

**West Elementary BOE Report from Principal Amy Flinn and West Items for the Good  
September 4, 2024**

**Enrollment:**

Third Grade: 127 – No change from August Report  
Fourth Grade – 128 – No change from August Report  
Fifth Grade – 100 – No change from August Report  
Total - 355

**USD 320 Strategic Plan – West Elementary Supporting Goals:**

○ **Student Success**

- *Strategic Plan Goal: Provide high quality instruction and individualized learning opportunities to ensure students become successful and productive citizens.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - ***Increase frequency of OTRs*** (Opportunities to Respond) in all classrooms. Collect baseline data in the fall with goals for increased frequency second semester. BLT members will be using the “Basic 5 Observation Form”. I’ll be sharing more about this with the BOE at my November BOE presentation.
    - Continue to implement ***Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures*** in all classrooms. Fully train all certified staff at West Elementary in Kagan (Days 2-5 during 2024-2025 school year). Staff that are currently fully trained at West include: Jennifer Blume, Haylee Haynes, Cathy Wilber, Kandy Williams, Sara Greene, Jacy McIntosh, Emily Ruby, Molly Townsend, Robin Butler, Hallie Hatfield, Jody Havice, and Marcia Hermesch.
    - Follow the ***Science of Reading*** in all classrooms by implementing core literacy curriculum, ***CKLA***, with total fidelity.
    - Follow the ***Science of Mathematics*** in all classrooms by implementing core math curriculum, ***Eureka Math 2.0***, with total fidelity.
- *Strategic Plan Goal: Enhance student well-being and mental health.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Commit to building-wide expectations by following the ***CHAMPS/STOIC*** model in every classroom and establishing clear ***structures*** for learning, clearly ***teaching*** expectations, ***observing*** student behavior regularly, ***interacting*** positively, and ***correcting*** misbehavior fluently.
    - Commit to implementing ***Second Step Social/Emotional Learning*** curriculum in all classrooms and across the building by focusing on each unit’s content and following the scope and sequence set for Second Step.
    - ***Ratio of Interactions*** (Positive vs. Negative/Corrective/Disruptions to Learning) - increase positive interactions. Use Relationship Building Strategies we have trained staff in using.
    - Create ***Student/Family Support PLC Team*** (Flinn, Neel, Zerbe, Butler, Platt, Hudson, Frank, Remmert) and set a weekly team meeting schedule to address student social/emotional/executive functioning needs and support families in need.

- Use **eduClimber** to help monitor and decrease chronic absenteeism and create plans to address students who are chronically absent, or who are becoming chronically absent.
- Implement monthly **Student Recognition Assemblies** to recognize students who are following our Second Step themes of Goal Setting/Growth Mindset, Bullying Prevention, Emotion Management, Empathy & Kindness, and Problem Solving.

○ **Retention & Recruitment**

- *Attract, invest in, and retain highly skilled and motivated staff to provide the best education and environment for student success.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Provide **instructional coaching** to second year teachers with Dr. Allyson Lyman during the 2024-2025 school year.
- *Cultivate supportive and safe cultures.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Implement “Fill the Fridge” and the “Treat Trolley” for all staff at West.

○ **Parents & Community**

- *Build and strengthen collaborative partnerships founded in trust, transparent communication, and engagement of all.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Provide civic engagement/leadership opportunities through the West Student Council with the Senior Center, Veterans, and local nursing homes.
- *Optimize stakeholder communication and engagement.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Parent Connections - Survey Fall/Winter, Seesaw - using consistently and emailing parents important information.
    - Send regular communication from each team via email to all parents/guardians.
    - Use the Seesaw App to highlight learning taking place in classrooms.
    - Send regular communication through School Messenger to keep parents/guardians informed (Principal).
    - Maintain Principal Blog and School Facebook Page to keep parents/guardians informed.
    - Engage an active and responsive Site Council and PTO.
- *Develop community learning partnerships.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Continue Classroom to Careers Program/Partnership with local businesses and all Fourth Grade Classrooms at West.

