

# Nelson School News

Fall 2010

## Superintendent's Message

The 2010-11 school year is off to a great start. Students and staff are focused on learning objectives and other school-related activities across the division. I am pleased to report successful daily student engagement in a variety of quality experiences.

As we begin another year together, I ask parents and community members to join our school employees to strongly emphasize our revised division goal which states, "Our school division will graduate all students equipped with 21st century skills, enabled to successfully transition into adult life and to function effectively in a global society."

To some our updated goal seems understated, while to others it may be challenging. However, as a division, we are committed to giving every individual an opportunity to find success beyond his or her high school experience. As you are aware, student SOL test results indicate high levels of success across the school division. However, recent data analysis revealed our federal graduation rate (which counts only those students receiving a standard or advanced diploma) is below 80 percent. This rate is calculated based on a cohort group of students who began the 9<sup>th</sup> grade together and are all expected to graduate 4 years later. We have always been committed to graduating all students, but we will now increase our efforts to graduate all students with either an advanced or standard diploma. As our local, state, and national economy continues to fluctuate, I am sure you will agree with me that a high school diploma is an absolute minimum standard for all of our students. I ask for your assistance in reinforcing this goal throughout our community.

I look forward to continuing our partnership. Your input is always welcome, and your support is important as our school division strives for excellence. Have a wonderful fall!



Roger D. Collins, Ed. D.  
Division Superintendent

## Recycling — the Fourth “R” Behind Reading, Writing and Arithmetic

The Nelson County School Board has embarked upon an aggressive campaign to teach students the benefits and to encourage the practice of recycling within the school division. Classrooms are outfitted with recycling bins where students and teachers place wastepaper. The paper is then periodically collected and deposited in the outside recycle waste receptacle to be picked up by county staff for processing at a nearby recycling facility. Plastic bottles and aluminum cans are also being separated from regular trash and placed inside bins located in strategic places within the school buildings.



Recycling is a “win-win” situation for the division and community as students learn to be good stewards of their environment and as the county saves money and resources by having less overall trash taken to a landfill for disposal.

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I'm not ready to go back...



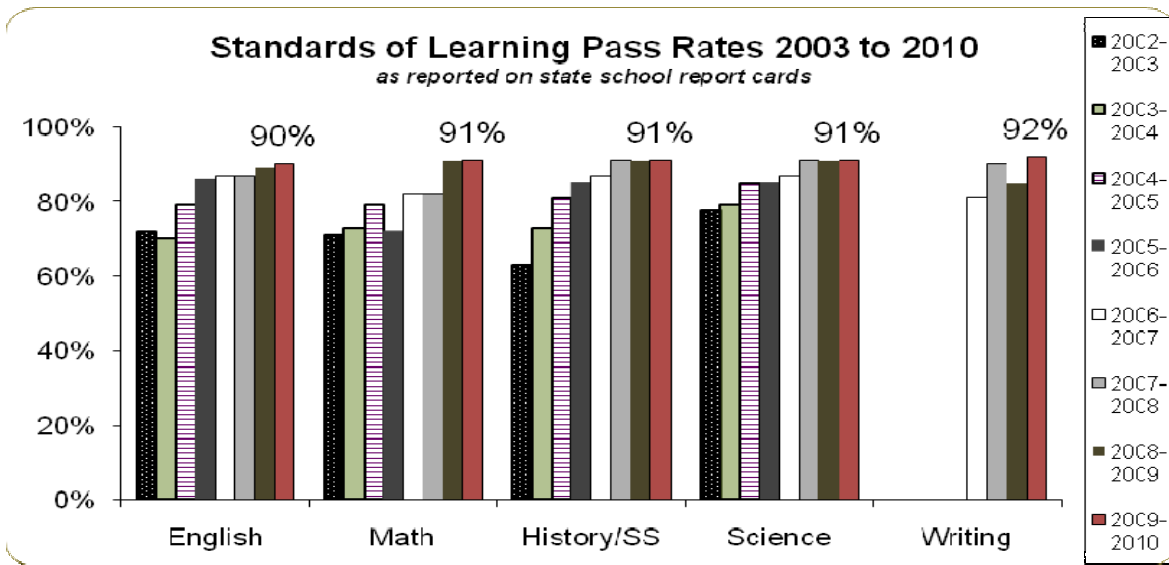
# The Commonwealth of Virginia Accredits All Four Nelson County Public Schools



## Nelson Students Surpass Virginia's SOL Pass Rates in All Five Academic Areas

All four Nelson schools received "Full Accreditation" from the state of Virginia for the sixth year in a row. This accreditation is Virginia's school accountability system and reports only on an individual school's progress. Included in the state report are overall student pass rates for the subjects of English (both reading and writing), math, science, and history. Expected pass rates vary for state accountability purposes but generally range between 70-75%. Nelson students scored above the 90% pass rate in all five academic areas.

