

PAW PRINTS

December 2015



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Troy C. Hopkins

Do you remember Y2K, the idea that computers would not be able to recognize a year that does not begin with “19”, affecting multiple functions of society including communication, transportation, and finance. Many held their breath in anticipation, the clock ticked into the year 2000, and nothing happened. Our students did not experience any part of the last century since our oldest students were born in 2002. Over the past 15 years, technological advances have required us to learn more and do things differently, in order to earn a living, care for our families, or just to function in the changing world. For instance, maybe you learned how to communicate through email as a function of your employment, pay your home bills electronically, or shop for groceries or gifts using an iPad, laptop, or phone. Our students are now experiencing an increasingly complex world that is changing faster than ever. They will need to learn faster, than any previous generation, in order to become independent and lead fruitful lives. Here is the problem – We do not know what they will need to know! No need to worry. While our students will still “know” quite a bit after leaving Ashford School, we are preparing them with the skills to **learn** whatever it is they may need to know in the future. These skills are commonly referred to as 21st Century Skills.

We are working to embed 21st Century Skills of autonomy, creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, cultural competency, innovation, media literacy, perseverance, self-control, and motivation to learn, into our instruction and our STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) initiative.

STEAM is how we empower students to use all of their learning to think about the world, solve problems and show what they know. This is our first year of a three-year process of implementing theme-based trimesters at each grade level. Every student will learn during the second semester with frequent reference to a theme and produce a project of his/her choice under that theme. The projects will be tied to real world situations and allow students to practice 21st century skills. The semester will culminate in a STEAM event to which parents and the public will be invited.

Here are the STEAM themes for the second trimester this school year:

K – How do we keep our body healthy?

Grade 1 – How does 100 affect something?

Grade 2 – Why is Ashford so great?

Grade 3 – How to combat natural disasters

Grade 4 – U.S.A. Regions and Resources

Grade 5 – How innovation solves problems

Grade 6 – Conflict

Grade 7 – Local Community

Grade 8 – Global Community

Major goals of our STEAM initiative are for students to see purpose in their learning and develop ownership of their work. It will be exciting to see the results of student learning. We hope that you will be able to attend your child's STEAM event. Teachers will be sharing details as the trimester progresses.

FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Garrett Dukette

As we head into the winter break, excitement is high around Ashford School. While excitement for school is a fantastic resource that drives us to excellence, sometimes student excitement can bubble over into rambunctious behaviors and silliness that takes away from our focus on learning.

As the assistant principal, it is my job to work with our students as they develop appropriate behaviors and an awareness of social expectations. When I speak to a student, my goal is always to help them to understand how they can make better decisions, as it is the learning and not the consequence that helps to move our students in the right direction.

Based on this belief, when Ashford School returns from winter break in January, there will be a new program in place for students in grades 6-8. Dubbed the Wolf P.A.C.K. program

(P.A.C.K. stands for Partnership for Athleticism, Community, and Knowledge), this program will focus on providing an alternative to traditional consequences for students who continue to struggle with their behavior in social and academic settings. Students who enter this program will spend three days a week after school working on developing a greater sense of awareness of their school community, a strong sense of fitness, and an assortment of strategies for meeting with academic success. Often, students find themselves in trouble as a result of their inability to meet the basic expectations placed upon them; the Wolf P.A.C.K. program aims to alleviate this, reducing behavioral issues in our school, and helping all students to be successful.

If you have any questions about the Wolf P.A.C.K. program or would like to speak with me about behavior at Ashford School, please feel free to call at 860-429-6419 or email gdukette@ashfordct.org.

Happy holidays!

PRE-SCHOOL

Mrs. Longo and Mrs. Lusa

In Preschool, we believe that children learn best by first hand observation of their natural environment and through the active manipulation of materials. Children are encouraged to make discoveries as they explore and use new materials in the classroom. This fall, the preschool students completed a “pumpkin report”, which included observing and measuring a pumpkin over the course of several days. The children documented their observations in a pumpkin report showing the measurements of each pumpkin’s circumference, height and weight. The front cover displayed a photo of each child proudly holding the pumpkin that they investigated.

