

**West Elementary BOE Report from Principal Amy Flinn and West Items for the Good
January 3, 2024**

Enrollment:

No Change:

Third Grade: 123

Fourth Grade – 104

Fifth Grade – 128

Total – 355

New Students: 1 Third Grader

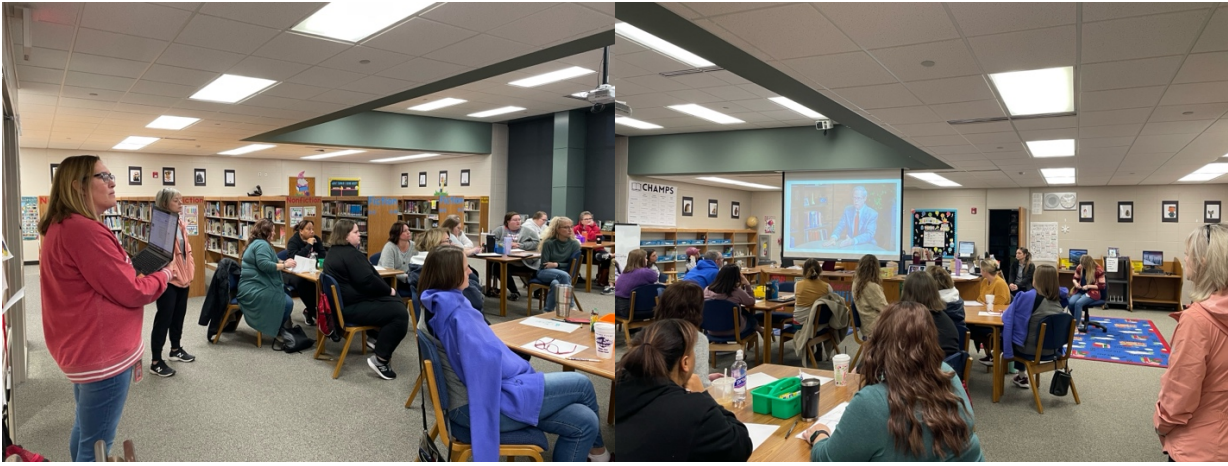
Withdrawn Students: 1 Third Grader

West Building Leadership Team Updates

On Thursday, January 4, the members of the West BLT provided training to both classified and certified staff on a variety of topics to kick off the second semester of the school year.

Amy Flinn, Robin Butler, Penny Graber, Kaycee Bieberle, and Alyssa Smith provided **“Behavior Strategies and Relationship Building”** for all classified staff (aides, instructional aides, paras, office staff, and nursing staff) from 8:00-10:00am. This training was geared toward those that work closely with students, but who have the least amount of training in education. We focused on *Relationship Building Strategies, Positive vs. Corrective Feedback and Blending the Two, Discipline through Shared Control, Trauma Informed Responses, Dynamics of Co-regulation, and Expectations for Supervision of Students*. Staff engaged in several activities to increase their knowledge and develop their skill set and were provided with several resources to use in their work with students.