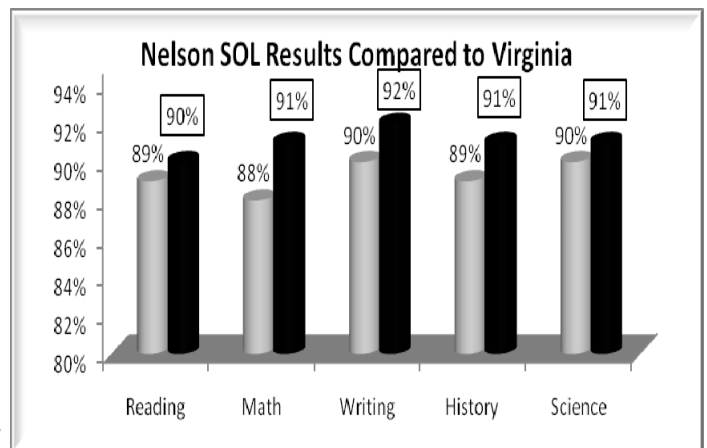
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) is the federal government's accountability reporting system and goes a step beyond state accreditation. AYP is reported for each individual school, with an aggregate calculation for the division as a whole. AYP differs from state reporting in that it also reports pass rates for various subgroups only in the areas of reading and math, plus one other area referred to as the "other academic indicator." This year, the division met or exceeded 97%, or 143 out of 147, federal benchmarks. Nelson Middle School, Tye River Elementary School, and Rockfish River Elementary School all met or exceeded 100% of their AYP requirements.



## Nelson Students Exceed SOL Pass Rates Above Other Virginia Students

This is the first year that students in Nelson County superseded the Standards of Learning (SOL) pass rates of students across Virginia in all five academic areas of reading, writing, math, science, and history. For the past four years, reading scores in Nelson have been either at or above the state average. In science and history, results have been higher than Virginia's pass rates for three years. Math and writing results have been higher two of the last four years.

Complete student achievement data is available on the Virginia Department Of Education website under the Virginia School Report Card section found at [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics\\_reports/school\\_report\\_card/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/school_report_card/index.shtml).



Key: Virginia = Grey Nelson = Black

## NCHS Assistant Principal Travels to India

During the summer of 2010, Roger Dunnick, Assistant Principal at Nelson County High School, was fortunate enough to be selected to travel to India to participate in an educational leadership conference held at the prestigious India Institute of Technology-Delhi (IIT-Delhi). The conference ran from June 9-12 and was sponsored by the Virginia Schools and University Partnership program. Mr. Dunnick, as well as administrators from Greene County, VA and Fayetteville, NC, arrived in India on June 6 and were able to spend several days visiting cultural sites such as the Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort, the Lotus Temple, and the National History Museum of India. During this time, the group also visited several schools characterized by the hosts as "slum schools."

"I could not believe the level of poverty that I witnessed, yet children were learning and seemed to be having a good time doing so," said Mr. Dunnick when asked about his experience in the slum schools. "It was also amazing to



K. Pursel, V. Aldridge, R. Dunnick

find that administrators in India were dealing with many of the same issues confronted here in America"

The group also attended the educational conference at IIT-Delhi where they were instructed in educational management and were exposed to Indian policies and processes involving virtually every aspect of education in the country. In addition, the three-member group was asked to lead a round table discussion with aspiring Indian school administrators. Issues such as individualized education, the incorporation of technology in the classroom, class size, and funding were all areas of common ground in the round table discussion.

NCHS staff are currently in the process of establishing a partnership with the Mira Model School in Delhi. Staff hope to have students from both schools communicating and cooperatively learning together in the near future.

## Log Roll Into Fall

One of the most exciting times of the year at Nelson Middle School is fall. The leaves are changing; the football and volleyball seasons are in full swing, and the soothing sound of a bow saw fills the air after school. Yet, as the leaves fall, dozens of middle school students spend their afternoons preparing for the Crops Judging and Forestry Field Day competitions that will soon be held at the Virginia State Fair. This year, the fair will be held on October 1<sup>st</sup> at the Meadow Farm in Doswell, Virginia.

Since August, students have been staying after school to vie for one of the seven coveted positions in the Forestry Field Day competition. Teams will be competing in the Log Toss, Water Accuracy, Bow Saw, Two Man Cross-cut Saw, and Log Roll contests. In addition to these events, thirteen Nelson Middle School students will be participating in the Crops Judging competition which consists of plant and seed identification and evaluation. Some of the crop judges awoke early during summer break to practice with Mr. Massie and Mrs. Hughes!

