

**West Elementary BOE Report from Principal Amy Flinn and West Items for the Good
February 5, 2025**

Enrollment:

Third Grade: 124 - One withdrawal - homeschool

Fourth Grade – 128 One new student in January and one new student in February

Fifth Grade – 99 – One new student in February; Two withdrawals – one to homeschool and one moved to home district

Total - 351

West Elementary BOE Report from Mrs. Flinn:

- ***West Staffing Changes for 2025-2026***

Title I Teacher, Lisa Kruse will be returning to her hometown with her family. The Kruses have purchased a refurbished farmhouse and will be within seconds of her parents' farm. We are so sad to lose Mrs. Kruse from our school and district, but we are so excited for the opportunity for her children to grow up with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins surrounding them.

Instructional Aide, Corey Reeves, has accepted a position as Events and Tourism Director for the Wamego City Chamber. He was approached about this position and we know he will be a tremendous asset to our community. Corey plans to finish out the school year in his current position as a Reading/Math Instructional Aide at West and will assume his new duties with the Chamber this summer. We have loved having Corey on staff with our team!

Fourth Grade Teacher, Robyn Logan, will be moving up to Fifth Grade next year. She is currently a Fourth Grade teacher at West. We will need six sections of Fifth Grade next year and we currently only have five sections. Robyn has done a wonderful job her first year of teaching and we know she will do equally as well in a Fifth Grade classroom.

Third Grade Teacher, Mason Meinhardt, will be moving up to Fourth Grade next year. We still need six sections of Fourth Grade, but only need five sections of Fifth Grade. Moving Miss Logan up a grade and Mrs. Meinhardt up a grade made the most sense to us in putting students first. The plan will be for both teachers to move back down to their current grade levels during the 2026-2027 school year, as long as they want to make the move back. During the 2026-2027 school year, it is anticipated that we will need six sections of every grade level at West.

- ***Kagan Cooperative Learning:***

As a Kagan school, we are focusing on ensuring that all Kagan Cooperative Learning components are in place. Minimally, all teams are familiar with and have implemented the "Seven Keys for Success" of Kagan. These are reviewed regularly in PLC Teams. Our Kagan textbook is a GREAT resource to refer to regularly. PLC Teams are expected to take their Kagan texts with them to teaming each week to dig into the following areas:

- ***Structures*** - Currently, there are over 200 different Kagan Structures. Teachers are working to be fluent in multiple structures by the end of this year, but newly trained staff have been instructed to start small and use a couple in all parts of their lessons - (anticipatory set, checking for understanding, closure, etc.). They then move on to adding additional structures to make learning more engaging and fun! At a minimum, staff are expected to regularly use the "Essential 5" - RallyRobin, Timed Pair Share, RoundRobin, RallyCoach, and Stand Up/ Hand Up/Pair Up.

- **Teams** - The creation of Kagan Teams follows the Kagan model. There are four types of teams that can be created in a classroom. All classrooms have their students sitting in cooperative teams and they are numbered 1-4 and A/B. **Rows of desks are NOT appropriate in a Kagan school!**
 - **Management** - Students in teams are all able to put their hands on the same piece of paper, able to comfortably orient themselves to each other, and have access to shared materials. Teachers have a shared signal to refocus teams quickly when they need to regain attention of their students.
 - **Class Building** – Class Building is used frequently and focuses on the Five Aims - Getting Acquainted, Class Identity Building, Mutual Support, Valuing Differences, and Developing Synergy.
 - **Team Building** – Team Building is used at least twice per week. Again, the Five Aims listed above are followed.
 - **Social Skills** – Teachers emphasize social skills that students are developing during Kagan Structures. They also follow the Five Strategies for Fostering Social Skills Development - Structures & Structuring, Roles & Gambits, Modeling, Reinforcement, and Reflection & Planning.
 - **PIES (Basic Kagan Principles)** – Teachers follow the PIES basic Kagan Principles in their classrooms - Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Equal Participation, and Simultaneous Interaction.
- **Facilities Master Planning Committee:**
A group of BOE members, admin and department heads met with Tucker Peddicord, owner of Lighthouse Construction Guidance, and BBN architects on **January 21** over the lunch hour. Tucker has been hired by the BOE to oversee long-range facilities planning for the district. We will be obtain input from our BLTs very soon, and would like for BLT members to represent the voices of their team members. The West BLT is scheduled to meet with Mr. Peddicord on Tuesday, February 11 at 3:40pm.

