

Bucks Bulletin is a project of the students and staff of Washington Island School.

Standardized tests an objective way to evaluate

Bucks Bulletin February, 2020

“February, when the days of winter seem endless, and no amount of wistful recollecting can bring back any air of summer.” –Shirley Jackson

We have entered the mid-point of the third quarter of the school year. We are preparing for a myriad of academic endeavors that are important to the district, staff and students.

The sophomores, juniors and seniors took the ASVAB test on February 7. The juniors will be taking the ACT on March 3. The sophomore and freshman will take the ACT Aspire on April 21, and the 3-8 and 10 graders will begin their Forward Testing in April as well.

There is dedicated preparation by the staff, for the students taking these exams, during the extending learning time of our regular school day. The tests are an opportunity for the district to get a snapshot of student growth and achievement through multiple measures, over time. The state requires these testing opportunities be afforded to all students in each of the school districts in Wisconsin.

There has always been much debate regarding the amounts of testing, types of testing and the actual tests themselves, throughout the last two decades. In the face of the latest iteration of the testing backlash, we should try to remember why standardized tests are considered essential. The key reasons seem to all indicate three things: objectivity, comparability, and accountability.

Aaron Churchill, of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute for Advancing Academic Excellence, wrote about this in a piece he submitted several years ago called, “Bless the tests: Three reasons for standardized testing.” It is summarized below. I hope it helps to explain some of the rationale of the whole testing experience for students.

At their core, standardized exams were designed to be objective [testing] measures. They have been created to assess students based on a similar set of questions, given under nearly identical testing conditions, with results that are calculated by computers, or blind reviewers.

These test results are intended to provide an accurate, unfiltered measure of what a student knows at that time in their educational process. Now, some have argued that teachers’ grades are sufficient. But the reality is that teacher grading practices can be wildly uneven across schools—

and even within them. The grading standards also vary from district to district, and state to state.

Yet, when students take a standardized exam, a much clearer view of academic mastery can begin to emerge. So, while standardized exams are not intended to (and should not) replace the teacher grade book, they do provide an objective, “summative” assessment of student achievement, across time and across classrooms.

Standardized assessments of achievement can be used for comparison and accountability purposes, both of which are discussed in turn.

The very objectivity of standardized exams yields comparability of student achievement, a desirable feature for parents and practitioners alike. Most parents, for example, would like to know whether their child is meeting state benchmarks, or how the student compares to statewide, and nationally, to peers. Statewide standardized exams give parents this important information. Meanwhile, school-shopping parents have every right to inspect and compare the standardized test results from a range of schools, including public school districts, charters, private, and STEM schools, before selecting a school for their child.

School practitioners also use statewide test results to benchmark their students’ achievement across school and district lines.

Standardized exam data remains the best way to hold schools accountable for their academic performance. The accountability metrics include robust measures often referred to as “student growth” or “value-added” measures, along with conventional proficiency results and college-admissions results. All these outcome measures are based on standardized test results.

Outside of current standardized test results, there are no real objective methods that seem to exist for policymakers to identify either poor-performing schools needing intervention, or high-performing schools deserving rewards.

Consider the alternative: would one want policymakers to intervene in a school based on their “gut feeling” or reward a school based on anecdotes? Statewide and national standardized exams are essential for endeavoring to uphold a fair, and objective accountability system.

*Your Partner in Education,
Michelle Kanipes, Principal*

Washington Island school teachers attend professional development conference

By Alyssa Wagner

Marleen Johnson and I attended the annual Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Feb. 6 and 7.

This year’s conference theme was “Learning Together in Communities of Practice.” Over the course of two days, we had the opportunity to hear two dynamic keynote speakers, Cornelius Minor and Donnalyn Miller, as well as attend six different break-out sessions of our choosing. These sessions covered all literacy topics, inviting teachers to re-examine their own strategies, approaches, and methods in the reading and writing classroom, and leave invigorated to try something new and grow professionally.

Led by presenters who write or conduct research for major literacy publishing companies, well known published authors, college professors of education, and classroom school teachers from across Wisconsin and the United States, each session brought valuable takeaways, opportunities to ask questions and seek answers, network with fellow educators, and create valuable connections with the speakers for future learning.

This conference continues to be a real eye opener, helping teachers develop a deeper understanding of the true importance of literacy in our classrooms and of the new innovative ways to reach all students in their literacy education.