- **Facilities & Resources**

- *Proactively seek and provide the most optimal environment that enhances all areas of student learning.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Provide new, comfortable seating area for students in atrium space at West Elementary (funded by West PTO). Create a classroom space to use in this area to access natural sunlight.
    - Clean out all storage areas in the building and reorganize to optimally use the spaces available – completed summer of 2024 by various West Staff members.
    - Revamp PLC Teaming room to make it more comfortable and inviting for staff and parents (in process for 2024-2025).
- *Ensure safe and secure learning environments.*
  - **West Goals connected to this SP Goal Area:**
    - Convene West Elementary Crisis Response Team to serve as a resource to all staff. Set Safety/Security Presentations with SRO for October 7 and set all drills for the school year.
    - Train every staff member in how to identify if someone should or should not be in our building and promote and reinforce “stop the prop” initiative throughout the building.

**Kansas Assessment Focus Areas for Teams:**

- ***Interventionists:***
  - **Literacy:** Commitment to class wide fluency and use fluency partners throughout the year.
  - **Math:** All areas improved overall grades, but still need a focus on fractions.
- ***Third Grade:***
  - **Literacy** (Key Ideas and Details) - Use more Opportunities to Respond and try to implement similar language as the assessment uses so that students know what is being asked of them.
  - **Math** (Number and Operations with Fractions) - Require students to create their own fraction models from scratch during regular math instruction to prepare for state assessments. Try to get through more of the fraction unit before assessments.
  - We also did not get to go through the entire fraction unit before assessments due to snow days (5) and the timing of assessments, so hopefully we have fewer snow days and are able to plan out lessons better when it comes to a timeline leading up to assessments.
- ***Fourth Grade:***
  - **Literacy** - In-depth, explicit instruction and reinforcement of writing skills and use the language in writing set of mini tests.
  - **Math** - Math groups working on fact fluency, strategic thinking and reasoning, and multi-step word problems.
- ***Fifth Grade:***
  - **Literacy** - We will focus on analyzing word meaning (vocabulary).
  - **Math** - We will focus on building the connection between fractions and decimals.

## Applying Adaptive Schools Work in PLC Team at West:

- **What Why How Agendas:**
  - Each team will use the Adaptive Schools What Why How agendas for PLC teaming. The **What** is a statement of the topic. The **Why** sets the purpose for the topic item. The **How** sets the intentions for how the item will be addressed. Is it dialogue? Is it discussion with a resulting decision? What decision-making process will be used?
  - Most agenda items will fall under the main categories we set up at the beginning of the year with BLT Updates; Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment; or Lesson Planning. Staff need to differentiate between what goes under CIA and what goes under Lesson Planning, as there is a difference. Teams will create learning objectives together and ensure that they are consistent across classrooms and that they are not too broad. They should be specific to goals for each lesson.
  - All “housekeeping items” should be dealt with during Early Release PLC Fridays.
- **Inclusion Activities** – Each faculty meeting and BLT meeting will begin with an “inclusion” activity at the front of the meeting to bring our “hearts and heads” into the rooms.
- **Posted Agendas** – We will always have a visual agenda posted for all to see for all faculty meetings and BLT meetings this year, in addition to the electronic agendas that go out to everyone.
- **Teaming Minutes** – We will alternate who takes minutes at our BLT meetings to ensure everyone receives equal opportunity to participate in our meetings.
- **Sum Up before You Stand Up** – We will end each of our BLT meetings with this activity – Sum Up before You Stand Up – where each team members states what action steps they will be taking prior to our next BLT meeting.

### **Items for the Good for West Elementary 9-4-2024**

- **West Elementary Students and Staff to Recognize Patriot Day for 9/11 – Participate in Celebrate Freedom Week and Constitution Day September 17-21**

First thing in the morning on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, our students and staff will gather at our flagpole at West Elementary to pay our respects and give honor to all impacted by the horrific events of September 11, 2001. Our students at West weren’t born yet when the attacks took place. However, we believe it is important to take time to remember and honor all those who lost their lives, as well as their families, emergency response personnel, and our military men and women who have fought and continue to fight to protect us and our freedom.

During the short ceremony, the following information will be shared by Mrs. Flinn:

*On September 11, 2001 (23 years ago today), 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group, al-Qaeda, hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in*

*Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which triggered major U.S. initiatives to combat terrorism.*

*Today, we gather to remember all those who lost their lives as a result of these attacks, including all those on one of the airplanes or at one of the targeted sites, their families and loved ones, all law enforcement and emergency response personnel that were involved, and all those in our military who have fought and continue to fight to protect our freedom and keep us safe. It is important for all of us to remember what happened on that day and to keep the memory of those who perished alive in our hearts. Please join me in a moment of silence to pay our respects. God bless America and may we never forget.*

Following our moment of silence, we will recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing our National Anthem, led by Music Teacher, Marcia Hermes. We believe strongly that it is important for our students to understand the gravity of what happened and how it has shaped our country and our history.