I have asked staff to consider “what challenges and opportunities” we have with our current reality. This is not a time to complain about things like what is not being cleaned to a teacher’s satisfaction, or minor things that are not part of the “big picture”. However, it is an opportunity to think about what we currently have, what we need, and what we would like to see happen in the future.

The items listed below were generated by Principal Amy Flinn:

- **Drop Off/Pick Up** - Create a safer system for drop off and pick up. Separate buses and car riders. This could be a major infrastructure item that will need coordination and collaboration with the City of Wamego.
- **Heating/cooling system (HVAC)** - On its last leg. Needs replaced.
- **Fixtures** - Some areas need new toilets, sinks, tile, etc. Old and outdated.
- **Classroom Sinks/water fountains/storage cabinets on the old side** - These are original to the building and are very old and outdated. Some don’t even work properly anymore. One classroom does not have any running water and needs to have this.
- **Doors on the old side of the building** - May need to be replaced. Do have asbestos internally in these doors, so this is quite expensive for disposal and replacement, but may be necessary at some point. NO, there is no danger to students/staff with the way they are now, but you should never nail anything into the doors!
- **Special Education spaces** - Need to ensure we have adequate space for the needs of our Special Education students. Additional “quiet room”?
- **Natural Lighting** - Would very much appreciate the opportunity to have some sort of natural lighting in the interior rooms without such at this time.

- **Recreational/Gym Space/Lunchroom Space** - Would love to have an additional gym to allow for more recreational opportunities, as well as additional space to have more than one location for meal service.
- **Current Lunchroom** - Dingy - would like to brighten it up.
- **Storage** - We have quite a bit of storage, but very little “accessible storage” for teachers. Classrooms have VERY limited storage due to their smaller size.
- **STEM/Common Spaces for Grade Levels** - Would love to see “common” spaces for each grade level to engage in collaborative work, more science/STEM activities. Possibly add grade level storage in these areas?
- **Sound System** - Our current sound system on the stage is the original and needs to be updated.
- **Stage Curtains** - Shrunk when laundered after the “bat fiasco of 2007”. Need replaced.
- **Stage Lighting** - We do not have good stage lighting.
- **Projection System in Gym/Recreation Space** - Would like to have a nice projection system with a large surface to project in our current gym or any new gym/recreational space for presentations/assemblies.

Items for the Good for West Elementary
2-5-2025

- ***Third Graders Explore Finding Area in Math***

In this hands-on lesson, Third Graders are using square tiles to explore how to find the area of rectangles. By counting the tiles that fit perfectly inside each shape, they're discovering the concept of area in a fun and interactive way.



- ***Third Graders Celebrate Kansas Day!***

Third Graders had a blast celebrating Kansas Day! From creating state flag art to learning fun facts about Kansas history, they embraced the spirit of the Sunflower State. It was a day full of fun celebrating our great state!



- ***Fourth Graders Ring in the New Year with "Be the Change" Activity***

The New Year started off strong with lots of snow and ice to try to put a halt to school activities, but Fourth Grade students started off just as strong the following week! Activities for the New Year were abundant in the Fourth Grade hallway, as students created goals for themselves and how they wanted to "Be the Change" in the New Year. In several classes, students picked a character trait they wanted to

embody in the coming New Year and set a standard for themselves and their school. Students created wall hangings to encourage others to do the same and start off the New Year positively, not with an impossible resolution, but with a manageable and simple goal.



- **Fourth Grade Celebrates Kansas Day!**

The Fourth Grade was overshadowed by the Christmas break blues UNTIL the bright spot known as Kansas Day invaded their classrooms. Each class was turned into a one room schoolhouse including full costumes and one room schoolhouse activities. Students made butter and even bread was baking in one classroom. Students participated in one room schoolhouse games, penmanship classes, spelling bees, arithmetic, and the reading of Kansas folktales. They were completely immersed in an 1800's experience jumping in the time machine to the time of their great grandparents or older! Students also created crafts relating to state flowers and birds to bring some color and to drop some knowledge out in the hallways.