Spelling bee



Eleven students, three judges, one pronouncer, one coordinator, and a room full of parents, relatives, and friends-- the 2020 Washington Island Spelling Bee was a hit! Jocelyn, Allison, Jaylyn, Fisher (in back), Kinsey, Ashlynn, Emily (in back), Gretta, Xander, Magnus (in back), and Julia all took a step forward to dedicate their time to practice for and participate in this year’s spelling bee which was held on January 20 in Ms. Johnson’s classroom. Amy Rose, Carolyn Foss, and Bill Nauta volunteered to judge the event, and Ms. Kanipes graciously agreed to be the pronouncer. Ms. Johnson was the coordinator and would like to thank these four people and all those that came to support the students. Both Jaylyn and Emily not only had their mom and dad there cheering them on that night, but Donna Briesmeister and Sally Schweikert as well, which one could say was almost their whole neighborhood!



PHOTO BY MARLEEN JOHNSON

Smiling Spelling Bee winners: Julia who took second place, Xander who took first place, and Magnus who took third place on Jan. 20 at the Washington Island School Spelling Bee are proud to show-off their certificates and bronze, silver, and gold medals. Xander advanced to the Regional Spelling Bee representing Washington Island at Edison Middle School in Green Bay on Feb. 17, where he got to experience competing against third- through eighth-grade students from participating Green Bay and Kewaunee schools. Although Xander didn’t move on to the Badger State Spelling Bee in Madison, he sure made many people proud of him!



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First Door County SeaPerch competition

By Miranda Dahlke

Five teams gathered at the Sturgeon Bay YMCA Friday, Feb. 7 to compete in the first Door County SeaPerch Competition. Washington Island School competed against teams from Sevastopol and Southern Door who are all in their first year of participation in the National SeaPerch Underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) Competition.

The Door County Maritime Museum worked to build partnerships in order to sponsor all the teams interested in participating this year.

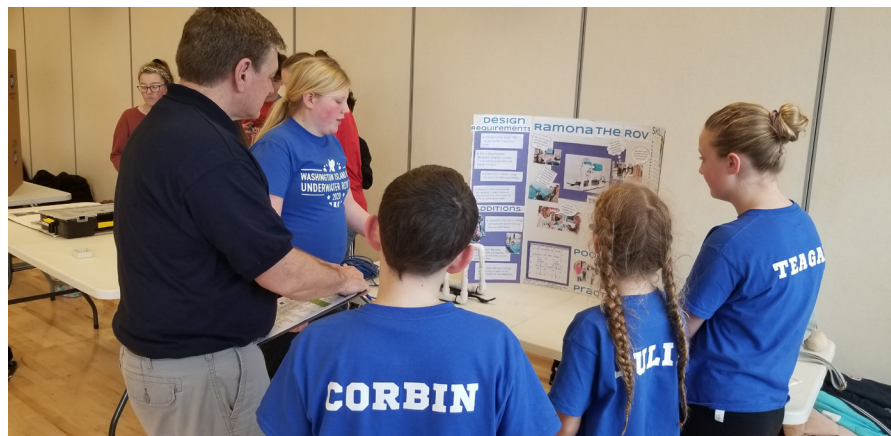
Washington Island fifth graders competed against teams of mostly seventh and eighth graders in two different courses. The Washington Island team was the first to compete in the pool.

After a slight motor malfunction, "Ramona" the ROV was back in the water. Julia Pratt and Corbin Kellerman worked together to guide Ramona through the first course with a time of three minutes and 25 seconds. In the second challenge the two worked to collect floating and sunken trash.

All four team members, including Teagan McGrane and Emily Nickchen, participated in the poster presentation.

