

# Nelson School News



## *Superintendent's Message*



Dear Parents and Friends;

As we near the midpoint of the 2009-10 school year, students are preparing to close one semester and begin another. Staff members are hurriedly assessing, examining, and using the calm of winter to maximize learning opportunities.

Administratively, the preparation of next year's operational budget, which addresses the needs of our learning community, is a challenge for my staff and me. Because of the continuation of recessionary trends, the Commonwealth of Virginia projects a further decline in available revenue for public education purposes. Consequently, Nelson County Public Schools can anticipate less state funding for the 2010-11 school year and for the following year as well. Less state funding will dramatically reduce the level of staffing, programs and services that we all have come to expect and appreciate.

Our school division is achieving at a high level and continues to improve systemically. This success has been achieved through a team effort over many years. An essential part of continuous improvement is to be vigilantly aware of resource management and future needs as they relate to student preparation. Given the current economic conditions and the mutual goal of moving forward educationally, it will be necessary for us to work more collaboratively as funds decrease. Effective management of our resources, while addressing student needs, will be our foremost priority.

The coming months promise to illicit debate on a variety of topics related to the necessity of workplace and college readiness as well as the value of globally competitive skills. Plan to be a part of this ongoing conversation with school staff and leaders within our community. Remember, a quality education for all of our students is critical to Nelson County's future.

During my twenty-seven years in public education, I cannot remember a time during which education has been more important! I thank each of you for your support of our schools.

### *School Board Members*

Division Superintendent

<b>South District:</b>	Jane B. Mays, 29 Dave's Place, Arrington, VA 22922	(434) 263-8181
<b>West District:</b>	David Parr, P O Box 598, Piney River, VA 22964	(434) 277-5265
<b>Central District:</b>	Margaret D. Clair, 560 Gullysville Lane, Faber, Va. 22938	(434) 361-2463
<b>North District:</b>	Mary S. Cunningham, 171 Joshua Lane, Afton, Va. 22920	(540) 456-8316
<b>East District:</b>	Amy C. Snapp, 91 Riverside Drive, Schuyler, Va. 22969	(434) 987-0374



## *Economic and Financial Literacy*

Economic and financial literacy is an important concept for students to understand as they graduate from high school and transition into adult life. Currently in Nelson County, high school students are taught the responsibilities of finance through a number of classes and programs.

There are fifteen objectives taught concerning economic and financial literacy, and through the coursework, students will learn to:

- evaluate the impact of fundamental principles of economics on personal finances;
- analyze how career choice, education, and skills affect income and goal attainment;
- compute taxes; to develop a budget/spending plan of earning, spending, saving, and investing for personal/business money management ;
- judge the quality of a financial institution's services;
- demonstrate how to open and manage an account in a financial institution;
- examine the basics of personal insurance policies;
- examine credit options and complete the process for a loan;
- analyze strategies for debt management;
- interact effectively with salespersons and merchants;
- describe consumer rights and responsibilities;
- examine the implications of simple contracts;
- compare consumer choices for saving and investing;
- examine the financial implications of an inheritance.

Beginning next year, students will be required to take a specific one credit class on Economic and Financial Literacy. The class will address concepts and principles that are important to economics at the macro level. It will also direct attention to understanding skills that will allow students to be knowledgeable consumers in many areas of daily life. Students will be exposed to the many aspects of informed decision making which they will need for future individual success and will receive a foundation for continued study of economics and finance.

Given the current economic climate, financial literacy is a skill that has become a necessity for all to possess in order to live and prosper in today's society. The goal is to teach students the skills to know how to plan and save for purchases, to recognize the difference between needs and wants, and never to borrow more than they can afford to pay. With the tightening of credit by lenders and the importance of individual credit scores upon a citizen's ability to borrow money for major purchases, financial literacy skills become paramount. Staff acknowledge the responsibility to convey these skills to our students in support of our mission to educate students to become skilled, responsible, productive, and enlightened citizens who contribute to society.