- **West Elementary Fourth Graders Celebrate Kansas Day with Pioneer-Themed Learning**

The Fourth Grade teachers at West Elementary School brought history to life as they celebrated Kansas's 164th birthday on Kansas Day. Dressed as pioneer school teachers, they encouraged students to step back in time by wearing traditional pioneer attire. Many students participated by wearing sunbonnets, pioneer dresses, flannel button-up shirts, suspenders, and overalls, adding to the immersive experience.

To guide the day's lessons, teachers used the *Rural School Days* Nearpod lesson provided by the Kansas Historical Society. This interactive program transported students to the historic one-room Stach School, where "Miss Drown," the schoolteacher, led lessons as they were taught in the 1920s. Through videos, historic photographs, and authentic textbook exercises, students engaged in reading, spelling, history, and penmanship just as children did over a century ago.

Adding a hands-on element to the day, students learned how to make homemade butter, which they enjoyed on fresh, homemade bread provided by their teachers. The activity was a delicious way to wrap up a day filled with learning and appreciation for Kansas history.

West Elementary's Fourth Grade students and teachers had a memorable Kansas Day, celebrating the state's rich history with engaging and interactive learning.

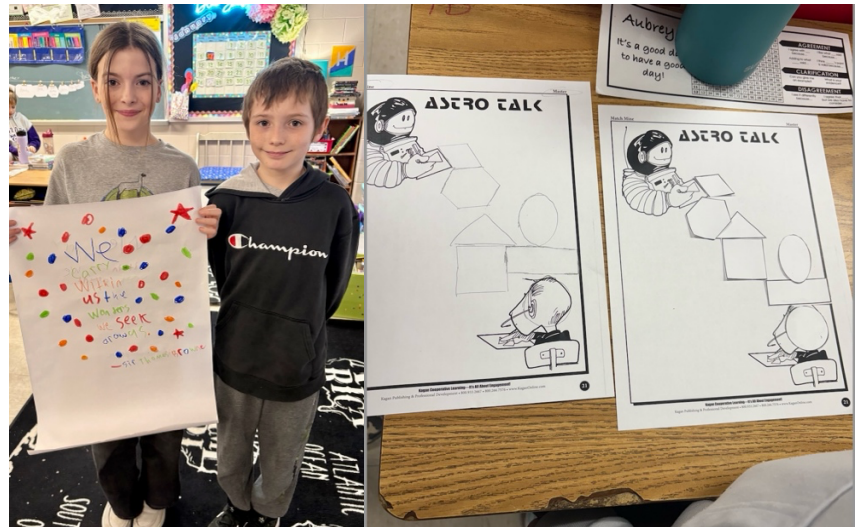
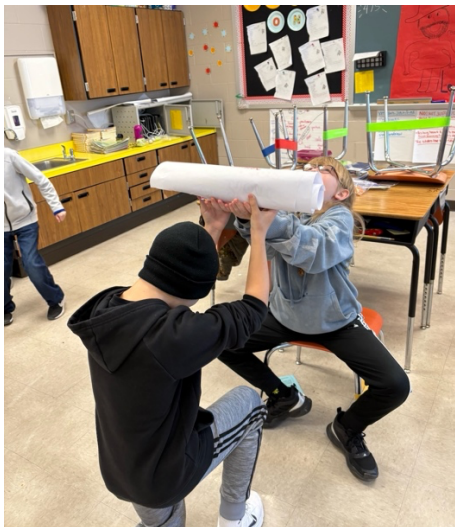
- **Fifth Grade Studies Don Quixote in Explorers Unit for CKLA Language Arts**

In the CKLA curriculum, Fifth Graders concluded their exploration of the fiction genre by delving into the classic novel "The Adventures of Don Quixote." Students focused on characters and plot, as well as on literary elements such as characterization, while reading a full-length adapted version of *Don Quixote*. CKLA continues to provide rigorous and meaningful learning experiences for our students.

- **Fifth Grade Practices Patience with Kagan Structure**

We practiced patience along with active listening by trying a new Kagan Structure called Match Mine. This was also a great way to end our space unit since we had to give directions just like the flight director in Apollo 13.

