

# Nelson School News

Nelson School News

Volume 3, Issue 1

Spring 2006

## *Superintendent's Message*

Dear Parents and Friends:

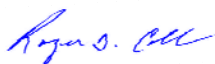
I have immensely enjoyed my observations of and interactions with the students and staff during the first semester of this year. The commitment to learning continues to be the primary focus within Nelson County Public Schools. It is hard to believe that spring is just around the corner and with its arrival comes new challenges.

This spring our students in grades four, six, and seven will be tested in reading and mathematics as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. I am confident that these students will perform to the best of their abilities when the tests are administered. If you have questions about this new testing requirement, you may direct them to your child's teacher or principal.

The arrival of spring also signals the preparation of our Proposed Operational Budget for the 2006-2007 school year, and the support of our parents and members of the community is vital. Therefore, I encourage each of you to familiarize yourself with that proposal which will be available on our website at [nelson.k12.va.us](http://nelson.k12.va.us) after approval is given by the Nelson County School Board.

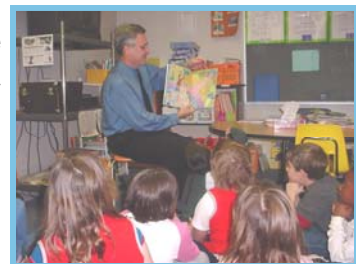
At this point in the budgetary process, the approved proposal is then submitted to the Nelson County Board of Supervisors by the school board. This is the critical step in our efforts to continue to provide essential services to our students. However, the funding of our schools has been a priority of both boards in the past, and I look forward to continuing our excellent working relationship.

This spring will be busy for all of us, and I know we will rise to meet the challenges that lie ahead. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a safe and enjoyable spring and summer, and on behalf of our lifelong learners, I thank you for being a part of our school family.



Roger D. Collins  
Division Superintendent

Visit our website  
[www.nelson.k12.va.us](http://www.nelson.k12.va.us)



## *Facts about our schools and student population*

### **Our Students 2005-2006**

Schools Attaining Adequate Yearly Progress	100%
Schools Fully Accredited	100%
Student Enrollment	1984
Pupil to Instructional Staff Ratio	1 : 12
Division Attendance Rate	94.5%
Drop-out Rate	1%
Students on Free or Reduced Lunch	43%
Limited English Proficient Students	2%

Students with Disabilities	16%
Student to Computer Ratio	2 : 1

### **Enrollment**

Nelson County High School	636
Nelson Middle School	450
Rockfish River Elementary School	389
Tye River Elementary School	509

## *High School*

The curriculum at Nelson County High School has been expanded in order to incorporate a new system for delivering mathematics instruction to its students. The name of the program is Cortez Mathematics, a method of combining mathematics teachers with computer-based instruction. In partnership with Cortez Management System of Hampton, Virginia, the high school started the program with one algebra lab in 2004 and has now expanded it in order to provide another lab for geometry.

The majority of NCHS students enrolled in the Cortez Program begin their studies with Algebra I, parts 1 and 2. Then, students progress into geometry, parts 1 and 2. Both of these classes are two semesters in length, and students typically earn three mathematics credits that are required for a standard diploma and one elective credit for the successful completion of the sequence of the two courses.

The Cortez method of instruction is advantageous to NCHS students because it provides for flexibility of time and teaching approach. Staffed by a lab administrator and a mathematics teacher, the lab meets the needs of individual students by allowing those who are successful to progress at a faster pace than those who may require additional time for mastery. Each student's daily routine consists of working on his or her individualized lesson plan on the computer and receiving help from the mathematics teacher on an individual basis. Twice weekly, each student is involved in small group instruction outside of the lab in "breakout" sessions. As a further advantage to the individual student, the program is organized so that the algebra and geometry SOL tests are given only after the student has demonstrated mastery of the material.

Approximately sixty percent of NCHS students taking Algebra I and fifty percent of those enrolled in geometry currently receive their mathematics instruction through the Cortez lab. By providing the students with more flexibility in learning pace and instructional delivery methods, the Cortez Mathematics instructional program promotes student success in these two mathematics subjects.

## *Middle School*

How does a teacher modify instruction effectively? The immediate availability of useful data on how well the students have learned determines how well the teacher has taught. At Nelson Middle School, the utilization of new computer software gives teachers instantaneous data for evaluating both effective learning and effective teaching in an efficient and timely manner.

