

PAW PRINTS

MAY 2016



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Troy C. Hopkins

Dear Ashford School Families,

“You’ve used all the data in your 10GB plan (cycle ends the 25th). Overage data for this cycle is \$15 per 1GB. Or, increase your plan by 2GB for \$10 more per month.”

Sound familiar? Ok, I admit, this message has popped up on my phone more than once. Since my own two children (and my exchange child from Norway) have joined our family plan, we use a lot of data. I wonder where all the data goes?

The usage pie graph, viewable upon logging into my account, indicates videos, apps, and social media are eating up most of the data. The daughter who uses more than her allotment of data pays the overage fee, a logical consequence. We noticed that they text more than they talk on their phones, an indication that social communication norms are changing. Yes, we are concerned about safe use and speak to them often about being safe. We exercise developmentally appropriate trust, meaning that we trust them to make good decisions about their technology use, while realizing that certain temptations may be too irresistible for them to handle. I often wonder - Are adults modeling safe use for our young people? Hopefully we are not reading messages while driving, for example. After all, a tragedy due to distraction is far more likely than a predator causing harm.

Responsible handling of technology is, and will continue to be, a necessary reality for all of us. At Ashford School, we are going to do even more to assist students and their families with this constantly changing challenge. Next year, every fifth grade student will be taking a course called Digital Passport and every sixth grade student will be in a course called Digital Compass. These courses are focused on developing communication skills, specifically digital media research (reading and listening), and digital media production (writing and speaking). Both courses will include the concept of digital citizenship in order to teach safe, respectful, and responsible use of technology.

While clear rules and guidelines are hard to find, the website <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/> provides some sound advice for families regarding appropriate technology use for children.

When the 2016-2017 school year begins, even more technology-enabled possibilities will exist. Let's confront the challenge together and prepare our children for their futures.

FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Garrett Dukette

As we head into the summer time, I find that our students are full of excitement and energy. Often this leads to positive behaviors within the school environment; however, sometimes our students may find themselves in a difficult situation. Part of our job here at Ashford School is to work with all of our students in developing healthy and responsible habits in regards to their behavior. While every student is different, there are some things that are important to keep in mind as we provide students with the tools to reduce behavior issues.

Being concise and clear is important! Students have a lot on their plates, from their grades, to their activities, to what their peers think of them. When interacting with your child or student, being firm and kind is important; however, you must also be clear and to the point. Tell your student exactly what the behavior was that you did not like. Explain how it made you feel. Help them to see why it was not the best choice to make. Often, I try to use the following phrase with kids... “when you.... I feel... because...” Try it out at home or in the classroom, and you may see some changes in behavior.

Be consistent! Inconsistency is the enemy of positive student behaviors. If you give your child or student a warning, sometimes they will test you to see if you follow through. This is critical. Follow through shows not only that you are consistent, but also that you care enough to hold them accountable.

Give choices! Students, no matter their age, like to feel in control of their life. Think back to when you were a kid and an adult said to you “BECAUSE I SAID SO!” How did that make you feel? Instead of making demands, provide choices. Often this can be done in a way that leads them to what you wanted in the first place. For example, “You can choose to apologize to your sister for hitting her or you can choose to go to bed tonight after dinner.” The choice is clear, for us and for them.

Restore your relationship! No matter how frustrated you may feel, after you've given a consequence, make sure you tell your child or student that you still care about them and that this incident has not changed how you feel about them as a person. Show them that you care, and they won't want to disappoint again.

As with all things, behavior has many different approaches. As we head into summer vacation, try some of these strategies with your students—you may be surprised by the results!

PRE-SCHOOL

Mrs. Longo and Mrs. Lusa

For the second year in a row our preschoolers are learning the importance of bike safety and helping others through participating in the St. Jude Trike-a-thon. The preschool students engage in a weeks worth of short lessons designed to teach them bike safety with characters Bikewell Bear and Pedals Bunny. The students learn to "Always wear your helmet," "Never ride in the street," "Always be careful near driveways," and to "Always watch where you're going." The trike-a-thon itself takes place during the preschool session and students are asked to complete at least two laps around the track, many keep going! Voluntary donations are collected and the students are able to earn prizes for their fundraising efforts. Last year we raised just over \$1,000 to help the kids at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital! This year we are on target to beat our amount from last year! For further information or to donate to St. Jude please visit <https://www.stjude.org/get-involved/at-school/trike.html> or email jadeylongo@ashfordct.org.

KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Connolly, Mrs. Dingler and Mrs. Ross

The end of the year is a very exciting time for Kindergarten students. We are keeping busy by attending several special events.

The Pre-K and K students participate in Activity Day. The students spend half of a school day using motor planning, reasoning skills and cooperation to play games such as Gator Golf. They also work on good sportsmanship and teamwork as they compete in relay race style games. The students enjoy a fun day outside with their friends. They especially love eating a delicious snow cone to cap off the day.

Step Up Day is exciting for Kindergarten students as well. The children visit a first grade classroom to check out the space, meet the teacher and ask questions about what it will be like to be a first grader here at Ashford School. They are often relieved to find out that many things will be the same, such as lunch routines and attending beloved specials.

Each Kindergarten class hosts an End of the Year Celebration to honor the learning and friendships that have developed throughout the year. Families are invited to come show support for their children and to strengthen a sense of community by getting to know one another. Things to see at the celebration may include a slideshow of pictures taken

throughout the year, projects and books students have made, class yearbooks and displays about what students will be doing over the summer. This event helps ease the transition of ending the school year for children, families and teachers alike by celebrating many remarkable accomplishments.

Kindergarten students, staff and families will squeeze every bit of learning and fun out of the remainder of the school year. It is so gratifying to reflect on the immeasurable progress that the students have made this year. They're ready to fly! ☺

FIRST GRADE

Ms. Benton, Mrs. Horn and Ms. Marshall

First grade celebrated Earth Day with second grade on April 15th. Students participated in four different activities throughout the day. Some activities included planting, crafting, designing, and outdoor explorations. It was a day full of learning and fun! On May 9th, first grade went to LegoLand. We participated in a workshop called Spinning Tops. In this exciting workshop students built Lego spinning tops, collected data on whose design spun the longest, while also learning about the forces that affected their tops performance. We were very excited for the opportunity to have taken learning outside of the classroom. Thank you again to the PTO for supplementing the cost of this field trip.

First grade teachers want to thank all parents for their continued support in making this a very rewarding and successful year.

SECOND GRADE

Miss Anderson, Mr. Busse and Mrs. Wood

Second graders have had a busy spring. April was spent learning about measurement in math and celebrating National Poetry Month in reading and writing. Students read well-known poems and crafted many of their own. They are now studying how to write opinion pieces and will wrap up the year with animal reports to coincide with our trip to the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Rhode Island. In addition to our field trip, students are looking forward to our annual second grade spelling bee, SWINGS Jr., and many other end-of-the-year festivities.

THIRD GRADE

Mrs. Klock and Mrs. Turcotte

Ashford School's third graders have been super busy learning! We are studying measurement in math. Students were given their own wooden ruler, which we color-coded by inch, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. We will continue with our measurement unit for the next couple weeks by studying volume! The end of the year will finish out with review, testing, and mastery celebrations!

We visited Wickware Planetarium at ECSU as an end of unit culminating experience. The planetarium visit was a show about the planets, the orbital paths and constellations. Dr. Zoran

Pazameta, Professor of Astronomy and Physics and Director of Robert K. Wickware Planetarium hosts our third graders each year free of charge. What a great way to share his passion for astronomy. We had a blast!!!

FOURTH GRADE

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

Fourth grade has been very busy. We have been working hard on our writing. Each fourth grade class has sent out a class book to be published and all fourth graders will be published authors! Next school year these books will be available to be checked out of our school library.

Students also spent the month of April studying a famous person of their choice. They read biographies and researched their chosen person. Each student then dressed up as their chosen person and gave a presentation as if they were the famous person. Presentations were wonderful; students had creative costumes and props to use throughout their presentations.

As we quickly approach the end of the year we will be taking several field trips to bring our learning outside of the classroom. We will be going to the Old State House to learn about government and how laws are made. We will also be going to the Eli Whitney Museum to build a camera obscura and learn about energy at the Energize CT Center. Our last two field trips focus on coastal eco systems where we will observe animals at Mystic Aquarium, explore the eco system at Bluff Point and finally from a boat through the Thimble Islands.

