Nelson School News Volume 6, Issue 1 Fall 2007

Superintendent's Message

Dear Parents and Friends:

The 2007-08 school year is well underway after a smooth and successful beginning. Staff, students, parents, and significant others are to be commended for preparing themselves for the rigors of another challenging school term.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage reading throughout our community. Research clearly shows that children who are encouraged to read often perform better in school, and a better performance in school benefits the individual, the family, the school division, and the entire community.

As a group, can we collectively set a goal to be the top rural reading community in the Commonwealth of Virginia? Yes, we can! I believe this is a worthy and attainable goal. A first step in becoming the top reading community in the state is to monitor our own reading and make reading a priority in our lives. Let's ask ourselves the following questions:

> Do I read each day? Do my children see me read? Do I read with my children or children with whom I come in contact? Do I visit and use the library?

Our challenge is to read more as an example for all of the children and young adults within our community. Throughout the year, each school will schedule at least one activity with a focus on reading, and I hope that everyone in our community will participate in some way.

I thank you in advance for working collaboratively with us toward this goal and for making reading a priority in your home. Modeling reading, as well as supporting the reading habits of your family, can pay extraordinary educational dividends over the years and provide countless hours of learning pleasure.

As always, I encourage you to schedule a visit to our schools soon and see learning in action. Have a great fall season, and accept the reading challenge for yourselves and your family!

Roger D. Collins, Division Superintendent

Auditorium Sound System to be Upgraded with $30,000 Gift

Nelson County High School's auditorium will soon be substantially improved courtesy of a generous gift to upgrade the existing sound system. Dr. Roger Collins, school superintendent, stated, "I was moved to tears when the major capital donation arrived." He went on to say that the Nelson County family, who made the donation anonymously, felt that the $30,000 gift would benefit not only the school division but also the entire community as the auditorium is a gathering place for many activities and should have the very best sound system available.

As a result of this gift, Scott Belcher and Diana Driver, teachers at Nelson County High School, are in the process of ordering amplifiers, speakers, system controllers, wireless microphones, and other technical equipment. They plan to complete the installation prior to the beginning of the arts season.

Community Caring Day

In 2006, Tye River Elementary School's El Salvador Project, TRES KREATES CHANGE, received national recognition for Make a Difference Day. Through this effort, the staff, parents, and students collected $2,100 which will send seven children in a rural, impoverished community in El Salvador to school for one year.

To continue and expand the project, students and staff are working to raise community awareness about the power of making a difference; consequently, other Nelson County schools, area colleges, churches, and community organizations are becoming involved. On October 27, 2007, TRES will hold a Nelson County Community Day of Caring based upon the students' El Salvador project and in celebration of **National Make a Difference Day.** Activities will include a slide show presentation about our El Salvador students, a soccer clinic, an exhibition of antique cars, and many outdoor activities. For this occasion, groups of all ages will unite at TRES and bring contributions of toys, children's shoes, and money for school scholarships. The event will be a celebration of caring not only for the children of El Salvador but also for the children within our school community. As a result, the extended community will model that caring is an important value for our children to embrace.

The students at Tye River have learned that they can indeed "make a difference"; they CAN make a positive change by caring about the children in El Salvador. Now, they can extend that caring and share fun with family and community members of all ages. It will be a day of caring across generations and across America.

Nelson County High School Emphasizes Character

During the 2006-2007 school year, the School Improvement Committee at Nelson County High school created the **Exemplary Character Award** to recognize students for exhibiting outstanding character while enrolled at the school. At the annual senior picnic in May 2007, Leonard "L.J." Thomas and Julianna Truslow were named as the inaugural recipients of this prestigious honor. The winners were selected by the faculty and staff of NCHS, and each received a plaque acknowledging his and her exemplary character as well as a $20 gift certificate to a local bookstore.

For the 2007-2008 school year, the School Improvement Committee plans to expand the "character" concept throughout the school. Through a series of activities, the committee will educate the students at NCHS about the positive characteristics and outcomes of good character. Beginning in October 2007, the group will honor monthly one student who demonstrates strong traits of character. These monthly awards will be based on recommendations from students within the building. The committee also plans to continue the faculty/staff **Exemplary Character Award** for two deserving seniors this year.

Fast Facts

Scholarship Money

The class of 2007 received $446,328 in scholarship money. Local money accounted for $218,028 of that total.

Meeting Time Change

School Board Meetings are held at **6:00 P.M.** on the second Thursday of each month in the middle school library.