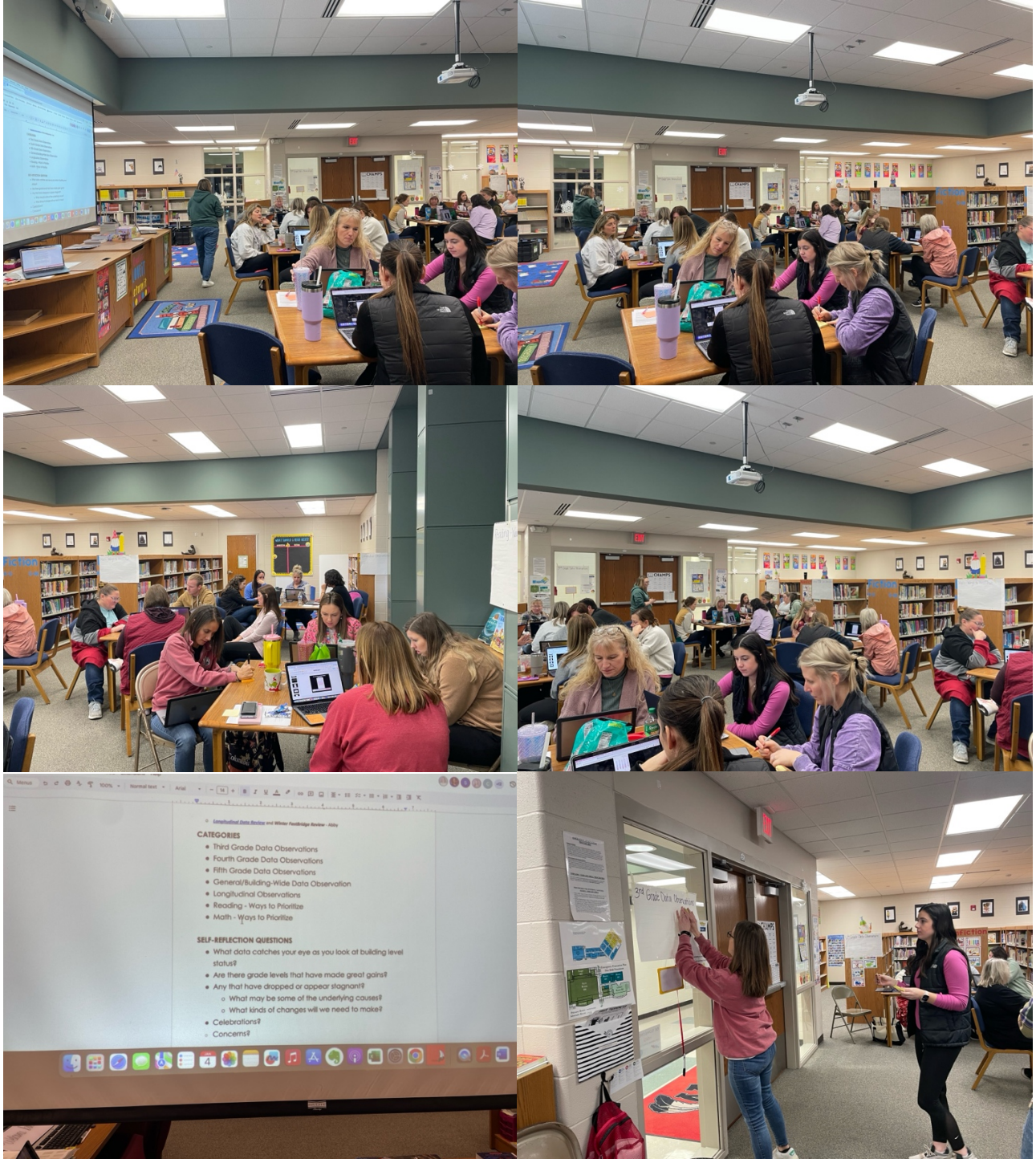
At 10:30am, additional members of the West BLT presented to the entire staff at West on the following topics: *Longitudinal Data Review*, *Winter FastBridge Data Review*, *Relationship Building Strategies to Improve Behavior*, and *Chronic Absenteeism*. Those that presented included Amy Flinn, Abby Ross, Robin Butler, Penny Graber, Jennifer Blume, Emily Ruby, and Stacey Hirt.

We began by completing an “inclusion” activity and regrouped so that staff members were sitting with a mixture of other staff and not just with their current PLC teams. These are strategies we have learned as a DLT through the Adaptive Schools Training with Dr. Kelly Gillespie. We then spent some time reviewing our data from FastBridge, both from the winter testing window, as well as longitudinally. Groups of staff spent time writing down what stood out to them for each grade level and the content areas of reading and math, and then discussed what should be prioritized moving forward. Teams wrote these thoughts on sticky notes and placed them on chart paper strategically placed around the room. We then completed a “gallery walk” where each team viewed the notes collected for each area and had the opportunity to add to the list of noted items. We have MUCH to celebrate with respect to our data from this winter! Specifically, some celebrations worthy of noting include the following:

- Third Grade CBM scores went from **65% to 70%** at benchmark!
- Third Grade Reading Accuracy scores went from **82.4% to 95.1%** of all students reading accurately this winter!
- Third Grade aReading scores went from **77% to 79%** at benchmark.
- Third Grade aMath scores went from **81% to 86%** at benchmark! ***This is OUTSTANDING!***
- Fourth Grade CBM scores went from **57% to 60%** at benchmark!
- Fourth Grade Reading Accuracy increased from **92.3% to 94.1%**!

