

Williams-Cone School  
Principal's Newsletter  
March 2014  
Randa C. Rineer, Principal



## 5th Grade Students are Unleashed!!!!

Pictured above are WCS 5th grade Kids Academy students in a recent performance of the play "Unleashed". The play, written by our 5th grade students was directed by Curt Dale Clark from the Maine State Music Theater.



Hello WCS Families!

What talent we have within our WCS community! Over the past several weeks our students have displayed their talents in many ways—from the Variety Show to the recent 5th grade Kid's Academy production, "Unleashed." Opportunities of this nature allow students to discover, grow, and expand their interests, talents and strengths. The staff and I remain steadfast in our commitment to partnering with our school community to meet the needs of our students—academically, socially and emotionally. Here are some current and upcoming opportunities that support this commitment to our students:

**Parent/Staff Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM) Committee:** This committee has been meeting throughout the year to identify and create opportunities for students to have more access to STEM opportunities. Plans are underway to host a "Scientist in Residence" at WCS April 16th and 17th. This opportunity will include classroom presentations and a family event. Classroom teachers will work with students to introduce and implement a 4th and 5th grade students STEM Fair during the month of May. Students will be required to complete independent projects which will be on display for all of our school

community. The STEM committee is also partnering with The Highland Greens, Maine Cooperative Extension 4H Program, Maine School Science Volunteers and Cathance River Education Alliance (CREA) to host summer STEM camp. The camp is planned for July 15-17 and will be offered to WCS students who are currently in grades 3-5. Additional details will be given as they become available.

**Bullying Education/Prevention/Support:** A parent/staff committee was formed earlier this year for the purpose of proactively educating and supporting students in this important and sensitive subject. The committee has worked together to define bullying and identify and implement a variety of educational strategies and supports. These supports have included the implementation of "Reader's Theater" plays performed by 4th and 5th students that focus on bullying education and support.

**The Circus in Coming to Town! :** A Circus Smirkus resident artist will be visiting WCS, March 31st through April 4th. The professionally trained artist will provide students with expert instruction in an engaging variety of training that improves balance, reflexes and fine motor skills while promoting an active, healthy lifestyle. Through the use of circus type body movements including juggling, plate

spinning and more, students will collaborate together to set and achieve goals and learn cooperation and camaraderie. This unique opportunity is being provided for our students through the FOWC Arts Fund.

**March is Read Across America Month:** To help promote reading among our students, classrooms will host community readers this month. Students will also engage in a school wide Read-A-Thon, on March 12th, benefitting the town of Topsham's heat relief fund. Not only will all 226 students have the opportunity to read together in one room at the same time, but this activity also helps to build an awareness in students of community needs and how to positively respond to these needs.

Daylight savings also begins this month. I'm all for some additional daylight.....spring is just around the corner.....right?!?!?!?!

*-Mrs. Randa C. Rineer, WCS Principal*



## Important Dates

March 11th: Parent/Staff STEM Committee Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Learning Commons

March 12th: Read Across America Read-A-Thon, 2:15 P.M., Gymnasium

March 13th: Early Release, 11:30 A.M.

March 14th: No School for Students

March 19th: Music in our Schools Assembly, P.M.

March 21st: In-Service Day, No School for Students

March 25th: FOWC Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Learning Commons

March 28th: 5th Grade Fundraiser-Squaredance, 6:30 P.M., WCS Gymnasium

March 31-April 4-Circus Smirkus-Artist in Residence

April 8th: Parent/Staff STEM Committee Meeting, 6:00 P.M.



## FEBRUARY/EARLY MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Although the activities were cut a little short due to inclement weather, the cafeteria held "Colors Week" during the week of February 10th. Many thanks to the parent volunteers who distributed samples of various foods that reflected the color of the day. Snow days did not stop the flurry of activity that took place at WCS in February!

A FOWC fundraiser was held on February 17th at Rollerworld. Many WCS families and friends attended the fun rollerskating event. Many thanks to Lori Kane for organizing this great time and many thanks to the participants who came out to support our school's fundraising efforts.

Variety Show practice took place weekly throughout February culminating with a school day performance on February 26th and an evening performance on February 28th. To kick-off the afternoon performance, WCS staff dressed up as "minions" from the Despicable Me movie series and danced for students. Student acts ranged from instrumentals to skits with talent abounding everywhere. Special thanks to Mrs. Morneau, Mrs. San Pedro, Mrs. Kish, Mrs. Marsteller and Ms. Wallace for directing the Variety Show.

5th grade Kids Academy participants wrote, created and performed the play "Unleashed" on March 3rd and 4th. The play, directed by Curt Dale Clark from the Maine State Music Theatre was a highly energetic showcase of the students' talents and interests. Many thanks to Heather Hollenbach and Holly Kopp for acting as stage moms for the performance, taking care of the many details and communications.

Kindergarten through second grade teachers participated in language arts staff development presented by Rebecca Cronin from Columbia University's Teachers College Reading Writing Project. WCS hosted first grade teachers from around the district who spent time in Ms. Kennedy's first grade classroom observing and implementing various comprehension strategies with students.