Free Admission for Senior Citizens

Effective this fall, local citizens age 60 and over may now attend school division events free of charge*****. The administrative staff welcomes senior citizens and encourages their attendance at school events in support of our student body. Plan to visit an upcoming school event soon, and watch the students of Nelson County excel.

*****Limits exist for drama events.

Nelson Middle School Proudly Presents:

If you are old enough to remember the tunes "Conjunction Junction", "I'm Just a Bill", and "Interjections", you can probably still sing every word! Whether you are a child of the 70's or a child of today, you will enjoy these classics and many more which were made famous by the Saturday morning educational cartoon, School House Rock. On Thursday, November 8, and Friday, November 9, 2007, Nelson Middle School will open its doors for its *First Annual Nelson Middle School Musical.* The students will be performing the Broadway Junior edition of **School House Rock, Live!**, and the community is invited to gather for a fun-filled evening of comfort food and nostalgia.

The Chicken Coop will provide fried chicken, cole slaw, and "taters", and, of course, there will be an array of desserts from which to choose. Tickets will be sold from October 25th to November 2nd at the middle school and elementary schools. Also be on the lookout for ticket order forms to come home with your child the week of October 22nd. In addition, you may also check the Nelson Middle School website or contact Amber Hartzog at *(434)263-4801* for ticket information. *Be sure to mark your calendars. This is an event you do not want to miss!*

A Learning Community

A professional learning community is a place where the main focus is on learning. In a school, students, teachers, and staff are taking advantage of every minute and every opportunity; it is a **place** with a **plan**. Questions are pondered in advance: What specifically do students need to know, how will the staff know when they have learned it, and what will be done if students have not learned the material or already know it and are ready for a new or different challenge?

At Rockfish River Elementary School, some positive improvements are taking place this year to ensure "learning for all." Remediation time is built into the daily schedule and allows students who need extra assistance on a skill to get help in a timely fashion. Students ready for enrichment will spend that time with more challenging activities. After- school tutoring will not be scheduled; therefore, several days a week will be free for enrichment activities and clubs open to **all** students after the dismissal bell has rung.

Working as a cohesive team, members of the RRES instructional staff will closely monitor student progress, share successful teaching strategies, and participate in professional development opportunities. Title I teachers and special education teachers will spend more time instructing in the regular classroom setting alongside the regular education teachers. Retired teachers, PALS tutors, and additional remedial tutors will also assist during the school day with remediation and enrichment. These measures will allow students more time on task and will provide opportunities for individualized/ small group learning. In addition, all K-5 students will work in the school's computer lab every day on programs geared to their specific instructional needs.

Rockfish River is a school with a plan. The staff is building on past successes and attempting to provide for the needs of every child. As parents and visitors enter the front door, they step into a true professional learning community.

Dates to Remember

October 1, 2007 - Non Student Day
October 16, 2007 - Division Early Dismissal/Parent-Teacher Conferences
November 1, 2007 - Elementary Only-Early Dismissal
November 21-23, 2007 - Thanksgiving Holiday
December 20*-31, 2007- Winter Holiday Break
January 1, 2008 - Division Holiday

***(Dec. 20 Make-Up Day if needed)**

Six Week Period Ending Dates*

First Six Weeks	September 28, 2007
Second Six Weeks	November 9, 2007
Third Six Weeks	January 11, 2008
Fourth Six Weeks	February 28, 2008
Fifth Six Weeks	April 18, 2008
Sixth Six Weeks	May 30, 2008

*Subject to change

All Schools Accredited

First Year Federal Standard Exceeded State of Virginia's

Results are in! Nelson County High School, Nelson Middle School, Tye River Elementary School, and Rockfish River Elementary School are all fully accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Our schools and our division have also met or exceeded 144 out of 145 (99 percent) federal benchmarks to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

State accreditation is based upon "overall" pass rates for students in the four core subjects of English, math, science, and social studies. In contrast, the federal AYP ratings measure subgroup performance and participation in reading and math, and in one other area involving science, attendance, or graduation.