During the month of December, the children have been exploring a theme on families and celebrations. Children have had opportunities to share about their families and learn that each family is unique and special. They are in the process of creating family books and are graphing information about their families. We read stories about some of the holidays that families may celebrate in the month of December. This theme will culminate with a Family Celebration in the preschool classrooms on Monday, December 21st.

KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Connolly, Mrs. Dingler and Mrs. Ross

November and December are very busy months in Kindergarten. In November, the Kindergarten students learn about the meaning of Thanksgiving. They participate in a variety of activities where they share about what they are thankful for. While participating in these activities, they are working on speaking, listening, reading, writing, and math skills. Our Thanksgiving Unit culminates with a Native American mini-unit. Kindergarten students have the opportunity to choose from various projects that teach them about Native American culture and history.

In December, the themes of Family and Celebrations are explored. Children learn that all families are unique and special. They have a chance to share about their family traditions. The students learn about several holidays that occur in December, such as Hanukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. As a conclusion to this unit, the students invite their families to school for a Family Celebration. At this celebration, children share songs they have learned, craft projects they have created, and a special book they wrote about their families.

FIRST GRADE

Ms. Benton, Mrs. Horn and Ms. Marshall

December in First Grade is all about, Families Past and Present. In this unit, we will be talking about family traditions. The students are working on a special homework project that addresses this. We are so excited to see the finished projects. We will spend the last 2 weeks before vacation sharing our projects.

In reading we have started Unit 3 in our Wonders reading program. The big idea for this unit is Changes Over Time. We will be exploring topics that include, How we measure time, How plants change over time, What a Folktale is, and How life was different long ago. Our

reading unit ties in perfectly with our new STEAM unit called, How Does 100 Affect Something? In this unit we will be investigating how the concept of “100” affects different things. We will incorporate all of the curricular components of school. We are very excited to start this unit.

SECOND GRADE

Miss Anderson, Mr. Busse and Mrs. Wood

Second grade has been hard at work this fall. They have been improving basic skills like reading fluency and math facts. Students have also been learning different techniques to include while writing exciting narratives. They have shown tremendous growth since the beginning of the year in this area. In social studies, students are learning about maps and our community. They are excited about an upcoming project where they will make gingerbread houses to place on a large map of Ashford. Our grade is also looking forward to a STEAM project where students will be able to make items out of our town’s natural resources. We love our town and are so thankful for the learning opportunities that it provides!

THIRD GRADE

Mrs. Klock, Mrs. Turcotte

No doubt about it, Ashford School third graders are hard at work.

What do tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes have in common? They will all be topics for our third grade interdisciplinary STEAM unit on natural disasters. This project will tie in well with our study of informational writing, in which we will incorporate headings, captions, diagrams, and sidebars. During this unit, we will answer the question: How can human knowledge and creativity combat natural disasters? We look forward to visiting the Apple Store in South Windsor to design logos for their invention ideas.

If you asked a third grader what multiplication means, he or she could readily explain that multiplication can be thought of as repeated addition or as sets of rows and columns called arrays. Third graders also have been studying the properties of multiplication. They know that the product of 5 times 8 is the same as the product of 8 times 5 (commutative property). They know that a large multiplication fact can be broken down into smaller pieces and those smaller pieces can be added together to get the final product (distributive property).

At this grade level we continue to stress the importance of reading fluently, reading different genres, and responding in detail to what is read.

FOURTH GRADE

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

It has been a wonderful first trimester in our 4th grade classrooms. We enjoyed writing realistic fiction stories and revising them to make them the best they could be. Our students have made incredible progress in their writing and we know they will continue. Our second unit of study, which we have just begun, will focus on persuasive writing. We’d like to congratulate our winner of the 4th grade narrative writing challenge, *Emerson Dyer*.

