

Nelson School News

Nelson School News

Volume 10, Issue 1

Spring 2009

Superintendent's Message

Dear Parents and Friends:

Spring is the time of year when students, parents and staff see some light at the end of the "educational" tunnel. For Nelson students, this means a strong finish academically with a laser-like focus on any class work, projects, exams or tests. Grade level or end of course tests now carry with them tremendous significance for each individual and the school division.

The mandated state tests are intended to be an accurate reflection of annual student progress combined with accumulated prior knowledge. Positive test results are important to all of us as we continue to define and develop our instructional sense. Therefore, we would like for all students to demonstrate successfully what they have learned. This goal can be accomplished in collaboration with families and other stakeholders. Your support and encouragement will be critically important to our students as the testing dates draw near as well as during the actual process.



In closing, I wish our students well this spring and anticipate outstanding results. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the children of Nelson County. Enjoy all of the year end activities and have a great summer!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rogers, C.".

Division Superintendent

School Budgeting – Financing the Blueprint of Education

In light of the unprecedented reduction in state funding for next year, the school board and administrative staff have examined more closely the priorities and needs of our division while striving to provide the best possible education for the children of Nelson County. Over a two year period, meetings have been held with staff and community members to gather input to establish a framework concerning those budgetary items deemed most important and meritorious of continued funding. As a result, the 2009-10 Operating Budget will be a leaner and more efficient fiscal spending plan directed towards the unwavering goal of increased student achievement.



Unless economic conditions improve dramatically, Nelson County Public Schools will experience serious financial challenges in the coming years. With this in mind, input and support from the community will be vital to the continued success of the division. Research proves that personal involvement in schools, participation in parent-teacher organizations, and membership in booster clubs, all contribute to the overall success of schools. Citizens are encouraged to become more involved in the schools and to learn about the abundance of opportunities for students to showcase their individual and collective talents. The insights gained from such experiences give one a broader understanding of the many challenges to be overcome. Without a doubt, an informed populace will make better decisions as they work together to shape the blueprint of the future of education in Nelson County during challenging economic times.



One thing is for sure, student achievement is and will continue to be, our first priority.

New Transportation Director Announced

On January 23, 2009 Nelson County Public Schools welcomed Mr. William Deane as its new Transportation Director who oversees the fleet of buses and cars that transport approximately 2,000 students to school everyday in all kinds of weather.

William, the valedictorian of his class at Madison County High School, is a graduate of the University of Virginia and most recently worked as Service Center Manager for DHL Express and Logistics in Chantilly, Virginia. In the near future, he and his wife, Danielle, along with their black Labrador retriever, Jack, will be relocating to the Nelson community. Mr. Deane looks forward to working with you as he strives to provide the safest and most efficient transportation possible for all students.



Start with Art - Learn for Life

Spring is in the air at Nelson Middle School! March came in like a lion but went out with some beautiful artwork adorning our hallways and cafeteria. In recognition of National Youth Art Month, students participated in a school-wide art activity on Friday, March 20th.



On a 4x6 card, each student created a piece of art that reflected the National Youth Art Month theme, "Start with Art - Learn for Life." Teachers could also assign an art activity to reflect and connect to their own curriculum. At 9:00 a.m. students and teachers dropped what they were doing to begin their masterpieces using pencils, colored pencils, crayons, markers and pens.

Nelson Middle School students creatively learn for life through art.

New Student Information System

The Nelson County Public School Division has implemented a new student information system called **PowerSchool**. In addition to providing more information in a better, faster format for teachers and staff, the new system will ultimately result in enhanced communication options for parents once the software is effectively utilized.

PowerSchool

The new system has a "Parent Portal" that will be operational during the next school year. This portal will allow parents to log on and view their own child(ren)'s current grades as they appear in a teacher's grade book as well as the current assignments and tests through a quick access to a homework page. Parents will also be able to set up an automatic email system to alert them as to new assignments and updated progress. Furthermore, a feature can be activated by parents in order to automatically receive progress reports for all classes on a consistent basis.

