

**West Elementary BOE Report from Principal Amy Flinn and West Items for the Good  
September 6, 2023**

**Enrollment:**

Third Grade: 125 – 12 new students; 5 withdrawn  
Fourth Grade – 102 – 2 new students; 3 withdrawn  
Fifth Grade – 128 – 6 new students; 0 withdrawn  
Total – 355

**Out-of-District:**

Third Grade – 3  
Fourth Grade – 5  
Fifth Grade – 11

**New Epson BrightLink Interactive Projectors with Whiteboards:**

The installation of our new “Epson BrightLink Interactive Projectors” with whiteboards is completed! We purchased 16 of these units (one for every classroom teacher; we already had one of these systems installed in a Third Grade classroom). Our teachers are LOVING this new technology that they are using every, single day for instruction. The interactivity is amazing, along with the sharpness of the colors and images. Our teachers are able to annotate on top of any slides they display, and the projectors work extremely well with all of the digital pieces of our new curriculum resources for CKLA and Eureka Math Squared, as well as Mystery Science and our Second Step Social/Emotional Learning curriculum. We are so grateful that we made the decision to move forward with using \$20,000 of our fundraising dollars through PTO and \$15,000 out of this year’s West Capital Outlay funds and next year’s Capital Outlay funds (total of \$30,000) to make this project a reality for our students and staff. This was money extremely well spent! We are excited to have BOE members come visit classrooms in person and see the technology being used.

**Staffing for the Future**

As a district, we must continuously look for ways to ensure we retain our teachers, but also work toward recruiting new teachers for the future. A couple of ways to help with this effort is to host Early Field Experience Students from KSU, as well as Block B Students. We also encourage the acceptance of Student Teachers, where appropriate. I am excited to share that 10 of our current 17 classroom teachers are hosting EFE Students this semester. This class provides an opportunity for future educators to spend time working in schools to ensure they are choosing the best profession for them. They must provide “aide” support 4 hours per week in a classroom. We are excited to host so many preservice teachers at West this semester!

We also are encouraging the mentoring of Student Teachers. We will have three Student Teachers this year – In P.E., we will host Braden Tharman. In Fourth Grade for Second Semester, we will be hosting two KSU students who have worked for us part-time as Para-educators during the time of their schooling at K-State – Kathleen Shepard will be placed with Jacy McIntosh and Saige Halseth will be placed with Sara Greene. We are so excited about each of these student interns!

**West Student Council**

We will be again sponsoring a Student Council opportunity for the students at West Elementary School. This will be the fifth year that we have provided a Student Council in our school to increase students’ leadership opportunities and help them grow in their leadership skills. We generally take about 30 students total from the entire school. Students must submit an application and two letters of reference from trusted adults. Several staff members score the applications based on a rubric and then work to build the StuCo from the list

of applicants. Students may only serve one year on StuCo to give as many students as possible an opportunity to serve. Thank you to Mrs. Haynes, Mrs. Greene, and Ms. Hirt for sponsoring StuCo for our West students.

### **Classroom Walkthroughs**

It has been great to complete walkthroughs in our classrooms this week! It is wonderful to see all of the learning and interactions taking place in the classrooms of all of our staff. Walkthroughs provide an opportunity for administrators to demonstrate instructional leadership, visibility to students and staff, feedback for teachers, and help guide professional development needs for the staff. This year, we are using a Google Form for this process, rather than the eWalkthrough Tool we have used for the past 11 years. The information we are gathering and sharing with our staff is still the same as what we have been sharing through the eWalkthrough form.

### **Eureka Squared Math Update**

Our teachers are really digging into our new math curriculum resource at the elementary level, Eureka Math Squared. All teachers received Day 1 of EM2 Training last May and Day 2 on August 11. We will also be providing Coaching opportunities throughout the school year with dates set for September, November, January, and March. This professional development is critical to ensure our successful implementation of our new math curriculum. Our students are engaged in high quality math instruction daily and we are seeing the benefits of the professional development pay off in daily math instruction and weekly data review by PLC teams.

### **FastBridge Fall Benchmarking Results**

We are so excited to start digging into our Fall FastBridge Benchmarking data to help us guide our instruction for the year. We were especially excited to see the results of our current Sixth Graders, as their results are a direct reflection of the instruction they have received from Central and West Elementary – 86% of our Sixth Graders scored at benchmark or above in math and 81% at benchmark or above in reading! This is outstanding! Another celebration comes in Third Grade – 82% of them scored at benchmark or above in math and 76% scored at benchmark or above in reading! Great job to our Central Staff for getting the students to these levels!