The teachers at NMS are using this new computer software not only to improve instruction but also to increase student achievement in their classrooms. Some of the advantages of this program are as follows:

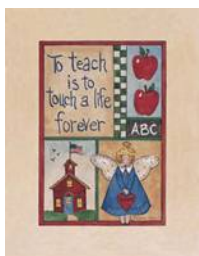
- Creation of individualized answer sheets for each student
- Evaluation of the test immediately after it is taken
- Analysis of each test question to see how many students answered it correctly
- Adjustment of test, even after it has been taken, to eliminate poorly worded questions
- Elimination of questions which were not mastered or poorly taught
- Preparation of pre-tests to reveal what concepts should be taught again
- Utilization of results to prepare individualized learning guides for students
- Assistance to both teachers and tutors in preparing for redirected teaching
- Accessibility to individual and group successes

Changing instruction to meet the needs of students is vital in education. With the use of available software, the staff at Nelson Middle School is combining good teaching practices and instantaneous data to review and change instruction to facilitate the academic success of its students.

## *Elementary*

First graders enter their rooms, greet their friends enthusiastically, and immediately go about their routine for the beginning of the day. They hang up their coats in the cubby area, find their work folders on the shelf, and then check the assignment sheet to see what will be their center activity for the day. By the time the bell rings, all of the students are in their seats and working. Since it normally takes weeks to establish this kind of routine, one might ask if the month is November or even February. Surprisingly, it is the second day of a new school year in a classroom that has been **looped**.

Many parents may have already heard of looping, which is sometimes called multi-year grouping or continuous learning. Basically, looping means that the teacher is “promoted” with her students to the next grade. As a result, the students do not have to become acquainted with a new teacher or learn a new routine. This encourages close student-teacher relationships and cuts down on the transition time at the beginning of a school year. At the beginning of the second year, teachers have prior knowledge of their students’ individual strengths and weakness; consequently, they do not have to spend valuable instructional time becoming acquainted with what their students may or may not have mastered. Instructionally, students can start where they left off and move forward quickly.



Presently, three classes at Tye River and two classes at Rockfish River are being looped. This year marks the second looping sequence for Tye River’s kindergarten to first grade class, and two groups of students have been looped from the second grade to the third. At Rockfish River, one kindergarten to first grade class and one second to third grade class are in their second year of looping. In addition, Tye River has piloted a five-week looping sequence in the summer to allow more time for students to master annual learning objectives or goals. These students were then assigned the same teacher for the upcoming school year.

All teachers involved in looping agree that they are immediately seeing positive results at the beginning of the second year. Since classes are able to move into the curriculum faster, time is not lost, and rapport and routines are already established. Teachers also note that looping fosters positive communication with parents and builds a relationship of trust. Students, teachers, and parents do not begin the year with uncertainty.

Our looping experiences have also resulted in increased student achievement. For example, the summer looping class at Tye River demonstrated a four to six month gain in reading based on the results of their spring and fall PALS tests. Teachers report that all looping classes are ahead of the non-looping classes in curriculum pacing.

Looping is a concept that is gaining popularity in school divisions across the nation. It is all about time and giving more of it to students. As one of the students in the K-1 class at Rockfish River said, “I like it. I hope my teacher will go to the second grade with me.”

## *Important Dates*

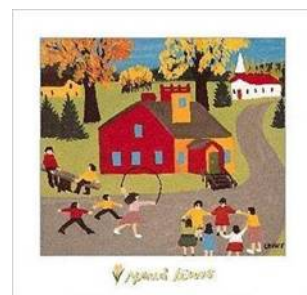
### **Kindergarten Registration:**

Rockfish River Elementary School: April 11, 2006 4:00pm-7:00P.M.

Tye River Elementary School: April 18, 2006 4:00pm-7:00P.M.

**NCHS Senior Graduation**—Saturday, June 10, 2006

**Summer Learning**—Elementary and Middle School— July 5—28, 2006



## *From the Instructional Corner*

What exactly is instruction? Its definition is simple: a systematic presentation of facts, ideas, skills, and techniques to teach students. Teachers instruct in their classrooms every day, yet instruction is only effective if students are learning. At this point, instruction becomes more complex because all students do not learn in the same way. In each classroom there may be visual/spatial learners, verbal/linguistic learners, kinesthetic learners, logical/mathematical learners, or musical/rhythmic learners. For teachers to meet all of their students' diverse learning styles, they must implement different types of instruction.

One of Nelson County's division-wide goals is to differentiate instruction in order to meet our students' individual learning needs. According to research conducted by Robert Marzano of the McRel Institute in Colorado, there are nine top instructional strategies that affect student achievement, and this year the teachers at the elementary and middle schools have been learning about them and implementing them in their classrooms. In addition, a differentiation specialist conducted a presentation for the high school faculty. The teachers at all levels are trying new methods in order to differentiate their instruction and listed below are just a **few** of the instructional practices that they are using.