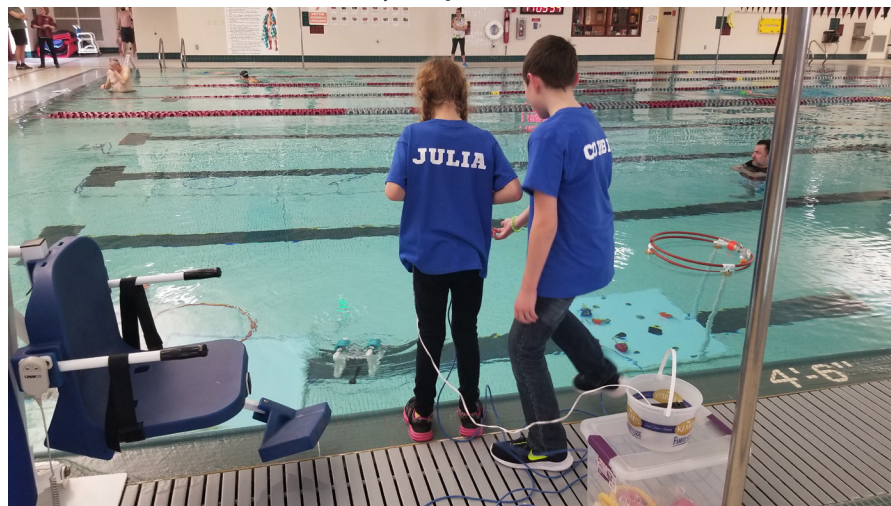
The students performed the best in the poster presentation and walked away in fourth place.

The Northeastern Wisconsin Regional Competition takes place on Saturday, Feb. 22 in Green Bay. The top two scoring teams will qualify to go to nationals in Maryland.



PHOTOS BY MIRANDA DAHLKE

Fifth graders of Team Ramona present about the engineering design process with Ramona the ROV at the Door County competition.



Julia and Corbin maneuver Ramona through the waterway cleanup challenge, collecting floating and sunken trash with the ROV.

Early childhood screening set for April 24

The Washington Island School will be offering its annual developmental screening on Wednesday, April 24, from 9 – 11 a.m. at school.

Parents of children who will be three or four years of age by Sept. 1, 2020 will receive packets in the mail containing questionnaires and pertinent information. Screening includes a questionnaire for parents regarding social, motor, language, number, and letter knowledge development.

Once completed, the screening questionnaire is scored and can reveal an overall picture of the child's development in relation to age norms. Results are then shared and explained to parents on screening day.

Also included on screening day are health, vision, and hearing screenings. Screening packets will be mailed during the first week of March 2020.

Zuzka Krueger will be accepting calls for appointments beginning on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 920-847-2507.

If you do not receive a packet, but would like your child to be screened, please just let the school know and we will get one to you.

Fun in the classroom



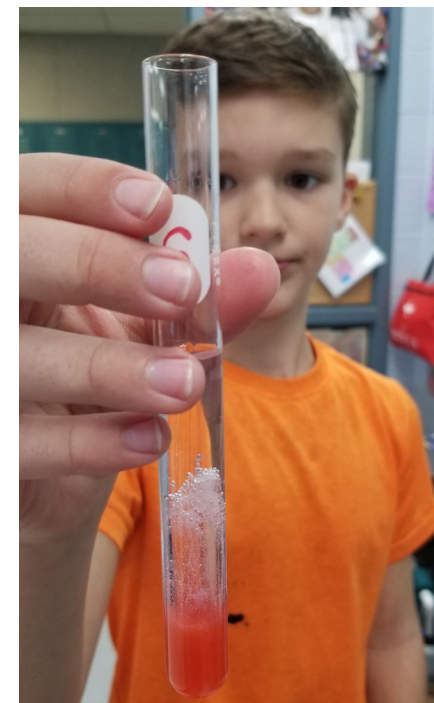
PHOTO BY ALYSSA WAGNER

The 100th Day of School was Feb. 7, 2020. To celebrate this special holiday, the first and second graders enjoyed several "100 activities" including making a 100-item collage in math. They counted, added, and learned how 10 groups of 10 make 100.



PHOTOS BY MIRANDA DAHLKE

Sixth-grade students extract DNA from strawberries in the study of cells.



Mason has collected quite a bit of DNA from his strawberry. It is caught in the bubbles in his test tube. Many strands are clumped together to appear like a blob.

