record a poem and insert it into a presentation about the poet. After researching the poet's background and commenting on the reason for selecting that particular poet, students have a neat multi-media research project.

We are also working on improving our typing skills! There has been tremendous growth this trimester as students practice these valuable skills. Some of our top scores include 88, 66, 63 and 60 words per minute!

ART
Ms. Dockendorff

During this winter season all art students have been working on clay projects. K and pre k have made press mold bowls as well as hand print plaques, 1st grade made slab texture bowls, 2nd grade made birds, fish and dinosaurs, 3rd grade made native american storytellers, 4th grade made three footed bowls, 6th grade made dragons, 7th grade made mugs and 8th grade had the brunt of the delays and snow days and many made penguins and some made press mold bowls. Primary students also have been doing winter related projects like torn paper penguins, mittens, hot chocolate mugs and various snowflake projects. We are now leading into spring projects.

SPANISH
Ms. Rhubin

The 7th graders have begun learning about lots of different foods in Spanish. We are researching Puerto Rico and we may even get to try some plantains and mangos! The 8th graders are learning how to keep themselves healthy, using Spanish vocabulary. We have made drawings of each other and presented them to the class. We will soon be writing a health brochure all in Spanish. Soon we will be learning about Argentina.

SCIENCE AND ENRICHMENT
Miss Imhoff

Last week our students proudly showed off their inventions and science projects at science night. There were many amazing solutions to common problems and we are so excited for the students who will be representing our school at the capitol and the Connecticut Invention Convention. Our students also represented Ashford at the North Eastern Regional Science Bowl. The team made it to the wildcard championship round but ultimately lost by one question after several tie breaker rounds. Our robotics teams have been placing well and we are currently preparing for our last competition of the year.

The middle school STEM cohorts have been learning about space exploration and they are preparing for a simulated space expedition next month. The sixth grade STEM class has been experimenting with green energy and practices. Thanks to generous support from the Ashford Clean Energy Task Force, the students will be designing and racing solar powered vehicles. The elementary science classes have been busy designing roller coasters, creating chemical engineering processes through play dough, building hovercrafts, making model rovers, and much more. If you don't mind getting messy, feel free to stop by room 21 and join in on the science learning and fun.