Tuesday, September 17 is Constitution Day. September 17 - 21 is Celebrate Freedom Week. All staff will take time to teach our students about the founding of the United States and its key documents. Emphasis will be given on the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution.

May we never forget. God bless the USA.

- ***WHS Students Learn from West Elementary Teachers***

This year, we have the great fortune of hosting three WHS students from the “Teaching as a Career” course taught by Mrs. Anne Kidwell. Luke Lane, Shaela McKonkey, and Ryan Holloway have all expressed an interest in pursuing teaching as a profession and will be spending time in West Elementary classroom the 1<sup>st</sup> 9 Weeks to learn from our outstanding educators. They will visit West from 8:00-8:55am every Tuesday and observe in different classrooms each time. Teachers that will be hosting these students include the following: Mrs. Blume, Mrs. Haynes, Mrs. Wilber, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Greene, Mrs. McIntosh, Mrs. Ruby, and Miss Halseth.

- ***Family/Community Resource Liaison - Mikaela Zerbe; Sped Social Worker - Erin Hudson***

Mrs. Zerbe attended our **September 4** faculty meeting to share a bit more about her role and how she can support students this year. The Student/Family Support PLC Team will be meeting on Fridays this year (Mrs. Zerbe, Mrs. Butler, Mrs. Platt, Mrs. Hudson, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Remmert) to plan. They will be creating a referral system for additional social/emotional support. Mrs. Zerbe will not be doing the exact same thing as Mrs. Bieberle, as she does not have a Social Work license, but she can and will be providing many of the same services - just not THERAPY.

Mrs. Zerbe’s schedule is going to look a bit different this year, as she has her own office space and won’t need to share (at this time). We thought mixing up her schedule might help in her support of students and not always require her to pull kids from the same time in each classroom, as well as avoid core instruction time whenever possible. She will follow this schedule for now:

- Mondays/Wednesdays in the AM at Central and the PM at West
- Tuesdays/Thursdays in the AM at West and the PM at Central
- On Fridays - AM at West and PM at Central

We are going to re-evaluate this schedule at the end of the quarter to see if any adjustments need to be made. One thing that may change the schedule is if we find a new Sped Social Worker for the

elementary schools. Alyssa Smith took a job in Tonganoxie over the summer, and we were unable to find a replacement, which means that Erin Hudson will be coming back to West as our Sped Social Worker! Welcome back, Erin! Annie Frank, Rock Creek Social Worker, will be covering the Sped Social Work needs at Central for now.

- ***Pawnee Mental Health Services for West Elementary 2024-2025:***

As a reminder, Amanda Remmert is our School Mental Health Liaison for the elementary level. She also shares some responsibility with Mikaela Zerbe to support any homeless child.

If you have any questions on mental health support for students, or any inquiries from parents on mental health support, Amanda is your go-to person (along with Robin Butler, Mikaela Zerbe, and Erin Hudson).

Amanda's office is at the end of the Fifth Grade hallway by the door to the picnic tables (where Mr. Schmidt was last year). She will continue to be at West in the mornings M-F and at Central in the afternoons M-F. The space she is using is also the space that PMHS will use for School-Based Therapy and Case Management.

School Based Therapy will be Fridays from 8:30am to 2:00pm with a tentative start date of **September 6**. Our new therapist is Stevie Williams.

Case Management will be Wednesdays (start date was **August 21**) and will be from 8:30am to 3:00pm. Krystal Williams is our Case Manager.

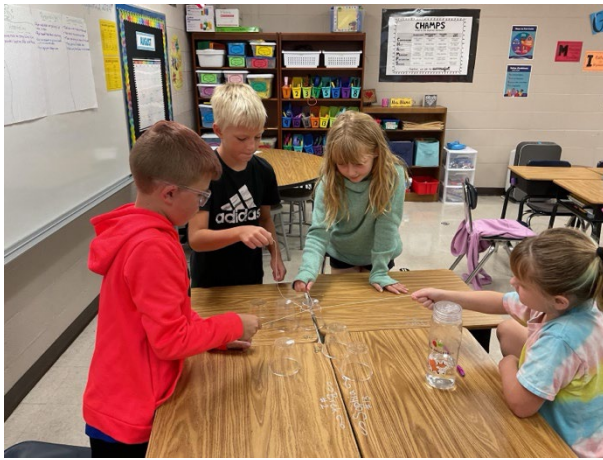
If you have any students that receive SBT or CM, Amanda has reached out to you or will be soon! Do not ever hesitate to ask for help or ask questions if you have them! Amanda can also assist with the referral process for any child needing SBT or CM. Mrs. Remmert shared more info at our **September 4** faculty meeting.