Historically, NMS students have exceeded expectations at State Fair Events. Just last year NMS students won two of the three scholarships given for crops judging. Students, staff, parents, and community members are proud of the FFA and FCCLA students for their performance each year at the State Fair. Please join together in wishing them luck as they travel to Doswell again this fall!



## A New, Yet Familiar Face...

The first day of school for students was also the first day on the job for Nelson County Public Schools' new Director of Transportation and Safety, Mr. David Johnson. David is a lifelong resident of Nelson County and thus knows the community very well. He is a graduate of the school division and attended PVCC. David resides in Shipman with his wife Mari and their daughter. Besides camping, hunting, and fishing, David enjoys spending time with his family.

David's intimate knowledge of Nelson County's numerous roadways, gained from his years of work experience at VDOT, will prove invaluable to the school division as bus routes are examined to determine the safest and most cost-efficient manner to transport all students to and from school.



## Success Can Be Found in Many Ways!

During the summer of 2010, Nelson County School Division staff had an opportunity to recognize and appreciate success in a different venue. The University's apprentice program has been in place for more than 25 years and was the first state agency to offer such a program. Several staff members had the pleasure of being invited to the University of Virginia's Annual Apprentice and Education Recognition Ceremony.

The UVA Facilities and Management Division honored five new graduates of its apprentice program on July 21, 2010. One of the honored graduates was Nelson County's own Charles "Charlie" Pierce, Jr., a 2006 graduate of Nelson County High School and the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Pierce. Charlie was a graduate of the UVA Facilities and Management Mason/Plastering Program.



Charlie Pierce, Jr. and Rona Rose

The University of Virginia Apprentice Program offers training for heating, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and masonry trades. Students who successfully complete the program have the opportunity to remain on staff at UVA as a full time employee.

In addition to recognizing the apprentice graduates, the university welcomed seventeen new inductees into the program. Of these inductees, three were former Nelson County High School graduates: one will enter the Plastering Program; one will enter the Electrical Program, and another will enter the Plumbing Program. These students were selected from thousands of applicants. Each inductee will attend school in Charlottesville, receive a salary, on-the-job training in the facilities management division, and receive tools needed for their trade.

The theme of the program celebrated the accomplishments of the graduates and inspired the new inductees for future success. Programs such as these are invaluable to students as they prepare to enter the world of work and compete in a global economy.

## Piedmont Futures: Preparing Students for the Future

This year Piedmont Futures will help students consider how they can turn their interests into career skills with two new programs: After-School Career Academies for middle school students this fall, and job shadowing for high school students in the spring.



Students in the After-School Career Academies will develop workplace skills through activities that present challenges encountered in the workplace. Themes for academies may include Culinary Arts, Information Technology & Software Development, or Horticulture. Professionals from local businesses will teach hands-on workshops throughout the Academies.

In the spring semester, selected businesses will be invited to host a Nelson County High School student to job-shadow in the workplace for a portion of the school day. Students will be paired with businesses in career fields of interest to them.

Other programs offered through Piedmont Futures annually include the **Career Pathways Speaker Series** for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students (monthly), **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Career Expo** at U.Va. (November 2010), **Commonwealth Scholars**, the Charlottesville Business Innovation Council **Tech Tour** (October 21), **10<sup>th</sup> Grade Career Day** at PVCC (March 17 & 18, 2011), and **Summer Career Academies** at PVCC in June and July 2011.

For more information about these programs, please contact your child's school counselor or go to [www.pvcc.edu/futures](http://www.pvcc.edu/futures). Piedmont Futures is sponsored by the schools of Albemarle, Charlottesville, Fluvanna, Greene, and Nelson in partnership with Piedmont Virginia Community College.



*Visit our website:*

*[www.nelson.k12.va.us](http://www.nelson.k12.va.us)*

## Learning Landscape at Rockfish River

Students at Rockfish River Elementary School have an additional learning area in the midst of the scenic beauty surrounding the school. A representative from Project H Design in North Carolina assisted a group of volunteer parents this summer to install a tire structure on the playground. This structure, called a Learning Landscape, is a scalable, grid-based playground system for elementary math education. The spatial grid is intended to combine active movement and competition with mathematics curricula, providing an outdoor classroom framework for fun and engaged learning. It can be tailored to a range of skill levels and can also be used for language arts games.

Math games children can enjoy include Match Me, Math Musical Chairs, Math Around The World, and more. They teach concepts such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as well as spatial and logical reasoning through individual and team-based competition. Because



of the system's flexibility, teachers and students are able to invent their own games as well.