Students also continue to enjoy participating in the "Keep the Quote" activity where they allow a student to select a quote to guide their interactions with one another.



- ***West Elementary MTSS News***

West's Reading Specialist, Abby Ross, has been attending a monthly Literacy Learner Cadre with several other literacy leaders in the district through Greenbush, our education service center.

The goal of the Literacy Learner Cadre is to increase knowledge and skill within Structured Literacy frameworks and principles of instruction to positively impact learner achievement. This time provides the opportunity to work in a collaborative professional community learning with other highly motivated educators.

Some of the topics of the LLC have included:

- Brain Science
- Structured Literacy
- Four Part Processing Model for Word Recognition
- Scarborough's Reading Rope
- Simple View of Reading
- Principles of Instruction in Structured Literacy
- Elements of Explicit Instruction
- The Forgetting Curve
- Memories and Retrieval
- Gradual Release of Responsibility
- Assessment Literacy
- Data Protocol
- Data Dives

Using this information from the LLC, Mrs. Ross from West and Mrs. Donnelly from Central plan to provide professional development opportunities in the Science of Reading next year for our elementary teachers.

- ***Title I Teacher, Abby Ross, Nominated for Amplify Science of Reading Award***

Abby Ross is a truly deserving candidate for the MTSS Maestro award for her exemplary work in advancing the science of reading and its practical implementation within our district. Abby's dedication to improving literacy outcomes is evident in her tireless efforts with students requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 reading interventions. Her targeted instruction has not only helped struggling readers develop foundational skills but has also inspired a renewed sense of confidence and joy in learning for countless students. Abby consistently tailors her instructional approaches to meet the unique needs of each student, ensuring that no learner is left behind. Her impact extends beyond the classroom, as she works closely with teachers to analyze student data and determine appropriate interventions for each learner. By fostering a collaborative culture of data-driven decision-making, Abby ensures that every student is placed in the most effective intervention for their individual needs.

Abby's influence as a leader in the science of reading is particularly evident in her presentations to staff about student data. She skillfully translates complex assessment results into actionable insights, empowering her colleagues to make informed instructional decisions. Abby's ability to clearly articulate trends, identify areas of need, and celebrate successes has significantly enhanced our collective understanding of how data informs intervention strategies. Her presentations are not just informative; they inspire educators to engage deeply with the data and actively participate in the continuous improvement process.

What sets Abby apart is her unwavering commitment to using data to monitor the effectiveness of

interventions and ensure that they are producing meaningful outcomes. She doesn't settle for "good enough" but instead constantly seeks to refine and optimize interventions based on real-time data. Abby's regular review of progress-monitoring results enables her to make timely adjustments to interventions, ensuring that every student receives the right support at the right time. Her data-driven approach has not only led to measurable improvements in student outcomes but has also set a high standard for excellence in implementing MTSS within our district.

Abby's work is a testament to the transformative power of combining expertise in the science of reading with a steadfast commitment to student success. Through her leadership, dedication, and innovative use of data, she has become an invaluable asset to our school community and an inspiration to educators striving to make a difference. For these reasons and more, I am honored to nominate Abby Ross for the MTSS Maestro award. Her contributions have left an indelible mark on our students, our staff, and our mission to ensure high-quality education for all.

- ***BGC AmeriCorps Volunteer - Kyler Boley***

Boys & Girls Club is providing an AmeriCorps volunteer to work at West this semester. Her name is Kyler Boley, an elementary ed major who also worked as an EFE in Mrs. Townsend's room in the fall. She'll be in rooms with identified BGC students providing additional academic and SEL support.

Monday:

12:30-1:00 - Third Grade Recess Duty

1:00-2:00 - Miss Halseth's Class

2:00-3:15 - Mrs. Linn's Class

3:15 - BGC Bus Duty

Tuesday:

2:00-3:15 - Mrs. Linn's Class

3:15 - BGC Bus Duty

Thursday:

2:00-3:15 - Mrs. Linn's Class

3:15 - BGC Bus Duty

Friday:

12:30-1:00 - Third Grade Recess Duty

1:00-2:00 - Miss Halseth's Class

2:00-2:30 - BGC Bus Duty

- ***Dillons/Kroger Rewards for West Elementary***

Please link your rewards card to West Elementary School. Community Rewards is easy to use. The more you shop with Dillons, the more money our organization will earn!