## *Middle School Students Communicate Around the World*

Do you remember purchasing air mail stamps and waiting weeks to receive a letter from your pen pal overseas? Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> century where times have changed! Mrs. Ponton's seventh grade foreign language class is using technology to communicate instantly with students all around the world. The class is currently working on a small video and slide show presentation about life in an American middle school, and students are using digital cameras and Flip Video cameras to document their daily activities. When finished, their presentation will be received instantaneously by their pals around the world through [www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com). Communicating via email exchange with students in Australia, Indonesia, Poland, Uzbekistan, and Taiwan, NMS students are learning about other countries through the eyes of their teenage citizens.

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## Middle School Students *continued*



Mrs. Ponton's class is also corresponding with a classroom in China and is using images such as school pictures and videos to communicate through the language barrier.

When the students are not busy communicating with their pals around the world, they are using technology to research other countries and cultures. Each student is completing a webquest with Google Earth and the Internet, finding famous places around the world and learning something new about each one. These innovative opportunities promise to enhance Nelson Middle School student communication globally in recognition of a *flat world*.

## Volunteering—Making a Difference in the Lives of Others

*It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.*

To volunteer means “to do charitable or helpful work without receiving pay for it.” The Nelson County Public School Division is very fortunate to have many individuals volunteering their time and talents on behalf of our children.

When visiting any of our four schools at any time of the day, one will most likely find at least one volunteer assisting in some capacity. Working once a week in the school, chaperoning a field trip, providing clerical help, reading to a class, tutoring students, becoming a “lunch buddy,” or bringing snacks in for a group of students are just some of the valuable contributions of our volunteers. One can also discover a diverse group of people helping in the schools – retirees, students, current parents, former parents, grandparents, former teachers, and other individuals who represent community organizations. After the school day ends, there are those who lend a hand to extra-curricular activities like the marching band and booster clubs, and on the weekend, a volunteer may be seen weeding flower beds or spreading mulch. There are also volunteers who assist on a regular basis with our SAVE (Substance Abuse and Violence Education) program which involves a ten-week training program, while others dedicate time to helping specific-needs children. A few individuals started helping a particular class in the first grade and followed that same class through the twelfth grade!



One of the long-time volunteers at Tye River, Mandy Dugan, has been helping in Ms. Formo's class for the past thirteen years; she has not only been an inspiration to the children and a great asset in the classroom, but she has also developed a strong friendship with Ms. Formo. Another volunteer, Bill Howard, started helping a student in elementary school with reading and has followed this student into middle school. Watching the child grow and mature over the past five years has been a very rewarding experience for him! Mr. Howard helps the student with his assignments and provides additional practice in different subjects.

Even though volunteering means “doing work without receiving pay”, there are far greater rewards involved for all those concerned. In a community where finances are limited and at a time when our economy is strained, the schools and children benefit greatly. Teachers profit because they can concentrate more time and energy on the business of teaching while another person assists with other classroom tasks. Furthermore, the school and the teachers develop positive relationships with the community. By giving time and talent, the volunteer gains personal satisfaction by helping students, meeting others, and learning new skills. Lastly and most importantly, the students benefit tremendously, not only academically but also socially, as they develop relationships with citizens and mentors who are true role models that demonstrate the importance of education and service to others.



## *Book It! Bag It! Read It!*



As part of a focus on citizenship and community service, Rockfish River second grade students recently wrote and drew pictures about their favorite books and included examples of how to be a good citizen in our community. Paper grocery bags were adorned with the student writing, drawing, and the following note to customers: *"If you choose to bag your groceries and/or food with paper today, you will receive a bag created by a Rockfish River Elementary School 2<sup>nd</sup> grader as part of our study of citizenship and community service. We hope this bag brightens your day and encourages you to read a good book!"* It was the hope of the students that consumers would smile when they saw their creations and would encourage customers to have a better day.