As we embark on our second trimester, we are diving head first into our STEAM theme: Regions of the United States. The questions we will seek to ultimately answer are these: How do people adapt to or affect regions in the United States? What challenges and benefits do various regions present to the communities that live in them? Students will be working hard to research the various regions and what they have to offer U.S. citizens. Many of us have never been outside of New England! They will be thinking deeply about the regions that they might ultimately want to live in. Landforms, weather, economy, are just a few of the factors that the students will be investigating. For their final project, students will pick a region of focus. Students are thrilled to travel through their country via each other.

Our focus on the non-fiction genre of texts weaves in nicely with the beginning of our long-term STEAM projects. We will continue to become knowledgeable readers of non-fiction and students will use these texts to learn even more about the regions and states around them! As we read more, we will begin to write with the same strategies that expert authors use. We are excited mathematicians, as we become comfortable with multi-digit multiplication and long division. Long gone are the days of repeated addition! From here, we will zoom in on fractions, and we will pay especially close attention to collecting data and organizing data with charts, tables and graphs.

On behalf of the fourth grade team, we wish all of our families a wonderful winter season!

FIFTH GRADE

Mrs. Burnham, Mrs. Craven and Mr. Horn

The fifth graders recently completed their first survival day. Students have been reading novels with a survival theme such as Hatchet by Gary Paulsen and Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth George Speare. In these books, characters have to survive in a wilderness situation by using their own knowledge, the few tools they have at their disposal, and a significant amount of grit. Working in groups based on interest, students began by making a plan and doing research on their topic before preparing a hands-on demonstration to share with their classmates. Groups explored creating fire, edible foods and cooking, signaling, water purification, shelter, and first aid. Jim York generously shared his time and knowledge about fire safety to teach about safe fire handling, and to supervise our fire pit on presentation day. After 2 days of preparation (in and out of the classrooms), the Wednesday before Thanksgiving was our survival day. Students spent the day outside demonstrating their new skills and learning from personal experience, how difficult it can be to survive in the wilderness. After much effort, the fire group started a fire using a combination of techniques. This was followed by the ever-continuing search for wood as it quickly consumed what they had collected. The food group roasted chestnuts and baked cornbread over the fire. The water group demonstrated several methods for purifying water, including filtering and boiling. The signaling group demonstrated how you could spell out words in a field, use a mirror to reflect sunlight, and mark a trail in the woods. The students studying shelter built a home that is, “guaranteed to be hurricane proof.” After enjoying the lessons of the day, students went home for Thanksgiving with smiles on their faces, an appreciation for how difficult survival is, and the lingering smell of campfire and hard work.

SIXTH GRADE

Ms. Compton, Mrs. Knotts and Mrs. Mielniczuk

Reflecting back on the 1st trimester, a highlight for the 6th graders was their Ancient Egyptian project. Students researched an Ancient Egyptian topic of their choice and documented their findings using a form of technology to highlight the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the topic. Student choices included PowerPoint presentations, newspaper articles, Word documents, and charts. Students then created an artifact model. The social studies classroom was transformed into an Egyptian museum in which the students presented their artifacts to visiting classes, while practicing public speaking strategies they learned. Many thanks to Mrs. Rice for her contributions to this project in the form of time, creativity, and supplies.

In ELA, we focused on kindness and tolerance through the reading of the powerful book, Wonder. We will continue those themes throughout the rest of the year. Students have been diligently practicing their narrative writing through stories of their choice. We have seen tremendous growth in their organization, use of dialogue, elaboration, and conducting self and peer evaluations.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES

Mrs. Backhaus, Mrs. Bryce, Mr. Kiefer, Mrs. Lindsay and Ms. Manfre

Social Studies

Mrs. Bryce

Seventh graders have finished up their review of physical geography and are now learning about cultural geography. The focus has been on population growth and the effects on our environment and resources. Ask your students about the characteristics of a “typical” person in our world of 7.3 billion people. Our demographers are looking forward to examining statistics for 196 countries in our fact-filled almanac issue of *Junior Scholastic*.

Eighth graders began the Civil War unit by learning about the life of a soldier and participating in four hands-on stations in November. Students had the opportunity to build a ¼ scale pontoon bridge, train for artillery drills, practice signals and codes, and improvise a stretcher for the wounded, while exploring medical care during the war. Educators from Roseland Cottage in Woodstock presented this exciting program.

