

# PAW PRINTS

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## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Troy C. Hopkins

Sense it, you will - the overpowering force! You need not search long to witness the remarkable spirit that resides at Ashford School. It is not the typical school spirit, disconnected from learning some other schools possess. Enthusiasm for learning, among all our school community members, has created the prevailing **WOLF** spirit, which stands for **We Optimize Learning For all**. Joining forces, students, staff, parents, and community members together create a school that others envy. Eager learners of all ages come back, day after day, to experience the **WOLF** spirit again.

What is our secret, our recipe for success? Even if I reveal it, others will not likely be able to replicate us any time soon. That is because we have an abundance of a magic ingredient. We have passion! Truth be told, the Ashford School staff is more passionate, in my humble principal's opinion, than in any other school around. Without our passionate and dedicated staff we could not do what we do. Whether having lunch with kids, facilitating a night or weekend event, writing "pawsitive" referrals, running an after school club, serving on a voluntary committee, presenting at professional conferences, or attending educational workshops as life-long learners, our staff is continually reaching out to connect with students and working to make themselves and Ashford School stronger.

Here are the other ingredients of our WOLF spirit.

1. **Purpose.** We lead students to see purpose in their learning. When students understand the reasons for their learning they are more motivated.
2. **Autonomy.** We allow students some choice in what they learn, how they learn it, and how they show their learning. Students develop autonomy and confidence by making decisions about their work.
3. **Mastery.** We help students to monitor their individual progress by teaching them to self-assess. When students know where they stand and are clear about the expectations to go further, they are more motivated to reach their potentials.

These essential components of our STEAM approach are embedded in learning experiences at Ashford School. We have just concluded a theme-based trimester in each grade level. Throughout the trimester teachers helped students to see connections between the different disciplines while understanding real world application. Students completed their chosen projects and displayed, performed, or presented them during STEAM events. If you participated in one of these impressive events, you witnessed the extraordinary WOLF spirit. More is on the way!

If you have not yet encountered the spirit, come on by and I would be pleased to introduce you to the WOLF!

### **FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL**

Garrett Dukette

March signals the end of the second trimester at Ashford School, and with the new trimester comes the first signs of spring, and a sense of excitement for the warmer weather. Over the past six months, our students have been keeping their brains busy and warm, working on growing their learning skills, much in the same way the flowers of spring will grow—beautifully and with purpose. As a STEAM school, every classroom teacher nurtures this growth, providing a comprehensive learning experience that develops the connections between all subject areas, from Spanish, to Math, to Art. However, one area in particular has been a specific focus for our students this year: writing.

Our goal as a school is to develop learners who don't just memorize facts, but who are curious, inquisitive, and tenacious; and as research shows, the best way to develop these learning habits are through consistent writing practice. As neurologist Judy Willis explains, "Through writing, students can increase their comfort with and success in understanding complex material, unfamiliar concepts, and subject-specific vocabulary. When writing is embedded throughout the curriculum, it promotes the brain's attentive focus to classwork and homework, boosts long-term memory, illuminates patterns, gives the brain time for reflection, and when well-guided, is a source of conceptual development and stimulus of the brain's highest cognition." In essence, when students develop their writing skills they set themselves up to become successful, creative, high-functioning lifelong learners.

So as the year continues on, don't hesitate to talk to your students about their writing. Treat them like young authors; encourage them to journal, to write short stories, and to create how-to manuals for the activities they excel in at home. The more our students write with purpose and in authentic ways, the more they will excel as learners overall. Remember, like the shoots in our garden at the cusp of every spring, the more we can nurture and cultivate our students' writing abilities, the more they will flourish and bloom.

### **PRE-SCHOOL**

Mrs. Longo and Mrs. Lusa

In Preschool, we have been learning about some of the people who work to help us in our community. We have been talking about the different jobs people do.

We had a great visit to the dentist office in Tolland. The dental hygienist let each child have a ride in the chair and talked all about how we can take care of our teeth. Each child got to take home their very own toothbrush and floss.

We also visited the Big Y in Tolland. The children got to visit the bakery to see how they decorate cakes, the pizza shop where they made a pizza just for us, the deli for a slice of cheese and the seafood counter where we got to see a live lobster. We also visited the produce department to search for different vegetables and fruit. We went behind the scenes to see the cardboard crunching machine and we got to go inside the walk-in refrigerator and freezer. We ended our visit with a chance to practice being a cashier and each child had a chance to ring out two items.

As part of our unit, parents were invited to come in and share their occupation with the class. The morning classes have had the opportunity to hear parents tell about being a nurse and a reporter. We are including many other jobs into our talks as well.

### **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. We started our first STEAM unit in December called, “How Do Things Change Over Time?” Every child in First Grade was able to choose their own project that related to this theme. The children worked in class on their projects. On March 4th the children presented their finished projects in our first STEAM event. Thank you to all the parents that came and participated in this event. It was a great success and the students were really proud of all the work they did.