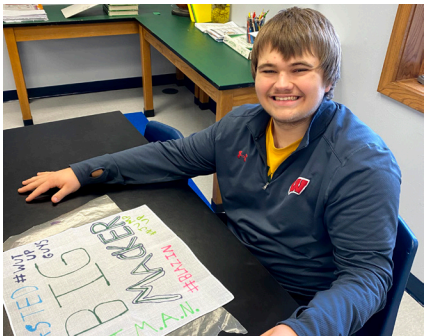
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A window into Mrs. Dennis' classroom



PHOTOS BY JESSICA DENNIS

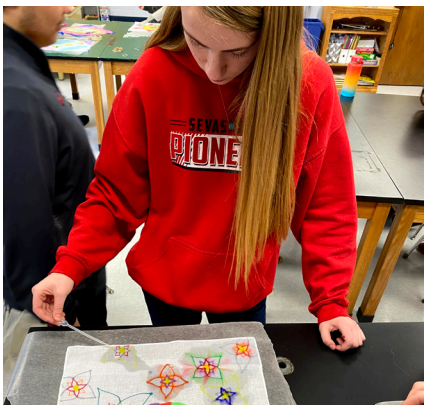
Tara and Evan drip rubbing alcohol over their design to watch the changes take place.



According to Max, "This lab was lit Mrs. Dennis!" **For those of you who don't know, 'lit' is a word used to describe something exciting, cool, or fun (or at least that's what the students say!)



Physical science student, Breanna, shows enthusiasm and surprise for a previous lab on magnetism and interference with magnetic fields.



Paige takes her time to strategically wet her decorated handkerchief.

During the month of February, the third and fourth graders have been working hard in their individual math classes. The third graders have been learning how to tell time, adding and subtracting time (elapsed time), and reading and creating bar graphs and pictographs.

The fourth graders have been learning about one of the hardest units in fourth grade math: different types of comparisons and multi-step problems focused on the order of operations (including long division and multi-digit multiplication).

The students also have been learning about forces we cannot directly see in science. They had the opportunity to experiment with hopper poppers to see how changing variables in the types of material and rubber band affect how high the poppers went in the air.

Students have also done multiple trials on bridge designs to see who had the strongest bridge, holding the most pennies. Spoiler alert: one bridge held over 500 pennies! Currently, we are learning about friction and how it acts as a force together with gravity by experimenting with different materials going down a slide.

High school physical science students are jumping into different types of energy sources and gearing up for a debate based on hypothetical scenarios with topics around renewable and nonrenewable energy sources. Students will also be participating in a lab where they are asked to design a water heater.

Waves and sound are the next topics; creating their own music instruments out of various household ma-

terials is in the future.

High school chemistry students have been knee-deep in Lewis Dot structures and learning about covalent and ionic bonds. Balancing chemical equations, writing chemical reactions, and stoichiometry are in our future. These students have gotten very comfortable with their Periodic Table of Elements.

With learning about covalent bonds, students also were exposed to chromatography. Chromatography is a procedure scientists do in order to separate the different parts of a mixture (the components separate because of a difference in polarity which occurs when a pair of electrons is pulled in a particular direction by an atom). Students were given permanent markers, white handkerchiefs and rubbing alcohol; by drawing a design with the markers and dripping rubbing alcohol, the colors were pulled from the original design into a makeshift tie-dye.

Check out the pictures to see the students' designs!

Get excited about heart health! February is American Heart Month.

Did you know the human heart is the size of your fist? Or that your body contains about 5 liters of blood? Did you also know your body has two circulation loops? Your heart is such an important organ because it is sustaining your life. So, what can you do to have a healthy heart? According to health.gov, you can maintain a healthy heart by being active, having a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, quitting cigarettes or staying away from secondhand smoke, reducing stress or, if you're anything like Olaf, hugging.



Chemistry students brainstorm ideas and concentrate on their designs. Ellie is the first to test out a different tie-dye method.

A note from high school English

By Leila Nehlsen

The 9th and 10th graders finished "All Quiet on the Western Front," an explicit experience of a 17-year-old German boy and his comrades in WWI. It was eye-opening for the students to see the war from the German perspective and realize the German soldiers suffered the same as our soldiers did.

We had many good discussions about many aspects of war. We wrote letters from the Western Front to the Home Front and back, learning letter formats and how to address an envelope. We are now writing analytical essays on the lost generation, comradeship in war, or Remarque's use of irony to show a lost generation.

The 11th and 12th graders just finished writing resumes and getting letters of recommendation from past employers. We plan to use these with a cover letter in a mock interview in the spring. Looking at past experiences in work and school and awards acquired has been an interesting exercise for students soon to enter the next phase of their lives.