- Interactive Notebooks- a way to process information, combine words and visuals, and demonstrate critical thinking
- Math Manipulatives- hands-on activities to develop math concepts
- Small Group Instruction- every child is part of the lesson
- Computer Lab- using computers for instruction, remediation, and/or extension
- United Streaming Videos- video clips bringing visuals to students
- Technology– smart boards and presentation stations
- Socratic Method- asking a series of questions surrounding a central issue and answering questions of the others involved in the discussion
- Experiential Learning- science experiments
- Problem Solving/Critical Thinking Activities
- On-Line Instruction



The definition of instruction is straightforward and uncomplicated; however, its implementation is varied and complex. With its goal of differentiation, the Nelson County Public School Division is striving to meet the various learning styles of its students in order to provide a successful environment for them.

## *Tentative Testing Schedule*

### Spring

- May 17-26, 2006 Grades 3-8 SOL Testing  
 May 10-16, 2006 High School—End Of Course SOL Retakes  
 May 17-31, 2006 High School—End Of Course SOL Testing

### Summer

- July 18, 2006 High School—End Of Course SOL Writing Multiple Choice  
 July 19, 2006 High School—End Of Course SOL Direct Writing Test  
 July 20-21, 2006 High School—Make Up SOL Writing Tests



## *No "Parent" Left Behind*

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has accelerated every school division to target more time and resources toward programs that would enhance achievement for all students. As we approach the year 2013, when every student must pass the Standards of Learning assessments, we are asking every parent to partner with us to achieve these educational goals.

The NCLB Act holds school districts accountable for meeting high standards of student achievement and engaging the parental community. These mandates are providing new opportunities for parents to take an active role in their child's education. As a parent or community member, you can help us meet our educational goals by first becoming knowledgeable of the challenges and requirements placed upon our schools from both the state and federal governments. Secondly, maintain an active and supportive role in your child's academic journey through school. Finally, stay informed and keep communication open between you, the school, and your child.

We are continually looking for additional avenues to maintain communication among students, parents, community, and schools. Resources are readily available online at the websites below, and other parent portals are listed for you to explore. Please target your time and energy toward educating yourself of the expectations placed upon your child and his or her school.

Caring adult partnerships begin with open communication between the school and the home, but it encompasses much more. It is important for all adults to realize how much of an impact we can have on our child's educational success just by having an attitude of care and respect. Effective partnerships between school and parents will improve not only student learning but the entire school climate as well.

### **Websites:**

Nelson County Public Schools <http://www.nelson.k12.va.us>

Virginia Department of Education <http://www.pen.k12.va.us>

### **Other ways to become informed and stay involved:**

- ⇒ Read and discuss teacher communications with your child
- ⇒ Attend Parent/Teacher Conferences
- ⇒ Attend Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO, PTA or other parent advisories)
- ⇒ Maintain your child's achievement records in a file for referencing and comparing to guidelines for graduation and other student success
- ⇒ Become part of your child's learning experience and culture
- ⇒ Attend school based co-curricular events
- ⇒ Read and keep school/division newsletters
- ⇒ Keep an ongoing dialogue with students, guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators
- ⇒ Become a student yourself – learn all you can about the school culture, expectations, goals, and challenges
- ⇒ Volunteer in one of our schools



## *No Child Left Behind and State Accreditation*

The schools of Nelson County are excited about the academic success of our students in the 2004-2005 school year. As referenced in our last newsletter, all of our schools are fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education, and each school met twenty-nine benchmarks required by the **No Child Left Behind** (NCLB) Act of 2001. Our division as a whole also met all of the same benchmarks. While we continue to be proud of our students' progress, the challenges before us continue to increase. The chart below shows the mandated increases in the overall percentage of students passing Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments ending with 100% in the year 2013. Tests will be administered for the first time this year in grades 4, 6 and 7 in reading and math. We encourage you to partner with us as we strive to improve and meet these benchmarks.

### New Federal NCLB Benchmarks

\* Overall passing percentage required of total students tested.

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Reading *</u>	<u>Mathematics *</u>
2005-2006	69	67
2006-2007	73	71
2007-2008	77	75
2008-2009	81	79
2009-2010	85	83
2010-2011	89	87
2011-2012	93	91
2012-2013	97	95
2013-2014	100	100

### Basic Facts about No Child Left Behind

- At least 95% of enrolled students must participate in the testing programs.
  - Students are tested annually in reading and math in grades 3 thru 8.
  - Students are tested in science and social studies in grades 3, 5 and 8.
  - Students are tested at the end of most high school courses in English, math, science and social studies.
  - Data is reported to the federal government by sub-groups on assessment results, student attendance and student graduation rates.
- \*\*Sub-groups include:**
- All Students
  - Black students
  - White students
  - Hispanic students
  - Students with Disabilities
  - Students with Limited English Proficiency

\*\* As identified by federal law.