### **Other results:**

Grade 3 – 76% @ benchmark on aReading; 65% @ benchmark on CBM; 82% @ benchmark on aMath  
Grade 4 – 69% @ benchmark on aReading; 58% @ benchmark on CBM; 73% @ benchmark on aMath  
Grade 5 – 71% @ benchmark on aReading; 60% @ benchmark on CBM; 63% @ benchmark on aMath

## West Items for the Good – September 6, 2023

- **Back to School/Open House Night and Parent Night at West for 2023**

We had excellent attendance at Back to School Night with almost 92% attending! Parent Night was up almost 10% this year compared to last year, with 62% attending, overall. Parent Night provides an opportunity for parents to learn more about what to expect from their child's teacher and grade level. Our teachers did ensure that all families had access to the presentations shared by sending these to all "no shows". Our intention was to combine Back to School Night and Parent Night this year to continue to increase our attendance, but our delay on the installation of our new interactive projectors forced us to keep the two events separate again this year. We are hoping to combine these events for 2024.

- **West Elementary Students and Staff to Recognize Patriot Day for 9/11 – Participate in Celebrate Freedom Week and Constitution Day September 18-22**

First thing in the morning on Monday, September 11, 2023, our students and staff will gather at our flagpole at West Elementary to pay our respects and give honor to all impacted by the horrific events of September 11, 2001. Our students at West weren't born yet when the attacks took place. However, we believe it is important to take time to remember and honor all those who lost their lives, as well as their families, emergency response personnel, and our military men and women who have fought and continue to fight to protect us and our freedom.

During the short ceremony, the following information will be shared by Mrs. Flinn:

*On September 11, 2001 (22 years ago today), 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group, al-Qaeda, hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which triggered major U.S. initiatives to combat terrorism.*

*Today, we gather to remember all those who lost their lives as a result of these attacks, including all those on one of the airplanes or at one of the targeted sites, their families and loved ones, all law enforcement and emergency response personnel that were involved, and all those in our military who have fought and continue to fight to protect our freedom and keep us safe. It is important for all of us to remember what happened on that day and to keep the memory of those who perished alive in our hearts. Please join me in a moment of silence to pay our respects. God bless America and may we never forget.*

Following our moment of silence, we will recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing our National Anthem, led by Music Teacher, Marcia Hermesch. We believe strongly that it is important for our students to understand the gravity of what happened and how it has shaped our country and our history.

Sunday, September 17 is Constitution Day. September 18 - 22 is Celebrate Freedom Week. All staff will take time to teach our students about the founding of the United States and its key documents. Emphasis will be given on the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. We are excited to partner with WHS and Mr. Topliff's students this year. The WHS students will be researching and presenting more information to West students on the 6 ideals found in the Preamble of the United States Constitution. They plan to make these presentations on September 19.

May we never forget. God bless the USA.

- **Positive Principal Visits with Mrs. Flinn**

As an incentive to meet class and building-wide expectations, students at West can earn Class Dojo points to receive various rewards. One of these rewards they can select is a “Positive Principal Visit”. This is a time where the child can visit with Mrs. Flinn for generally about 15-20 minutes about anything he/she is interested in discussing. It normally turns out to be a conversation about all sorts of different topics, most specifically about the child and his/her interests. This is one of Mrs. Flinn’s very favorite activities at school and she is promoting this with her teachers to encourage students to request a Positive Principal Visit. This is the fifth year for this project in our school.

- **Class-wide Fluency Work – From West MTSS Team**

After our multiyear work with the ELA TASN team, the Building Leadership Team at West Elementary took a deeper look at how to implement best reading practices as quickly as possible to start the school year. Our staff agreed to implement a class-wide fluency intervention for all three grade levels during the first few weeks of school.

Our Reading Specialist and Title I Interventionist, Abby Ross, created a procedure and schedule for this routine. After formally presenting to the staff, teachers implemented this procedure with fidelity during the daily scheduled intervention time. Students learned the routine, which will be used frequently in small reading groups, CKLA (ELA curriculum), science, social studies, and math.

