



ENGAGED LEARNING IN THE FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 23, 2023

Farmington High School

Model UN Nations Conference

This year, a record number of FHS students participated in the Model United Nations Conference at the University of Hartford, sponsored by the World Affairs Club of Connecticut, on December 2 & 3, 2022. Over 50 students took part in an exciting weekend of debate and problem solving.

Model United Nations is a popular award-winning club at Farmington High School that simulates the committees of the actual United Nations. Under the guidance of the club's faculty advisor, Social Studies teacher Lance Goldberg, members research their assigned country and then write resolutions based on their country's point-of-view. In addition, veteran members travel to the United Nations in New York City to consult with the official delegates from the countries they represent to further assist in simulating their perspective on world issues as accurately as possible. At the Hartford Model United Nations Simulation, chosen resolutions are then presented, debated and voted upon. Additionally, participants' conflict resolution and problem solving skills are exercised and enhanced as nations must join forces to cooperate with each other in order to solve real-time emergency crises. Completely run by students, it is a high school highlight for many who attend.

Irving A. Robbins

Celebrating South Asian Culture- IAR Social Studies classes have a long tradition of embracing and celebrating many vibrant cultures. On December 21st and 22nd, IAR welcomed FHS students into 7th grade social studies classrooms to celebrate and learn more about South Asian culture, history, geography, traditions, and identity/perspectives. FHS students from the Indian Student Union and Muslim Student Union worked diligently to prepare presentations for two South Asia Days. They designed their presentation to enhance the 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum, which includes an in-depth study of South Asian culture, history, and geography. IAR students experienced presentations and demonstrations about topics such as food, religion, architecture/famous sites, government systems, sports, clothing, education and more. They also had the opportunity to ask a variety of questions about those topics and beyond as they prepare to start their unit of study. Teachers and students appreciated learning more about South Asian culture, and our FHS students loved sharing more about their identity and culture as well. In Farmington, we are civic-minded contributors who embrace diverse perspectives.



IAR World Language



It was a joy to observe students in **Spanish II-A** engaging in a “mixer” in the library across all 3 interdisciplinary teams! This is a rigorous interpersonal speaking summative assessment in our Identity Unit, where students, acting as **‘Self-Aware Individuals,’** explore what defines their personal identity, learn about their peers’ identities, appreciate the diverse background of their peers, and build a sense of community within the classroom and across the three interdisciplinary teams. Students create a Padlet recording about their identity and listen to the recordings from across the teams to connect their own identities with their peers’ identities. Students then interview each other in the library “mixer”; these numerous spontaneous conversations require students to apply knowledge and skills via sustaining a conversation with questions/answers, actively listening and reacting, and transferring a variety of vocabulary in new ways. Finally, students select one student to create an on-demand writing biography article about students in school for the authentic audience of a ‘Scholastic’ magazine. Students are **‘Disciplined Thinkers’** by displaying attention to accuracy and creativity, as well as resilient **‘Empowered Learners’** who use technology skillfully, and **‘Engaged Collaborators’** with effective communication.



To conclude this identity unit, each of the 14 sections of **Spanish II-A** design and create a giant, colorful infographic that synthesizes the whole class identity! Survey questions to create this collaborative, creative infographic include the following: nationality, birthday month, favorite class, and number of siblings.



The **'IAR World Language Club,'** led by Señor Hook, gives students the opportunity to explore languages and cultures beyond the classroom! Club members will be **'Civic-Minded Contributors'** as they organize community service to the school, to the community, and to the world!

Recycling Repurposed



8th Grade artists in Alana Valdez's class exhibit what it truly means to be a Civic-Minded Contributor by creating art that utilizes waste to address environmental problems. Before creating their pieces, students conduct independent research on environmental issues that impact their community and create project proposals to explain the impact of their issue, make a personal connection, and explain their project plan.