### STATE ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS

\* Overall passing percentage required of total students tested.

<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>
<b>English *</b>	<b>English *</b>	<b>English *</b> 70
Grade 3 75	Grade 6 70	<b>Math *</b> 70
Grade 4 70	Grade 7 70	<b>Science *</b> 70
Grade 5 75	Grade 8 70	<b>Social Studies *</b> 70
<b>Math *</b>	<b>Math *</b>	
Grade 3 70	Grade 6 70	
Grade 4 70	Grade 7 70	
Grade 5 70	Grade 8 70	
<b>Science *</b>	<b>Science *</b>	
Grade 3 50	Grade 8 70	
Grade 5 70	<b>Social Studies *</b>	
<b>Social Studies *</b>	Grade 8 70	
Grade 3 50		
Grade 5 70		

*Note:*  
Pass rates for new testing grades 4,6 and 7 have been proposed by the Virginia Board of Education at the rates shown in this chart.

## *Graduation Class Summary*

At the end of the **2004 – 2005** school year, Nelson County Public Schools had 139 graduates. Of those graduating, 74% planned to attend either a two or four year school of higher learning, 2% enlisted in the military, and 22% left our school system with full time jobs.

Listed below are schools which students planned to attend in **2005-2006**:

*(The percentage of our seniors is listed beside each school)*

Piedmont Va. Community College – 32%	University of Virginia – 6%
Radford University – 6%	James Madison University – 5%
Va. Commonwealth University – 5%	Va. Tech – 4%
Randolph Macon College – 3.8%	

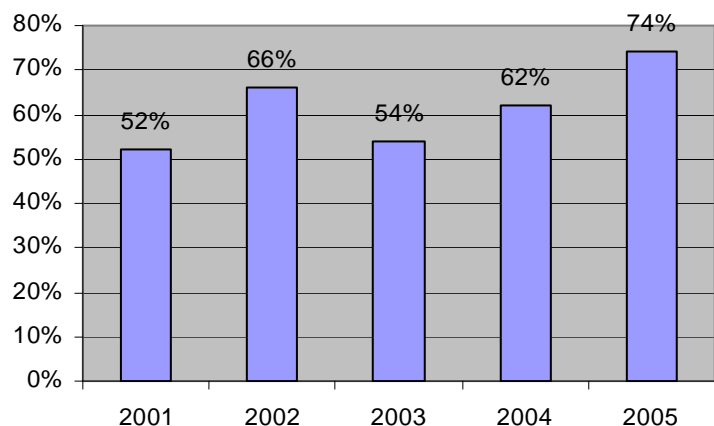
Less than 2% percent of the students planned to attend the colleges below:

ATI	Averett	Bridgewater
Clemson	CNU	College of Culinary Arts
CVCC	Dabney Lancaster	Eastern Kentucky University
Eastern Mennonite	Ferrum	George Mason
Guilford	Liberty	Mary Washington
NC A&T	NC School of Arts	Old Dominion University
Pace	Penn State	Pratt
St. Johns	Saint Olaf	Sweet Briar
Temple University	University of Manoa	University of Richmond
University of Wyoming	VA State University	VMI
Winthrop	Woodrow Wilson	

## *Meeting Educational Goals*



**Percentage of NCHS Seniors Planning to Attend A Two or Four Year College Following Their Senior Year**



Nelson County School Board  
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84 Courthouse Square  
Lovingson, VA 22949

Visit our Website  
[www.nelson.k12.va.us](http://www.nelson.k12.va.us)

Phone: 434-263-7100  
Fax: 434-263-7115  
E-mail: [khughes@nelson.k12.va.us](mailto:khughes@nelson.k12.va.us)

## School Volunteers Needed

Numerous opportunities exist in a variety of capacities for those who are willing to serve. For more information contact Malcolm Drumheller at 263-5095.



## Seeking Newsletter Sponsors

If you or your business would like to sponsor all or part of our school division newsletter, please contact Kathy Hughes at 263-7100 for more information.

## School Board Members

<b>Central District:</b>	Stuart Armstrong, 270 Sawmill Creek Drive, Nellysford, VA 22958	(434) 361-9203
<b>North District:</b>	John Kirchner, 218 Blundell Hollow Rd., Afton, VA 22920	(434) 361-2553
<b>South District:</b>	Jane Bibb, 29 Dave's Place, Arrington, VA 22922	(434) 263-8181
<b>East District:</b>	Cindy Lachance, 141 Drumheller Lane, Shipman, VA 22971	(434) 263-8668
<b>West District:</b>	David Parr, P O Box 598, Piney River, VA 22964	(434) 277-5265

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