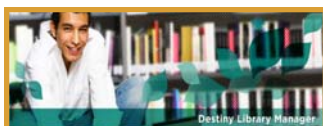
The Learning Landscape *pilot* installation was in a school for orphans in Uganda. Since then, several other Learning Landscapes have been installed in rural school districts in the United States. As an educational tool, the Learning Landscape is both universally adaptable and context specific, making it functional on a global scale and in variable implementations. Long-term initiatives of Project H focus on improving environments, products, and experiences for K-12 educational institutions in the US through systems-level design thinking and community engagement.

Rockfish students and staff are grateful to the parents who donated their time to install the structure, to Project H Design for the plan, and to local businesses who donated the tires. Students will benefit during the day; YMCA children will use it after school, and the community will have this new option for playtime on the school grounds as well. More information on this idea can be found at [www.projecthdesign.org](http://www.projecthdesign.org).

## Tye River Students Have a New "Destiny" in the Library

Finding that perfect book just became a lot more convenient at Tye River Elementary, thanks to the addition of a new web-based program called Destiny. During the summer of 2010, the library was updated with a program to improve the existing cataloguing system. The biggest improvement is that this system is web-based. A student or teacher log-in allows easy access to library information from any computer or device with internet access from any location. This new program will enable students to see what books they have checked out, to know if they are overdue, and to search for additional books they may be interested in reading.

To find that perfect book, students have the ability to search in a variety of ways. Searches can be completed by title, author, keyword, subject, or series. An exciting feature that adds a visual aspect to the search process is the title "peek" feature. While everyone knows you should never judge a book by its cover, sometimes it helps to see the cover art to make sure that it is the book you were searching for. Many times students pick up a book



because they are drawn to the cover, but they can't remember the exact title. The "peek" feature can help students search by cover art and allow them to find the title for which they were searching. Although not all the book titles have pictures yet, they are being added daily.

This new system is also linked to the collections in all four schools, which will allow users to see books that are available elsewhere in the district but may not be located in their specific school. Can't remember all the books you want to read? Not a problem now. Students can create book lists so that they don't forget about that special story they wanted to read.

Students are not the only ones who will benefit from the new system. Teachers can also create lists that will allow them to quickly pull titles for units of study so students can have access to resources in the classroom when working on projects or reading for fun. With all the new features and functions it is clear that students and staff will have a new reading "Destiny" that is certain to improve both teaching and learning.

<http://ncps-destiny/common/servlet/presenthomeform.do?l2m=Home&tm=Home&l2m=Home>

## Hear Ye! Hear Ye! A New Communication Tool for Parents!

In an effort to increase the level of communication between home and school, a new medium will be unveiled on November 1, 2010. This new tool is called a Parent Portal. The Parent Portal is an internet-based program through the division student data system, Power School. Parents are encouraged to frequent the Power School Website by using their own ID and password (which will be communicated to parents in October). This will enable parents to check their child's grades and attendance, and to view important school announcements. On this website, parents will also be able to update their child's demographic information, such as address or phone numbers, whenever those changes occur.



Realizing the importance of the home/school connection, this valuable resource will allow parents to view due dates for assignments and will provide the ability to monitor their child's grades throughout the six weeks instead of having to wait for interims and report cards. As a proactive measure, this portal will provide parents and staff with current information to aid in the identification of potential strengths and weaknesses of their student's academic performance. This interaction will also allow for informed decision-making from both parties as staff strive to provide a high-quality education for each and every child in Nelson County.

## 2010 Smyth Award Winners: The Tradition Continues

During the annual All County Day Convocation that begins the new school year, ten deserving employees received awards for going above and beyond the call to duty during the previous school year. Through an endowment of the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge, the following employees received a \$1,000 check, an engraved plaque, and a certificate which described their meritorious contributions to the division as recognized by their peers:

- Diana Driver – NCHS Drama Teacher
- Kelly Ferrell – TRES Teacher
- Donna Fitzgerald – TRES Instructional Assistant
- Elizabeth Knight - NCHS Art Teacher
- Gillian Lanier – RRES Teacher
- Melissa Powers – NMS Library Media Specialist
- Kim Price – TRES Teacher
- Gary Scott – Bus Driver
- Steven Washington – NMS Custodian
- Sarah Wood – Central Office Secretary

The true beneficiaries of the extraordinary efforts of these employees are the children who continue to enjoy success in both academic and extracurricular activities at the local, regional, state, and even national levels. Please join the school division family in congratulating these individuals.



## Governor's Ranked in Final Wachovia Cup Standings

The Nelson County High School Governors gained statewide recognition by finishing in the final Wachovia Cup ranking for 2009-2010. 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 performance in specific VHSL competition categories, including athletic and fine arts events.

Nelson finished 12<sup>th</sup> in the academic competition out of 88 Group A Schools and 305 total high schools in the state. The outstanding ranking was supported by a State Championship in theatre. Congratulations to NCHS students and staff!

