

# PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

## CLARK-WILKINS SCHOOL DISTRICT

September 23, 2019

Anna Parrill Principal

### Clark-Wilkins Updates:

We have had such an exciting start to the school year. I would like to start by highlighting our Open Houses that took place on September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. From the data collected from the teachers, we had 91% of our parents show up for these events. This speaks volumes to the commitment and support afforded us relative to our parents' investment in their student's education. The vibe in the schools was simply electric on both nights. Teachers and students were able to "show-off" the good things that are happening in and out of the classrooms. It was a great opportunity for me to get to meet and greet many of our parents. What a nice way to start our school year.

Another event that took place, during the week of September 16<sup>th</sup>, was the 4<sup>th</sup> grade hike to Miller State Park. On three separate beautiful days, the 4<sup>th</sup> graders, teachers and parents set-off to hike Pac Monadnock together. This is a long-standing tradition that is rich with team building, collaboration, and memory making. As in years past, and this year was no exception, it was a successful rite of passage for our 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

Collaborative Team Time focused on the review of our new professional development tracking software – *Frontline*. Teams reviewed results from the NWEA fluency assessment, reviewed scoring in Empower and continued working on developing grade level playlists to help guide scoring. These meetings were facilitated by Christine Landwehrle. While the work is hard and thought provoking, the staff employed their own productive struggle to make meaningful progress in all areas mentioned. I enjoyed the opportunity to be party to the collaborative dialogue and risk-taking that occurred during each meeting. Through these meetings, we continue to raise the bar for instruction and student learning. I am excited to be a part of the ongoing conversations scheduled throughout the year.

On September 12, 2019, The STARS Program, at Wilkins, had a successful on-site visit from the DOE for the approval of the program. The meeting was led by Meg Beauchamp, Lisa Femia-Hou and the STARS staff. The representative from the state was so impressed with the program that she asked if other towns looking to implement a similar program could come to Amherst to see how it can be done successfully. I would like to congratulate the STARS staff for their dedication and hard work.

During the weeks of September 23rd-October 4th, NWEA testing will be happening across all grade levels. We look forward to reviewing the data and establishing interventions, extensions, and instructional changes, where needed, to best meet the needs of all learners.

## *Goals and Objectives for 2019-2020*

### ***I. To create a positive, healthy and risk-taking school culture:***

This month, we have met with a small committee to improve our student Behavior Form. The language and data collection information is consistent with the tenets of the Responsive Classroom. This tool gives information on observable behaviors, such as time/when/where, strategies used by the teacher consistent with Responsive Classroom, a processing format for the administrator, or counselor, and an area for consequences/next steps for the student/team. This information will be entered into our data collection system, which will allow us to further assess potential areas of the school day where we might need to do more direct teaching in order to remediate behaviors and expectations and improve school culture.

During our next staff meeting, we will review the form and the expectations. The team has prepared simulations and situations for vertical teams to discuss in order to build consensus and a common understanding of behavior expectations and student referrals moving forward.

In collaboration with the behavior referral process, a committee was formed with teachers to form a Positive Behavioral Expectation Plan. The committee will be meeting on Monday, September 23, 2019 to discuss and formulate our plan. The committee's goal is to come up with the school's rules and expectations and make them visible. Secondly, we would put together ways to acknowledge students on a daily basis that are meeting and exceeding those expectations. Potentially, coming up with a plan to acknowledge students monthly who are exhibiting kind and respectful behaviors, showing perseverance in the classroom and engaging in a growth-mindset. Our school mascot, soon to be named, will play a cornerstone role in our school climate and culture initiatives. All of this information will be presented at our next staff meeting in order to garner excitement and support of this Positive Behavior Plan (PBP).

Integral to enhancing a positive student culture is the opportunity for student leadership. Applications have already gone out to interested 4<sup>th</sup> graders to participate in the Principal's Council. To date, students have expressed both interest and excitement in the possibility of participating in this opportunity. With the 4<sup>th</sup> grade team's support, we will be choosing representation from the six classrooms. This group of students will have many opportunities for service and leadership in our school. Their first task will be to oversee the voting processes for identifying a new mascot for our school. The group will meet monthly and will be responsible for setting goals for the year for increasing and leveraging positive school culture. I intend to leverage other student leadership opportunities this year because I believe giving students voice and choice adds to their experience of learning and leading in a positive school culture.

At the start of the school year, we quickly identified the need to revise busing procedures in order to improve the efficiency of arrival and departure times. Additionally, we were clear about our behavior expectations for all students during end of day bus dismissal. As a result, we have noted that students are loading buses 5-10 minutes earlier, and quietly, which has helped with getting them home sooner, while experiencing a calmer bus ride.

On 9/20/19, Michelle Croteau, Business Administrator and bus liaison, along with Deb Decoteau, Butler Bus Coordinator, met to discuss ways in which students' bus rides could be shortened. The goal being to ensure that all buses arrive to school no later than 15 minutes after the last bell. This could shorten some runs by 5 to 10 additional minutes. We will continue to review our data and work collaboratively to ensure students arrive home safely and in a reasonable amount of time. Another area we spoke about was changing the bus referral form to be more philosophically aligned with our expectations and

communication systems. We will continue to revise this process. Additionally, bus behavior will be included in our Positive Student Behavior Plan (PSBP).