FIFTH GRADE

Mrs. Burnham, Mrs. Craven and Mr. Horn

Fifth graders were involved in a mini-STEAM unit this trimester. The unit was inspired by an eesmarts essay contest. Eesmarts is an energy education learning initiative sponsored by the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund. The contest presented a unique opportunity for students to enhance their skills in writing, math, technology and science as they explored renewable, efficient energy technologies. The fifth grade contest required the students to write a book review on The Lorax by Dr. Seuss. Students began by examining the theme and messages of the text. In science class, students brainstormed related issues such as deforestation, pollution, recycling, etc. Ms. Aubrey, the Spanish teacher, was able to arrange for us to Skype with Dr. Guerrero-Murillo, Conservation Specialist with USDA. Students learned about how the Native American community of San Juan in Michoacan, Mexico adapted to dislocation due to a volcano, how poverty affects land use in developing countries and how the Tarrascan community of San Juan has developed sustainable forestry management practices to provide economic development opportunities to their community. Additionally, Dr. Michael Dietz, director of project NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials) and parent of a fifth grader, came in to teach the students about rain gardens. Project NEMO provides information, education, and assistance to local land use officials and other community groups on how they can accommodate growth while protecting their natural resources and community character. Students used the Rain Garden app to learn about installing, designing, and maintaining a rain garden in an effort to make a positive impact on

their environment. Students installed the rain garden in the parking circle behind the school for all to enjoy. In writing class, students used their learning experiences to write powerful book reviews on The Lorax. One of our fifth graders, Nora Brown, was selected as the fifth grade first prizewinner and recently went to an awards ceremony at the State Capitol. We are proud of all of our fifth graders and our school!

SIXTH GRADE

Ms. Compton, Mrs. Knotts and Mrs. Mielniczuk

Sixth graders were busy inside and outside of school working on their independent book projects, Bag-a-Character, and Science Night experiments. With the Bag-a-Character, students created the main character from their book with a paper bag and then wrote about character traits, conflict, theme, etc. Students chose the experiment of their choice to perform and show results, and they will display their work at Science Night on May 19th. In math, students are working on rate with a culminating project of planning a party. Lastly, in social studies, the sixth graders have been very busy making booklets about an African country and most recently have created paper mache African tribal masks about the different cultures of different countries. They will teach some 2nd and 3rd grade classes about the cultural values in those countries. It's been a very productive and busy spring in sixth grade.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES

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

Social Studies

Mrs. Bryce

After reading *Uprising* in language arts, eighth graders have continued to research immigration and industrial working conditions in early 1900s America. Students are working on projects in which they write journals, gather collections, and create maps and documents to tell the story of an immigrant's experience. Encouraged by the wonderful storyteller Carolyn Stearns, we have been highlighting personal family histories as part of our involvement in EASTCONN's Waves of History grant. Students enjoyed their visit to the Windham Textile Museum and the low ropes course at Goodwin Forest for team-building activities with our Burr School partners.

This spring, seventh graders have been learning about Ancient Greece and Rome. A presidential election year is an opportune time to discuss Greek democracy and the Roman republic. Students have been making insightful connections about politics and government. They have also been applying the arts in social studies as their unit culminated in illustrating a favorite Greek god or goddess and creating a Roman-like mosaic. Students have been examining life in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and will be introduced to the physical and cultural geography of Asia by the end of the school year.

Science

Ms. Manfre

In seventh grade science, the students are studying waves and information processing. The students just completed projects where they showed off their creative or musical sides to create wave models. Ask your child how they showed wave patterns through a model!

In eighth grade science, the students are studying bridge design and forces. The students will design websites for their engineering firm and try to build the strongest and most efficient bridge.

Math

Mrs. Backhaus

Grade seven students have just completed a unit on percentages. The focus was using percentages to solve problems involving interest, discounts, tips, and general percent of numbers. Seventh grade students will now move on to analyzing data using box-and-whisker plots and histograms. Particular emphasis will be made on comparing sets of data using these two representations.

Eighth grade students are presently studying rules of exponents both in algebraic and numerical expressions. The primary application of these rules has been using them in writing very large and very small numbers in scientific notation.

Language Arts

Mrs. Lindsay

In language arts, the seventh graders are wrapping up their 1930s and Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry unit with a fun event! On Friday, May 20, they will host fourth graders in a series of 1930s-related activities. Fourth graders will be invited to try food prepared according to 1930s recipes, and play games like marbles, jacks, and Monopoly. They might learn dances, shop in a 1930s general store, and watch clips from student movies about *Popeye*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and more! We look forward to sharing our learning with our friends in fourth grade.

Eighth graders are reading To Kill a Mockingbird. When we finish the novel, we'll watch the award winning 1962 version starring Gregory Peck and a very young Robert Duvall! If you have not read this wonderful story, please share it with your student now.

