

WINDHAM RAYMOND SCHOOL
LINK

Windham Raymond School Department
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THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY
OF REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT 14

LINK

WINDHAM RAYMOND SCHOOL

Achievement growth continues to climb

The success of a school district and the students that it serves can often be measured through several different indicators. Ones that tend to be familiar to the public are student academic scores, commendable attendance, college acceptance rates, dropout rates, SAT scores or graduation rates. While each of these is important to measuring the success of a school or district, they do not always provide a clear picture of the growth that a student makes in a classroom over the course of a year.

Growth is a powerful indicator for a school district. It provides valuable feedback about the effectiveness of curriculums, programs and interventions on

student achievement. If a portion of the school program is effective, one can expect that the percentage of students showing growth will increase. Several years ago, the Windham Raymond School District adopted a continuous achievement model for goal setting that focused on increasing the percentage of students who were demonstrating academic growth over the course of a school year. Within this process, yearly goals are developed that are targeted toward increasing the percentage of students who demonstrate growth.

Several methods and tools are used to measure student **Achievement growth**
continued page 2

AP participation on the rise

Windham High School students and teachers have participated in the Advanced Placement program run by the College Board for a number of years. The AP program provides students with the opportunity to take courses during their high school career that have the same content, rigor and pace as courses that are offered at the college level.

There are several benefits to students who decide to take one or more AP courses during their high school career. First, AP courses show post-secondary institutions that a student has challenged himself or herself beyond the regular high school curriculum. In turn, it may provide an advantage during decisions about college admission.

Second, it provides the potential for advancement beyond the typical freshman course during the first year of college. Third, students have the potential of earning college credit if they earn a satisfactory score on their AP Exam, which is given at the end of the course.

Over the course of last year, a group of students, parents, teachers, led by Deb McAfee, formed an Honors Committee to look at ways to improve the school's Advanced Placement program and to look at ways to recruit students into AP classes. The work that the committee completed has had an impact on the overall AP program.

AP on the rise
continued page 2

From the Superintendent... Sandy Prince Staying focused on mission

Welcome to the fall issue of the Windham Raymond School District, RSU 14, Link newsletter. I am pleased to report that we had an extraordinarily smooth opening to school. Thanks to all parties for assisting our students with the transition to a new school year.

As we proceed into the school year, we remain focused on what matters most – ensuring our mission of “Success for All.” As a school community, we are committed to paying close attention to what needs to be done every day to ensure student success. From teachers to principals to district office administration to policymakers, the heart of our work is ensuring that students continue to show performance gains – aca-

demically, emotionally and socially.

I am thrilled to share with you in this Link a sampling of innovative programs, curricula updates, technology accomplishments and a glimpse at the ingenuity of our staff in teaching students. This Link captures how our mission is vibrantly catching on. It is at its best when the wider school community – meaning all of us – can simultaneously work together to stay focused on what matters most. “Success for All” is at the core of our work.

I thank you again for your continued support in educating our RSU 14 children and look forward to another exciting school year.

Revolutionary Learning Raymond students dig in for ecology



Raymond Elementary School students have a new appreciation for pond ecology following a hands-on project at Panther Pond.

Raymond Elementary School third-graders have taken their classroom lessons about pond ecology and conservation out into the real world with impressive results.

Working with teacher Ann Jolda and Noralee Raymond, executive director of the Raymond Waterways Protection Association, a presentation was developed about pond ecology and conservation and an in-classroom exercise demonstrated the harmful impact erosion can have on a body of water.

Then, 46 third-graders, teachers, parents and members of the Panther Pond Association visited three sites on Panther Pond, where the children helped remediate erosion sites by spreading mulch, planting blueberry bushes and refreshing silt settling in ponds. According to staff members, everyone from the Panther Pond Association was impressed with how well the event went. And it seems likely that as a result of their experience, the children will be better stewards of the lakes and nature.

Accomplishments

Windham Raymond Adult Education's GED/diploma completion rates have increased during the past three years (66 percent, 89 percent, 90 percent). Twenty-seven people graduated in June. Post secondary enrollment rates have increased over the past two years, from 32 percent to 67 percent. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program has grown from 14 percent of the adult education population to 32 percent during the past three years

What's new

Volleyball new school sport
For the first time, girls volleyball is being offered at Windham High School.

The RSU 14 School Board voted in June to support volleyball as a new sport at the high school for this fall season. Volleyball is a sport that many area schools have added to their athletic programming.

Alum room in the works
Over the summer the Alumni Conference Room in the Athletic Arena at Windham High started to take shape. It's the intention of the Athletic Department to display many pieces of history that represent the past accomplishments of teams, clubs, activities and individuals while they were at Windham High School. Anyone who

School Nurse of the Year is Marcia Mullen, who has just recently retired from the district. Her nursing career spanned 39 years.

