

Nelson School News

Fall 2011

Superintendent's Message

Dear Parents and Friends:

The 2011-12 school year is well underway after another successful beginning. Smooth school openings seldom occur naturally or by accident. A tremendous amount of effort went into the seamless transition from summer activities to the current fall school term. It is an honor and privilege to work in the Nelson County community and a heartfelt thank you goes out to our dedicated staff for their steadfast preparation and to our parents for sending us great students to work with. Finally, we acknowledge and fully appreciate the wonderful continuing support from the local board of supervisors and the broader Nelson community family.

As superintendent, I have the unique pleasure of visiting each school weekly and on occasion individual classrooms. Without exception, over the past couple of weeks, my visits were punctuated with smiles, best wishes and a genuine sense that the school year will be a tremendous success. The level of excitement and energy characteristic of a new school year is at an all time high.

Please plan to take some time during the year to visit our schools. Each school has an abundance of opportunities in which stakeholders can participate. When parents and others volunteer at school, students witness firsthand the concept of paying it forward. "Pay it forward" has recently become a popular theory of spreading kindness throughout society that we hope will reach our youth. Our school team is able to succeed and flourish because of your encouragement and support.

Have a great Fall!



Division Superintendent

Governors Ranked Again in Final Wachovia Cup Standings

The Nelson County High School Governors once again gained statewide recognition by finishing in the final Wachovia Cup ranking for 2010-11. The Wachovia Cup is an annual award that acknowledges excellence in Virginia High School League (VHSL) state competitions. High schools across the State of Virginia earn points for outstanding results in specific competition categories including athletic and fine arts events.



Nelson finished 9th in the academic competition out of 88 Group A Schools and 305 total high schools in the state. This ranking was supported by a state championship in theatre. Nelson also finished 30th in the athletic competition thanks to a state championship in girl's volleyball.

A well deserved **congratulations** goes out to all participating students and staff!

Recognition of Excellence in Public Service

The Blue Ridge Community Foundation recently announced the 2011 winners of the Annual Smyth Awards, which recognizes outstanding performance of job responsibilities for ten school division employees over the course of the 2010-11 school year. These individuals were nominated by their supervisor, their peers or by members of the greater Nelson County community for going "above and beyond the call of duty" in their respective fields.

Our heartfelt congratulations and appreciation for a job well done is extended to the following individuals:



- Susan Ballowe – Instructional Assistant - Rockfish River Elementary
- Jeanmarie Bantz – Special Education Teacher - Tye River Elementary
- Carrie Bryant – First Grade Teacher – Rockfish River Elementary
- Vickie Crawford – Health & PE Teacher - Nelson County High School
- Toni Donigan – Health & PE Teacher – Nelson Middle School
- Jeff Harris – Network Administrator – Technology Department
- Frances Kidd – Cafeteria Manager – Tye River Elementary
- Holly Reynolds – Health & Medical Science Teacher - Nelson County High School
- Kathy Tolton – Special Education Teacher- Nelson County High School
- Gordon Wiley – Custodial Supervisor - Nelson County High School

See all of the Smyth Award Winners
from 1998 through 2011

<http://www.nelson.k12.va.us/District/SmythAwards.pdf>

Students Contribute at Tye River Elementary

Students at Tye River are volunteering at an early age and getting a head start on extra-curricular activity participation. Over forty students are contributing both during and after school to keep their school running smoothly. While participating in these groups, the children are not only learning about responsibility and teamwork, but also experiencing firsthand the excitement that comes from accomplishing a task.



There are currently four different student helper groups: recycling, stage hands, flag corp., and the school store. The Recycling group stays after school on Thursdays and collects paper recycling from the collection bins throughout the school building. They are then accompanied by an adult to the large school recycling bin to dispose of their collection.



This year Mrs. Bantz's class has taken on the responsibility of collecting and emptying recycling bins for plastic containers every Tuesday after school.

The stage hands are a group of students who help to set up and also collect chairs and risers for school assemblies. Students work together to arrange the chairs and risers so program attendees can not only see the show, but sit comfortably as well.