- ***Celebrate Freedom Week Resources and Constitution Day:***

We will recognize Constitution Day on **September 17** and Celebrate Freedom Week **September 17 - 21**. Our Third Graders are going to participate in something new being sponsored by KSDE - a mock trial! The Third Grade PLC Team is using the resources and lesson plans provided by KSDE to participate in this activity.

- ***Third Graders Complete Team Challenge to Build Classroom Community***

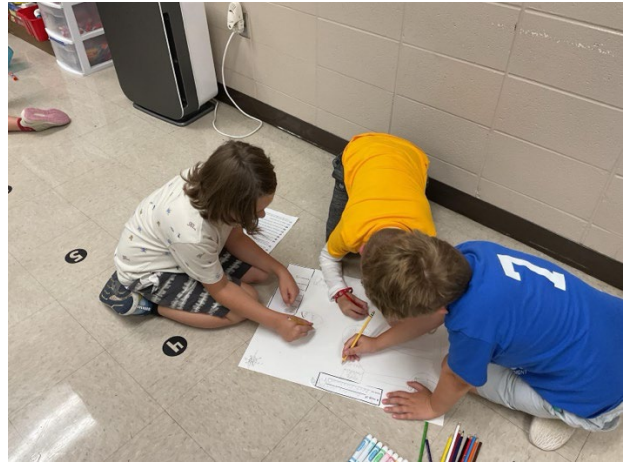
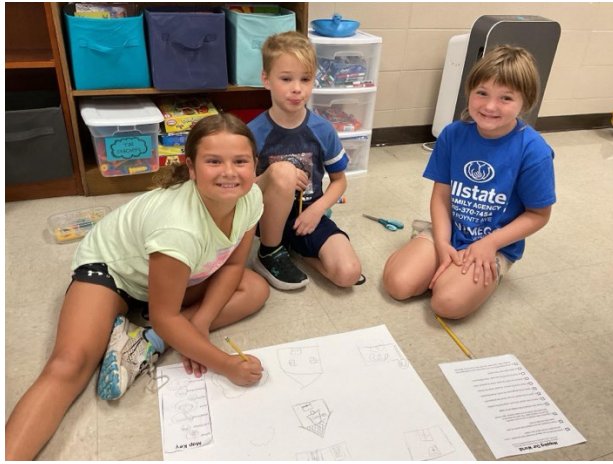
A new school year means new friendships. A great way to get students to interact with their classmates is a team challenge. The cup stacking challenge helps students see the value in communication, working together, and building trust in each other. The object is for each team to build a pyramid out of their cups. The challenge is the students cannot touch the cups and must hold on to their one piece of string that is attached to a rubber band. Through organization and communication, the teams become successful and extremely proud of their success! It is a fun and interactive way to build relationships at the beginning of the year.



- **Third Graders Develop Mapping Skills**

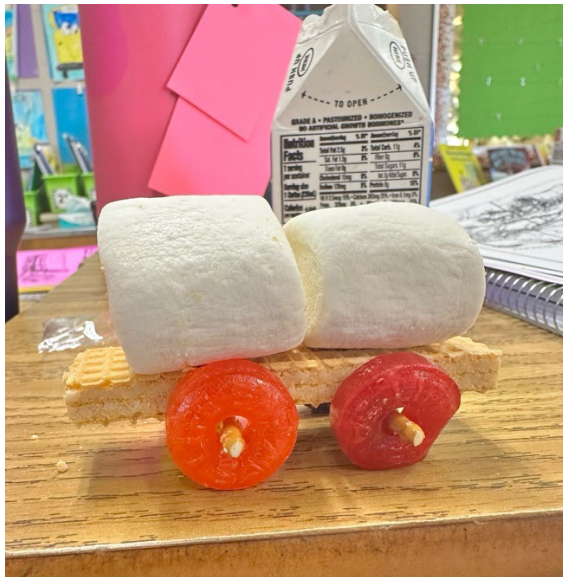
In Third Grade, we learn about maps. We look at all the different parts that make up a map such as a scale, key, compass rose, etc. Students then create their own maps following explicit directions and placing their buildings based on cardinal directions. To complete the unit, the students use Google Maps on their iPads to look up Wamego and key places in their town. The students had a great time with their partner looking at the shape of our City Park Pond, the words written on the end of our football field end zones, and the name of the river that is south of Wamego.