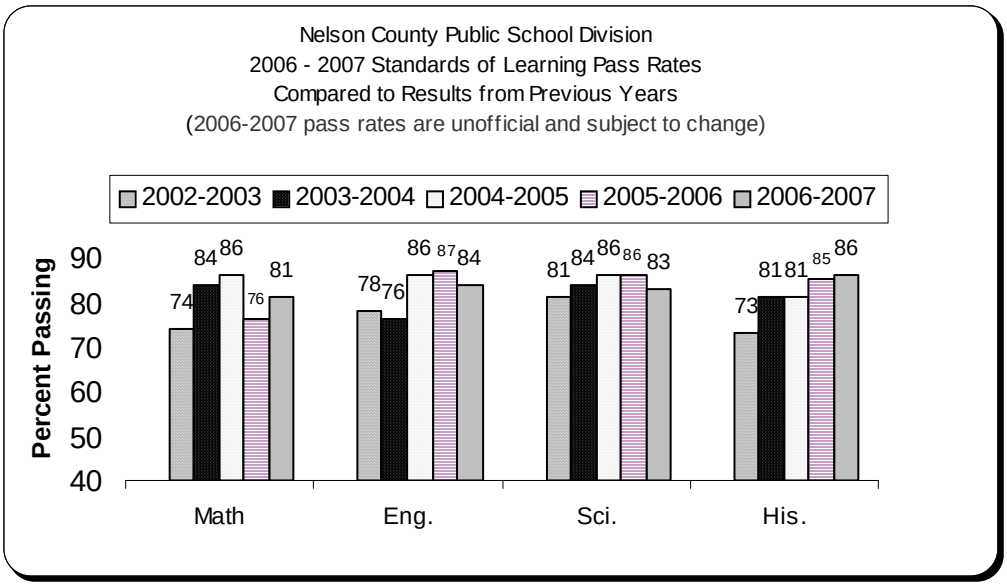
This was the first year that federal expectations for Virginia's students exceeded the Standards of Learning benchmarks set by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The bar was set high; the Virginia Department of Education stated, "Virginia's AYP benchmarks for 2006-2007 were among the highest in the nation. For a Virginia school or division to have made AYP during 2006-2007, at least 73 percent of students overall and students in subgroups must have demonstrated proficiency in reading, and 71 percent of students overall and in all subgroups must have demonstrated proficiency in mathematics." Federal standards will increase four points each year until the year 2014 when 100 percent of all children will be expected to pass the Standards of Learning assessments.

Showing a 5 percent increase over last year's results, mathematics took a leap upward this year in division pass rates with the middle and high school taking the lead by gaining 30 or more percentage points in Algebra I and grade 7 math. The other core subjects remained fairly steady with a slight variance of plus or minus one to three points.

Within Virginia, 72 percent of the schools and 44 percent of the divisions made AYP based upon the results from the 2006-2007 school year. However, each year the federal benchmarks will continue to climb. For the current school term, reading pass rates are set at 77 percent, and math pass rates are 75 percent for all subgroups. The stakes are high, yet the goal is for all Nelson County students to reach their potential as educated, responsible, and productive citizens.

Virginia Standards of Learning Historical Pass Rates

For the third consecutive year, our students have succeeded at reaching well beyond Virginia's Standards of Learning benchmarks of achievement. The graph below displays Nelson County Public School Division's Standards of Learning (SOL) results over time. In addition, our division and all four of our schools continue to show a high level of student performance. We celebrate with our students the great accomplishments of the past year!



Virginia's maximum benchmarks are set for reading at 75% passing and all other subjects at 70% passing.

**2005-2006 results are based upon official state report card results*

*** 2006-2007 division results are preliminary and subject to change*

Regionalization of County Adult Education Program

In May 2007, the school superintendents from Nelson, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, and the City of Lynchburg signed a Memorandum of Agreement to regionalize the adult education programs in the six school divisions. The new program will serve an area of 2,613 square miles and a population of 245,815 (2000 census). There are many advantages in having a regional program; they include the following:

- Staffing – centralization of management and leadership; better efficiency of dollars spent with administrative staffing;
- Programming – improved communication and greater consistency of programs;
- Access – outreach/recruitment crosses local boundaries; classes can be held anywhere that is beneficial to the program; continuity in the delivery of adult education; greater access to GED testing; and
- Economic Development – will be supported by regional adult education development (workforce development).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's State & County Quickfacts, the educational attainment levels of the population to be served by the new regionalized program are as follows:

School Division	Population	* Less Than a High School Education	* High School Graduates	* Bachelors Degree or Higher
Amherst	32,239	29.4	70.6	13.1
Appomattox	14,128	29.3	70.7	10.5
Bedford	66,507	19.9	80.1	20.9
Campbell	52,667	26.6	73.4	14.6
Lynchburg	65,113	22.0	78.0	25.2
Nelson	15,161	31.0	69.0	20.8