This fluency routine helped our students ease into the school year and prepared students to perform their best on all oral reading fluency assessments after a long summer break! After several weeks of this instructional routine, our students will be moved to small reading groups based on their fall benchmark screening reading data. These groups can include decoding interventions, fluency support, novel studies, and enrichment reading activities.

- **FastBridge Assessments**

Our students have completed the Fall FastBridge Benchmark Assessments in the following areas:

- FastTrack Math – aMath and CBM Math Automaticity. Not doing CBM Math CAP.
- FastTrack Reading- aReading, CBM Reading English, AUTO Reading (fourth/fifth only)

These assessments will allow us to access the Screening to Intervention (S2i) Reports and use the intervention materials/plans from FastBridge in both reading and math!

To start the year, we will be doing *Class-wide Interventions* for the first two weeks, as shared above.

We plan to progress monitor every Thursday so that we have “fresh data” for any progress monitoring data meetings on Fridays. We’ll be creating a *Collaborative Calendar for Reviewing PM Data and Decision-Making*, just like we did last year. These “data conversations” were some of the most important work we did last year.

Our Reading Mini BLT created the following Reading Protocols after working with TASN last year:

[West Elementary Reading Protocol](#)

[West Elementary Intervention Protocol](#)



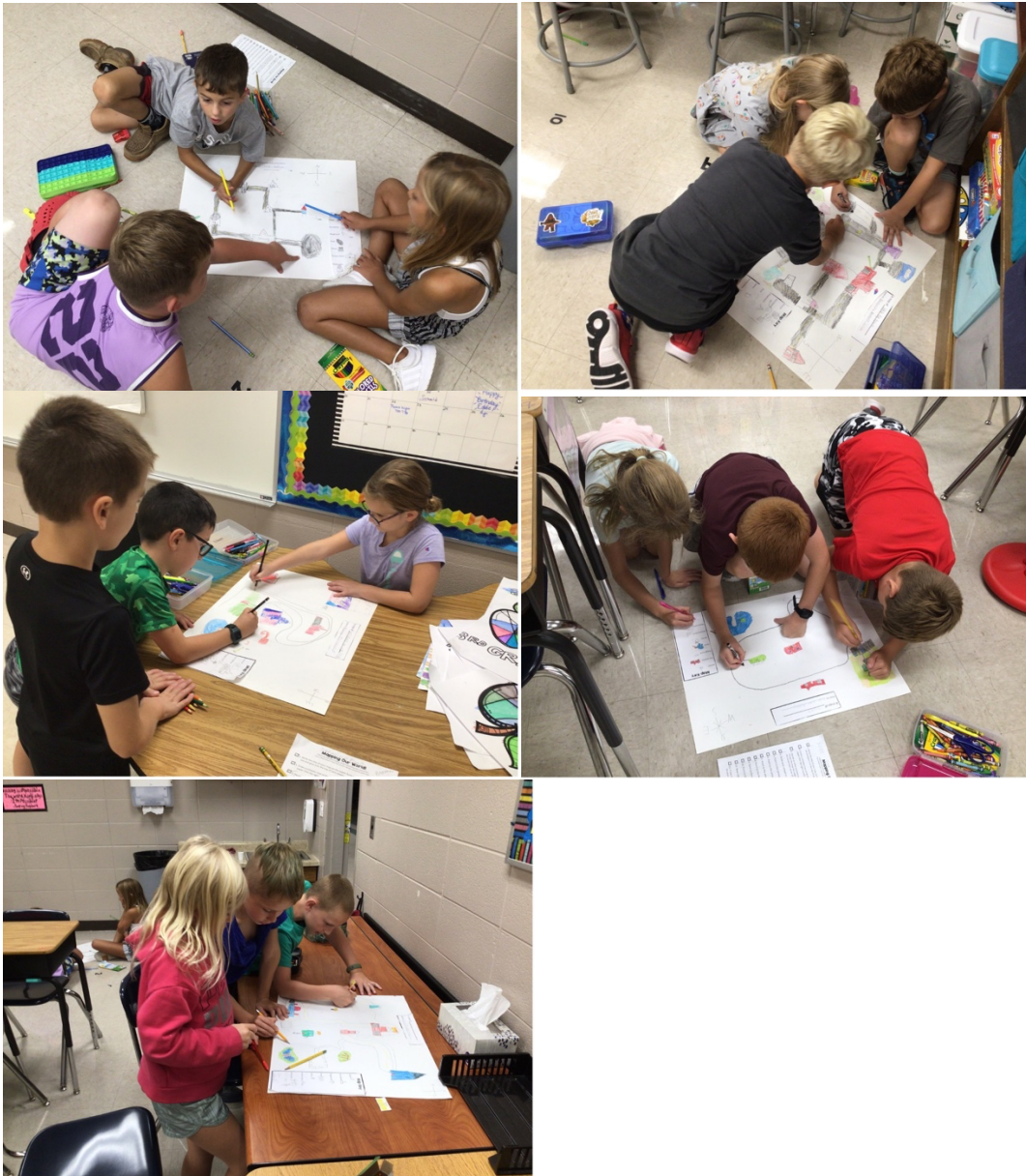
- **Third Grade Team Building Activity**