Artist and University of Hartford professor Katharine Owens visited us virtually to talk about her broad research in plastic pollution and inspire students with her [Entangled and Ingested](#) series, life-sized portraits of animals harmed by marine debris, made of non-recyclable plastic. Prior to her presentation, students studied her work and generated questions for her such as, "What 'triggered' you to make this project? When did you realize this was what you wanted to make?"

Select work from this project will be on display at the upcoming K-12 District Art Show.

WHY IT IS A PROBLEM AND WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT TO ME

Water pollution is a serious threat to everyone. An estimated 1 in 3 to 4 people do not have clean drinking water, forcing people to drink sickness- and disease-inducing waters. If water pollution continues at this rate, there will be more plastics in the ocean than fish in 2050.

Like everyone else, I exist in the same world. Water contamination and access to clean water are issues that affect more than just me and people in third world countries. Everyone on the planet is affected by it. Future generations will need access to water to live. Until the trash in our oceans and pipes is recycled or properly disposed of, this issue won't stop killing people. I want to raise awareness of this situation through my project.

CT Regional Scholastic Art Awards Winners

Each January, middle and high school art teachers in Connecticut are invited to submit student work to the Connecticut Regional Scholastic Art Award Competition. There, the work is judged on originality, content, style, and technical skill. In the category of Digital Art, 8th graders Pranit Bagchi, Katy Watkin, and Amelia Greenfield took home awards. In Ceramics & Glass, current 9th graders Eva Rios and Amy Cabanillas won. 9th grader Vienna Beaupre won in the category of Comic Art. These students will be distributed specific [awards](#) after the show of winning work opens on January 17th. The show will run from January 17th to February 3rd at the Silpe Gallery at University of Hartford. Students will be honored at an awards celebration on January 29th. "Boredom" by Amelia Greenfield (L) and "Lollipop" by Katy Watkin (R)



"Boredom" by Amelia Greenfield (L) and
"Lollipop" by Katy Watkin (R)

"NFT Comic" by Vienna Beaupre



West Woods Upper Elementary School

West Woods Wildcats were excited to fundraise for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center on Friday, December 9 by dressing in their PJs. Schools across the state engaged in this fundraiser, which helps to support children with cancer. Wildcats have been helping to raise funds for CCMC for over ten years, and this year was no different. We are so proud of our students and staff for continuing to raise the bar when it comes to civic-minded activities that empower and support our community.



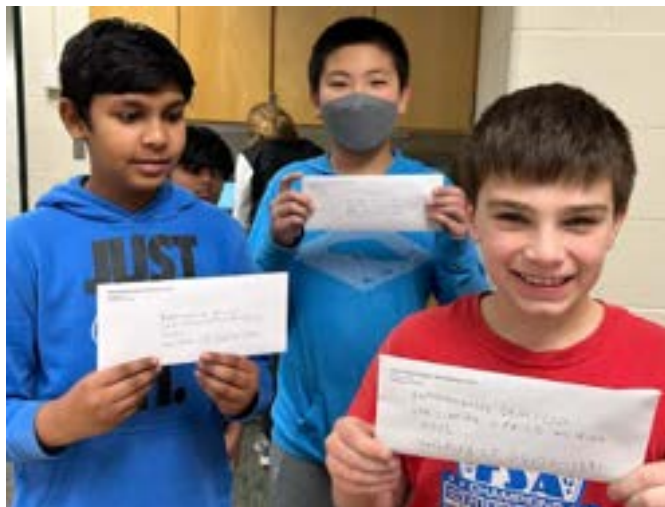
Collaborative Discussions in Reading Class

WW Wildcats have been working on their collaborative discussion skills in Reading classes. Through preparation and self-reflection, they can analyze the types of questions they are asking each other and how much of their discussion is spent on developing, revising, ranking, and connecting theories and ideas about texts. These engaged collaborators will continue to work on these skills throughout their reading work this year.