- Fourth Graders Kick Off School Year with "Getting to Know Me Activities" and Studying the Trails***  
 The beginning of Fourth Grade has been full of excitement and creativity! Students kicked off the year by creating "All About Me" backpacks, where they brought in personal items from home to share with their classmates. This activity allowed everyone to learn more about each other and build a strong, friendly classroom community.

In addition to these fun introductions, Fourth Graders embarked on their "Trails Across Kansas" unit, starting with the Santa Fe Trail. As part of their hands-on learning, they explored the history of Conestoga wagons and then put their knowledge to the test by constructing wagon models using Life Savers, wafer cookies, pretzel sticks, and marshmallows. This engaging activity helped them visualize the journey of pioneers and made learning history a delicious and memorable experience!



- Fifth Grader Expand Knowledge of Using Text Evidence***  
 Fifth Grade students spend quite a bit of time working to find text evidence to support their thinking. Here, students are working to find a quote that supports the theme of the story. Students reread a section of the text and then worked with others who read the same portion to select a quote that best supports the theme of the text. Then, they returned to their table team to report back on the quote they selected and shared their reasoning for why that quote supports the theme of the story.





- ***Fifth Graders Explore Ecosystems in Science***

Fifth Grade students asked themselves the questions “What does it eat?” and “What does it get eaten by?” when thinking about animals in food chains/webs. In the ecosystems unit, students learn about ecosystems, food chains/webs, photosynthesis, decomposers/producers/consumers, and how the sun’s energy is transferred through food chains.





- **MTSS Team News**

At West Elementary, excitement buzzes through the halls as two dedicated staff members, Mrs. McCarter and Mrs. Ross, prepare to embark on a new professional journey. Their mission: to enhance their literacy instruction skills through the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training program.

Although both teachers completed LETRS training several years ago from USD 320, they decided that starting this newest edition would be beneficial for their classrooms as well as supporting other teachers in the Science of Reading through implementing effective literacy practices school-wide. Their goal is to refine their approaches and stay current with the latest research in the extensive field of reading instruction.

Mrs. McCarter, a Special Education teacher known for her explicit and engaging classroom activities, had always believed in the power of foundational literacy skills. She has multiple master's degrees in various Special Education areas, including a Reading Specialist endorsement.

Mrs. Ross, the school's reading specialist, has spent many years guiding students through reading difficulties and has seen firsthand the impact of targeted instruction.

Both staff members were excited about the journey ahead. They know that the skills they will gain from LETRS will not only enrich their own teaching practices but also contribute to the overall success of their students. With a shared commitment to fostering strong literacy skills, Mrs. McCarter and Mrs. Ross are ready to embrace the challenges and rewards of their LETRS training, confident that it will be a transformative experience for their professional growth and their students' achievements.

- **Specialized Team News for August 2024**

**Art News from Mrs. Havice:**

Hello! It is great to be back at school with the students at West Elementary School. For those of you who are new to West Elementary, I was your child's art teacher at Central Elementary as well. On the days that I am not at West, I work with the students at Central. If you are new to USD 320, welcome! We are happy to have your family as part of our school and community.

We are currently working on creating a cover design for the students' art folders in grades three through five to store their artwork during the year. The students are working with an emphasis on shapes for this design using the silhouette shape of various school supplies and the number that

represents their grade level. Through their designs, they are working on drawing lightly when using pencil, tracing with markers and making selections on types of lines that can be used to help attract attention to various parts of their design, as well as adding a variety of color to their work that best represents their individual likes.

Please keep in mind that your child's artwork will be sent home as it is completed during the year. Typically, your child's work will come home in October/November, December, March, and in May when we change to a new grading quarter. I only have one time slot thirty-five minutes a week that your child will come for art, so it can take us several weeks to complete a project. Please keep in mind that during times of illness and the winter months, it can be difficult to complete projects, if we face lots of inclement weather. When artwork is sent home, you will receive a letter explaining the project along with the student's work in a keepsake construction paper folder.