Writing Lab

Mr. Kiefer

Students in Writing Lab have been busy delving into our argumentative unit! We started off the trimester by researching a number of topics of debate; after students conducted their research, organized their arguments, and demonstrated understanding of both sides of the issue, each student participated in a debate, arguing for one of the sides to their topic. This served as the perfect introduction to argumentative writing, which we have been practicing in

our responses to a number of different articles, ranging from discussing the societal impact of video games to whether or not the income disparity between female and male athletes is fair.

SPANISH

Ms. Rhubin

In the Spanish classroom, the eighth graders have just completed a Spain project. Each student chose a place to visit and wrote a summary in Spanish of their trip, including what souvenirs they would have purchased. If only we could visit for real!

The seventh graders are studying Puerto Rico. We are learning how to say lots of activities that we would do on a vacation, in a classroom, or in our daily lives.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS

Miss Dotson and Miss Silverstein

The Ashford Music Department has had an eventful spring season! On April 14th select sixth, seventh, and eighth grade musicians presented the 10th Annual Small Ensemble Concert. Students worked very hard to prepare for this night of small ensembles featuring songs from Pirates of the Caribbean, Harry Potter, Pentatonix, and many more! Through concert donations and our Penny War, students raised a record \$1,178.23 in support of our neighbor The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. Mr. Dukette helped us raise this record amount of money by offering to shave his head if the students won the Penny War. Last Friday the whole school watched as eighth grader Nate Kennedy shaved Mr. Dukette's hair! We are thankful to have such outstanding support from our community. Please join us on May 26th at 7:00 p.m. for the Spring Concert.

PE

Mr. Hollister and Miss Noheimer

This trimester in PE & Health students are recognizing the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction. Students are enjoying lifetime activities that are improving children's health and self-esteem while building strong interpersonal skills!

ART

Mrs. Truskoski

First off, let's congratulate eighth grade's Ryan Ignatowicz, fifth grade's Alison Bean, and second grade's Aerian Cooper for having their artwork accepted into UCONN's Connecticut Student Writer's Contest publication! This was a statewide competition with over 200 contestants, and Aerian Cooper's work will be showcased on the cover. I am so thrilled to see their hard work recognized.

In the art room, all students have been producing skilled artwork, in addition to learning about how to communicate about art. By focusing on art literacy, our students have been able to more successfully evaluate and articulately analyze their own work, as well as each other's.

PreK-Kindergarten recently completed their country frogs, as inspired by the picture book *City Dog, Country Frog*, and have moved on to more color mixing and drawings inspired by the book *Birds and Dinosaur, Dinosaur*.

First and second graders have become author/ illustrators, developing storyboards that make Common Core ELA connections, while learning to handcraft their own books.

Third graders have been building their drawing skills, learning about perspective line, pattern and architectural elements.

Fourth grade continued their pottery unit, scaffolding their knowledge of hand building with clay through the creation of animal pinch pots.

Fifth and sixth grade completed their peace posters and learned to respond to conflict through art, and have begun a Mexican folk art unit (fifth), and clay hand building techniques as inspired by the artist James DeRusso (sixth).

Seventh and eighth graders just completed a two-point perspective-drawing unit and learned about eco-building and sustainable architecture.

SCIENCE AND ENRICHMENT

Miss Imhoff

Spring is an exciting time in the science enrichment room. We've been getting outside more to explore the nature trail and the greenhouse. Speaking of the greenhouse, feel free to visit and see the different fruits and vegetables that are growing inside. There are lots of ways to explore science this spring. Family Science Night is at 6:00 p.m. on May 19th and there will be lots of hands-on stations to explore including different applications of robotics. And, don't forget to wish our robotics teams luck; their last match is next week.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS (SPECIAL)

Mr. Kiefer and Mrs. Preston

This trimester, students in first and second grades have worked with students in fifth through eighth grades on a number of exciting projects! We practiced sign language with a number of fun songs, learning how to sign different colors, animals, and foods. We celebrated National Poetry Month by studying rhymes and word families, reading Dr. Seuss, and having students write and illustrate their own poems. Students also had a mini-unit on sea creatures, allowing them to practice their descriptive skills with an aquatic-themed Guess Who game, as well as learn about echolocation. Currently, students are working on a zoo unit, mixing and matching different parts of animals to create their own unique creatures, and then writing rhymes, riddles, and descriptions for their new animals, which will be proudly displayed along the walls of Ashford School.

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (SPECIAL)

Mrs. Preston

We have been experimenting with Tinkercad to explore 3D design. We have also used Scratch to try some simple programming and Lightbot to complete Hour of Code. We have improved our online reading skills using the Read Theory website and used our Google Apps to complete presentations and writing projects.