- Fourth Grade aReading increased from **69% to 70%** at benchmark.
- Fourth Grade aMath increased from **73% to 77%** at benchmark – almost to our goal!
- Fifth Grade CBM scores went from **60% to 62%** at benchmark.
- Fifth Grade Reading Accuracy increased from **90% to 96.8%**!
- Fifth Grade aReading went from **70% to 72%** at benchmark!

To view our comprehensive data review, click the following link: [West Elementary Data Review – Winter 23-24](#)





Special Education Numbers at West Elementary:

I felt that it was important to make sure you all are aware of the demands our Special Education Teachers are under this year. We currently have the following numbers of identified students at West:

- ***Third Grade - 17***
- ***Fourth Grade - 18***
- ***Fifth Grade - 36***
- ***Total - 71, with 3 active evaluations going on right now!***

By teacher, they have the following caseloads:

- Mrs. Beachler - 23 - Testing 1
- Ms. Garrett - 17
- Mrs. Graber - 13 - Testing 3 (All Behavior Needs)
- Mrs. McCarter - 20 (All High Needs)
- Mrs. Moody - 47 (Includes West, WMS, and 2 at WHS)
- Mrs. Julie Meinhardt (EL) - 42 - Testing 8, 4 of whom are at West (Includes Central, West, and Rock Creek)
- Mrs. Roberts (PT) - 57 (Includes Wamego, Rock Creek, and Wabaunsee School Districts)
- Mrs. Marfield (OT) - 50 (includes West, Central, WMS, and WHS)

We are currently evaluating or have evaluated the following this year:

- ***Third Grade - 3 (2 of these for EL)***
- ***Fourth Grade - 5***
- ***Fifth Grade - 6 (4 of these for EL)***

We have an amazing Special Education PLC Team at West! These staff work so hard every day to support our students. In addition to providing daily instruction, they also are responsible for writing all IEPs, writing quarterly progress reports, evaluating new students and completing re-evaluations for three-year IEPs, and supervising para-educators! We are still short paras and will be even more so after break! I continue to work on creative ways to provide para support and we are leaning into our West Volunteer Program to help with this need.

West Elementary Items for the Good – January 4, 2024

- **MTSS Team Professional Development Update:**

Sara McCarter has been attending KSDE's Structured Literacy Intervention book study. Each week, there is a different focus based on the book *Structured Literacy Interventions: Teaching Students with Reading Difficulties, Grades K-6* edited by Louise Spear-Swerling. This has been a great book study to talk about the strategies that are being used with other teachers in the state and work to improve reading with others.

- **MTSS Team Data Update:**

The MTSS team has worked towards setting oral fluency goals for individual students on our data collection website, FastBridge. Any student receiving additional support in the area of reading is progress monitored once a week or once every other week, based on their tiered performance. Each intervention teacher meets with our students individually to share their growth and successes on FastBridge data. We find great motivational value in sharing this data with students.

One of our goals for last year and this year was to include classroom teachers more in the collaboration of reviewing this data and develop a plan to review it more frequently. Our teachers have always looked at the benchmark data, but now follow a collaborative calendar to look at every student's progress monitoring data during their weekly PLC teaming meetings. Teachers and interventionists are diving into individual student data to look at progress monitoring, benchmark data, and time-series data. Since we have multiple years of data on FastBridge, teachers can look at data longitudinally. This ability has been very valuable to make data-informed decisions. If the data shows that students are not making adequate progress, the team has a problem-solving process to determine next steps. All decisions we make for our groups are based on this data.