From October 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, our school earned \$542.92 from 125 households. That is 3 additional households that registered this quarter! PLEASE, IF YOU SHOP AT DILLONS, REGISTER YOUR COMMUNITY REWARDS CARD!

This is easy money to earn for our school, so if you shop at Dillons in Manhattan, be sure to register your Community Rewards card. Just go to the Dillons website and set up an account and you can link

your Rewards card there. **This is a Non-Profit Organization, and our number is LM001. This will not take away from any savings for you or your family!**

On average, we earn about \$2,000 a year to use on our students from this program! Thank you for your support!

- ***West Spelling Bee 2025***

We had an outstanding Spelling Bee on Tuesday, January 14, after having to reschedule it twice due to snow days! I am so proud of the 30 students that participated. They did a wonderful job and were poised, confident, and respectful.

After 16 rounds, Madison Walsh was named Champion with Amelia Risser Runner Up and both were very well prepared and clearly studied a tremendous amount in preparation for the bee, as did many of our contestants. Madison spelled the championship word "noncommittal" correctly to be named School Champion.

I want to congratulate all of our participants again:

Nolan Aldridge, Samuel Beaubien, Camden Bellinder, Tynlee Biesenthal, Charlie Casterline, Turner Cole, Jada Collins, Arielle Dagenais, Joseph Fry, Madison Heddon, Emerson Hopkins, Adalyn Hudson, Michael Jacenko, James Katt, Hadley King, Brantley Koster, Charlotte Kreider, Jax Kugler, Caleb Lancaster, William Lutter, Elizabeth Miksch, Josephine Murphy, Alyceya Pugh, Lincoln Ralston, June Redman, Amelia Risser, Lucas Rowe, Destin Schultz, Foster Smith, Wrigley Utley, Madison Walsh, and Anika Warner.

Thank you to our judges, Mrs. Hatfield, Mrs. Kruse, and Mrs. Ross. I so appreciate their help, and I am very grateful to Mrs. Hatfield for all of the time, energy, and effort she puts into preparing for our bee.

- ***Pottawatomie County Spelling Bee February 1***

Our students did well in the Pottawatomie County Spelling Bee on February 1. Amelia Risser and Madison Walsh from West and Grayson Hopkins from WMS participated. Unfortunately, Emmalyn Sampson was ill and unable to be participate.

Thank you to Laura Hovind for organizing an amazing County Spelling Bee and to her daughter, Gemma Hovind, former Spelling Bee Champion and 5th Place State Finalist, for serving as pronouncer. Thank you also to all of the judges and volunteers and to Paramour Coffee for providing coffee to the guests.



- ***KMEA Elementary Honor Choir February 1***

Congratulations to all of our KMEA Elementary Honor Choir participants on a job well done at the North Central Elementary Honor Choir Clinic and Concert last Saturday, February 1. The following students were selected after trying out with WMS Music Teacher, Elizabeth Walker: Regan Baum, Ayla Gunderson, Ashlynn Hermes, Hadley King, Ellie Massie, Lizzy Miksch, Makayla Molz, Rylan Rhoads, Lucas Rowe, Destin Schultz, Victoria Smith, and Anika Warner. The event was held at Manhattan High School (normally it is held at Junction City Middle School). The students learned five pieces of music from Clinician, Jenna Eshelman, and performed a short concert for their families, teachers, and other guests. We appreciate Mrs. Hermes making this event possible for our Fifth Graders at West!

- ***West PTO Update***

- ***Welcome Back to 2025 Treats:***

- Thank you to Casie Hartwich for organizing these special treats and to all who assisted with this! The staff loved it. We enjoyed Bublr and Veggies Week 1, Breakfast Bierocks Week 2, Grinder Dip Week 3, and Chicken Noodle Soup Week 4.
- We will have Sarah McVay come provide a free yoga class for all interested staff members sometime in the near future.

- ***Treat Trolley:***

- Amy will send out a request for more snacks/drinks at the end of February.

- ***High Five Friday:***

- Next date is **February 7**.
- Need to find a group to do this!

