

## **Kensington Elementary School**

By Becky Ruel, Principal

Kensington Elementary School has had a wonderful start to the new school year! With just over 110 students, everyone came back **energized** from the summer, **excited** about the changes being made at school and most importantly we are all **eager** to learn. Given our small class sizes, instruction at KES will continue to be personalized and tailored to meet students' individual needs. Similar to the other elementary schools in SAU #16, we are shifting towards a Competency Learning Model to ensure our students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and utilize the critical thinking skills needed to be successful in this ever-changing world. While academic achievement is important, the teachers and staff at KES are committed to supporting the *whole child*. This was further validated by our Competency Education visioning work this spring, when the Kensington community identified the following qualities and characteristics as being of utmost importance for our KES students: **confident, self-driven, empathetic, kind** and **academically competent**. Our goal at KES is build these dispositions in ALL students.

As we continue our journey towards a Competency Learning Model, teachers are continuing to incorporate Project Based Learning (PBL) into their classrooms. Well-designed PBL has been shown to result in deeper learning and more engaged, self-directed students - the exact qualities we are looking to develop! Our third grade students, led by Ms. Chris Culver, have launched into their first project-based adventure of the school year. They are trying to answer the question; "How and why were the Native American cultures so diverse?" Students have studied and discussed the concepts of *culture* and *diversity* and have become completely engrossed in their research about various Native Americans and the regions in which they lived. Students' projects, along with their informational writing and storytelling, will illustrate the reasons why Native American cultures developed with such diversity. Ms. Culver has been so impressed with her students' engagement and says, "They are asking excellent, complex questions that continue to drive their research. They are soaking this up like sponges!"