Science

Ms. Manfre

Seventh graders are studying bone structure. Students are serving in the role of Biomedical Engineers and are designing ways to better heal broken bones that require surgical repair.

Eighth graders are studying genetics and will be looking into gene therapy in the near future.

Math

Mrs. Backhaus

Seventh graders are beginning to study proportional relationships.

Eighth graders continue to study relationships between variables using multiple representations.

Language Arts

Mrs. Lindsay

Both seventh and eighth graders are finishing the short story unit, which culminates in a comparison essay. Students recently visited the historic Hanover Theater in Worcester and enjoyed seeing dramatic representations of the short stories we read in class. Students were amazed at the beautiful theater and delighted by the excellent performances.

Writing Lab

Mr. Kiefer

Over the past trimester, students have worked diligently at creating a portfolio of wonderful works of narrative writing, reflecting and supplementing what they learned in the narrative unit of their ELA class. Each student created and revised at least four stories, which were written over the course of the trimester. Students developed dialogue, utilized figurative language, self-evaluated, and when applicable, created endings that provided a moral or theme to their stories. As students move into the second trimester, we will be starting our informational unit, which focuses on learning how to properly research, take notes, cite resources, and use evidence to support a claim. Once again, students will be working on a portfolio of research papers on topics of their choice, which will also be turned in at the end of the trimester.

Reading

Mrs. Cunningham

Eighth grade reading class students recently completed the historical fiction book Fearless, which chronicles the adventures of two impoverished boys in search of their father, presumed lost at sea, in 1703. In this story, the boys-falsely accused of theft-are rescued by Henry Winstanley. This remarkable British artist, architect and gadgeteer actually lived from 1644 to 1703 and is best known for designing and building the first off-shore lighthouse in the world. The Eddystone Lighthouse was constructed in 1698, nearly 14 miles from the coast of Plymouth, England, on the treacherous Eddystone Reef, where an average of 50 ships were demolished every year. In addition to lighthouse and building design, Winstanley is also credited with creating the forerunner of the roller coaster, musical fountains, trick mirrors and the world's first robotic butler. Fearless author Elvira Woodruff engaged in extensive research in the United Kingdom to create this engaging book. Students are currently researching and writing about the Eddystone Lighthouse and roller coasters, as they relate to Fearless and the incomparable Henry Winstanley.

SPANISH

Ms. Rhubin

Seventh graders are focusing on Spanish adjectives. We are describing ourselves and each other and everyone around us. We have also been talking about places that we would like to visit.

Eighth graders have been learning how to describe what chores they have to do at home. They've also been writing advice and giving orders! Try telling your child to "pon la mesa" and see if they set the table!

MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS

Miss Dotson and Miss Silverstein

The Ashford Music Department has finished up a very busy season! On November 10th, 19 Ashford musicians joined with students from nine local towns to participate in the Quinebaug Valley Middle School Music Festival. Students rehearsed under the direction of guest conductors and performed a fantastic concert after only two rehearsals! We are very proud of our students' musicianship and stellar character.

The Winter Concert was held on Thursday, December 10th at 7:00 p.m. Miss Silverstein and Miss Dotson would like to thank the students for their hard work and inspiring performances. Thank you to all of our families for their outstanding support.

The 6th-8th grade Select Chorus went on a caroling tour of Windham Hospital, Mansfield Rehabilitation Center, and St. Francis Hospital. The students were wonderful representatives of Ashford School and spread joy to many people in our community.

PE

Mr. Hollister and Miss Noheimer

In Physical Education, students started a brand new curriculum learning how to interact well with others. The first few weeks, students focused on first impressions and team building activities to create a positive environment. We have integrated health into PE while focusing on the 5 components of fitness. Students were introduced to brand new activities to facilitate growth in an intensive gymnastics unit. Students improved their muscular strength and endurance while challenging themselves on the whittle equipment. Moving into the second trimester, students will engage in project based health lessons in the classroom. Upcoming topics of study include nutrition, substance abuse, injury and disease prevention. Students should be able to understand the impact of their decisions and how it plays a part in total wellness.