## Student Assessment Updates

The results from the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) that were administered in October of 2013 will be sent home with students in grades three through five during the week of March 10th. The assessments measure student achievement in language arts and math as well as writing for students in grade five.

While the NECAP will no longer be administered to students beginning the 2014-15 school year, students in grades three through five will be administered the new Smarter Balanced Assessment during the spring of 2015. The Smarter Balanced Assessment assesses student performance in language arts and math as well as writing for students in grade five.

Third and fourth grade WCS students will participate in a Smarter Balanced Assessment field test in the area of math between March 18th and April 4th. This exciting opportunity for our students will allow them to try out the new, online testing software and innovative test items. The assessment will be administered over multiple days or sessions. Though we will not receive student results, they are confidential and children's grades will not be affected by participation.

If you would like more information about Smarter Balanced, please visit their website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>. There you will find sample test items. If you have further questions feel free to contact Mrs. Rineer, WCS Principal.

## Williams-Cone Gives Back!

Many thanks to everyone who supported the "Have a Heart for Hunger" food drive benefitting the Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention Program (MCHPP). Our school community appreciates the work that MCHPP does for our community, including a student back-pack program. The backpack program supports dozens of students around the mid-coast area, providing food for students and their families weekly.

### 2014-15 Kindergarten Registration

March 10th-28th

We are pleased to welcome you and your child(ren) to MSAD / RSU 75 and WCS!

To make the registration process easier for you, please feel free to download and complete the forms in the "Forms for Parents" folder on the MSAD #75 website before you visit the school to register.

When you arrive for your appointment to register, you will need to present:

- 1) Proof of residency (a utility bill, tax bill, etc. not including PO Box addresses).
- 2) The student's birth certificate.
- 3) An official immunization record.

If there is anything that we can do to help, please contact the school at 725-4391. A parent information night will be held later this spring.

## Parent-Teacher Conferences March 10th-March 20th Conference Tips

Parent involvement and home-to school partnerships rank as one of the top three factors impacting student achievement. Over the next few weeks parent-teacher conferences will be held at Williams-Cone School. To help ensure a highly productive and beneficial conference, consider the following tips:

1. Talk to your child-Ask if there is anything that he/she would like for you to discuss with the teacher.
2. Be prepared-Write down things that you would like to discuss/questions that you would like to ask at the conference.
3. Be specific. Bring any work with you that is of concern. Describe your child's strengths and areas of need.
4. Arrive promptly or a few minutes early.
5. Exchange information. Feel free to share with the teacher situations in the home that may affect your child's school work (Ex. a new baby in the family, new babysitter, etc.).
6. Discuss the whole child. Your child's social and emotional development is as important as his/her academic success.
7. Leave with a plan. The conference should end with a clear statement of what you will do and what the teacher will do.

## Bullying or Unkind Behavior, How to Know the Difference....

While researching the topic of the difference between unkind behaviors and bullying I came across this article by Sherri Gordon on the web site About.com.Bullying. Rather than reproducing the entire article I will summarize her thoughts and ideas. I found myself agreeing with her and look forward to your comments.

I believe all of you would agree that all bullying behavior is unkind, but not every unkind behavior is bullying. Children, especially in the 4-10 year old range are still learning about emotions and social skills. They need support from their parents, teachers, and other adults in their lives to show them how to be kinder, resolve conflicts, how to be inclusive and how to grow into responsible adults.

Children in this age group are often open and honest with their thoughts. They have not all learned or mastered how to be tactful. Children may say things that are uncomfortable or negative for others to hear such as: why do your teeth stick out, your mother is fat, or you are messy. While these are unkind comments, they should not be labeled bullying. Instead these children need an adult to tell them what is appropriate and what isn't. The children may also need some practice with how to phrase things so they don't offend others. Additionally, those on the receiving end need coaching to learn how to say they didn't like what was said to them.

It is natural for children to be close friends with a few people and want to spend all of their time with them. Although we encourage children to be friendly and kind towards everyone it's unrealistic for them to be close to everyone. It is also normal that not everyone gets invited to parties, play dates, or outings. This is not the same thing as ostracizing behavior. When your child is left out remind them that sometimes they too have to choose not to include everyone. Being left out is not bullying. Only when someone is deliberately excluded, does being left out become bullying.

Conflict is a very normal part of growing and maturing in their relationship with others. It is key that children learn how to solve their problems peacefully and respectfully. A fight or disagreement is not bullying, even when unkind things are said, as bullying also includes an imbalance of power.

Teasing is a more complex skill to discriminate between having fun with each other or is it bullying. If it is done in a playful, friendly, or mutual way and everyone is laughing and no one's feelings are hurt than it is not bullying. When teasing becomes cruel, unkind and repetitive, it crosses the line into bullying. Making demeaning comments, name calling, spreading rumors, and making threats all constitute bullying.

Most children at some point like to play games according to their own rules. They may come across to their peers as bossy. It is important to teach your child how to deal with this by saying something like "we can play your way and then we can play my way". Children are learning how to play fair and need the help of an adult to teach them how to take turns and cooperate. Remember, wanting games to be played a certain way is not bullying. Only when a child begins to threaten others or physically hurts them when things don't go their way does it start to become bullying.

*-Amy Wallace, WCS Guidance Counselor/Social Worker*