- **West Identifies Top Spellers for 2024 Spelling Bee:**

We want to congratulate our Spelling Bee finalists for the West School Spelling Bee scheduled for Tuesday, January 9. Parents/guardians of contestants are welcome to join us for the contest. We will hold our Spelling Bee in the West Gym starting at 1:10pm.

This year, as we have done for the past several years, we have selected our top spellers in our school to participate in the School Spelling Bee. The students selected spelled a minimum of 20 words correctly out of a 30-question spelling test. All Third, Fourth, and Fifth Graders had the opportunity to participate in the spelling competition to make it to the final Spelling Bee. Our top two winners will get to attend the County Spelling Bee scheduled that will be held in Wamego sometime next month.

Spellers will have to spell words correctly and participate in a vocabulary piece to the competition, just as they will at the County Spelling Bee and beyond. Thank you to our Spelling Bee Coordinator, Librarian/Technology Teacher, Hallie Hatfield, and to all of our judges for the Bee - Abby Ross, Adina Van Os, and Amy Flinn. Mrs. Flinn will also serve as the pronouncer for the Bee.

We plan to Zoom the Spelling Bee to our classrooms only so that other students/staff may watch when it works for them. Other students not in the Bee will not be in the gym for the actual Spelling Bee.

Congratulations to these finalists for our school: Nolan Aldridge, Sam Beaubien, Camden Bellinder, Kristian Dugan, Nia Dugan, Ivy Feathers, Joseph Fry, Caden Herman, Karody Hirt, Ady Hudson, Macy

Johnson, Levi Lancaster, John Massieon, Andrew Norris, Bo Price, Lincoln Ralston, Elijah Ramirez, Amelia Risser, Lucas Rowe, Emmalyn Sampson, Destin Schultz, Isabella Scott, Gentry Utley, Madison Walsh, Sadie Williams, and Emmalee Woody.

- **WHS Junior, Gemma Hovind, Presents to West Elementary Top Spellers on Tuesday, December 12:** The West Elementary School Spelling Bee Finalists had the amazing opportunity to learn from a champion speller on Tuesday, December 12. Gemma Hovind, WHS Junior and multi-year USD 320 Spelling Bee Champion, Pottawatomie County Spelling Bee Champion, and State of Kansas Fifth Place Spelling Bee finalist, presented to our top spellers on how to prepare for a spelling bee. Gemma prepared a Google Slide presentation that included tips, tricks, and how to prepare to do the very best in this competition. Gemma won the School Spelling Bee her Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade years. She also won the County Bee several times and placed fifth at the State Spelling Bee.

Students were highly motivated by this presentation and even shared thought such as, "I feel more confident now to be in the spelling bee!" and "I am so happy that I get to do this now!"

Gemma provided several resources that students can use to study and prepare. A copy of her presentation is attached below.

[Spelling Bee Presentation Gemma Hovind](#)

Congratulations again to our Spelling Bee Finalists! We are so proud of each of you!



- **West Elementary Supports Wamego Christmas Bureau:**

Thank you to all who brought food to support the Christmas Bureau. We had lots of items donated on Thursday of last week to bring our final total to 2,698 items. Here are our final numbers!



- **Third Grade News:**

CKLA Unit 4 - Opinion Writing Piece:

To wrap up CKLA Unit 4, *The Ancient Roman Civilization*, Third Grade students wrote an opinion writing piece. To prepare, students read text about architecture and its contribution to the Roman time period. Students then collected their facts and developed their own opinions, drafted, revised, edited, and wrote a final copy.

Students were graded on a rubric for their ideas, organization, and conventions. Students were able to state an opinion about a topic and were able to support their opinions with reasons from the text. Students were able to connect Rome's contribution to today's world in at least one example in their opinion writing piece.

As a culminating activity to end their Ancient Roman Civilization unit, students created and designed a mosaic picture. In Rome, mosaic art was used to decorate mausoleums, churches, and other important buildings.



Science – Animals Through Time:

In Science, Third Grade students have been learning about *Animals through Time* in our latest unit. In this unit, students develop an understanding of how animals and their environments change throughout time. Students were able to see how fossils provide a window into the animals and habitats of the past. Students were also able to analyze the traits of animals to see how these provided evidence for how those traits vary, how they are inherited, and how they have changed over time. Students also examined how the environment can affect inherited traits and determined which animals will survive in a particular environment. Third Grade students enjoyed lots of hands on activities during this unit!



