Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Community Learning and Playing Together

Our theme for the month of January is self-reflection. We know our strengths and talents. We discover areas where we are challenged. We think about those areas where we can improve. We ask, "What have we learned and how can I use this new learning?" The following shares some changes due to some recent self-reflection.

Safety

The tragic event in Connecticut prior to winter break was heart-breaking and felt so close to home. We are always striving to ensure that our learning environment at school is safe for everyone. Many in our community have been so kind as to support us in our efforts to reflect and offer advice. While we have many systems in place to support our students and our safety, we can strive to see our efforts in different ways. We have made adjustments using what we have learned. Though I do not believe it is in our students' best interests to share all of the details to our safety systems, I will share one recent change. We teach our children, at home and at school, to be cautious when a person knocks on our door or rings the doorbell. At school, there can be a few transitions during the day where students or others will knock on classroom doors to gain entry. We realized that our students responding to knocks on the doors of our portables did not consistently have reasonable ways to observe those knocking. Thankfully, over the winter break, our district has supported us in having thin windows installed in all our portable exterior doors. I will also say that we have greatly appreciated the support and advice offered by those in our learning community. Please continue to feel free to share any questions or ideas you may have which could potentially improve the safety for everyone.

Kindergarten

Our teachers consistently reflect and seek the most effective ways to meet the individual needs of each of our students as a whole child. This school year has found us with a rising number of kindergarten students. Our kindergarten teachers have been working hard to reflect and find ways to best meet the individual needs of our students early on in their school career, striving to shrink learning gaps before they move on. Recently our teachers have developed a plan to do just this. We are currently in the process of hiring a certificated teacher to support kindergarten students who we have assessed and found to be in need of intensive support with their learning. This teacher will work with specific students the remainder of the school year to give more direct support of our students each of our five days of school each week. Monday through Thursday will have students working with this teacher in groups of three. Students will then attend a fifth day on Fridays as one new class working together.

We continue to strive to support our students and families as early as possible in their learning. Our kindergarten team is also working to take our efforts to the next step. They have developed a plan to seek out and support four year olds and their families to better help them prepare and be ready to hit the ground running when they enter kindergarten. This will include at least monthly dinners, instruction, and providing activities and materials for incoming four year olds, their families, and local preschool staff so that they can learn together as they prepare for kindergarten. Finding these students and families who can best utilize this support can be a very time intensive job. Our kindergarten teachers are already very busy with their current jobs of supporting our students and families. We also plan to hire a liaison who can work specifically to seek and communicate with the families of our future kindergarteners so that we may better work with and support them. I am very excited about our recent plans and look forward to seeing all the benefits for our current and incoming kindergarteners.