In the week of 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 during Primary Pride 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 attending a play in April, participating in our Annual Earth Day Event and will be visiting LegoLand at the beginning of 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, Mr. Busse and Mrs. Wood

Second graders spent much of the past trimester exploring how people make a difference in their community by using its natural resources. Interest guided the learning of the students who each chose something unique to create from one of Ashford’s resources. Students showcased their creations at a farmers’ market here at school. Parents and members of the community were invited to attend the market where students showed evidence of their new learning. Students also shared a “how-to” informational piece of writing so that others could replicate all the different products on their own. It was amazing to see what can be created from things found in nature!

Second graders will continue their learning this spring with two field trips. Students are looking forward to a trip to the Children Museum in West Hartford this month where they will participate in an animal life cycle workshop and a dinosaur planetarium show. The year

will close with animal reports and a trip to the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence. We love where our learning takes us!

### **THIRD GRADE**

Mrs. Klock and Mrs. Turcotte

Third graders had amazing fun learning about different Natural Disasters. They proudly presented their projects last week at their first STEAM event. There were many ways students demonstrated their learning. Projects incorporated Science, technology, engineering and math. Students in Mrs. Klock's and Mrs. Turcotte's classes have begun reading different biographies. They will create a biography book project at the end of the month. We are in full swing with learning about fractions. Soon we will compare fractions and learn about equivalent fractions. Next month we will begin our study of the Solar System, and students will create a way to show what they know about our Solar System. Next month we will also have SBAC testing the week prior and the week following our Spring Break. We will also have two guest presenters. On April 14<sup>th</sup> a musician from the New Haven Symphony Young Peoples Concert will come to give an introduction about the symphony we will see in May. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, Jay Kaplan from Roaring Brook Nature Center will give third graders a presentation about Birds of Prey. He will even bring a live owl. We are excited with all the wonderful learning in grade 3.

### **FOURTH GRADE**

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

Hello from Fourth Grade! Students in Fourth grade have spent the second trimester working hard on their STEAM projects. They have conducted research about topics important to how people have adapted to different regions within the United States, how people have impacted the regions in which they live, and why people should or should not move to certain regions. Throughout our STEAM unit, students used Technology, Math, Science, Engineering, and Art in order to showcase their learning in a creative and innovative way. Students focused on using a persuasive tone to write essays on their topics, using their peers as mentors for constructive feedback. Students showed a lot of pride in their final projects and they had a lot of fun sharing them with their friends and family at our STEAM event.

During the second trimester, Fourth graders finished up their units on multiplication and division, and they will begin exploring fractions, as we enter the third trimester. Students are looking forward to practicing different ways to show equivalent fractions and represent fractions in simplest form and in decimal form.

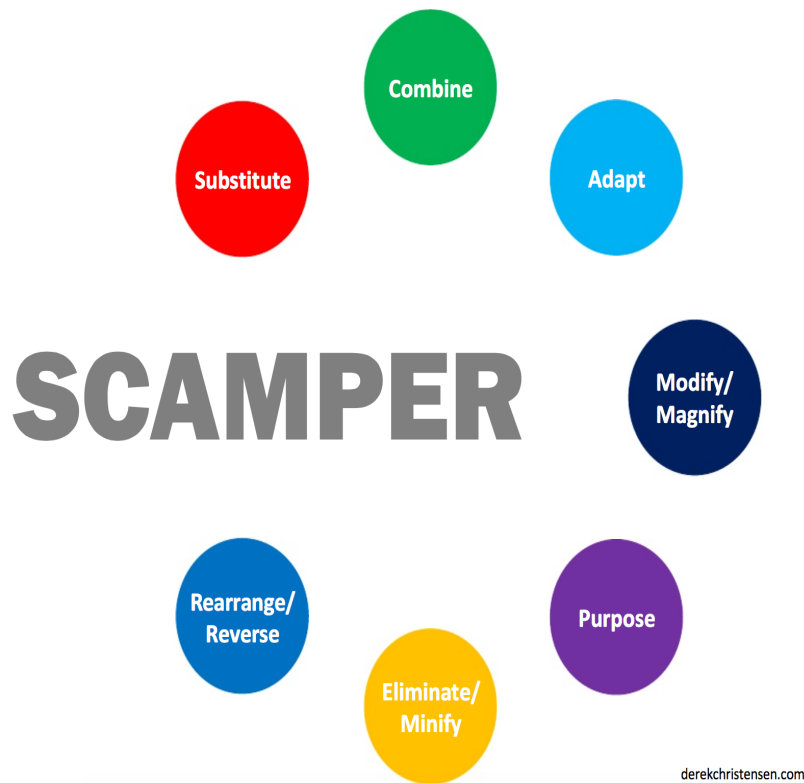
We are excited to begin new units in reading and writing, continuing our work with non-fiction texts and informational writing. We will also discuss topics in Social Studies, such as government and inventors of the Northeast.

