

Principals' Reports for November 2020

Celebrations

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

I've often admired the indoor Gaga pit I've seen in the Barton School gym. When I looked into it, I discovered that these cost around \$5000. Our phys ed teacher Matt Lapham is also a skilled carpenter. Since he doesn't have parent conferences like a classroom teacher, I asked him to construct a modular indoor Gaga pit in that time. It is constructed from plywood and 2x4's and bolts together for easy removal. It gives our kids a safe recreation resource as we enter the cold months. Rather than \$5000, it cost less than \$500 in materials.

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

One way we celebrate our school community is with "Tiger Time." Everyday our school comes together virtually. During this time, Mrs. Baker may lead a stretch or dance, Mr. Jacobs will engage kids in a fitness activity, Mrs. Sally may lead a mindfulness exercise, students have an opportunity to learn sign language with Karen-Mueller Harder or learn how to draw with Mrs. Corkins. Once a week during "Tiger Time" staff have been acknowledging and celebrating students for their positive behaviors and efforts with positive office referrals.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

In mid-November, we celebrated Support Professionals day by bringing gifts for Custodian Mike Sharon and Cook Cheryl Glodgett. Later in the month, I posted this to our Facebook page: "We have been lucky enough to receive hats and neck warmers from the Turtle Fur Company again this year. How awesome that even in such a difficult year, they continue to keep our children on the top of their list. Special thanks to Mrs. Berry for once again distributing these to the kids."

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Because we put so much time and effort into creating and sending home short-term closure packets, when we had to close for a couple of days we were well prepared. The best thing about the Glover staff is that they truly want to be in the building with the students and they continue to be flexible so that we can make that happen.

For the first six weeks of school we focused on social-emotional well being. Rigor picked up at the end of October and in November we've put more emphasis on academics. Students have gotten back into the routine of school, and still seem happy to be in the building.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

Our students and staff continue to work hard both at academics and also following the safety protocols due to the current pandemic. Due to staff shortages from recent illnesses, we've had

many staff members that have taken on additional duties to ensure that the school continues to operate smoothly and safely.

All of the students participated in a mock election in November for the President and Vice-President of the United States. There were some surprising results within some of the classes. It certainly proved that some of the students pay attention to family discussions at home.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students are continuing to work hard in all classes and are making progress. Teachers are using differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students where they are.

Our middle school continues to use a hybrid model. Students are doing a great job of checking in on remote days. The principal hosts a morning advisory for students and often there is 100% attendance and engagement. Teachers are continuing to work on best practices with remote teaching. We hope to bring back all students to full in-person soon.

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

Our middle school students decided that we are the ORA Otters. Our 3 school-wide expectations are Open-mindedness, Respect, and @ccountability. The staff is currently creating a behavior matrix that includes expectations for entering a class meeting, participating in a whole class meeting, participating in a small group meeting, and for participating in a 1:1 meet. We'll share these with students and parents when they are done.

We've also had a spike in enrollment due to recent COVID-19 cases in our k-8 schools. We just added 9 new students to ORA. 2nd grade is full and so are 3rd-5th grades. We'd have to make staffing changes to accommodate more students in these grades.

Focus on Learning & Equity

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

During the November building-based PLC I taught a two-hour session for Albany staff in which I shared my learning concerning trauma-informed practice from the many sessions I've attended with Dave Melnick of NFI. Dave is a foremost expert on the subject. Our PLC session was designed to cover the same ground as the Handle With Care verbal program, but using the most up to date theoretical models of trauma and behavior. The staff has done multiple HWC trainings with me, so it was good to give them a different approach. Trauma-informed practice benefits all students, not just those who have had adverse childhood experiences. It is also very helpful for those who experience ADHD, autism, dyslexia, mood disorders and other types of neuro-divergence.

We reorganized the middle school at the end of November. There were three purposes:

1. To make the cohorts smaller in case COVID entered the middle school. We now have separate cohorts for 5/6 and 7/8, which would simplify contact tracing and enhance safety.
2. To improve the climate of the Middle School, by reducing transitions and delivering more instruction in homerooms.
3. To improve math instruction, particularly for the 6th grade.

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

Our first trimester ended on Friday, November 20th and report cards were sent home Friday, December 4th. Report cards included a narrative report on “progress towards essential learning outcomes”, “cross curricular proficiencies”, and “recommended next steps.” Teachers put a lot of time and effort in providing thoughtful feedback for families on student progress.

Due to a positive Covid case in our school community, we had to pivot to remote learning for three days this month. In being proactive, teachers had spent time prior preparing short term closure materials and therefore students were able to continue learning remotely. Barton staff members checked in daily with students.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

One benefit to being a School in Need of Comprehensive Supports is that this fall I have participated in the Vermont School Leaders Support Program through the Center for Creative Leadership and the Vermont Principals Association. The program has included modules about having better coaching conversations with staff, understanding how polarity thinking can make those competing priorities into an asset, and student/staff climate surveys.

