Principal's Report
to the
School Board

Students in grades 3 – 6 completed the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium’s (SBAC) state standardized testing this month. These untimed, computer adjusted assessments were highly rigorous and help everyone understand that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are truly steps ahead of what we have been teaching. When these standards were implemented in 2011, it was understood that instruction would have to change to incorporate an increased amount of problem solving of real world issues, focus on 21st Century Skills (Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical Thinking), as well as the integration of technology throughout our curricula. What we experienced in this recent SBAC testing was that our students were challenged with real-life problem solving, critical thinking, and the use of technology. We are not sure when the results will be returned to us, however, it is very clear that we need to “step up” our instruction and curricula. Some of the ways that we can take positive steps in preparing our students for the state standards is to have an intense focus on what we are teaching each day. Our teachers know the standards that they are responsible for and plan and prepare accordingly. We support the classroom teachers through collaboration with our Enrichment Coordinator and Technology Integration Specialist. These two important members of our staff collaborate with the classroom teachers in presenting project-based learning opportunities that present real-life issues that make students think. We believe that we teach our students to think, not just regurgitate facts that are easily “googled”. The use of technology in researching these projects, reading and writing about them, and then presenting the culminating activity, helps prepare our students for the education and/or careers ahead of them. We are constantly looking for ways to engage our students and project-based learning and the use of technology are two highly motivating tools to use in our classrooms.

Eight members of our staff (Lafayette Math Committee) recently spent a day at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics National Conference in Boston, researching new math curriculums that are fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards. We found one titled, “Eureka Math” that is the only math curriculum that is fully aligned and written expressly for the CCSS. Most of the other programs that we researched were merely modified or slightly aligned. The process of changing curriculums was a thought provoking one as the committee searched for the best possible solution to the challenges presented in the CCSS. We will also be bringing a math consultant, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, to Lafayette this summer for mathematics professional development purposes. Both of these experiences will be part of the necessary steps to improve the math instruction of our teachers and the learning of our students.
We went into “lockdown” mode this month when a man was spotted standing in the tree line watching our students on the playground. We “reverse evacuated” the playground (everyone went inside the building), similarly to when we have spotted a large animal on the playground. The staff performed their responsibilities flawlessly. The local police departments (Franconia, Sugar Hill, and Bethlehem PD’s) did an exceptional job of arriving promptly, securing our grounds, and remaining as a presence throughout the day. Letters of commendation were sent to the local police departments and their respective Selectmen’s offices on the same day. The individual was not found to be interviewed and no physical description (other than clothing) could be determined due to the distances involved. In an amazing coincidence, the NH State Police SWAT Team used our building later that evening as a training site for their hostage rescue scenario. Our parking lot was full of state police cruisers as well as their armored vehicle. The commander of the SWAT Team was extremely grateful for the use of our facility.

Three Information Technology (IT) proposals will be reviewed and, hopefully, voted upon at the May School Board meeting. Secured Network Systems (SNS), Profile Technologies, and the SAU have proposals that will be brought forward to the Board. Our IT services are an instrumental and valuable part of our work, both from the students’ and teachers’ point of view. We have a strong instructional program based on a highly functioning technology infrastructure. As our students’ futures depend on a fluent command of computer technology, the associated costs involved are well spent.

This is the season for field trips, after a long, snowy winter. Our teachers have been taking the classroom learning to places such as the Fairbanks Museum, Squam Lakes Science Center, Belknap Mill Museum, Jericho-Cooley Forest, and the Copper Cannon Camp. All of these enrichment opportunities align with our curricula and the standards. We also had the Creative Edge Dancers visit school for a performance.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me regarding any questions that you may have regarding this report or the school in general.

Respectfully submitted,

Gordie Johnk
Principal