

Principal's Report

Amherst School District

School: Clark-Wilkins Elementary School

October 2017

Gerry St. Amand, Nicola Fraley

Elementary School Excellence

- **Collaborative Team Time (CTT):** Grade level teams meet weekly with C-W administration for CTT meetings. The meetings are designed to provide teachers with much needed time for collaboration around data-driven instruction, curriculum work, and strengthening and enhancing tier one of our multi-tiered system of support. Teachers meet during the school day while their students are in their “double special” block. The meetings have been highly productive and have set the stage for the complex and student-focused work that we will collaboratively engage in this year.
- **Assessment:** C-W has wrapped up our fall NWEA (MAP Growth) assessments. All students in grades K-4 completed mathematics and literacy tests in a little over two weeks – quite a remarkable feat given the scheduling, technology, and personnel requirements needed. MAP Growth is designed to measure what students know, and teachers can use the data to plan for future instruction. All assessments are dynamic, which means that they adjust to identify the students current level of knowledge, and understanding and application of concepts.
- **SMILE Day:** On Friday, October 6th all Clark-Wilkins students and staff came together to celebrate SMILE day. Beginning the day at Wilkins with an All-School Assembly that included a skit performed by fourth-grade students and Mr. St. Amand, songs led by Mr. Allwarden, and a slideshow of C-W staff and students sharing their smiles, was terrific. The day proved that we can find very successful ways to unite our two buildings as one to celebrate joy and happiness.

Diligent Fiscal Oversight

- **FY18 Budget:** The C-W leadership is continuing to approve requisitions as they come forward.
- **FY19 Budget:** We continue to work to prepare a comprehensive and fiscally responsible budget that meets the current and project needs of our students and staff.

Inspirational & Effective Teaching

- **Supervision and Evaluation:** As we move out of the “beginning of the year,” teachers and administrators have been engaging in reflective, growth-focused conversations centered around highly effective instructional strategies, student engagement techniques, and excellent teaching. Teachers that have a non-continuing contract or continuing contract educations that are in the third year of the certification cycle will participate in a formal observation before 11/30. Formal observations occur in four phases, a pre-observation conference, a classroom observation, a post-observation meeting, and a written evaluation.

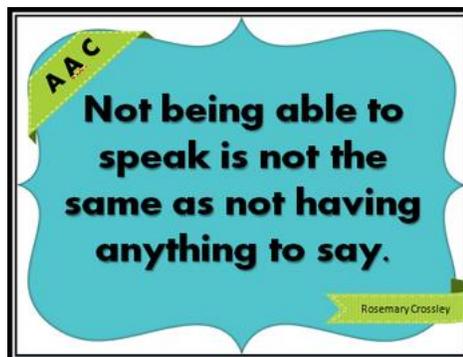
In addition to formal evaluation, all AEA professional staff, regardless of certification cycle or contract type will also experience three unannounced mini-observations over the course of the year.

The Thoughtful Classroom tool and coaching model are being utilized by all professional staff and administrators for all components of the supervision and evaluation cycle.

- **STEM/Humanities Model at Grade 4:** The 2017-2018 school year brought a significant shift in the way that curriculum is delivered to students in grade 4. Students are divided into three teams, each team with two teachers, a STEM teacher and a humanities teacher. The students work with both teachers on a daily basis as they engage in STEM (science and mathematics) and Humanities (ELA and social studies) learning. Each instructional block last just over two hours and provides time for integrated projects and learning opportunities. In addition to the change in the instructional approach, the fourth-grade teachers are also adjusting how they plan for and execute parent-teacher conferences and progress reports. Collaboratively the teachers will prepare documentation of student growth and progress. At conference time teachers will meet as a team with parents to present a complete picture of their child as a learner across the school day.

Innovative Technology Integration

- **STEM Maker Lab:** The newly named STEM Maker Lab used its technology recently in their Global Projects unit. Aerodynamics, momentum, and other physics principles were investigated using online activities and resources. Students grades 1-4 performed a culminating project using these principles and their learning.
- **AAC at Clark-Wilkins**



“Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say.”
~ Rosemary Crossley

October is International AAC Awareness Month!

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to any non-speech form of communication. These would include facial expressions, gestures, sign language, writing or typing text, pointing to/exchanging symbols or pictures, and

activating an electronic speech-generating device. An AAC system may be used when a person is a nonverbal communicator (does not use speech to communicate), a minimally verbal communicator, and/or when a person's speech is unintelligible or minimally intelligible (difficult to understand).

In our Clark-Wilkins School community, we currently have five students who use speech-generating devices as their primary mode of communication, or to supplement their speech. Some of these students use "dedicated devices" that operate solely for communication, while other students use AAC apps on iPads. Another student uses a switch that speaks a pre-recorded message when pressed. Some of these students are currently fairly proficient in using their AAC systems independently for much of their functional and academic communication at school and continue to benefit from speech/language intervention to expand their use of the vocabulary embedded in their AAC systems. Some of these students' independent use of their AAC is currently limited to specific vocabulary and word sequences that are related to highly-preferred activities. Still, others are emerging AAC communicators who are learning to use their system via request-reward interactions. All of these students are continuing to learn how to increase their use of their AAC systems, and thereby their expressive vocabulary and communication, through direct instruction from the Speech/Language Pathologists. Carryover of these communication skills to other settings is facilitated by Paraeducators, Special Educators, Occupational Therapists, the Physical Therapist and classroom teachers. Consultation with an AAC Specialist is utilized as well.

Perhaps one of the most positive benefits of AAC is the social aspect. So many students in the Clark-Wilkins community have experienced having a classmate who uses AAC at some point during their time here. The response of classmates to their AAC-using peers has been overwhelmingly positive. Given permission from classmates' parents/guardians, their photos can be put on buttons on the device, and then the AAC user can activate these buttons to say their classmates' names. The other students usually find it fascinating to see their face on a button in their classmate's device, and to hear their name spoken aloud by the device when that button is pressed. Many students demonstrate great interest in their classmate's AAC system, and in the unique way that their peer communicates. Through having a classmate who uses an alternative way of communicating, children learn that everyone has something to say, and they learn more about their peer's preferences, feelings, and knowledge. In this way, AAC helps to facilitate inclusion in our school community.

Respectfully submitted by the Clark-Wilkins Speech/Language Pathologists:

Meghan Plaisted
Joyce Stickney
Victoria Robinson

SAU #39 Strategic
Planning

- **Current Enrollment at C-W:** As of Monday, October 16, **665** total students are enrolled at C-W in grades PK-4.
Preschool - 35
Kindergarten - 108 Clark Total - 143
First - 139
Second - 116
Third - 134
Fourth - 142 Wilkins Total - 522
Total - 665

Summary of Upcoming
Events

- October 18: Staff Meeting - **Wilkins**
 - October 20: Progress Reports
 - October 25: PMEC Program for Kindergarten Students - "Biome in a Baggie"
 - October 26-November 3: Wilkins Scholastic Book Fair
 - October 27: Birds of Prey - 2nd Grade
 - October 31: Halloween Parties
 - November 2: Parent Conferences
 - November 3: Early Release - Parent Conferences
 - November 9: Veteran's Day Assemblies
Grade 4 Team Geography Bee
 - November 10: Veteran's Day - No School
 - November 16: Picture Re-takes
-