We are now reading "Hamlet" by Shakespeare. It is always amazing to us how relevant the issues in "Hamlet" are: broken families, teen suicide, depression, fear, chaotic politics, betrayal by friends, violence, ambition. Wow! Great discussion material.

It is always a joy to teach these students! They are smart and good.

Foreign exchange student program

By Leila Nehlsen

If anyone is interested in hosting an international student, Karen Buelow, the coordinator, has emailed about several students: a boy from Denmark, a boy from Thailand, a boy from Italy, and a girl from Brazil.

Please contact Leila Nehlsen at 535-0567 for information on how to connect with Buelow.

It's a wonderful gift to give a young person and, also, a gift to our school and community.

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Washington Island School students



PHOTO BY MARLEEN JOHNSON

In anticipation of meeting Nathan Hale, the author and illustrator of the graphic novel book series, "Hazardous Tales Series One," students and staff from all over the school are sharing, swapping, and swiping his books to read before his visit to Washington Island School on Feb. 24. The author will engage groups of classes together in activities to learn about his writing and illustrating process—or develop their own—to answer questions, and to sign a few books. Pictured above, Allison is reading "Treaties, Trenches, Mud, and Blood," which, of course, is a graphic novel about WWI. Jaylyn is reading her fourth Nathan Hale book, "Alamo All-Stars," and Jaida probably has not gotten to the "the good part" of the "Donner Dinner Party" or she probably wouldn't be smiling. Christian is enjoying his first Nathan Hale book, "Big Bad Ironclad!" which covers the history of the ironclad steam warships used in the Civil War. Stay tuned to hear about Nathan Hale's visit to Washington Island School in the next Bucks Bulletin.



PHOTO BY MARLEEN JOHNSON

"What do we do in the winter?" We dance! On Jan. 20, Mrs. Gzrelak, Mrs. Dahlke, Ms. Welke, and Ms. Johnson held a Friday night Middle School dance in the school commons, and "Only on Washington Island" are two extra students from off Island who were in the Snowmobile Safety Course at the firehouse that night invited to come along as well! All had a great time, including the teachers and visiting parents who stopped in near the end of the dance. As soon as it was over and the kids were walking out the door, they were asking, "When is the next dance?!"



PHOTO BY LEILA NEHLSSEN

High school students enjoyed a Valentine's Party at Mrs. Nehlsen's on February 13. Students drew a name, wrote a poem, created a "cool" card, and bought a candy bar for their secret Valentine. Then they played bunco. A good time was had by all.



PHOTO BY ALYSSA WAGNER

Shapes, shapes, and more shapes! The students in Ms. Wagner's class had a blast creating their very own unique shape robots during math class.



PHOTO BY MARY GRZELAK

Congratulations to Washington Island School's grade level winners in the Zaner Bloser Handwriting Contest. Their entries will now be sent to the state level competition. Good luck, handwriters!

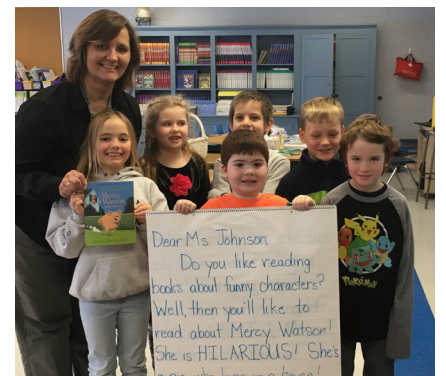


PHOTO BY MARLEEN JOHNSON

The first and second grade students presented Ms. Johnson with a persuasive letter including all kinds of reasons why she should read, "Mercy Watson to the Rescue" by Kate DiCamillo. It is in the Common Core State Standards that students learn how to write opinion and persuasive texts, and these students knew just how to convince Ms. J, giving her enough evidence from the story, proving that Mercy Watson is hilarious!



PHOTO BY MIRANDA DAHLKE

Washington Island School is excited to be hosting Mrs. Kayla Mann during her student teaching experience, seen here teaching a lesson about unit rates with the sixth graders during math.



PHOTO BY MIRANDA DAHLKE

Jaxin and Nicholas learn about ratios and proportional relationships in math class with a recipe for Oobleck.



PHOTO BY MIRANDA DAHLKE

Seventh graders presented their paper roller coaster projects to a panel of high school judges to share what they've learned about Newton's three laws of motion in science class.