The students also wanted to promote choosing paper over plastic grocery bags in order to promote an eco-friendly community. Additionally, they hoped to encourage good reading habits thinking that some customers may actually choose to find the book they illustrated on their bag and read that particular book since it was a student favorite. This was a learning experience for students as they practiced reading and writing skills, developed school publicity strategies, encouraged literacy in the community, and hopefully cheered up some shoppers.

A local grocery store, Blue Ridge Grocery in Nellysford, was kind enough to sponsor this project, and cashiers offered the student bags to customers until they were all gone. Rockfish River is very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. John Holman for their support. Hopefully this activity had a positive impact on many community members and generated smiles.



## *Alumni Band*

October 23, 2009, was truly Homecoming Night for forty-five former Nelson County High School band members. Sponsored by the NCHS Band and Band Boosters, the first annual Alumni Band was formed and joined forces with the 2009-2010 version of the Marching Governors for a pre-game performance during the football game against Appomattox.

Representing the graduating classes from 1964 through 2009, these former bandsmen met with Mr. Belcher on the Monday before the game to rehearse "The Star Spangled Banner" and NCHS "Fight Song." All of the musicians, both past and present, eventually came together to rehearse prior to the game and then marched onto the field together. Proudly dressed in green "Alumni Band" t-shirts, the group thrilled the crowd as they joined with the Marching Governors to form the one hundred member band. These graduates then braved the elements to sit with the Marching Governors in the stands for some music and fun during the first half of the game. After halftime, the alumni and their families were treated to food and drink at a social sponsored by the Band Boosters. Alumni Band Members traveled from all over Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to participate in the first annual event, and all indicated that the evening was enjoyable as they had the opportunity to perform and renew past acquaintances.

Mr. Belcher would like to thank all the alumni for their participation and those whose generous donations helped to fund the event. Alumni band members and Mr. Belcher are confident that the event will grow and be even more successful in future years.

## *Yá'át'ééh*

Native Americans are studied in second grade as part of the Standards of Learning for social studies, and at Tye River Elementary, learning about Navajo Indians and their culture was enhanced by the principal, Mr. Hill. He began his teaching career in Holbrook, Arizona, where he and his wife lived for five years; Holbrook is located adjacent to the largest land area in the United States set aside for Native Americans. Therefore, the student population in Mr. Hill's school was more than half Native American, primarily children of the Navajo with others from the Zuni, Apache, and Hopi tribes.

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## Yá'át'ééh *continued*

While teaching in Arizona, Mr. Hill learned about Navajo customs and culture and acquired some traditional items which he shared with the second graders. One of these was a Navajo cradle board still used today by traditional Navajo families; its construction is quite symbolic even down to the lacing used to secure the baby to the board. Another article that he shared was a wedding vase, a unique piece of pottery that looks like a water pitcher with two spouts. During the wedding ceremony, the bride drinks from one side and the groom from the other as a symbol of their union. The oldest items that the students were able to see and hold were pottery shards from the Anasazi people. The Anasazi are best known for their cliff dwellings, but they were also accomplished potters. Mr. Hill explained that the shards they were handling were older than everyone's age put together—almost one thousand years old!



The students followed up the presentation with excellent questions and wrote thank you notes to Mr. Hill. This activity allowed the students to practice their letter writing skills that they have been studying this six weeks and to share some of what they learned from the presentation. So, if you are out in the community, and a Tye River second grader comes up to you and says “Ya-Ta-Hey,” you will know that they are telling you “Hello” in Navajo. Just repeat “Ya-Ta-Hey” and watch them smile!



## Meet Our New School Board Members!



The Nelson school family is pleased to introduce to the community at large our newly elected School Board Members.



Representing the North District is Mary Silverthorn Cunningham. She has lived in Nelson County for the past twelve years and has two children in the district: Sami who is eighteen and Benjamin who is sixteen. As a life-long learning devotee, Mary has diverse interests; moreover, she brings extensive business experience to the board. Her commitment to children is evidenced by her past work as a Girl Scout leader, PTA member, and substitute teacher. Mary is appreciative of the support of the North District voters and wants everyone to know that she encourages communication with friends, students, and residents on matters relating to the school system.