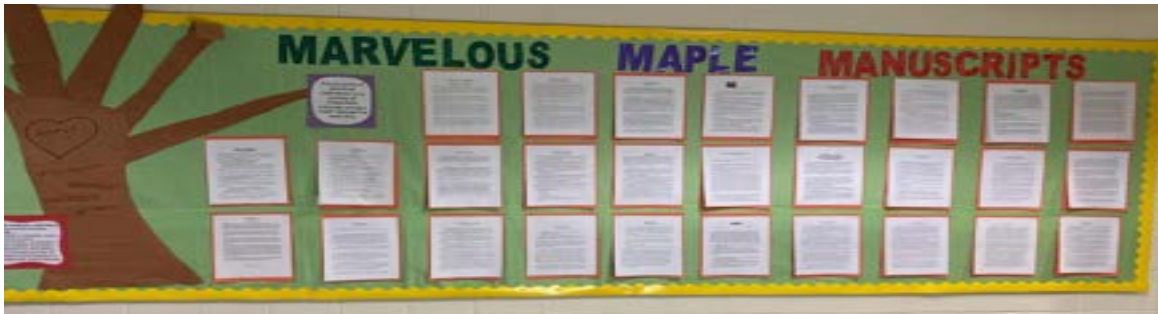
Voting Rights!

WWUES Students learned how the right to vote expanded over time through Constitutional amendments and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. At the end of the unit, students explored another possible expansion and looked at the issue of lowering the voting age to 16. Before taking a position on this issue, students analyzed various sources with differing opinions including scientific evidence on brain development. They had an opportunity to discuss the issue in class and then independently synthesize the information. After weighing the evidence, they wrote argument essays supporting their opinions with evidence from the sources. Students completed a survey at the beginning and end of the lessons and 26% of the students changed their minds after analyzing the sources. Overall 57% concluded that the voting age should not be changed in Connecticut. Some students decided to take action on the issue and are now writing to a Connecticut state legislator expressing their opinion.



WWUE- Why do we celebrate our writing?

When imagining our especially packed days, you may wonder why we stop and celebrate our writing. We teach the students that writers write for an intended audience. Sometimes that audience is their classmates or their families. Other times we look to outside audiences such as our local community members, published authors, or imagined audiences interested in our posted ideas, opinions, and interests. Dr. Mary Ehrenworth once said, "An [important] kind of response [we can provide to our kids] is going to be making a really big deal of their publishing. If they write, and it goes into a milk crate, kids stop writing." Without an audience, we lose an opportunity for our students to see others engage with their writing and for them to feel agency for their own writing. Writing celebrations provide a general excitement for writing.



The Farmington Rotary Club hosts an annual contest for WW writers. Here is a celebration of writing held in June for the winners.

This past fall, both fifth and sixth grade students wrote personal narratives. These are stories that share a message that was learned through an experience of each student's life. Sharing their stories is not just a writing activity that validates their hard work and provides meaning for the writing process, it is also an opportunity for students to learn about each other and develop an appreciation for the different perspectives and experiences that their peers have.