**FIFTH GRADE**

Mrs. Burnham, Mrs. Craven and Mr. Horn

5<sup>th</sup> graders spent the trimester investigating how innovation solves problems. This has included a study of Benjamin Franklin in our reading groups and the student's work on their Invention Convention projects.

The 5<sup>th</sup> grade team worked together to create a STEAM day where students rotated through different activities designed to support their work. With Mrs. Burnham, students worked to create a system to contain and transfer "chemical waste." They used yardsticks, tape, hula-hoops, and tennis balls to simulate the problem and create unique solutions. In Social Studies, the students "SCAMPER-ed" a paper bag. This inventing process helped students think of new ways to improve existing products. In Writing class, students simulated a "Shark Tank" episode where they needed to effectively advertise their product (a pencil) to their consumer.



Students were then challenged to solve a problem with a unique invention. The culmination of their work was the Invention Convention competition. Students shared their inventions in small groups. Judges included students from the University of Connecticut School of Engineering as well as community volunteers. Inventions were displayed that evening at our school's Invention Convention Celebration and Cardboard night. Five students will move on to the state Invention Convention at Gampel Pavilion on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

**SIXTH GRADE**

Ms. Compton, Mrs. Knotts and Mrs. Mielniczuk

Our 2nd trimester culminated in our STEAM event on conflict. Student projects ranged from conflicts in history, nature, sports, and human interactions. Students displayed their work in a variety of fashions including websites, posters, demonstrations, videos, and brochures. The 6th grade was pleased to see support from the community and was proud to present their projects. Moving forward we will implement a social emotional curriculum (Second Step) to help with peer conflicts and social and emotional growth.

**SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES**

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

**Social Studies**

Mrs. Bryce

Nicholas Botti's knowledge of Oceania helped him clinch the 2016 Geographic Bee championship at Ashford School. Nick persevered through tough competition from runner-up Jessica Giglio, an eighth grader. In the final round, both students knew the fictional train to Hogwarts leaves Kings Cross station in London and that the Puerto Rico Trench contains the deepest part of the Atlantic Ocean. The contestants had audience members on the edge of their seats during an extended series of tiebreaker questions. Nick emerged the champion when he recognized that New South Wales and Victoria are the chief manufacturing states of Australia.

Sixth grader Joshua Morrison placed third. In addition to the finalists, other young geographers included fourth grader Ben Morrison, fifth grader Olivia Zulick, seventh graders Emma Bussolotta, Lindsay Irvine, and Alissa Recchia, and eighth graders Jacob Chrzanowski and Joseph Sandberg.

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 knowledge of geography with the GeoBee Challenge, an online quiz at [www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee) or download the "National Geographic GeoBee Challenge" app from the App Store for iPhone, iPod touch and iPad, from the Android Market, or for NOOK Color.

Thousands of schools around the United States and in the five U.S. territories are participating in the Bee. Qualifying school champions will compete in their state Bees on April 1. State winners will head to Washington, D.C. for the championship rounds May 22-25. The first-place national champion will receive a \$50,000 college scholarship, a lifetime membership in the Society, and an Expeditions trip to a national park in recognition of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service. The national finals will air on television on the National Geographic Channel and PBS stations. Check local listings for dates and times.



**Science**

Ms. Manfre

In 8th grade science, the students are studying chemistry. They will be working on atomic structure, chemical and physical changes and finish with a formal lab report in preparation for high school.

In 7th grade science, the students are studying weathering and erosion. The unit will end with the students engineering solutions to erosion problems at our school.

**Writing Lab**

Mr. Kiefer

Students have worked diligently on conducting research and writing proposals for their wide array of STEAM projects! When finished, some students also conducted independent research on a topic of their choice, which they then wrote about in an objective, informational format.

Currently, students have begun working on their Argumentative Unit, which we are leading off with a small unit on debate. In small groups, students are given a variety of topics, which they will research, determine key arguments for, and present to the class, which will then assess how compelling each side was. Branching off from this, students will then transfer these skills over to writing thesis papers on topics of their choice. Exciting!

**Reading**

Mrs. Cunningham

Grade 8 Reading students recently completed the book Chasing Lincoln's Killer, to expand their knowledge of the Confederate plot to change the course of the Civil War. Written by James L. Swanson, this book chronicles the events leading up to President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, the plan to assassinate Secretary of State William Seward and Vice President Andrew Johnson, and the ensuing twelve-day manhunt for Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Exhaustive research by author Swanson reveals the character of the conspirators, as well as some of their exact words, taken from journals and newspapers of the era. For Civil War buffs, this book provides new insights into a dramatic part of our history.