CKLA Unit 6 – Light and Sound:

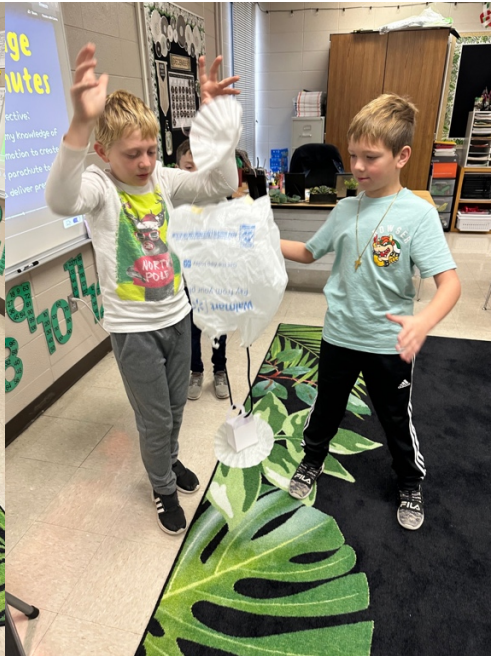
Third Grade students began their newest CKLA Unit 6, *Light and Sound*, in late November. In Unit 6, students were introduced to both light and sound. During the first part of the unit, Third Graders focused on learning about light sources, shadows, mirrors, reflections, refractions, lenses, and color. Students completed a variety of hands-on activities that allowed them to examine light in the classroom. Students also learned about the properties of light, how light travels in waves, and how light can be manipulated by various instruments such as magnifying glasses, microscopes, and telescopes through nonfiction text and fiction stories. Throughout this unit, Third Graders have had multiple opportunities to focus on reading, fluency, accuracy, comprehension, spelling, grammar, and morphology. Third Grade students have also had multiple opportunities to write in a variety of ways and for different purposes.

Third Graders Study Scientific Process with Package Parachutes:

To end the semester, Third Graders learned about the Scientific Process through a STEM activity. They used this new knowledge to create parachutes for packages. The students assumed the position of Santa's elves and helped create parachutes that could safely deliver presents dropped from Santa's sleigh down to the little boys and girls on the "nice list".

Students watched a video to gain a better understanding of how parachutes work. Then they discussed how they could create a parachute with a limited number of materials. After drawing a model of the parachute they imagined, they listed out the supplies needed, wrote down a procedure to plan the project, and built a parachute in groups of three students. Students used communication skills and teamwork to build a successful parachute as a group.

On Wednesday, December 20, students tested out their parachutes! The parachute was attached to a small package that was dropped from six feet. Students recorded the time it took for the package to hit the ground. Between trials, students modified their parachutes to hopefully increase flight time. After three trials, the students reflected on their project with their groups.



- **Fourth Grade News:**

- **CKLA Eureka Student Inventor - Unit 4:**

Fourth Grade students are diving into the CKLA Eureka Student Inventor Unit 4, where they become inventors analyzing the world, identifying problems, and creating solutions. It's an interactive

experience with collaborative discussions and challenges guided by teacher and inventor-judges like Thomas Edison and George Washington Carver.



Gift of the Day Celebration: Spread the Joy of Giving:

In December, our Fourth Graders embraced the joy of giving. Each student was encouraged to bring a wrapped gift bag or box with a thoughtful item for each classmate. These homemade, low-cost gifts were celebrated daily as our "Gift of the Day."



