

The Washington County Consortium

NEWSLETTER

Brought to you by Sarah Woog, Executive Director of the Washington County Consortium (WCC)

May 1, 2019

Is it too early to talk about Harvest of Ideas? Nope.

We're doing it a little different for next year, and we need your help NOW. Everyone must pre-register for Harvest of Ideas by June 1, 2019.

Harvest of Ideas 2019 will be designed to meet your individual needs. We are asking that you self-identify with the groups listed in the pre-registration. Please also respond to the other questions so programming may be designed to best meet your needs.

All groups are available to all educators, no matter your title.

This information will be used to place you in a session with educators with similar needs that will lead to a model of sustained learning and reflection. Please only select the group(s) with whom you are eager to learn.

Thank you for your time. We are very excited to create professional development for the 2019/2020 school year that truly impacts your work and enables you to share and reflect with others.

You may access pre-registration using the link below:

<https://forms.gle/XPyX9NyGK4jJm9TT8>

One more thing:

If you are interested in being a presenter at Harvest of Ideas, or know of a colleague or professional in the field you think would be just PERFECT, please email Sarah at wcc@maine.edu and share your recommendations. We'd love to support local talent in contributing to the day's programming.

Meet Charity Williams, Principal at Princeton Elementary School



As I explored ways to best support Washington County educators this year, Charity's name kept on coming up. "Charity has done some great work implementing practices that celebrate teaching at Princeton Elementary School," one colleague told me. As I reflect on teaching and how to best support it, I've come to believe celebrations are key. I wanted to learn more.

Charity welcomed me to her school a couple weeks ago. I showed up an hour early (long story) and offered to wait until our scheduled time and catch up on some other work. Charity told me to come on over instead. So I showed up at 8:00 AM on a Wednesday morning, somewhat unannounced.

Have you ever walked into a school and felt immediately at peace? Did it ever happen at 8:00 AM? I think we can all admit this can be a bit of an anomaly. (If it's not for you, please reach out so I may profile you and your school next!) Well, it happens at Princeton Elementary School. And I wanted to know why.

There are many fantastic things that go on at Princeton Elementary. Here are three that stuck out to me: 1) student voice is encouraged and heard; 2) teaching is celebrated; and 3) the surrounding community serves as a partner and resource.

Charity and her staff use restorative practices to support students in making good decisions and learn and move forward when they do not. When a student comes to Charity because of an infraction, she asks three questions: "What happened? Who was affected? How can we fix it?" They even plan an logical consequence together. Teachers are encouraged to engage with students in this manner as well. Charity shared that when she first started as principal, an offending student would say "I'm just a bad kid." Now they say "I made a bad choice and I can fix it." I think that's a lesson in acceptance and reconciliation we could all learn from, even (or especially?) as adults.

It seems folks at Princeton Elementary are constantly learning, and they especially value learning from each other. Twice a month, one educator hosts "open classroom" after the students have left for the day. The entire staff goes to the open classroom and is welcomed with snacks. The host teacher shares what's worth celebrating in their classroom. Open classroom allows educators to join in celebration while fostering a vibrant learning community.

Community doesn't stop at the school doors. Charity partners with organizations in her area to bring resources to the school and students that may otherwise have been unavailable. A local church hosts a celebratory turkey dinner for the staff each year as a gesture of appreciation. A health center donates a social worker regularly to help support the implementation of trauma-informed practices. Charity is given a small "slush fund" annually so families may get help with heating expenses when a child is cold at home. The school partners with the local grocery store to have fresh and healthy snacks for the students.

I could write more about what goes on at Princeton Elementary and the work of Charity and her staff. There are many lessons to share. I recently remarked to Charity how I would love to intern under her one day if time and opportunity allowed. She replied she is happy to do this with any current or future administrator. Please, if you feel inclined, reach out to Charity and take her up on this offer (williamsc@su107.org). Not only would such an experience equip you with concrete strategies for supporting educators, students and communities of

Washington County, but it would make you proud to be a member of our educational community as well. Princeton Elementary is a model of strength-based problem solving and a true testament to the Downeast way of loving thy neighbor.