- ***Read-a-thon Rewards/Updates:***

- We decided we would do a “Staff Mismatched Dress Up Day” if our students read 100,000 minutes.
- We decided we would provide an ice cream treat and allow the top readers per grade level to “decorate Mrs. Flinn as a human sundae” if students read 200,000 minutes. Last year, they read 230,000, so it is doable!

- ***End of Year Assessment Celebration Updates (May 16):***

- Kayla Stansbury will reach out to book the inflatables with Ultimate Bounce out of Topeka; Kandy Williams has secured Vicky Miller to reserve Scarecrow SnoCones.
- We do have popsicles in the workroom freezer we can use on this day, too, if needed.

- ***Fundraising Presentation by StuCo:***

- We had a great presentation by four of our StuCo reps, Ty Brown, Lawson Wollenberg, Lute Schwartz, and Blake Mayer, on ideas for fundraising dollars.
- Thank you to Mrs. Haynes, Mrs. Greene, and Ms. Hirt for attending to support their StuCo reps!
- The majority of students want additional playground equipment. Ideas include the following:
 - new set of high quality balls
 - adjustable height basketball hoops
 - creation of baseball/kickball field
 - new belt flags for football - Rich Wollenberg mentioned he has a set of flags from Lawson’s team last year and will send them to school.
 - painted lines on concrete for basketball
 - painted lines on concrete for pickleball courts
 - more swings
- StuCo reps will be coming around to classrooms to gather more input on what areas we should target from the above list with this year’s fundraising dollars.

- ***Parent/Teacher Conference Meal on March 13, 2025:***

- Jenny Donnelly is chairing this and will reach out to those that signed up to help. She is going to do a catered, buffet-style meal from somewhere local. Teachers, send your ideas to Jenny!

- ***Central/West Site Council Update***

Site Council met on **January 28**. We had a small group, but I appreciate the staff that attended. Scott Meitler shared an update on the Early Learning project we are working on, and Amy Flinn and Shane Neel presented information on the USD 320 Strategic Plan and the building goals Central and West have set to support the Strategic Plan. Next meeting: TENTATIVELY set for **February 18**.

- ***West Professional Development for February 17***

West Elementary Staff will be busy with professional development on February 17. Part of our staff will be attending the final day of the 5 Day Kagan Cooperative Learning training. The remaining staff will be involved in the following professional development activities:

- Creating projects with iPads that take learning to a higher level. We have spent all of this money on the iPads, and we definitely do not believe in using them as "filler" for kids. We want to take the PD that has been provided to us by Kyle Pace from Apple Education and apply that at a higher level, but the teachers need time to dig into what he has taught us and find places in their curriculum where they could create projects that would make learning more meaningful than what we are currently doing.
- Working through Behavior Interventions - We have spent all of this time as a BSEL team with TASN and have created a "Behavior Intervention Log", but we have not had the opportunity to look more closely at our data to streamline interventions. For example, are there common behaviors that we can identify that we could address through a more targeted behavior intervention? Who will implement these interventions? How will they be progress monitored? These and so many more questions need to be answered and plans need to be made.
- EduClimber - There is SO much to eduClimber and our staff needs time to start learning more about how we can use this very useful (and expensive) data dashboard. The training modules take quite a bit of time. They will through some of these, with plans to complete this training in the spring or early fall.

- ***Specialized Team News for January 2025***

Art News from Mrs. Havice:

During January, the students worked on flower, leaf, and stem designs for their artwork based on the work of Yayoi Kusama. We continued learning how to handle challenges with materials, mistakes, and how to pivot when plans need to be altered, all of which are very important life skills. The students worked with their table group members to discuss ways to transform a flower shape into something new, fresh, and creative with influences from the artist Yayoi Kusama. After brainstorming verbally, the students drew their ideas on a sheet of paper. Then the flower design pages were voted on by students to determine the most interesting designs that came from the brainstorming sessions. From there, the students selected their construction paper colors, flower, and leaf styles. They added additional designs with black pens and colorful polka dot stickers to give their items a boost of additional color.