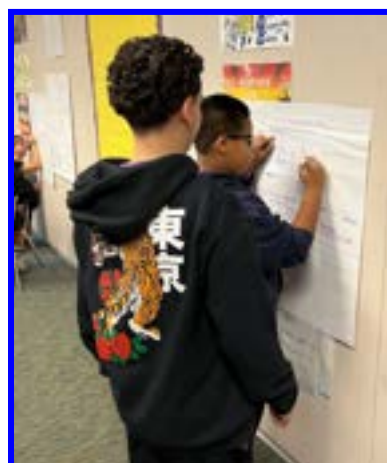
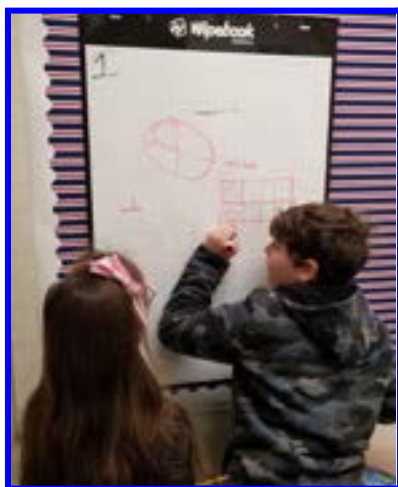
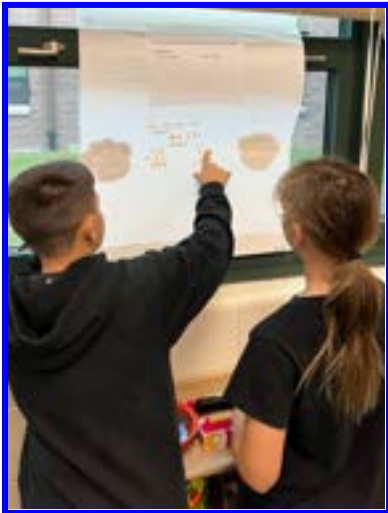


Writing celebrations taking place in December on the Elm, Birch, and Pine teams.

Don't forget to celebrate your child's writing at home! Sharing writing by posting it on your refrigerator and reading it with friends and family is a great way to honor the writing work that your children are doing in school.

WWUE Mathematicians

West Woods mathematicians have been using vertical, non-permanent surfaces to unpack anchor tasks at the start of each math lesson. These surfaces, along with small, randomized groupings, promote student engagement, risk-taking, collaboration, communication, and knowledge mobility. Whether students are exploring fractions and decimal concepts (grades 5 & 6), or rates and ratios concepts (grades 6), they are able to do so in meaningful and engaging ways!



Union School

Projects and Presentation in Fourth Grade

Students in fourth grade celebrated the culmination of their unit, 'Reading the Weather, Reading the World,' with presentations to their families and students from other classrooms. Throughout the unit, students researched weather related disasters and extreme circumstances such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and much more. As disciplined thinkers and engaged collaborators, they worked in groups, planned presentations and thought carefully about audience and impact. Parents and students in attendance rotated through presentations and had opportunities to ask questions of these weather experts.



Second Grade Meta-Moment Leaders

Union School's second grade classes led our November monthly assembly, teaching the school staff and students about the RULER strategy of using the 'Meta-Moment.' The Meta-Moment is used to regulate emotions and respond to situations when emotions might be strong. The students introduced the Meta-Moment and presented skits they had recorded. In each short skit, students modeled confronting a stressful or challenging situation, taking a moment, calling up their 'best selves,' and responding in an appropriate way.



East Farms

The East Farms Student Council sponsored their annual Toy Drive. NBC 30 was so impressed with the generosity of the East Farms community that they did a live broadcast from the East Farms library on 12/2. Several students were interviewed and shared their thoughts about the importance of showing compassion and generosity to kids and their families who may not be as fortunate as they are. One student said, "I wish I could see the smiles on the kids' faces when they open these gifts." Over 300 toys were collected and donated to the NBC 30 Toys for Tots event held at Bushnell Park. 70 kids and their families delivered the toys in the pouring rain and then were treated to a ride on the Bushnell Park Carousel. East Farms embodies the characteristics of being a global citizen.