A new school year means new friendships. A great way to get students to interact with their classmates is a team challenge. The cup stacking challenge helps students see the value in communication, working together, and building trust in each other. The object is for each team to build a pyramid out of their cups. The challenge is the students cannot touch the cups and must hold on to their one piece of string that is attached to a rubber band. Through organization and communication, the teams become successful and extremely proud of their success! It is a fun and interactive way to build relationships at the beginning of the year.



- **Third Grade Explores Maps in Social Studies**

In Third Grade, we learn about maps. We look at all the different parts that make up a map such as: a scale, key, compass rose, etc. Students then create their own maps following explicit directions and placing their buildings based on cardinal directions. To complete the unit, the students use Google Maps on their iPads to look up Wamego and key places in their town. The students had a great time with their partner looking at the shape of our City Park Pond, the words written on the end of our football field end zones, and the name of the river that is south of Wamego.



- **Fourth Grade All about Me Bags**

Fourth Graders created "All About Me" bags to get to know each other better. They filled the bags with five personal items and took turns sharing them. The activity helped students build positive relationships within their new classmates!





- **Fourth Grade Studies Animal Adaptations in Science**

Fourth graders used tools (spoons, toothpicks, chopsticks, and tweezers) to represent bird beaks and found that different beaks worked best for different types of food. This helped them understand how bird beak adaptations allow birds to survive in different environments.



- **Fifth Graders Build Classroom Community through "Pineapple Project"**

During our first week back, Fifth Grade students completed the annual "Pineapple Project". After reading about how pineapples became a symbol of hospitality during sea-going exploration in the 1500s, students were paired up to interview each other. They then created posters with symbols to represent the interests of their classmates to 'welcome' each other to a new class and grade.



- **Fifth Grade Studies Food Chain in Science**

Did you know that racoons eat frogs? Or that crows sometimes steal eggs from other birds to eat? Fifth Graders recently participated in a fun "Food Chain Challenge" game as part of our Ecosystems unit. While reading informational cards to learn about what common North American backyard animals eat, students were challenged to compete and create the longest food chains possible.



- **News from West Specialized Staff for August 2023**

**Art News:**

Hello! It is great to be back at school with the students at West Elementary School. For those of you who are new to West Elementary, I was your child's art teacher at Central Elementary as well. On the days that I am not at West, I work with the students at Central. If you are new to USD 320, welcome! We are happy to have your family as part of our school and community.

We are currently working with Op Art in Grades 3-5 as we work on creating an Art Folder to store the students' artwork during the year. Op Art stands for Optical Illusions and can cause your eyes to appear to play tricks on you based on the type of shapes and colors that are used. The students had four options for their Optical Illusions ranging from wavy lines to bullseyes, to varying thicknesses of lines, to lines resembling an over excited pizza slicer.

Please keep in mind that your child's artwork will be sent home as it is completed during the year. Typically, your child's work will come home in October, December, and in May when we change to a new grading quarter. I only have one time slot thirty-five minutes a week that your child will come for art, so it can take us several weeks to complete a project. When artwork is sent home, you will receive a letter explaining the project along with the student's work in a keepsake construction paper folder.

I look forward to working with you this school year. If you ever have a question, feel free to contact me at [havicej@usd320.com](mailto:havicej@usd320.com).

### Counselor News:

Welcome back for another thrilling and educational school year. I am so happy to see all the students and to meet our current Third Graders and new students.

