

Williams-Cone School
Principal's Newsletter
October 2013
Randa C. Rineer, Principal



Williams-Cone School 2013 National Blue Ribbon Award Recipient!!!

Last week the Department of Education announced the names of over 230 public schools and 50 private schools across the country that have been named 2013 National Blue Ribbon Award recipients. The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, founded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1982, recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students' academic achievement.

WCS received notification of the award nomination from the Maine Department of Education in December of 2012. What followed was a rigorous application process which included an in depth review of student achievement data, academic programming and

overall student opportunities. The following is an excerpt from the application that was used to demonstrate why WCS was deserving of the Blue Ribbon Award:

"Williams-Cone School (WCS) is one of two elementary schools located in Topsham, Maine. Topsham is a vibrant mixture of rural and neighborhood settings on the mid-coast. The school community has experienced changing demographics resulting from the Brunswick Naval Air Station closure, an expanding business district and increased socio-economic diversity. What sets WCS apart as a strong school community is, in fact the community itself. From playground clean up day to instructional support families, businesses, local colleges and nonprofits partner with us and take a special interest in preparing our children for the future.

Our close-knit community believes in developing the whole child and giving each child opportunities to explore and expand his/her interests, talents and strengths. Each year we work to be a stronger school than the year before, providing a feeling of "home" when you walk through the door. Our community's generous gifts of time, energy and resources help WCS achieve excellence for all."

As you can see, this award is a tribute to our entire community. Thank-you all for helping us to achieve this tremendous honor. However, our work is not done and we must use this award as a "tipping point" for even greater growth and opportunities for our school and community. Community support is needed now more than ever!

-Randa C. Rineer, WCS Principal



Mrs. Rineer and Ms. Dutton, WCS kindergarten teacher, will be attending the National Blue Ribbon Award Ceremony in Washington D.C. in November. Our school's Blue Ribbon Award Committee is planning a school wide Blue Ribbon Award ceremony for later this fall. Other celebratory activities will be taking place throughout the year as well as some potential visits from state and local government. Stay tuned for more details as they become available!

Important Dates

NECAP Testing, Grades 3-6, October 7th through October 23rd

October 10th: Science & Technology Kid's Academy Training, 6:00 P.M., Learning Commons

October 14th: Columbus Day Holiday, No School

October 16th: Parent & Staff Bullying Prevention & Education Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Learning Commons

Scholastic Book Fair, October 21-25th, Learning Commons

October 22nd: Science & Technology General Committee Meeting, 6:00 P.M., WCS Conference Room

October 24th: Playground Dedication Ceremony with The Highlands, 2:00 P.M., Gymnasium

October 29th: FOWC Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Learning Commons

November 2nd: Craft Fair, 9:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M., WCS Gymnasium

November 11th: Veteran's Day, No School

November 15th Picture Day Retakes

November 15th: FOWC Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser & Basket Auction, 5:00-7:00 P.M.

November 26th: Early Dismissal, 11:30 A.M.,

Parent/Teacher Conferences: November 18-26

Thanksgiving Break-No School, November 27-29

Suggestions!!!

The WCS staff and leadership is always looking for ideas and feedback on how we can better meet the needs of our students. To assist us with this, a "Suggestion Envelope" has been posted on the FOWC bulletin board located in the main lobby area. If any parent, caregiver and/or community member has any suggestions for our school leadership and staff, feel free to submit your thoughts. Thanks!

Volunteers helped to clean over 90 laptops. Pictured from L to R: Devan Bailey, Amber Hemond, Diane Bartels, Kate Greely, Elementary Technology Integrator and Bill Stewart.



September Highlights

We have had a fabulous start to the school year! The new playground equipment is a hit with our students and approximately 55% of WCS students participated in the Principal's Summer Reading Challenge. Many thanks to the volunteers who picked up pizza, helped serve the special lunch and/or helped Mrs. Rineer supervise students during the bonus recesses. We had a record turnout for the Open House/Ice Cream Social-in fact, attendance was so great, we ran out of ice cream! Many thanks to the teachers and volunteers for making this special tradition possible. New safety measures have been reviewed and implemented with students including building entry procedures along with several fire drills held in cooperation with the Topsham Fire Department. The first Parent and Staff Bullying Prevention and Education meeting was held as well as a Science and Technology Kid's Academy Informational meeting. Our Children's Garden has been in full bloom and the Children's Garden Kid's Academy also held meetings. Staff continue to review the "Real 3 R's-Rights, Respect and Responsibility" as a framework for our school's social and behavioral expectations.

Academically, all students have been learning and practicing classroom instructional routines including reading and writing workshop and daily math practice. Teachers spent time individually screening each student to determine current reading and math levels utilizing the AIMSWEB progress monitoring system. Additionally, students in grades three through five have spent time reviewing and preparing for the upcoming New England Common Assessment Program that will be administered beginning this week (10/7-10/23).