Counselor News from Mrs. Butler:

During the month of January, the students began Unit 3: Empathy and Kindness in Second Step. During this unit, students will learn the importance of engaging in kind acts to help them develop empathy—

the ability to understand and feel how someone else is feeling. Third Grade students are learning how empathy and kindness help build friendships and how they can identify acts of kindness for others. The Fourth Grade students are focusing on learning how to ask questions to help understand another person's point of view. During Fifth Grade lessons, students are identifying a community problem and empathizing with those affected by looking at potential solutions.

Another project all the students are working on this month is creating a vision board. A vision board is a visual representation of their goals, hopes, and dreams now and in the future. All students identified personal and academic goals (short term and long term). The students also identified 2 or 3 careers that interest them. The remainder of their vision board will be filled with bucket list items. Finally, the students will create a digital vision board that will be posted on Xello when they are completed.

Explore News from Mrs. Hatfield and Mrs. Spearie:

After reading The Word Collector by Peter H Reynolds, we started exploring things students are looking forward to in 2025. They brainstormed a word of the year that would represent what they want to focus on. Through this activity, students got the chance to brush up on their dictionary skills and create a collage featuring their word of the year.

Library News from Mrs. Hatfield:

The Caldecott Medal is an award given each year to the most distinguished American artist of a picture book for children. Students used the award's selection criteria to evaluate several books as part of a Mock Caldecott in advance of the announcement of this year's award at the end of January.

In addition to the Caldecott we also celebrated the winners of the following awards, the Newberry Medal, Coretta Scott King Award, Pura Belpré Award, and the Siebert Award.

Music News from Mrs. Hermesch:

Sing! Sing! Sing! All classes have been doing a lot of singing this month.

Fifth Grade has been working on five songs that our honor choir participants will sing in Manhattan on February 1st. The students will perform them at their spring community tour in May.

Fourth Grade polished their concert music for a performance on January 21st. They did very well! The show was called "I Need a Vacation".

Third Grade is also polishing their concert music for a performance on February 11, 2025. The show is called "Swamped". They are looking forward to sharing their music with an audience.

We would like to welcome Kansas State University Student Intern, Ethan Karnes to West Elementary. He has been doing a wonderful job creating music with the students. He will begin teaching the kids as soon as their performances are over.

Physical Education News from Mrs. Ontjes:

In January, we kicked off the semester with some ultimate frisbee! The students first learn the proper way to throw and catch the frisbee, and then they had the chance to play an actual game of ultimate. To keep things interesting, we also introduced ultimate basketball, a fun twist on the classic game. It was so great to have the students back after the break and see them working together again!

After frisbee, we moved on to our jump rope unit, which has been a huge success! I've been challenging students to see how many jumps they can do in a row. If they reach a certain number, they get to write their name on a poster displayed in the gym for everyone to see. We've also been practicing jump rope tricks like the crisscross and double side swing. Once students felt comfortable with individual challenges, we moved on to two-person jump rope challenges.

In these, two students turn the rope while the rest of the class lines up outside. The students had to time the rope just right to run through it successfully.

We're finishing up the month with fitness testing. We did our initial round of fitness test the start of the fall semester, and now it's time for the second round. This includes the PACER test (a test of endurance), the curl-up test (which measures abdominal strength), and the push-up test (for arm strength). I'm really excited to see how much the students have improved since our first round of testing and whether they've met the goals they set for themselves. I always tell students not to stress over fitness testing—just do their best! It's all about tracking progress and helping them improve for next time.

Technology News from Mrs. Spearie:

This month, Fifth Graders began to explore search engines in preparation for their research project. They explored the various functions in Google, practiced using a search engine to answer questions, and learned how search terms can refine their search results.

Fourth Graders who were unable to finish their Everfi Financial Literacy modules before winter break had the opportunity to complete them in the first weeks of school. Then they worked on Intermediate Typing lessons in Typing.com.

Third Grade returned to Dance Mat Typing focusing on bottom row keys. Both Third Grade and Fourth Grade are competing in a contest for the "Golden Keyboard." They are working together as a class to get points by completing typing lessons. The winning class from each grade will have a reward day in Technology and will receive the Golden Keyboard for their classroom.

All grades were able to review their coding skills by playing Music Lab, Dance Party, Pirate Plunder, or Mario's Secret Adventure in the last few minutes of class.

