

April 25, 2017

To the Citizens of West Bath,

As our second year as a new municipal school district is coming to a close, I am pleased to report that once again it has been a wonderful year at the West Bath School. With the on-going, tremendous support of the West Bath community, we have been able to continue the structures and programs that were initiated in the inaugural year, and build upon them.

This school year has created new opportunities for community partnerships and authentic learning experiences for our fifth grade students. In the fall, the fifth graders had the opportunity to participate in a 3 day, 2 night trip at Chewonki in Wiscasset allowing for a variety of citizen scientist work on human ecology and environmental systems, team building opportunities, the development of survival skills, as well as the development of estuary and ecology skills and knowledge. Staff and students expressed that the relationships formed between the students through the process developed a strong team commitment to one another, which set the stage for a positive year for the students. Additionally, fifth grade students have had the continued opportunity to work with Maine Maritime Museum one day per week in the Maritime Museum Boat Building class. Through this weekly partnership, students have worked to build two Monhegan skiffs, which will be launched by the school in June. Students have learned about the rich history of boat building in the region, applied rigorous mathematics knowledge and skills to an authentic, hands-on learning opportunity, and have



developed aspirations for their future. Both experiences with Chewonki and Maine Maritime Museum have set the foundation for the year-long fifth grade expedition which focuses on 18th century survival skills.

Responding to a significant need in our new school system in its inaugural year, we were able to create the position of technology support specialist through last year's budget process, and hired resident Patrick Bowdish to support the back end of the many technology-based aspects of a school system. This has included supporting the food service and financial software, the student information system, on-line assessments, the school's network and infrastructure, maintaining and updating staff and student computers, upgrading the school's security and camera system, and monitoring the heating system software. In addition to keeping the building running through these and many other functions, Mr. Bowdish has worked directly with students and teachers to support technology education in a way that students have not had access to previously. Some of the new opportunities for students have included participation in coding activities, programming through scratch, robotics, 3-d printing, and utilizing Virtual Reality for expedition field work and web 2.0 instructional resources, providing our students with experiences that support 21st century learning skills. We are grateful for all of his support.

Once again, this year's state assessment data has demonstrated that West Bath students are scoring significantly higher than other Midcoast districts in both reading in math. In the area of reading, West Bath scored 10.81 percentage points higher than the state average, and scored 35th out of 255 districts in the state. In mathematics, West Bath students scored 15.69 percentage points higher than state average, and scored 18th out of 255 districts in the state. While pleased with the data points, we continue to focus on improved practices and continued growth as professionals to help to ensure that our students are receiving an education of the highest quality.

In February, we paused as a school community to simultaneously reflect upon the progress made towards our school goals and to initiate conversation to begin to drive a new mission and vision for West Bath School, as we are still technically operating under a 25 year old mission and vision even though our instruction has evolved dramatically. Part of this process was to invite stakeholders into an open discussion about how the school is currently operating, and hopes for their children's education. Parents spoke about the high quality instruction, feeling pride for their school, appreciating the feeling that they know their child is known and cared about, and recognized the investment of the staff in the children. They spoke of seeing their children being willing to take academic risks and growing in confidence, and how they appreciated how teachers scaffold children's growth. In regards to parents' hopes and dreams for West Bath students, the responses included having an education that is well rounded with hands-on learning opportunities and with community

involvement. Parents stated that they wanted their children to be armed for a radically changing world, and develop a strong sense of core values. They wanted their children to be global citizens on a local level, and for us to ensure that expectations are high for all students. Responding to the question about how West Bath can better support the students to be a strong global citizen, parents stated that they need access to foreign language, which opens up the mind to diversity and helps the brain develop and the need for improving the physical space, and providing more room for art and music. The final word was one that stated that the integration of school and community are “profoundly important” and we need to put attention towards making sure this is woven together. I would like to thank Deb Snell, David Strelneck, Aggie Demers, Steven Hinds, Keith Hinds, Camille Kauffinger, Hannah Whitney, Emily Booth, Joy Frohmiller, Jennifer Bowdish, and Lou Ensel for taking the time out of their busy days to take part in this initial stakeholders meeting. This was the first time we have had a stakeholders group like this to hear parent input and the process was extremely valuable. This information, with feedback from the staff, will be brought to the School Board of Directors for crafting the first draft of the new mission and vision to help us to guide the learning in West Bath for the next several years.

Our staff and students continue to be recognized through grants, honors, news articles, and school recognition. Gifted and Talented Teacher, Beth Jarvis, was awarded a \$1,000 Senters grant to help to support the installation of a greenhouse in our outdoor classroom and school garden. Lowes is generously donating portion of materials to this project as well. West Bath was also once again awarded a \$500 ExxonMobil math and science grant that enabled the school to purchase a refrigeration system for the 2nd grade salmon tank to support their spring expedition. The school was awarded a \$4,500 PEPG grant to support professional development for teachers. Staff have proactively applied for four other grants to support STEM based education, and are awaiting word. Second and Third grade teachers, Mrs. Beal and Miss Marco, graced the cover of Maine Educator magazine, and along with their second graders, were the featured story of the month. The article focused on student engagement at West Bath School. Mrs. Beal and Miss Marco also presented their work in a master class at the EL Education National Conference in Detroit in October. Their class focused on how to design learning expeditions with engaging and relevant products for the community, and utilizing the backwards design model. Mrs. Jarvis was a speaker about the benefits of yoga and mindfulness in schools at the Life Sciences Honors Program at Central Maine Community College. Finally, West Bath School faculty have been invited to be one of 18 participants in a 3-day global action lab in New Mexico that focuses on Nourishment Economies. Participants include farmers, farm-to-table business owners, and educators who integrate nourishment cycles and school gardens into their curriculum. Fifth grade teacher Robert Schulz will represent West Bath at this landmark event in June.



With a focus on the whole child, school counselor Allison Cosgrove has initiated the Back Pack Program in partnership with Good Shepard Food Pantry. This program aims to reduce food insecurity for children during times that school is not in session, and provides meals for children to take home on weekends and school vacations. Good Shepard sponsored 20 children at West Bath this school year, at a cost of approximately \$4,500.

Spring expeditions are fully underway and the classrooms at WBS are bustling with excitement and inquiry. Students are engaged with working with experts, making observations, and participating in field work. The grade level guiding questions are:

- K - How do worms survive? How do worms adapt to their environment? Do worms' lives matter?
- 1 - How do we communicate without words or gestures? Why do shadows change over time?
- 2 - How do Atlantic Salmon survive in their environment? How have people impacted the survival of salmon?
- 3 - How has immigration evolved over time? Does cultural diversity strengthen our community and country?
- 4 - How do invasive species impact the natural order in Maine?
- 5 - Can I identify and develop the skills to survive an 18th Century expedition?

On behalf of the West Bath School staff, students, and the Board of Directors, I would like to thank you for your support of our community school, and **invite you once again to visit us at our Celebration of Learning on June 14th at 3 PM and see our students in action!**

Respectfully Submitted,
Emily Thompson
West Bath School Principal
West Bath School Administrative Unit Superintendent