**SPANISH**

Ms. Rhubin

The 7th graders have just finished a unit about Mexico. They researched tourist attractions in Mexico and prepared presentations showing what a tourist would see in those locations. We learned vocabulary that goes along with travel and are now working on increasing their vocabulary and writing sentences about what they would do on a vacation.



The 8th graders have been working on vocabulary regarding the body and giving advice about how to be healthy. They have just begun learning how to describe actions that have happened in the past and are complete. We are about to begin a project about tourist attractions in Spain.

### **MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS**

Miss Dotson and Miss Silverstein

The music room has been buzzing with excitement! Students in pre school are working on their understanding of musical opposites such as high, low, fast, slow, heavy, light, loud, and soft. Students in kindergarten have been playing many games to tell the difference between beat and rhythm. Ask them how many sounds are in a “ta” and how many sounds are in a “ti ti!” Students in first and second grade have been working on melody centers. They have been traveling around the room to explore centers with short melodies using the pitches So, Mi, and La. Ask them about playing melody go fish! Third graders are working very hard on playing the recorder. Ask them to play the four notes they know so far! Fourth graders are finishing up a unit on musical form using the app GarageBand. Ask them about their awesome musical compositions! Fifth graders are working on their jazz projects. They have chosen a topic about jazz that interests them and they are gathering information, creating skits, iMovies, and PowerPoint presentations to present their knowledge. Sixth graders have been drumming! They are doing an amazing job picking up on drumming techniques and they have learned 3 musical ensembles. They are performing their ensembles for an audience on Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. The seventh and eighth grade students have been working furiously in the new music technology lab. They have been creating their own musical compositions on a program called Sibelius. They have put their own style and taste into their songs and they are really taking pride in their music.

### **PE**

Mr. Hollister and Miss Noheimer

The PE/Health department has been very busy at Ashford School! During trimester two we held our first annual badminton tournament, and dove into mental wellness. Recently, we kicked off our Hoops for Heart Fundraiser for grades K-5. Hoops for Heart benefits the American Heart Association in their research and teaching efforts about heart health. Throughout the fundraiser, students will learn in health class about the importance of the heart, as well as how to care for it. In PE, students will be involved in various activities to develop their basketball skills. As the weather warms up we are excited to get outside for activities such as trikes and base games.

### **ART**

Mrs. Truskoski

Students have been working hard in a variety of media and processes in art. PreK students and kindergartners have been building their skills in the elements and principles of art and design, creating projects based on literacy connections and international holidays. First and

second grade just finished a multi-media project studying multicultural art from South America. Third grade explored three-dimensional concepts by evaluating form. They recently finished building paper sculptures, which they hand painted by mixing colors. They also learned about graphic design in the art room, as a part of the third grade STEAM initiative. These students developed logos for their interdisciplinary STEAM projects, complete with a trip to the Apple Store to utilize their design software. Fourth grade has been working hard on collagraph printmaking, based on their second trimester theme of US Regions and Resources. These students learned about US architecture and developed printing plates that reflect their vision for architectural structures, based on a geographic location. They just began working in clay to create pots for the Empty Bowls Project. These will be for sale at the Ashford School Art Show, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 5:30-7:00 p.m. All proceeds will be donated to the CT Food Bank. This event will showcase the visual art of all Ashford students, and will include band and choral performances at 6:00 p.m., as well as the PTO sponsored book fair.

Middle school students have been working as industrial designers (fifth grade), monster ceramicists (sixth grade), and observational potters (seventh and eighth grade). By focusing on 3D art education this trimester, students have furthered their understanding of shape, space and form.

### **SCIENCE AND ENRICHMENT**

Miss Imhoff

It's a busy time of year in the Science Enrichment room. Students have been preparing for the greenhouse that we hope to have up and running soon (thanks to grants from Lowe's Toolbox for Education and The Whole Kids Foundation). Second graders are learning about the interdependence of life while dissecting owl pellets. Third graders have just finished up 3D printing models of homes that protect people and property during natural disasters. The fourth graders have been investigating fossils and are using fossil evidence as clues to determine how land would have looked like long ago. The seventh grade METS homeroom is preparing for a simulated trip to Mars at the University of Framingham (thanks to a grant from The Connecticut Space Grant Consortium) and the sixth graders will be conducting experiments while sailing on a schooner next month (thanks to a grant from Target). We are even busy learning on the weekends-- the fifth and sixth grade robotics teams will be competing at the state tournament this weekend. Best of luck!

### **CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS (SPECIAL)**

Mr. Kiefer and Mrs. Preston

Students in grades 1-2 have had an incredibly exciting trimester! They have worked with a number of students in grades 5-8 to write autobiographies, create digital comics, sequence stories and parts of a sentence, collaboratively craft using Play-Doh and Legos, use Sock Puppets to digitally perform plays, and even act out plays in their small groups!

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