The flag corp. was created last school year and is continuing again this year. These students have the very important task of raising the flags in the morning and then lowering and folding them in the afternoon for proper storage.

Finally, there is the Tye River school store. Need an extra special pencil for that in-class project? Forget your eraser at home? The school store is there to help. Students come in early and set up the store every weekday morning before classes begin so classmates can purchase needed items.

The helpers who participate in these groups are learning valuable lessons aside from academia. They are learning *discipline* by keeping to a regular schedule, *teamwork* by working side by side with their fellow peers, and also perhaps finding value in work.



Be There ...

Be There is not a fundraiser or a class. It's not asking for volunteers or money. Be There is a national media campaign that requires only one thing; for you to Be There for your child. Be there and be aware of your child, and remember that you are their most important teacher. Your child is only in school for roughly one third of the day, which means you are responsible for the majority of their day. This campaign is asking you to take some time out of your busy routine to talk to your child. Ask them how their day was and if they need any help with their homework. Whether you are grocery shopping or making dinner, include them and get them involved.

Parent involvement isn't limited to organized functions or school hours, and there is no limit to how much your children can excel with your help. The amount of time parents spend with their children on a daily basis has decreased overall. Studies show adults with children under the age of eighteen spend a total of only forty-seven minutes each day actively engaged with their children. Only ten minutes of that time is spent participating in educational activities. Family dinners have become almost non-existent, even though studies have shown that children who participate in family dinners are forty percent more likely to get A's and B's in school.

Family time has been replaced with TV time and video games. Everyone can agree these forms of entertainment are not typically educational, but how can we stop this trend of disconnect?

All you have to do is **Be There**.

For more information visit:
<http://bethere.org/>



Rocketry, Caches and Robots ... Oh My!

If you walk through the doors of Nelson Middle School on a Tuesday afternoon, you can follow the sound of race cars and the smell of pizza downstairs to see technology education in action. The Technology Student Association, or TSA, is a club led by technology teacher, Kevin Rose, and is open to all technology students at Nelson Middle School. The students in this popular club focus on finding real world applications for the technology skills they have learned in class.

One of the many activities these students participate in is the Global Positioning System (GPS) Scavenger Hunt. Students first learn the history and technology behind GPS, then they put their knowledge to the test. Hidden in the fields behind the school are a variety of strategically placed packages



GPS SCAVENGER HUNT—Charlie Hall and Chase Truslow

Rocketing continued...

or “caches”. With a GPS in hand, the students follow coordinates of latitude and longitude until a “chirp” (short distant radio beacon) detects that they are near a cache and can download the first coordinates to their GPS. When students find their first cache, they continue down the list to find the remaining caches by entering the coordinates into the GPS. When asked about the experience, Chase Truslow, eighth grade student at NMS, felt he learned a lot and had fun participating in the scavenger hunt. He said, “Now I know how to use it [the GPS]. I can find my way back if I get lost in the woods while I hunt in a place I’ve never been before”. Charlie Hall, another eighth grader, agreed when he stated that the activity “was a challenge,” but he liked that he now had a new method to help him get where he wants to go.

In addition to the wildly popular GPS Scavenger Hunt, students can participate in Lego robotics, kite building, and rocketry. The club members also build trebuchets (much like a catapult) and mousetrap racers, and play a variety of technology based learning games. TSA continues to be an excellent opportunity for students to enhance their knowledge of technology and have fun!

Keyboarding Camp at Rockfish River Elementary

Baby boomers needed typing class; today’s students need keyboarding skills. In order to meet these needs, a week of intensive keyboarding training is planned for students during the first week of October. Students will enjoy a “camp” atmosphere as they work toward the mastery of a 21st century skill. As students move toward one-to-one computer netbooks in classrooms, it is increasingly important to be accomplished keyboardists.

Students will enjoy “campsites” set up in each classroom, sing campfire songs, recite camp chants and make tasty s’mores along with time on the computer practicing the “home keys”. Proper fingering will improve speed for children as they do more composing and editing on the computer. Each afternoon, for one week, will be dedicated to learning typing in an intensive effort planned by classroom teachers, the school’s ITRT (Instructional Technology Resource Teacher) and administrators. Students will also don t-shirts with the camp logo and take home “memory books” of a fun week at camp. Hopefully, memories will be created and long-lasting skills will be introduced and eventually mastered.