The new communication channels will hopefully close the gap between parents and teachers as they work collaboratively to assure student success and higher levels of student achievement in the future.



Visit our Website: www.nelson.k12.va.us



Oakland Museum - Partner in Local History Studies



The Oakland Museum volunteer staff and a committee of teachers are working together to offer an innovative field trip experience for students in Nelson County. Upon completion of their studies, students will visit Oakland to experience the events which shaped their families and communities. What an exciting way to learn!

Nelson teachers are writing curriculum which focuses on science and social studies in grades 4, 6, and 11 and are combining the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL's) with Nelson County history. Field trips to Oakland will bring the lessons learned in the classroom to life.

The current exhibit at the Oakland Museum features an event which changed the way of life in Nelson County. **Cuttin' on the Lights: Rural Electrification in Nelson County** is dedicated to the impact created when electricity was made available to residents at the time of the Great Depression. Items used in the household and on the farm are displayed in addition to a video of local residents remembering the momentous occasion.

The other main exhibit features the devastation from and recovery following Hurricane Camille in 1969. With the use of a looping color slideshow by photographer Brower York, the exhibit showcases Nelson County during the days which followed the record-setting rainfall on the night of August 20, 1969. Storyboards on the four walls tell the story of destruction, loss, rescue, and rebuilding. Oakland will also be a priceless repository of writing, photographs, remembrances, interviews, and other Camille information.

History comes alive at Oakland as volunteers guide visitors through the 1838 brick structure and the tavern area which operated before the Civil War as a stopping place for travelers along the old Lynchburg Stage Road. Students have Nelson County history and culture in their own backyard.

Standards of Learning (SOL) Facts

178 Nelson students scored perfect on SOL subject tests resulting in 266 perfect scores

- ◆ 6 students scored perfect on 4 SOL subject tests
- ◆ 18 students scored perfect on 3 SOL subject tests
- ◆ 34 students scored perfect on 2 SOL subject tests
- ◆ 120 students scored perfect on 1 SOL subject tests



Tentative

Standards of Learning Testing Dates

Elementary Schools: May 13 - May 26
 Middle School: May 18 - May 27
 High School: May 18 - May 29



Plenty of Rest Before the Test!

Community of Readers

In the fall newsletter, you were encouraged to make Nelson County a community of readers by showing children around you how vitally important it is to read. I hope you have been able to talk with students about the books they are reading or, better yet, been able to discuss a wonderful book that you have shared with a child.

For those of you who may be unaware, there have been numerous activities and events at our schools which were designed to encourage children to read so that everyone, young and old, can become part of our community of readers. The following activities illustrate the varied ways our schools have chosen to highlight the importance of reading:

- Each school library held successful Book Fairs.
- At the high school, classes participate in Sustained Silent Reading, and a photography class has written journals on what they are reading. These students have even scheduled more visits to the library to get additional books and journals.
- Sustained Silent Reading has continued at the middle school with 2-3 classes using the media center each morning.
- In English classes, students have read novels, kept journals, discussed text structures, and have written about their readings.
- Library Book Club at the high school is writing book talk scripts for Photostory which will be published on the Media Center webpage as recommendations for students' summer reading.
- Library Book Club is held at the middle school.
- On Back to School Night at both Tye River and Rockfish, every student received a coupon for the Book Fair.
- Nelson Middle School library checks out approximately 750 books a week to students.
- Rockfish held a Pirate Family Reading Night. Students and parents moved from one station to another and read directions to create pirate hats, eye patches, and messages in a bottle. A story teller told pirate stories and students received free books.
- The Accelerated Reader Program is ongoing at both elementary schools.
- At Tye River, Mr. Hill, the principal, reads a poem or shares a portion of a book with students each morning during announcements.
- Thirty-two elementary teachers are taking a children's literature course this year to learn even more about different works of literature.
- A Parent and Tutoring Center, helping parents learn how to read with their children, is offered at Tye River.
- Tye River celebrated Read Across America month by writing and sharing book talks.