Science & Technology Kid's Academies

A training meeting will be held on **Thursday, October 10th at 6:00 P.M.** in the WCS Learning Commons for the upcoming Science & Technology Kid's Academy. This Kid's Academy is scheduled to begin the week of October 21st and will have four weekly sessions for students in grades four and five. We hope to be able to offer two sessions per week for the four week period. If you are interested in being an instructor or assisting an instructor, please strongly consider attending this training that will be led by Bill Keleher and Bernardo Feliciano. Also, if you are interested in helping to provide science experiences for students in kindergarten through third grade, please consider attending the training too!

Please also note that the committee will hold its general planning meeting on **Tuesday, October 22nd at 6:00 P.M.** in the WCS conference room.

One final note, you do not need to have a background in science and technology to help lead or support this important initiative. Your interest and desire to help encourage students to explore, expand and develop their interest in science and technology is all that is needed.

Highlights from Mr. John White, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Education's Visit to WCS, September 26, 2013



We were very honored to host Mr. John White, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Education. Mr. White spoke to several grade level groups on September 26th, first congratulating the school on receiving the National Blue Ribbon award but he also talked with students about the importance of education, their personal dreams and aspirations. Students shared with Mr. White

what they like about our school, what makes us a Blue Ribbon School and also sang the WCS song. Several school board members and community members also supported and attended Mr. White's presentations. FOWC and Mrs. Rineer presented Mr. White with a WCS T-shirt, sticker and Maine lobster roll as a token of the school's appreciation for his visit.

New England Common Assessment Program

The NECAP is a multiple choice achievement test in reading and math (Grades 3, 4, and 5) and a written prompt for writing (in grade 5 only). This assessment will be administered October 7th through October 23rd. The questions on these tests are a review of the work that students have been doing over the past year. To show how much students really know, it is important that students try their best. We encourage parents and children to talk about being ready and the importance of "trying to do their best" on this test.

Getting Ready...Tips for students

- Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.
- Eat a healthy breakfast. This will give your brain the energy it needs to do your very best.
- Come to school on time and with the tools that you need. Do you need your glasses or medication?
- Have a positive attitude. Remind yourself that you've studied hard and that you are ready.
- Remember to do your best and to try first and just move on when a question is too hard for you.
- Bring a book to read that you really enjoy
- Bring a nutritious snack
- Bring some extra #2 pencils



Growing readers!

Brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado and LD OnLine

How Parents Can Support the Common Core Reading Standards

The Common Core State Standards are national standards that say what K-12 students are expected to learn in math and the English language arts. For older students, the standards expand to include literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects. Despite the complexities of the standards, there are several basic ways parents can support their child's learning. The recommendations below line up with the four broad areas of the Common Core reading standards: Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Range and Level of Complexity.

Key Ideas and Details

What it means: Your child will be encouraged to carefully read many books and texts. Within these texts, your child will be working to understand what is happening, summarize key events or points and recall details important to the story or topic.

How parents can help: After you share a story, talk about important story elements such as beginning, middle and end. Encourage your child to retell or summarize the reading. After reading nonfiction, ask questions about the information, "Is the spider an insect? How is a spider different than an insect?"

Craft and Structure

What it means: The standards within this area (or "strand") focus on specifics within a book, for example, an author's specific word choices or phrases. A second emphasis relates to understanding the underlying structure of common types of texts, including storybooks, poems and more.

How parents can help: During and after reading, call attention to interesting words and phrases. This may include repeated phrases, metaphors or idioms ("sick as a dog," "a dime a dozen.") Talk about any new vocabulary and other ways the author used language or words to make the text interesting, informative, funny or sad.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

What it means: Within this strand, students will be working to compare and contrast details from stories, describe key ideas using details in informational text, and tell how two texts on the same topic differ.

How parents can help: For younger students, encourage your child to describe how the illustrations within a book support the story. For older students, have fun reading different versions of the same fairy or folk tale. Talk about the similarities and differences between the two books. Then switch to nonfiction and read two books on the same topic. Compare the information in each, again focusing on similarities and differences. "Let's look at each book and think about the words used to describe weather. How are the descriptions alike? How are they different?"

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

What it means: Teachers will be using a variety of techniques to introduce a range of books and other written material that both support and challenge a child's reading level. This may include nonfiction and fiction, info-graphics, poetry and more. This will be done with the ultimate goal of making sure students understand what they're reading.

How parents can help: Parents can help promote their child's skill while developing their reading stamina (ability to "stick with it."). This means helping them avoid frustration or anxiety about tackling a harder book. Support your reader by talking through some of the things that make a text complex, including multiple levels of meaning, inferred information (implied rather than clearly stated) or more sophisticated graphics.