Jeff Smith, school resource officer, was named a 2011 honoree of the Caring About Lives in Maine award by the Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program.

has memorabilia to donate to the Alumni Conference Room should contact Rich Drummond, athletic director, at rdrummond@windhamraymond-schools.org.

Spiffing up
The support staff and summer helpers prepared for the new school year by assisting with improvement projects, refinishing floors, cleaning carpets, painting and other summer cleaning activities. Key facilities improvements include the installation of new lockers and lights in the Windham Middle School, new water heaters at Windham Middle and Jordan Small Schools, new hallway carpet and classroom door locks at the Windham Primary School, and the purchase of new cafeteria tables for the Raymond Elementary School. Windham High School's track has a new base and new surface.



Advanced technology keeps close track of student progress

AIMSweb is a comprehensive, web-based data management and reporting system that helps educators to monitor students' responsiveness to instruction. This tool allows for continuous and frequent academic screening and progress monitoring, which subsequently provide teachers, parents and students feedback in the students' acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

With the use of mini-tests ranging from 1 to 10 minutes long, teachers are able to check students' progress in critical skills. It's similar to how regular well-visit checks are used to screen a child's health. Just like blood pressure checks are used by the doctor, the schools use regular checks to make sure all children are progressing during the school year.

These academic check-ins are called benchmark screenings. Benchmark screenings happen three times a year and help guide the district's overall curriculum and instructional practices to target critical skills in math and reading.

In addition, AIMSweb offers ongoing mini-assessments that allow the staff to track small increments of growth for students receiving targeted interventions in critical skills. By closely monitoring student growth and progress, teachers are able to provide high-quality education that meets students' needs before they have a chance to fall behind in skill development. The tool also can be used to measure the pace in which individual students acquire skills. Teachers often share this rate of improvement information with students and families to show the gains that happens during the time that the child is receiving a targeted intervention for a specific skill.

In the May edition of the Windham Raymond School Link, a few students were featured who shared their rate of improvement and made more than one year's growth in less than one school year. Children, staff and families have been very motivated by being able to measure these results using tools like AIMSweb.

Growth (cont'd)

growth. The tool that RSU 14 uses is an assessment called the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which is produced by the Northwest Evaluation Association. It is a computer-based adaptive assessment that is given to students twice yearly, once in the fall and once in the spring. The scores from the two tests can be compared to show the amount of growth that a student made over the year.

The assessment also gives a predictive growth measure called a growth target. Growth targets are based upon the amount of growth that a 50th percentile student would make in a year. If a student exceeds the 50th percentile measure, he or she is on pace with an average student at the grade level and is said to be meeting individual growth target. A district with average performance can expect to have half its students above the 50th percentile and half below. Above-average districts can expect 60 percent of its students above the 50th percentile measure and districts that have strong, targeted programming can see the percentage grow to 70 or 80 percent.

The second measure provided by the Northwest Evaluation Association is a simple percentile measurement. It provides the district with the percent of students who are performing above the 50th percentile across the district, and is independent of whether the students met their individual growth target.

RSU 14 has been tracking the percentage of students meeting their individual growth target and the percentage of students who are above the 50th percentile for several years. The growth during the past few years

is encouraging. In 2008, 57.8 percent of students met their growth target in math and 54.8 percent met the target in reading. During the most recent test in May, 63.9 percent of students met their individual target in math and 62.3 percent met the target in reading (above the 50th percentile when compared to peers).

The percentage of students above the 50th percentile increased in a similar fashion to growth targets. In 2008, 58.5 percent of RSU 14 students were above the 50th percentile in math and 63.4 percent were above in reading. In 2011, math has increased to 65 percent and reading has increased to 70.7 percent.

Each percentage point increase represents roughly 24 students who are either meeting their growth target or who are achieving at a level that is much higher than their peers across the country. The emphasis on student growth has already started paying dividends. SAT, Advanced Placement and New England Common Assessment scores have all shown district increases in the past two years. And, as the district continues to hone its programs and provide more individualized programming, it is expected other external indicators will rise, as well.

AP (cont'd)

This fall, 229 students are enrolled in AP courses, an increase of 82 enrollments over last year. The fall courses include AP US History, AP European History, AP English, AP Calculus, AP Statistics, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Physics and AP Studio Art.

SMCC and earn college credit.

Students who elect to take AP Calculus can earn a math credit at the University of Southern Maine.

A number of seniors also elect to take courses at USM and SMCC.

Spotlight on performing arts - The Windham-Raymond Performing Arts Alliance is made up of volunteers who support all performing arts in the district, which includes theater, band, orchestra and vocal performances. They also award

two scholarships each year to eligible high school seniors who intend to major or minor in the performing arts. They support the festivals the schools may host, such as the One Act Play festival or the District II festival, and raise money to fund needed items not covered by the school budgets.

Volunteers work by participating in various fundraising activities, ushering, providing refreshments at events and assisting with costume or set construction for the plays.