ART

Mrs. Truskoski

The art room at Ashford School has been a buzzing, creative center these past four months. Each grade is focusing on a different theme this year, beginning with preschool and

kindergarten who are working with an Introduction to Art and Design, first and second grade whose curriculum is based on Art Around the World, and third and fourth grades who are focusing on Art as Imagination and American Artists. In middle school, fifth and sixth grades are focusing on the Elements and Principles of Design, and Art as Personal Expression. Seventh and Eighth grades are learning about Art as Storytelling, as well as Cultural Representation and Communication. During activity periods, middle school students are looking more deeply at Art as Storytelling through a variety of media, in addition to pottery techniques such as wheel throwing and hand building. They are also able to participate in hatha yoga, learning about mindfulness and yoga postures.

All grades have been exploring a variety of media and materials, working with 2D and 3D processes, ranging from watercolor resist to lessons in industrial and graphic design. Our projects are interdisciplinary; STEAM oriented, and are grounded in social relevancy. They are always developmentally appropriate, and are grounded in references to art history and contemporary art. Our seventh graders are also embarking on a field trip to the community art center Real Art Ways in Hartford this trimester, to view an Academy Award winning independent film, in addition to taking a gallery tour. We are looking forward to making deeper connections to the art world around us, to further our understanding of how visual art can be used as tool for expression and understanding.

SCIENCE AND ENRICHMENT

Miss Imhoff

The students have been busy investigating in the elementary science room. The kindergartners have been learning about pushes and pulls by making gravity-copters, roller coasters, Rube Goldberg machines and more. Mirrors, flashlights, instruments, and slinkies were used in inventions designed by first graders to model light and sound waves. Last week they started a new unit focusing on how animal adaptations can inspire human inventions. The second grade students recently recreated a “waggle dance” to show how bees communicate and even vote. Now they are learning about the properties of different types of matter, which has led to some messy and fun experiments. The third and fourth graders have just begun building hot air balloons as part of their unit on forces. Last week they designed and then 3D printed model boats to test during a lesson on buoyancy. Next week, as part of National Computer Science Education Week, students will learn basic coding and how coding can be used to create solutions to problems all over the world.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS (SPECIAL)

Mr. Kiefer and Mrs. Preston

While Creative Communications has only existed as a course since the start of this year, we’ve already accomplished some pretty exciting things! Select students in grades 5 through 8 have been working with students in grades 1 and 2 on a number of fun and creative activities that focus on bolstering communication and leadership skills. Students have written and illustrated stories, designed school mascot masks, written their own characters into a story they read, learned how to use different apps on the computers and iPads, played variations of charades, worked on memorization and recitation skills, and done numerous activities involving acting and improvisation! As we move on into the second trimester, we

have many more exciting activities in store, pushing the boundaries of communication in ways that are both fun, engaging, and most of all, educational, for all that participate.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS (G PERIOD)

Mr. Kiefer and Mrs. Preston

The G Period extension of Creative Communications provides an opportunity for students in grades 7 and 8 to volunteer their help in elementary school classrooms. The support from teachers has been overwhelming, and student interest is at an all time high! From giving writing support, to teaching students how to use iPads, to participating in science experiments, and even working on social studies and math projects, our 7th and 8th grade students have been extra busy making a positive impact on our school.

ASHFORD SCHOOL GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Mr. Kiefer

On Saturday, December 5, 2015, members of Ashford School's faculty volunteered their time to collect donations for The Salvation Army. The event, which went from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Stop & Shop in Putnam, was organized by the Director of Ashford Youth Services Bureau, Melissa McDonough, as well as coordinated in conjunction with the Putnam Rotary Club. The following staff members generously volunteered their time for this wonderful cause: Melissa McDonough and her daughters Isabella and Sophia; Martha Sibley-Jett and her husband Mitch; Christine Knowlton and her daughters Rayann and Malerye; Gina Burnham and her children Anna and Henry; Lynn Fontaine and her daughter Morgan; Elissa Turcotte; Susan Cunningham; Matthew Kiefer; and Joan and George Celotti.