- **Fifth Grade News:**

- **Gratitude Activity:**

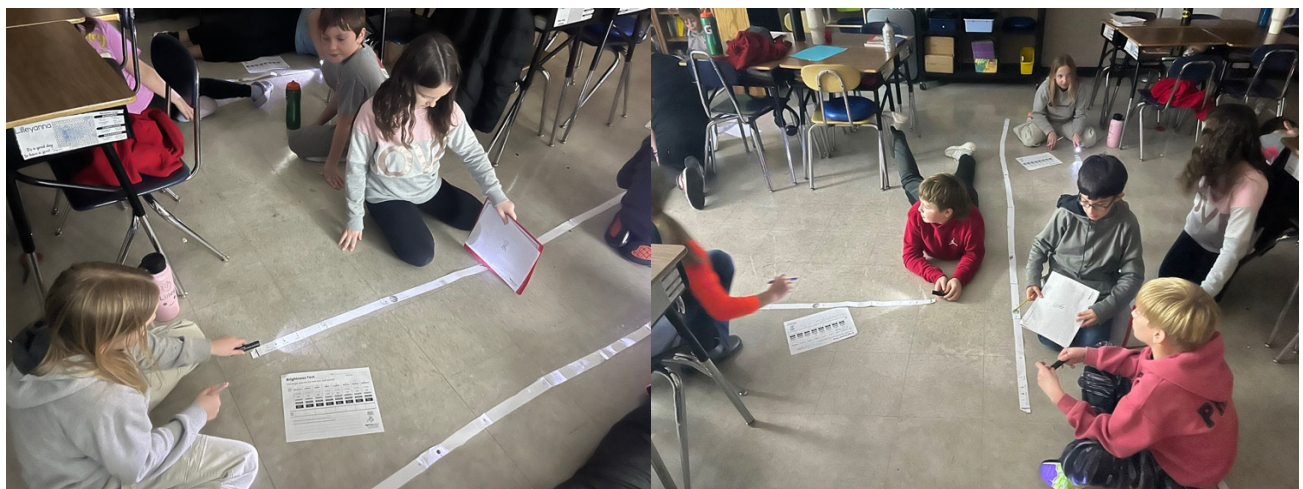
Fifth Grade students took time learning about gratitude and reflected on people, places, and things that they are grateful for this time of year. Some classes focused on a gratitude countdown and had a gratitude focus for the day. Other classes created a gratitude tree with ornaments that had things students were thankful for on them. Another class created a gratitude paper chain and for each link, students wrote a person, place, or things they are grateful for depending on the category or prompt they were given.

Students also worked to create compliment gifts for their classmates. They focused on character traits of six of their classmates and created compliment gifts for their peers. This was a fun activity that got students thinking at a deeper level. They could not simply write “you are nice”. They were challenged to write detailed compliments that you might not always receive. Students had a lot of fun with this challenge and the opportunity to be creative with creating their gifts!



Fifth Graders Study Space in Science Class:

In the month of December, Fifth Graders learned all about space! We did various activities to help us picture ourselves on different planets and understand a little more about space. We even learned about gravity on planet Earth versus on other planets and moons. Students discovered that gravity exists on other planets and moons, but it might be a different amount than what is on Earth. For one of our last activities, students were given the task to jump three times and measure how high they jumped. Then, they were given various planets and moons that have different amounts of gravity and had to see how high they would jump. Students really enjoyed seeing how high they would jump on some planets/moons and how little they would jump on others!



- **News from West Specialized Staff for December 2023:**

Art News:

As we near Winter Break, the students at West Elementary have been working on finishing up their projects in art class. Fifth Graders are busy working on completing their Henri Matisse inspired cut paper collages with gluing their pieces to a backing sheet. Once the pieces are attached, they will have the option to add design bands with markers around a few shapes to place an emphasis on certain pieces.

The Fourth Graders have been busy with creating a plan for adding color to their Robert Indiana inspired kaleidoscope name designs. They will be adding color once their plan is in place with a variety of marker colors.

Third Graders have been busy with drawing their sunflowers for their Vincent VanGogh inspired sunflower variety still-life. After working with several different styles of sunflowers, they are working on a plan for adding watercolor paint to their pictures.

Counselor News:

During the month of December, all students finished Unit 2: Emotion Management during our Second Step lessons. During counseling lessons, the students all learned how the brain works when we have strong emotions. Understanding how the brain works helps us understand how calming strategies can help.

We finished up our time in December finishing our missions in Xello. We will be using the information learned as we prepare for our career project that will be completed next semester.