***II. To build and leverage positive risk-taking within a collaborative school community that prioritizes and embraces student-centered decision-making.***

As stated last month, we will work to empower all members of our school community to leverage their agency and governance, as we collectively build a stronger, more unified, culture. All teams (Grade level, Special Education, Related Services, Interventionists, and Specialists) have selected one team member to represent their team on a Governance Committee. We have our first meeting on October 3, 2019. I have some questions and items for our first meeting, but I see this group as being responsive to the needs and issues that arise throughout the year. My experience has been that the group helps to lead the culture and raise the bar for improved instruction and student learning. I would look to empower and embrace the energy and leadership opportunities of this group. I am excited to work with this group and grow together. As with the students, giving people a voice and choice helps to improve and grow school climate and culture.

Kristin Morgenstern, Assistant Principal for Student Services, will be coordinating two opportunities for the para-educators to have an opportunity to share and grow in their role with students. The first opportunity is for daily “huddles” at the end of the day with the Special Education teacher with whom they work. This allows for continuous communication regarding students, academic issues/concerns and expectations. Secondly, Kristin will hold Para-Rep meetings beginning in October. The staff will choose representatives to meet with Kristin to talk about the school, staff needs and professional development opportunities.

This month, we are splitting up the staff meetings to provide dedicated time for Wilkins, and one for Clark, in order to maximize time and address the unique needs of each building. I view this as yet one more opportunity to leverage the specific needs of each school culture. While we are one elementary school, there are different needs that require acknowledgement and cultivation in order to grow stronger together. I feel this is important in order to grow a culture of collaborative, risk-takers.

In partnership with the Positive Committee, we will identify opportunities to enhance the school culture. As an example, with the assistance of the PTA, bulletin boards were made in both buildings that included all staff, at both buildings, with pictures, names, and position. With over 100 employees, it is important for us to integrate creative ways for us to get to know one another. A challenge that was given to the staff was to have a meaningful conversation with a staff member that you did not know prior to this year. It is important for all of us to have a sense of belonging and significance in our work environment. This was a simple, tangible act, but powerful, as it conveys that each person has a place in our culture.

This committee will be tasked with identifying opportunities, during the school day, and after school hours, when we might engage in activities that help us to celebrate our accomplishments and just have fun together. This could be as simple as continuing a past practice like celebrating monthly birthdays, or to establish new opportunities such as hosting a golf scramble, or publishing weekly recognitions in our staff happenings. Regardless, I look forward to seeing what the team comes up with for us to celebrate creative ways for us to come together as a staff this year.

### *III. To create structures and supports to build an effective Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)*

The RTI (Response to Instruction) team has met three times since the start of the school year to review and adopt new paperwork to properly document these processes. This means that the teachers that are referring a student will have updated forms to fill out that will address the area of need in: literacy, math, or behavior. The team has agreed upon an Intervention Plan Document (IPD) to be completed by the team during each referral meeting as well as identifying roles to ensure meetings are run more effectively. Roles include: facilitator, note taker, process-person, and intervention plan person. We also have structures ready around the 30-minute meeting time. The team will do a fishbowl simulation of a referral meeting process at our October staff meeting. The team has agreed to use Google Docs as their communication platform and to meet weekly and during late starts, if need be, in order to address student concerns in a timely manner. We have scheduled an additional planning meeting to fine-tune these processes, as well as to prepare for the staff simulation.

At the last staff meeting, we went over protocols for support calls and for student behavior calls in order to establish universal expectations for understanding. We also reviewed other drills/procedures that might be needed in the building to support students and teachers. This information was also shared with the para-educators, both verbally and in writing.

During the late start this month, our staff watched a video about Bullying Prevention. We then had breakout sessions, per teams, with written scenarios in order to discuss our practice and respond to each scenario. The district policy was shared and reviewed as part of the breakout session. Both the video and break-out sessions were informative and productive. This month, School Counselors will begin implementing classroom lessons using the Second Step Bullying Prevention Program.

In collaboration with Natasha Kolemäinen, Curriculum Administrator, we are meeting regularly around the topic of MTSS. As a district, will begin to meet regularly to share and learn best practices from one another. Natasha has set up a Trello board around MTSS in order for us to stay current, leverage the good work happening at each school, ask questions of the team and improve our processes. I look forward to these continued conversations.

## Facilities, Finance, and Operations

- Enrollment

Grade	August	September	Average Class Size
PK3	16	16	8
PK4	21	21	10
K	97	97	19
1st	144	144	21
2nd	130	130	19
3rd	142	142	20
4th	138	138	23
Total	688	688	

## Upcoming Events

- Sept. 25 School Pictures  
Staff Meeting
- Oct. 8 Late Start
- Oct. 9 School Picture Rain Date  
Staff Meeting
- Oct. 24 Parent Conferences 3:30 – 7:30
- Oct. 28 Chazanoff/Murrell/Vaupel/Wright State House & NH Historical Society
- Oct. 29 Alger/Kidder State House & NH Historical Society
- Nov. 1 Parent Conferences 8:00 – 3:00