The program is similar in nature to the Waddington Leadership Initiative that a large number of OCSU principals have completed in the last few years. There are still four more days of the Leadership Support program throughout the school year.

Teachers continue to implement Expeditionary Learning, EL, for our language arts instruction. I have witnessed students diving deep into finding evidence in the text as a way to back up their opinions. Currently the 7th and 8th graders are using the text To Kill A Mockingbird to discuss race in America. This EL module is one of many that ask students to consider the wider world and our place in it.

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

During our November 10th PD time, we assessed how we’re doing with our inclusion practices and then we had small group discussions about what we are doing well, and what we need to improve on. Assessment data shows that students in special education don’t make the progress that those in regular education do. We want to change this.

The middle school team is discussing inclusion practices every other week during their local PLC. On the opposite weeks, they discuss other equity topics like social and racial justice. The k-4 team is more focused on core instructional practices because we have new teachers who need to start there.

All 1st and 2nd year teachers have been observed and most have received their evaluations. These need to be turned into the central office by December 15th. Teachers on TEP have turned in their goals for feedback from me. I've provided that feedback and they are making adjustments based on this. They will continue to work on these throughout the school year.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

All of Irasburg teachers and paraeducators viewed the webinar, "Decolonizing Thanksgiving," which led to some great discussions around equity and cultural appropriation. The middle school team's lessons have included discussions with their students around civil rights and social justice. This has led to many informative discussions and eye-opening awareness among the students. They are currently reading, "This Book Is Anti-Racist," by Tiffany Jewell.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Staff participated in a webinar called "Decolonizing Thanksgiving" in November. That began a discussion about equity and the holidays. At a staff meeting in December, we read several articles about celebrating Christmas in schools. The discussion led the staff to reflect on their current practices and how they could reframe and restructure what they do to be more equitable. Together, they brainstormed some great ideas about how to improve what they do.

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

The ORA team continues to read *The Distance Learning Playbook*. They recently read about providing feedback in a remote setting. Many of the ORA teachers have started providing audio feedback using a Google Extension called Mote. It's quick and easy for the teachers and it plays nicely with Google Classroom.

Larry and Angeliuqe have observed any 1st and 2nd year teachers and have turned in their fall evaluations that are due on December 15th. Teachers who are on TEP have met with their advisories and have submitted their goals for final feedback. They've been given feedback and will adjust as necessary.

Staffing

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Staffing is stable at ACS. We have had some challenges getting everything covered when there are staff absences. There has been a shortage of substitute teachers.

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

The CEC program continues to be short two paraprofessionals. November has been a particularly challenging month finding enough substitutes for staff absences.

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

We are fully staffed finally. Noah Racine returned to join us in the fifth grade. Early indications are that this split class will be very successful. Kaleigh Nutting has taken the final paraprofessional opening; she is off to a great start working mostly with middle school students.

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Glover had all positions full in November and we began advertising for a long term sub for a middle school humanities teacher. So far we have no viable applicants.

We had two students request to transfer from ORA to in-person instruction so our k-1 class needed to be broken up. We started the year with 1 classroom teacher, 2 paras and 12 students. With the addition of 2 students and a behavior interventionist, social distancing was no longer possible within one classroom. We've put a sub who is training to become a teacher with the kindergarten class. Monique Schneider is still the teacher and plans the lessons and grades the students' work. She still works with these students multiple times a day in centers. However, the sub has 6 of the children, the 1 para, and the behavior interventionist in the old first grade room. Mrs. Schneider has the 8 students and para in her classroom. We still combine them for specials because fewer adults are needed to support the students during specials. If we get any more students in this group, we will have to split them for specials though.

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

Our new 4th and 5th grade science/math teacher began work at IVS on November 16th. It is certainly a relief to finally have someone in the position that will give some structure and routine to the classroom.

Our librarian, whom we share with Orleans, is now teaching classes remotely.

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Our librarian has begun teaching remotely. No new staff or resignations to report.

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

We don't have the staffing available to accommodate all of the requests for the OCSU Remote Academy that we currently have. There are roughly 3-4 students on a wait list.

Hazing, Harassment, Bullying Investigations

ALBANY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

1 investigation initiated 11/30

BARTON ACADEMY AND GRADED SCHOOL

3 investigations, 2 substantiations

BROWNINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

1 investigation, 1 substantiation

GLOVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

0 investigations

IRASBURG VILLAGE SCHOOL

1 investigation - substantiated

ORLEANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

0 investigations

OCSU REMOTE ACADEMY

0 investigations