The sampling of events listed above is, of course, in addition to the reading that goes on each and every day in the classroom using literature books, reading books and novels. Research shows it is critical that every child learn to read to his or her maximum potential as reading is a key indicator of future success. As a school division, our aim is to motivate, teach, and model how reading can change lives. We implore you to continue to be part of our community of readers and to help us emphasize that reading can be fun and exciting as well as being educationally informative.

Tye River Club Activities

Learning activities at Tye River Elementary do not stop at the dismissal bell as students participate in fun, interactive clubs that meet after school. Tye River students are studying aeronautics, sharpening their math skills through technology, and learning about plant life, soil conservation, and gardening.



The **Aerospace Club** meets weekly with students who want to learn about aeronautics and rocket propulsion. Through various hands on activities, students observe and experience the possibilities that await them in the aerospace field, and by the end of the club's session, they are capable of building their own rocket and launching it.

Comprised of students in grades 3, 4, and 5, the **Math Club** meets after school once a week. Utilizing interactive websites and hand-held computers, these students improve their math skills by working on multiplication facts, fractions, and more. At each session club members also apply critical thinking skills in solving math problems; and a Smart Board is also used by students to work out math problems by means of hands-on technology.



The **Garden Club** is designed to help students learn about agriculture and horticulture. The children study how to grow and use plants, how to keep the soil and water clean from pollutants that can affect plant growth, and how various types of soil can influence successful gardening. Caring for the flowers and shrubbery at Tye River provides young gardeners a chance to practice their craft.

Tye River club members are showing tremendous enthusiasm each week and are enjoying themselves immensely while they learn!

Dog Days at Rockfish River

Tuesdays are "dog days" in two classrooms at Rockfish River Elementary School this year. Mrs. Cindy Kirchner invited her friend, Ms. Nancy Avery, to bring her service dog to her fifth grade classroom each week. "Nelson" is being trained by Ms. Avery through the *Service Dogs of Virginia*. When he comes to school, "Nelson" lets children read to him in order to improve their fluency. Ms. Avery says that "dogs are non-judgmental, so children reading aloud to the dog gain confidence in their reading skills."

The Preschool Bright Start class has also become friends with "Nelson", so he stops by their classroom every Tuesday for hugs and treats. They even celebrated his first birthday recently and gave him a bag full of goodies and a handmade birthday card. When the dog arrives, there are smiles all around!

"Nelson" is part of the *Service Dogs of Virginia* agency which serves residents of Virginia with physical disabilities and/or families with an autistic child. He is the third dog Ms. Avery has raised and trained. Information about this organization can be viewed at www.servicedogsva.org. Rockfish River is very appreciative of community volunteers such as Ms. Avery who give of their time to help make learning fun and meaningful for students.



School Grounds are now tobacco free

In recognition of the inherent responsibility of adults to serve as good role models for children, on April 9, 2009, the Nelson County School Board revised policies to extend the prohibition of the use of tobacco products to include all school buildings, grounds and vehicles.

Realizing that children mimic what they see, and that tobacco use can lead to long-term addiction and health related problems, the School Board has taken a proactive stance to limit such exposure to children. We ask for your cooperation in refraining from using tobacco products at any school function including all athletic competitions on school grounds. We appreciate the opportunity to work together to form a healthier Nelson County Community.



Tobacco use policy can be found on the division website <http://www.nelson.k12.va.us/District/Policy/policy.htm> in policies GBEC, JFCH, KGB and KGC.

Class of 2009 Commencement




Commencement exercises for the Class of 2009 will be held on Saturday, June 6th at 9:00a.m. in Veterans Memorial Stadium at Nelson County High School.

School Board Members

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

Seeking Newsletter Sponsors

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




This issue of **Nelson School News** is also available on our web-site and can be printed individually as needed. The move from postal delivery to an electronic newsletter version is a cost savings measure.

Thank you for your continued interest in school division news.