Habitats and Organisms Integrated Unit and Celebrations

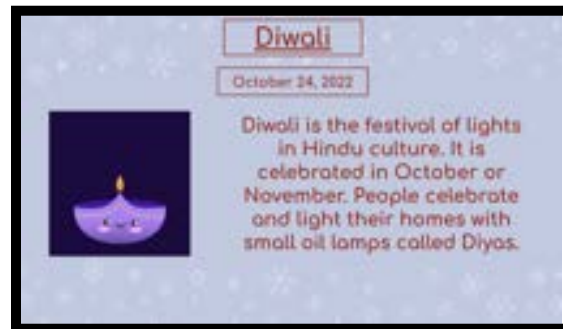
Third Grade students at East Farms have been practicing being Global Citizens while engaging in their Habitats and Organisms integrated unit. In this unit, students think deeply about habitats familiar and habitats new to them, and how the animals and organisms that live in these habitats have adapted to survive. Students have been disciplined thinkers by reviewing non-fiction texts strategically, synthesizing information into main ideas and details, and connecting new concepts with already held background knowledge. This integrated unit also provides a wonderful opportunity for students to be engaged collaborators, working with peers studying the same habitat to share information, facts, and opinions. This socially constructed learning environment helps support our student's learning and their ability to learn from multiple sources, such as books and classmates!

Third Grade classrooms at East Farms were also able to celebrate the winter season through celebrations facilitated by our PTO Room Parents. We welcomed the opportunity to bring parents into our learning space, while also celebrating the many holidays and traditions held by our diverse group of students. Classrooms at East Farms were able to complete craft projects representing the winter season, and cherish classroom community by eating food and decorating special treats! We had a great time building memories, sharing our classroom space, and celebrating the learning and community we have built so far this year!



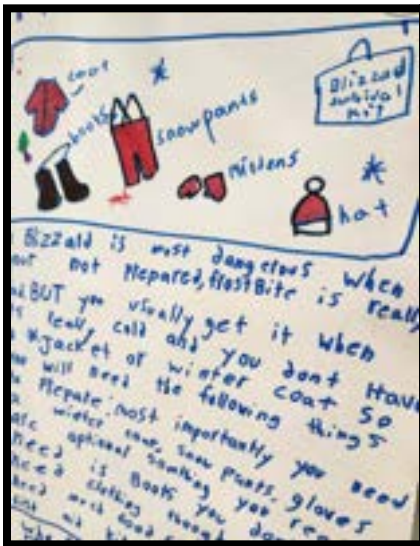
West District Elementary School

West District Tigers are global citizens! In celebration of many of the recent and upcoming winter holidays, West District faculty, staff, students, and families enjoyed a Winter Sing Along on Friday, December 23rd. The musical program, arranged by West District music teacher Adrienne Foret, featured a teaching moment about each of the holidays followed by a song to match. Each grade level took responsibility for learning a different song to be shared with the community. In addition, students learned that many cultures celebrate special holidays similarly. These celebrations often include enjoying special foods, getting dressed up, spending time with family and friends, and celebrations of light. We are excited to help all children learn to appreciate their own cultures, demonstrate curiosity about the cultures of their friends and classmates, and find commonalities between them.



Reading the Weather: The Learning Outlook is Bright!

West District Tigers in fourth grade demonstrated the skills of Disciplined Thinkers and Empowered Learners as they researched natural disasters and extreme weather topics. In reading, students learned how to analyze nonfiction texts closely to determine how the author structured the information. They determined the key details of their chosen weather topic and synthesized their thinking across multiple texts. As they read, they considered the purpose of their research and their audience. They worked hard, both individually and collaboratively, to create engaging presentations to share with third grade students. They considered the needs of their audience and thoughtfully chose the presentation style that matched their own interests and clearly communicated the important information they were teaching about their topic. They applied multiple strategies they learned throughout the reading unit and considered their own artistic or technological strengths when creating their presentations. Students were excited to do this work and often worked outside of the classroom to ensure that their presentations were high-quality and captivating.



Noah Wallace School

December in the Noah Wallace Library is always an exciting time because we celebrate coding all month long! Recently, students learned about computer science through unplugged activities where they took turns being the coder and the robot and wrote programs for their partners. In the photos below, you can see students from Mrs. Gilligan's 3rd grade class programming their "robot friends" to build a stack of cups using only arrows to guide them! Students also practice coding online via a set of given coding games from the Hour of Code website. Please click the logos below to learn more!