Lexia Reading monitors progress, hones skills

Using a game-based format, Lexia Reading, a computer-based reading program, helps teachers place Windham and Raymond students in grades K-5 into the appropriate levels.

Lexia is highly motivating for students and provides re-

peated practice with specific reading skills, particularly in the area of phonics.

Students in RSU 14 have benefited from the use of Lexia for two school years. This resource has been used to supplement core instruction in some kindergarten

and first-grade classrooms, and provided specifically designed interventions for individual students. District-wide, approximately 200 students were supported by the program throughout the last school year. Students have made notable gains in

phonemic awareness and oral reading fluency through the use of this software.

In addition to highlighting class progress in reading skills development, progress reports clearly show student performance history, including rate and accuracy.

Charting the data Software helps educators interpret information through the use of visually appealing graphs

In the 2010-2011 school year, Regional School Unit 14 began using a data visualization software called Tableau. Data visualization software allows users to extract large amounts of information and view it in visually appealing and easily interpretable charts and graphs.

Think about the dashboard in your car. It shows you a quick visual representation of the inner workings of the vehicle. It displays how much fuel is in your tank and how fast you are traveling. Tableau visualization software works in a similar way. It allows schools to pull information from the inner workings of the system and create easy-to-read charts and graphs.

A team of people from RSU 14 has learned to use the software to help make improved use of data from Excel files and Infinite Campus, our district data warehouse. Early in the fall of 2010, the

team of administrators, technology specialists, standards-based teachers and District Response to Intervention consultants attended a two-day workshop on how to use the tool. Monthly webinars provided team members with additional training on how to make specific visualizations while collaborating with other school districts across New England and Maine. Being able to collaborate regularly with other Tableau school users throughout Maine and New England helps the district learn about innovative ways to make use of this product.

Throughout the school year, Tableau was used to help curriculum teams see patterns within the learning reports and placement teams create balanced classrooms for the upcoming school year. Specifically, the District Math Curriculum Team was able to analyze and recognize trends in how each student was achieving in specific

New garden launches new learning opportunities

Beginning in this month, teachers Craig Haims and Christine Caputo will be integrating both gardening and culinary arts into the REAL School curriculum for their team.

The Mackworth Island Community Garden has been built with funding from PROP and a grant from the Communities Putting Prevention to Work project. They plan to work with local farms creating a Farm to School program to boost the amount of fresh, local produce served in the school lunch program. A hoop house is being built, which will provide the cafeteria salad bar with greens well into December. In addition, students will partner with the kitchen staff to prepare and serve lunch for students and staff from REAL and the Baxter School for the Deaf.

With help from Martin Keim, longtime chef for the Baxter

school, students will learn the business of school lunch and the challenges of running a large kitchen. The year-long project will teach sustainability through problem solving, along with agricultural science and essential life skills.

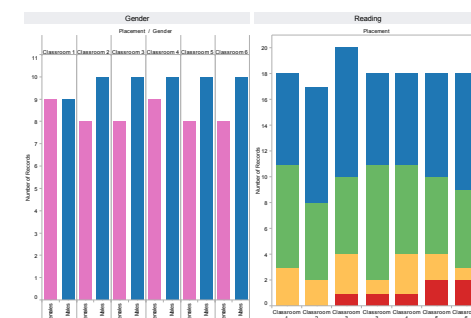
It's a wonder

Kathy Floyd and Pam Mallard developed a Windham-Raymond Outdoor Natural Discovery and Experiential Research (WONDER) Course attended by six students, from both adult education and Windham High School. Two high school credits were awarded for work in science and English for an intense, week-long experience. Topical science lessons focused on inquiry, scientific method, research and communicating results through a culminating project and presentation.

numeracy standards by grade level from kindergarten to 12th grade. Additionally, kindergarten and first-grade teachers were able to analyze how well their students were meeting end-of-year, grade-level benchmarks. This information provided a foundation for their curriculum discussions and adjustments.

For the 2011-2012 school year, one of the goals is for each

teacher to have his or her own Tableau Dashboard that would provide a quick glimpse at class performance. Teachers will have a place that accumulates various student data such as attendance, performance on district assessments, and progress on grade-level standards. With this, teachers will be able to easily and efficiently view charts of individual and class outcomes.



This Tableau graph shows how one placement team carefully monitored different factors such as gender and reading achievement as they placed students in well-balanced classrooms.

Partnerships

Boosters pitch in - The Athletic Boosters benefit the Windham High School and Middle School Athletic Departments by providing financial assistance and items to sports programs outside of what is funded in the budget. The organization also sponsors the sports banquet dinners and recognition programs.

The organization is 100 percent parent/student volunteers. Meetings are the first

Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., in the WHS Alumni Conference Room.

Colleges connect - Windham High School students now have the opportunity to earn college credits while enrolled at WHS.

Students who complete the computer courses IEA and ICT are awarded technology credits through Southern Maine Community College.

Students who are enrolled in the Early College for ME Program have the opportunity to take one course each semester at