***Test your E.Q. Preparedness***

Everyone has their story of what they were doing the day the earthquake occurred. Many said their brain tried to come up with a reasonable explanation for what was happening, but by the time they figured out what it was, the quake was over. Luckily, school had not begun when the earthquake took place. School staff didn’t have to learn any lessons the hard way. This is exactly why administrators are taking extra precautions now to ensure the safety of children if this were to happen again.



Test your E.Q. continued...

“We can’t prepare for everything, but we can practice,” said Dr. Collins during a recent meeting discussing earthquake preparedness.

During faculty meetings, teachers recently discussed safety measures that will be taken if another earthquake were to transpire during school hours. Although the instructions are simple, one must always be prepared for the unexpected.

First: Take shelter (shelter in place). There is no time for evacuation during an earthquake and research shows that most injuries occur when individuals try to change locations or go outside during the incident. Find shelter under a desk or table *if needed* and stay away from windows or heavy objects that could fall during the quake.

Second: There will be an announcement immediately following the quake instructing students to evacuate the building in an orderly and rehearsed fashion.

Third: After students have been evacuated, administrative staff will do a general assessment of potential damage. Students and staff will re-enter buildings after the assessment is complete.

Virginia isn’t known for its earthquakes and another strong quake like the one that took place recently hopefully will not occur again; but if it does, school administrators plan to be prepared.

2011-13 School Division Comprehensive Improvement Plan

Every two years a team of teachers, administrators, parents, and school board of-fice staff review and update the Division Comprehensive Improvement Plan. This plan serves as a guiding document for the school division to continuously build on strengths and improve upon identified challenges. The committee has two responsibilities during these meetings. First, to review the goals from the previous two year plan to determine if each goal has been met, is in progress, and if the goal should remain. Second, the committee determines future goals for the next two years. Once the committee completes their work, the document is taken to the school board who reviews the recommended document and provides further input. The following is a list of the goals included in the 2011-13 Division Comprehensive Improvement Plan. Nelson County Public Schools will:

- Continue to provide a variety of learning experiences and opportunities to prepare all students to become successful global citizens.
- Continuously improve communication and involvement with all stakeholders.
- Support the recruiting, hiring, training, and retention of highly qualified and diverse paraprofessionals, support staff, teachers, and administrators.
- Provide a safe school environment and maintain, upgrade, and improve facilities and equipment.
- Continue to use all resources (finance, human, facilities, and energy) efficiently.

You may access the entire plan at www.nelson.k12.va.us.

Colleges Visit NCHS

Colleges from several regions gathered together at Nelson County High School to meet with juniors and seniors to talk about post-secondary schooling options. Seventy-two colleges, universities, and technical institutions were represented, as well as 3 military recruiters. To prepare students for this day, teachers discussed suggestions for meeting each institutional representative and tips for a successful search.

Guidance counselors were also available to direct students through their visits and help students navigate to their chosen schools. Students had the opportunity to explore and ask questions concerning tuition, financial aid, grade point average/SAT requirements, availability of freshmen housing, and faculty-to-student ratios to name a few. In addition, students were able to collect hard copies of information from each of their selected schools for future reference.