I look forward to working with you this school year. If you ever have a question, feel free to contact me at [havicej@usd320.com](mailto:havicej@usd320.com).

### **Counselor News from Mrs. Butler:**

Welcome back for another fantastic and educational school year at West Elementary School. I am so happy to see all the students and to meet our current Third Graders and new students.

As we begin our school year together, students are learning and practicing the expectations for the time we get to spend together. This year, I will be supporting the Second Step program during our weekly lessons along with lessons about mindset and self-efficacy. Students will also be working in Xello, an engaging online program that helps students build the skills, knowledge and plans to be future ready. The program uses an investigative, discovery-based learning process. Students better understand themselves, their future career options, and the 21st century skills they'll need to succeed.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions at [butlerr@usd320.com](mailto:butlerr@usd320.com).

### **Explore News from Mrs. Hatfield and Mrs. Spearie:**

We began our Explore class with an introduction to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and the skills that STEM learning helps us to develop, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, perseverance, digital literacy and teamwork. Students created their very own STEM All About Me lightbulb and we witnessed two scientific phenomena (refraction and total internal reflection) through experimentation.

### **Library News from Mrs. Hatfield:**

In the Library, we began the year reading *Our School is a Family* by Shannon Olsen. We've been focused on making students feel welcome and ensuring they find books that they enjoy for checkout. We've also discussed book care.



### **Music News from Mrs. Hermesch:**

Welcome to the Music Classroom!

Third Grade has been singing and moving. They have performed the songs “Up the Ladder”, “Down to the Baker’s Shop”, and “Apple Tree”.

Fourth Grade recited the rhyme “Knees and Hands” (aka Name Game). They also have been improving movement and statues by playing the Statue Game.

Fifth Grade has jumped in with both feet rehearsing their concert music. The theme for their concert is Rock Around the 50’s. The date of their performance is October 22, 2024.

All students will need a recorder for music class. If they have one at home, please send it to school. I will be distributing new recorders to students who have purchased one the first couple of weeks of September.

### **Physical Education News from Mrs. Ontjes:**

Hello! In P.E. during August, we began the year with a Team Building unit. We engaged in various games and activities that emphasized teamwork and collaboration. Throughout and after these activities, we discussed key aspects of being a good teammate, including listening, cooperation, leadership, and fulfilling roles. Our goal is to help each student become a better team member, both for the rest of the year and in future classroom and beyond experiences.

My goal this year is to offer students a variety of activities, hoping they find something in P.E. that they can use to stay active and healthy throughout their lives.

I’m excited for the year ahead! Please feel free to reach out to me anytime at [ontjesm@usd320.com](mailto:ontjesm@usd320.com).

### **Technology News from Mrs. Spearie:**

In Technology, we began the year focused on learning classroom expectations and digital citizenship. Our classroom rules include Be kind, be responsible, be respectful, be computer smart, be safe, and be aware. We will touch on all these rules as they relate to digital citizenship throughout the year.



Using Common Sense Media’s Digital Citizenship curriculum, our Fifth and Fourth Graders have begun to differentiate between private and personal information and learned why it's risky to share private information online. For more practice students can play Share Jumper at

<https://www.digitalpassport.org/share-jumper.html>. In this game, students evaluate examples of online messages and decide what information is appropriate to share, and when.

We were excited to introduce our Third Grade students to our technology computer lab and they are currently working on developing their mouse skills! We learned the parts of a mouse, how to use proper hand placement, and how to point, click, drag, and scroll using a mouse.

- ***West to Host Early Field Experience Students from Kansas State University***

Each year, many of our teachers open their classrooms up to future teachers by hosting an “Early Field Experience”, or EFE, student from KSU. These preservice teachers often complete one of their Blocks at West after having this experience in our school, and many have requested to complete their student teaching at West. This is a “win-win” opportunity for our district in that we receive additional aid support from these students while they are attending college, and then get the opportunity to potentially find future teachers for our schools. This semester, the following teachers at West are hosting EFE students: Mason Meinhardt, Cathy Wilber, Kandy Williams, Sara Greene, Emily Ruby, Bri Rowe, and Molly Townsend.