

## **REPORT OF THE ELLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

This is my first year here as the Middle School Principal of Ellis School. It has been an exciting first few months. I have found the community, staff and students very welcoming. Ms. Lewis and I have been working collaboratively to develop enhanced educational opportunities for grades PreK-8.

Prior to the start of the school year, we greeted the Ellis School families at our Welcome Back Cookout. The cookout was well received, as we had around 250 families attend.

We started of the year with our State and District testing. The NWEA testing was completed in the fall and the NECAP testing in October. The fall NECAP tests in reading, mathematics, and writing were designed to measure your child's progress in meeting New Hampshire's Grade Level Expectations, or GLEs. The GLEs define the knowledge and skills a student should have mastered by the end of each school year. The reading test includes short and long reading passages, with related multiple choice and constructed response questions. The mathematics test includes multiple choice, short answer, and constructed response questions. The writing test includes multiple choice and constructed response questions, and a single extended writing prompt. A constructed response question requires students to show their work and/or explain their reasoning. Test results in reading, mathematics, and writing will be available at the end of January 2010.

One of my biggest undertakings as the new Principal was to complete and introduce the new report card system to the school community. The new report card format is the culmination of much collaboration from teachers, administrators, students and parents. The report card combines the philosophy of standards-based grading and traditional letter grades. Your student's growth throughout the trimester is assessed and measured against the NH Grade Level Expectations and is integrated with research-based and best instructional practices we use here at Ellis. The resulting product gives an accurate, detailed overview of a student's progress toward the standards and their development as a member of the classroom and school community. A report card night was held in October to explain the new format. The power point presentation from that evening is on our website at: <http://sau83.org/schools/middle/happenings.html>.

A Parent Forum was introduced to increase collaboration and communication with parents. The Middle School Parent Forum meets monthly with the Principal. The purpose of the forum is for parents to be able to dialogue with the Middle School Principal at Ellis on issues and concerns that will lead to improved student learning. The purpose of the Forum is to provide input on decisions, provide feedback on programs, and make recommendations for improvements to the principal and to work with the staff on making those improvements happen. These Forums also include informational meetings covering a variety of topics.

October was a busy month for activities at the Middle School, as we celebrated Month of the Young Adolescent and Red Ribbon Week. October is Month of the Young Adolescent, an annual international collaborative effort of education, health, and youth-oriented organizations.

Initiated by National Middle School Association (NMSA), Month of the Young Adolescent brings together a wide range of organizations to focus on the needs of this important age range, ages 10 to 15. The key messages for the celebration are:

- *The importance of parents being knowledgeable about young adolescents and being actively involved in their lives;*
- *The understanding that healthy bodies plus healthy minds equal healthy young adolescents;*
- *The realization that the education young adolescents experience during this formative period of life will, in large measure, determine the future for all citizens; and*
- *The knowledge that every young adolescent should have the opportunity to pursue his or her dreams and aspirations, and post-secondary education should be a possibility for all.*

[WWW.NMSA.org](http://WWW.NMSA.org)

Ellis Middle School participated in the National Red Ribbon Week the week of October 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>. Red Ribbon Week is the oldest and largest drug prevention campaign in the country. Red Ribbon Week serves as a vehicle for communities and individuals to take a stand for the hopes and dreams of children through commitment to drug prevention and education and a personal commitment to live drug free lives. Red Ribbon Week commemorates the ultimate sacrifice made by DEA Special Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena, who died at the hands of drug traffickers in Mexico while fighting the battle against illegal drugs to keep our country and children safe.

Ellis Middle School students received a Red Ribbon Week bracelet and pencil and were given individual pledge cards and invited to sign these cards pledging to live a drug free lifestyle. Officer Huard, our DARE Officer, spoke to students discussing the legal and physical consequences of using drugs and alcohol, along with discussing peer pressure.

One of the biggest undertakings the Middle School has been working on is creating a formal Response to Intervention (RTI) program. The Middle School staff held their first data meeting on November 18 for grades 5 and 6, and on November 24 for grades 7 and 8. These were day-long meetings in which teachers looked at each child individually. Assessment data was analyzed and the learning needs of each child were discussed. This information allowed us to develop a formal Response to Intervention program and Title I program.

*Response to Intervention aims to meet the needs of struggling students through a pyramid of interventions, collaborative team problem solving, data for monitoring student progress, and customized interventions, which conveys that all students can learn, effectively master educational requirements, and become proficient learners.*

Understanding Response to Intervention  
Solution-Tree Press 2008

It has been my pleasure getting to know the community, staff and students. I found the staff to be a dedicated, hard working group. They are truly committed to making the education of your children the best it can be. The parents and PTA have been a tremendous support to the school. As Principal, I am only one of many who strive for excellence in education. I am confident that with this staff and community we can do great things for the children of Fremont.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Safina  
Middle School Principal

Photos Courtesy of Carolyn Carr  
Fremont Garden Club