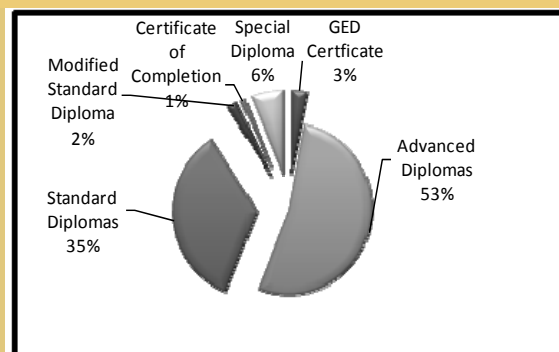
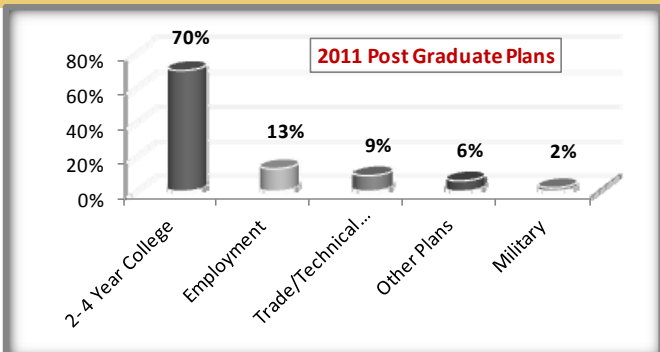
As a follow-up to the college fair, the guidance office houses materials for many colleges and universities year-round. Ms. Olivia Hudson, college guide, is also kind enough to offer college search workshops during G-Block period. If you or your child is interested in attending college fairs in our area, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Hudson through the guidance office at (434) 263-8317.



Seniors Look Beyond Graduation

Saving money never goes out of fashion, and lately, money could be the one thing holding students back from attending college. Several students from Nelson County High School made a tremendous effort in pushing through these obstacles to continue their education.

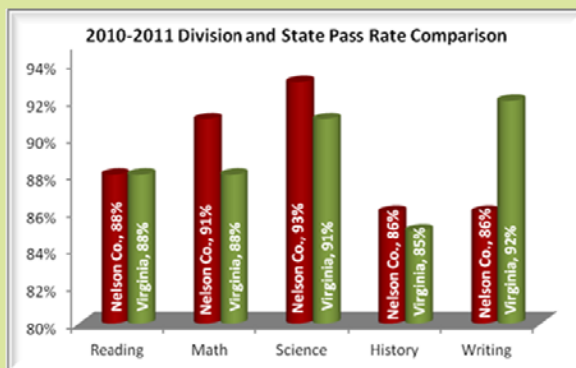
During Senior Award Night this past spring, seniors received \$315,854 in local scholarship money which was \$95,820 more than the previous spring. Cumulative financial awards received by Nelson students totaled \$779,854.00, which is a tremendous amount of help for students. Several colleges in the vicinity attended the ceremony and presented scholarships directly to the students that night giving the students a true sense of accomplishment. Seventy percent of the seniors that graduated this past spring plan to attend either a two or four year college this fall.



Standards of Learning Test Results

Nelson students performing well compared to peers across Virginia

Once again, all four Nelson County schools were fully accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia for the seventh consecutive year! State Accreditation is awarded to an individual school when the school's overall pass rate on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments meet state benchmarks. This year, Nelson students far exceeded state requirements in assessments administered in English, math, science, and history in grades 3-8 and End-of-Course classes. In the subjects of math, science, and history, Nelson County students had a higher pass rate than the Commonwealth of Virginia. In reading, the pass rates in Nelson and Virginia were the same. Looking back over the past few years, Nelson has met or exceeded the state pass rate in history the past 5 years, in science and reading the past 4 years, and in math the past 3 years.

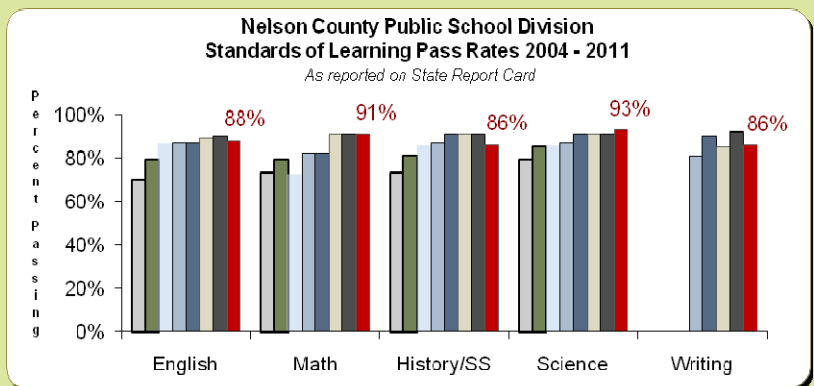


While a large percentage of students continue to pass the Virginia SOL assessment each year, the Federal Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report shows specific areas in subgroup performance where each division and school can focus their improvement efforts. Out of the 146 federal requirements necessary to "Make AYP", Nelson County Schools and the division collectively met 92% of them. Because 100%