The East District is now represented by Amy C. Snapp, a life-long resident of Nelson County. Amy graduated from Nelson County High School in 1982 and is the mother of two daughters: eighteen-year-old Rachel currently attends PVCC, and Haley is a fifteen-year-old student at NCHS. Her children's educational and church activities are her priority, yet she finds the time to volunteer at Drumheller's Orchard in Lovingston. Amy is grateful for the voter's confidence and desires to make a positive contribution to the board and school division.



Newly elected in the Central District, Margaret D. Clair has lived in Nelson County for the past ten years, and all three of her children are enrolled in Nelson schools. Alice is twelve and attends Nelson Middle School; Grace who is ten and seven-year-old Adam both attend Rockfish River Elementary School. Margaret has been a leader in the RRES Parent Teacher Association and has served on the Board of Directors of the Rockfish Valley Community Center for the past four years. Personal action and involvement in the community are important to her, and she strives to be a role model for her children in this regard. With a strong belief in public education, she is committed to being an advocate for its programs. Margaret is gearing up to face the difficult issue of providing a quality education while conserving our county's resources.

## PIEDMONT FUTURES *in Nelson County*

Has your seventh-grader mentioned that he learned how to remove medical gloves without contaminating his hands, or that she “excavated” historical artifacts for Monticello? Has your fifth-grader been talking about careers in green building lately? Have you or a co-worker recently been asked to serve as a career speaker in one of the schools?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may already know about PIEDMONT FUTURES, a career education program now in its third year serving schools in Nelson as well as Albemarle, Charlottesville, Fluvanna, and Greene. PIEDMONT FUTURES coordinates business involvement in programs designed to help students think ahead to success in the workplace. The initiative is sponsored by the schools, Rotary Clubs, and other organizations in collaboration with Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC).



**Commonwealth Scholars** is a program that brings business professionals into eighth grade classrooms to help students realize the connection between hard work in school and future success and to encourage students to take the more rigorous **Commonwealth Scholars** course of study in high school. In February, Nelson resident Jane Davis, Human Resources Business Partner at Martha Jefferson Hospital, will be serving as a Commonwealth Scholars speaker for the third year in a row. “Eighth graders see themselves far removed from making decisions about college,” says Davis. “The challenge is to help them understand that the decisions they make now will affect the opportunities they will have in the future.” The Commonwealth Scholars presentations will take place at Nelson Middle School on February 5, 2010. More information about the program can be found on the PIEDMONT FUTURES web page, [www.pvcc.edu/futures](http://www.pvcc.edu/futures). Scroll down to find “Commonwealth Scholars.”

Other PIEDMONT FUTURES programs include the Career Pathways Speaker Series held monthly at Tye River Elementary School; Summer Career Camp Academies at PVCC in June 2010; Seventh Grade Career Expo at UVA in November 2009; Tenth Grade Career Days at PVCC in March 2010; Dress for Success and PVCC Annual Job Fair in March 2010; and the ongoing Virtual Job and Internship Fair for high school students and recent graduates. Click on “Jobs & Internships” at [www.pvcc.edu/futures](http://www.pvcc.edu/futures).

PIEDMONT FUTURES is coordinated by Erin Hughey-Commers who grew up in Nelson County and has worked to promote integrated learning for Nelson youth since graduating from college. Prior to her position with Piedmont Futures, she was in charge of the Civic Education at Nelson County High School through Virginia Cooperative Extension and coordinated school outreach and education programs for Oakland, the Nelson County Museum of History.

To find out more about upcoming programs in Nelson schools or to volunteer as a career speaker, you may visit the PIEDMONT FUTURES web site or contact Erin Hughey-Commers at 961-6530.

### *Tips for Winter Driving*

1. Know your route and keep abreast of weather conditions.
2. Pack a winter safety kit.
3. Slow down.
4. Use a light touch on controls.
5. Know how to recover from skids.



6. Keep tires in good condition and properly inflated.
7. Make frequent stops.
8. If stuck, stay in vehicle.

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