

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

Middle School...an interesting time in the lives of children and a wonderful opportunity to work with these very talented, fun, and unique students.

At Ellis School, our Middle School program has grades five through eight. We are working toward making our Middle School program reflect the most successful school for young adolescents as stated by the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS). We continue to work on the recommendations from NELMS in the following areas:

- Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so.
- Courageous, collaborative leadership.
- A shared vision that guides decisions.
- An inviting, supportive, and safe environment.
- High expectations for every member of the learning community.
- Students and teachers engaged in active learning.
- An adult advocate for every student.
- School-initiated family and community partnerships.

### **Metamorphosis**

“Metamorphosis” is our mission statement. This word sums up the students that we work with and what we have gone through as a Middle School in the past couple of years. Students go through huge change processes in physical, emotional, mental, and social areas during the ages of ten and fourteen. Our staff has gone through huge changes in terms of the structure of the Middle School program, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

### **Leadership**

We have established three councils so that all shareholders have an opportunity for input and decision making. Our Student Advisory consists of student representatives from each grade level at the Middle School. The Advisory meets bi-weekly to discuss concerns and improvements that need to be made at the school from the students’ perspective. This year the Advisory adopted a troop to support in Iraq and will be working on how to improve behavior on the school bus.

We also have a Middle School Leadership Council comprised of members of the Middle School staff. This Council meets monthly and is charged with evaluating our progress toward meeting the goals mentioned above.

The Parent Leadership Council consists of a parent representative from each grade level. The Council is currently working with a facilitator to clarify the purpose, role, and responsibilities of the group. This Council is an important link for parental input on the school and our improvement efforts.

The staff at the Middle School level led the school improvement efforts at Ellis. They are constantly improving their knowledge and skills in research based best

practices of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They spend time analyzing test scores and other pieces of information to inform their practice. The result of this work is an increase in student learning.

### **Learning Environment**

We have three expectations: Being Prepared, Being Responsible, and Being Respectful. Our Gold Card system continues to be successful. The Gold Card is a Middle School student's ticket to all events and activities. That status is only given to students who are consistently meeting the expectations mentioned above. Students who have lost that status, due to behavioral situations, can be reinstated by completing a restitution plan. The restitution plan is what the student will do to make up for their behavior. This plan is much more effective at changing student behavior in a positive manner and teaching students to make better choices than detention or suspensions. The Platinum Card Status is bestowed on those students who meet and exceed the behavior expectations. These students have no behavior referrals of any kind for a period of seven weeks. Students with Platinum Card Status have special privileges.

All of these programs have shown a substantial increase in appropriate behaviors at the Middle School level. Listed below are the percentages of students with Platinum and Gold Card Status at the time of this printing:

#### **Platinum Card Status percentages:**

5 <sup>th</sup>	61 %
6 <sup>th</sup>	80%
7 <sup>th</sup>	69%
8 <sup>th</sup>	62%

#### **Gold Card Status percentages:**

5 <sup>th</sup>	95%
6 <sup>th</sup>	96%
7 <sup>th</sup>	98%
8 <sup>th</sup>	90%

For students that do not respond to the Gold and Platinum Card system, we have a Target Team. This Team's members are staff that meet weekly to discuss students that are having difficulty meeting the expectations. By formulating learning plans for students, this will decrease the inappropriate behavior and teach the students the appropriate behavior.

### **Curriculum and Programs for Middle School Students**

We continue to work with an educational consultant on our Language Arts program. The focus this year has been on writing and how to assess writing so that we can improve student learning.

This year seventh and eighth grade students began a new Math program that aligns with the Everyday Math program that begins in the elementary grades. The program meets the grade level expectations for math and provides consistency from

grade to grade. One goal of the program is for all of our eighth graders to be ready for algebra beginning next year. We were able to expand our teaching staff at the fifth and sixth grade level which allows for increased math instruction for our students.

The Unified Arts team is doing block scheduling for our seventh and eighth graders. Each seven week block the students can register for a class. This has allowed the students to have choices of courses such as website design, 2-D art, 3-D sculpture, music history, guitar, piano, and media study. Each student has health and physical education.

We introduced a pilot Standards Based Reporting System this year. Over the course of the last year, we have examined and evaluated the way in which we report student progress. The change to a Standards Based Reporting System comes from a belief that our previous progress reports did not fully communicate what the students are expected to know and be able to do as set forth by the New Hampshire State Standards. The pilot format allows us to communicate specific content of the State Standards and how well each student is progressing towards them. It also provides students and families a more detailed outline of the expectations in each of the major academic areas (Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies), Unified Arts (Art, Music, Library, Computer, Health, and Physical Education), as well as Ellis' PBIS behavior expectations (Be Prepared, Responsible, and Respectful). As the year continues, we will be gathering feedback from parents and making changes so that we may present a final proposal to the School Board for their consideration.

Students have many opportunities to be active in the school and community. Students can participate in a variety of after school activities such as the sports programs, intramural sports, activity clubs, drama group, talent shows, and dance group. Students are given leadership roles in the Student Council, Student Advisory, and the Wellness Committee. Students can volunteer for community service through Peer Mediators, Big/Little Buddy, and Peer Tutors.

## **Technology**

Ellis School continues to expand our use of technology. Four classrooms now have one-to-one student computers. This is made possible through the use of thin clients which run all software from the network server, allowing less space to be taken up in the classroom, less expense for licensing and electricity, and do not produce the amount of heat that regular desktop computers do.

Each classroom is also equipped with a ceiling mounted projector. This tool allows the teacher to use the computer as teaching tool for whole group instruction and for students to use as a presentation tool for assignments of learning. Teachers are using a variety of resources available from the Internet to provide the instruction necessary to teach the curriculum.

## **In Closing**

I would be remiss in this report not to mention the unbelievable staff at the Middle School. Your children and I are privileged to come each day and work with people who are dedicated, knowledgeable, skilled, caring, professionals who really understand and enjoy Middle School students. These educators show a determination to provide learning that is developmentally appropriate and engaging for young adolescents. They serve as exemplary role models and advocates for each student. They are the “best kept secret” in New Hampshire, and we have them here in Fremont!

Respectfully submitted,

Kelli R. Killen  
Middle School Principal

*“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”*

~John Dewey  
1859 – 1952

*“We hold the period of youth sacred to education, and the period of maturity, when the physical forces begin to flag, equally sacred to ease and agreeable relaxation.”*

*Looking Backward, 2000-1887*

~Edward Bellamy 1850 - 1898