Second Step Unit 3 will begin the second week of January. Student lessons will focus on the importance of engaging kind acts and empathy.

Explore News:

In Explore class, we have been studying the plant life cycle in preparation for our aeroponic tower garden experience. Fifth Graders are creating stop motion animations of a plant life cycle. Fourth Graders have studied the lifecycle and were able to experience an augmented reality version of the lifecycle of a bean plant. Third Grade completed a seed dissection and learned about the aeroponic gardens at AT&T park, the home of the Giants major league baseball team. Our seeds have begun germinating and we are looking forward to transplanting them onto our Tower Garden soon.

Library News:

In Library class, students have been brushing up on their understanding of subject classification and information location in libraries. They have practiced using the catalog to find titles that they like and have completed a scavenger hunt to locate books using their call number. We also recognized the 20th anniversary of the poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas", as we read various retellings and compared and contrasted the two texts.

Music News:

The Fifth Grade Music Classes have been busy singing. They continue to work on their concert songs, but also took time to Christmas Carol at our neighboring nursing homes. On December 4, Mrs. Beason's class sang at Vintage Park and Mrs. Townsend's class sang at Valley Vista. On December 5, Ms. Hirt's class sang at Vintage Park and Mrs. Rowe's class sang at Valley Vista. On December 13, Mr. Eckart's class sang at Grandview Suites Assisted Living. On December 19, Mrs. Price's class sang at Vintage Park.



Third and Fourth Grade classes took some time out from rehearsing their concert songs to sing some Christmas songs, as well.

P.E. News:

During the month of December, we concluded a great first semester by playing 9-Square in the Air. 9-Square in the Air is a favorite, as we usually only pull it out a couple of times a year. It is a survival game that is a combination of 4-square and volleyball and our kids did a great job with it. Additionally, due to the gym floor being re-done, we spent some additional time outside. We were blessed with some mild weather the last week of the semester and I appreciate the kids' flexibility of changing locations and having a great attitude.

Our “P.E. CHAMPS of the month” for December are as follows:

Bo Price
Gentry Utley
Rylan Rhoads
Hayden Jones
Lute Schwartz
Hadlyn Martin

These students all stood out this past month as great classmates during P.E.!

Technology News:

Third through Fifth Grade students started the month of December participating in “An Hour of Code”. Students learned the importance of giving commands in a specific order and most importantly, learned how to strategize before creating a specific code. We ended the month of December by creating a digital holiday card. Students were encouraged to use the knowledge they have learned so far in Google Docs and Google Slides to create their own holiday card and to add to a premade template.

• **Kagan Coaching at West:**

We will offer Kagan Coaching on **Thursday, January 18** and **Thursday, February 22**. All veteran staff need to be coached a minimum of one time. All new staff need to be coached twice (if at all possible). Molly Townsend is our Kagan Coach and does an amazing job of supporting our West Staff with the implementation of Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures. These coaching sessions generally only last about 10-15 minutes. Out of all of our certified staff, 14 have received the Kagan 5-Day Training. Cathy Wilber, Haylee Haynes, Kandy Williams, Jennifer Blume, Emily Ruby, Jacy McIntosh, Sara Greene, Curtis Eckart, Robin Butler, Olivia Garrett, Hallie Hatfield, Jody Havice, Marcia Hermesch, and Skyler Beam are all fully trained!

• **West PTO Updates:**

We will begin the PTO Read-A-Thon on **Thursday, January 25** and end it on **Thursday, February 8**. We will have our Prizes Assembly on **Friday, February 16** (this is a change, as I’m going to a Discipline of Students with IEPs/504s in Lawrence on the **15th**). I am shooting for a 1:20pm start time for the assembly with Fifth Grade reading groups being reduced to 25 minutes - 12:20-12:45 and 12:50-1:15. Please be on time, as we will have to zip through our prizes presentation!

Students will earn a raffle ticket for the prizes for every 20 minutes read. We encourage them to get their family and adult friends to sponsor them as part of the fundraiser, but our focus is on the minutes read for prize tickets! Last year, we raised over \$9,000 for our school with this fundraiser!