of the 146 federal requirements were not met, a rating of Does Not Meet AYP was given to all four Nelson Schools and the division this year. Keep in mind however, that just one student missing one question on a single test can keep a school from making the federal AYP rating; therefore, stakeholders should look at much more than just pass rates on one assessment. Not making the AYP rating doesn't reflect much about individual student learning, yet it does identify areas where each school can begin to focus their efforts each year.

Out of the 132 school districts in Virginia, only four districts met the federal standards completely. According to the Virginia Department of Education, 38% of Virginia's public schools achieved AYP, but at least 88% of Virginia's students passed their SOL test. Additional information

and complete student achievement data is available on the Virginia Department of Education website under the Virginia School Report Card section found at <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/>.



The logo for Blue Ridge Medical Center, featuring the text "BLUE RIDGE MEDICAL CENTER" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in four lines: "BLUE" on the first line, "RIDGE" on the second, "MEDICAL" on the third, and "CENTER" on the fourth. The logo is set against a dark blue background that includes a faint image of a mountain range.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

During the 2011-12 school year, Blue Ridge Medical Center will again be offering on-site medical care for each of the Nelson County Public Schools. The service will be provided in the Rural Health Outreach Program's mobile medical clinic and staffed by Sue Johnston, a Family Nurse Practitioner (with extensive pediatric experience). The mobile clinic will be at Tye River Elementary School every Wednesday morning; at Rockfish River Elementary School every Thursday morning; and at the High School/Middle School complex on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.

The school nursing staff will continue to be present every day in every school providing the same comprehensive health care services to your daughter or son. This *additional* program will allow you to choose to have your child seen in the mobile clinic for a variety of issues. These may include ear pain, respiratory symptoms, sore throat, abdominal pain or cough. The Nurse Practitioner will also be able to evaluate more chronic issues such as abnormal blood pressure, or asthma. *Well child exams can also be performed in the mobile clinic.* Generally these are recommended every one-two years throughout childhood and adolescence.

Seeing the school nurse practitioner does not mean you will be changing your child's primary care physician. No child will ever be seen in the mobile clinic without obtaining full permission from the parent or guardian. Parents should also expect to speak to the Nurse Practitioner by telephone before and after the exam to assure a correct history and understanding of the recommended treatment. Charges are the same as they would be if the child were seen at Blue Ridge Medical Center (BRMC). There will, however, be no money or co-payment collected by the mobile clinic staff. BRMC will simply bill for the services provided. *If your child is covered by health insurance and BRMC is not your primary care provider, you should check with your child's insurance provider to determine what steps should be taken so that the appointment is covered.*

We hope you will find this new service to be convenient. If your child becomes ill at school, you will be contacted and the child can be seen by the nurse practitioner. If you want to make an appointment for a well-child physical exam or sports physical; or if you feel your child is ill and needs to be seen while at school, you can call Blue Ridge Medical Center at 434-263-4000 to make an appointment at the school during the hours that the nurse practitioner is there in the mobile clinic.

Sincerely,

Peggy Whitehead
Executive Director
Blue Ridge Medical Center



Blue Ridge Medical Center is at your child's school!



Highlights

- *You child does not have to leave school.*
- *You can be there—or not. We will be in touch before and after the appointment.*
- *Your child does not have to bring money to school. We will bill you or your insurance.*
- *Your child's doctor will be notified of the visit.*

Students at all four Nelson County Schools can now schedule health care appointments with a nurse practitioner on school grounds. Physicals, sick visits, and other health care services will be provided by a Family Nurse Practitioner on the mobile clinic.



Meet Sue Johnston, FNP, an experienced nurse practitioner who has been serving children for over 20 years!



Call BRMC to schedule your child's appointment: 434-263-4000

Tye River Elementary: Wednesday mornings

Rockfish River Elementary: Thursday mornings

Nelson County Middle School/High School: Wednesday & Thursday afternoons