As we begin our school year together, students are learning and practicing the expectations for the time we get to spend together. This year, I will be supporting the Second Step program during our weekly lessons along with lessons about mindset and self-efficacy. Students will also be working in Xello, an engaging online program that helps students build the skills, knowledge, and plans to be future ready. The program uses an investigative, discovery-based learning process. Students better understand themselves, their future career options, and the 21st century skills they'll need to succeed.

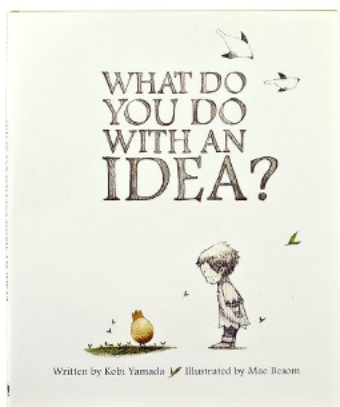
Finally, there will be a mindset theme that will guide our discussions about mindset. Here are our monthly themes for the year.

- September: Everyone Can Learn!*  
*October: My Brain Is Like A Muscle That Grows!*  
*November: I Am A Valued Member Of This Learning Community*  
*December: We Love A Challenge!*  
*January: Feedback Is A Gift--Accept It*  
*February: A Goal Without A Plan Is Just A Wish*  
*March: Mistakes Are Opportunities For Learning*  
*April: There's A Difference Between Not Knowing And Not Knowing Yet!*  
*May: I Got This!*

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions at [butlerr@usd320.com](mailto:butlerr@usd320.com).

### Explore News:

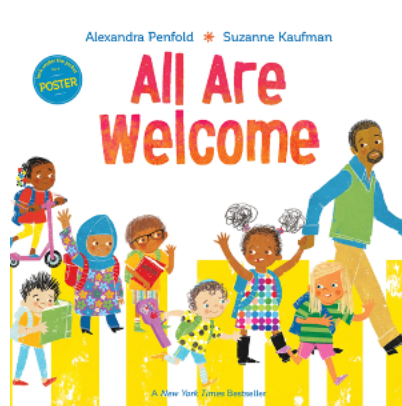
Our Explore class has been focused on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) concepts. Engineers look at simple things in creative ways and think about ways to solve the problems around them. We read *What Do You Do With An Idea* by Kobi Yamada and then students used innovative thinking to come up with all kinds of creative ideas in order to design a 3D name tag using just paper, tape and glue. Check out some of their great ideas!



### Library News:

In the Library we began the year reading *All are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold. We've been focused on making students feel welcome and ensuring they find books that they enjoy for checkout. We've also discussed book care.





### **Music News:**

Welcome back to the music classroom! All our classes have been singing, playing rhythms, and moving. Everyone was able to play an instrument and perform in an ensemble. The following are activities that the students participated in:

1. Operator Operator – Fifth Grade
2. Out Goes the Rat – Fifth Grade
3. Dum Dum Diddy Diddy – Fifth Grade
4. Good Morning – Fifth Grade
5. The Pink Panther – Fifth Grade
6. I Want to Rise – Fourth Grade
7. Shake the Papaya Down – Fourth Grade
8. Get Down – Fourth Grade
9. Bubble Gum, Bubble Gum – Fourth Grade
10. Down to the Bakers Shop – Third Grade
11. Up the Ladder, Down the Ladder – Third Grade
12. Please and Thank You – Third Grade
13. The Golden Rule – Third Grade

Please send recorders to school if you have one at home. If you purchased a recorder at enrollment, those have been distributed to the students. If your child needs a recorder, they can be purchased for \$6. You can send payments to the West Elementary office, or call and make a payment over the phone at 785-456-8333.



**P.E. News:**

In PE during the month of August, we kicked off our year with a Team Building unit. During this unit, we played a variety of games and activities that required teamwork to accomplish a task. During and after the activities, we discussed what it looked like to be a good teammate. Things like listening, cooperation, leadership, and filling the needed role were discussed regularly. The hope is that we can make each student a better team member for the rest of this year and onward in life beyond the classroom.

**Technology News:**

In Technology this month, we have learned classroom expectations while discovering what it takes to make a secure password. Each student is issued a secure password from our district's IT department and they will each create a mnemonic device in order to help them remember their passwords.