* **% of persons age 25+**

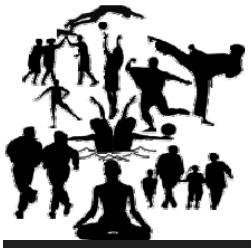
Dr. Edward Hopkins of Amherst was appointed Regional Program Manager, and each superintendent has chosen an Adult Education Contact Person to serve on the Regional Advisory Board. Based on the above data, the regional program manager and the regional advisory board have set goals for the 2007-08 school year. These are a few of their goals:

- To increase the number of adults completing a secondary school credential;
- To develop Fast-Track and GED prep courses and bridge the gap between English for speakers of other languages;
- To maintain a highly qualified staff in all ABE/GED classes;
- To align and implement the newly developed content standards in the instructional program; and
- To continue the collaborative partnerships already in place with Social Services, Head Start, Region 2000 Workforce Center, Virginia Employment Commission, Alliance for Families and Children, and community based literacy organizations.

Anyone interested in earning a GED or helping someone get a GED, please call 434-263-8317 ext. 1449 or email gtroy@nelson.k12.va.us.

New Partnership with the YMCA

The Nelson County School Board is pleased to announce the formation of a partnership with the YMCA of Central Virginia to offer a fee-based day care program to the families of Nelson County. Available to ages 4-12, the program provides care before and after school and on inclement weather days as well as during the summer months to students at Tye River Elementary, Rockfish River Elementary, and the sixth grade at Nelson Middle School. The Y-School Age Program Design is based on the YMCA School Age Curriculum which contains eight core content areas to aid in the development of the whole child. These content areas are Arts & Humanities, Character Development, Health, Wellness and Fitness, Homework Support, Literacy, Science and Technology, Service Learning, Social Competence, and Conflict Resolution. The program has a flexible schedule that allows for the developmental needs and differences in each child.



The YMCA child care logo is ***We Build Strong Kids, Strong Families, Strong Communities***. Together, the Nelson County Public School Division and YMCA hope to be able to expand services and offerings to more students and to the community. Please join the school division in welcoming our new partners in learning to Nelson County.

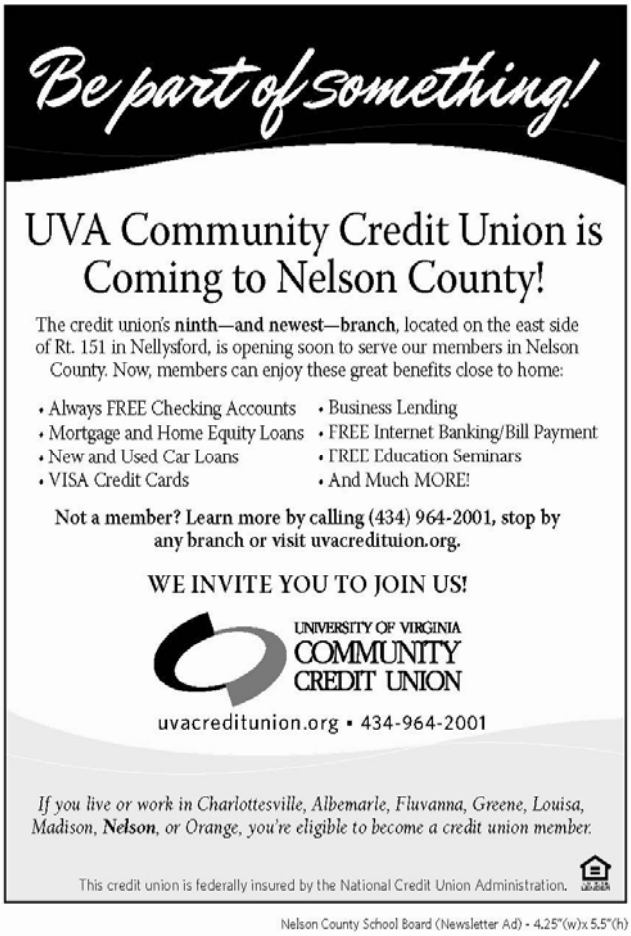
Nelson County High School Invitation

The staff of Nelson County High School invites all interested parents to attend an organizational meeting to begin the process of establishing a formal parent/teacher organization. The meeting will be held at 6:00 P.M. on October 16, 2007, in Room 103 at NCHS. More information may be obtained by email, *dtinder@nelson.k12.va.us*, or by calling Mrs. Dawn Tinder at *(434)263-8317*.

Did You Know ????

Over the last ten years, one hundred Nelson County Public School employees have been recognized for outstanding work performance in their field. Through the generosity of the SAW Foundation, winners of the prestigious Smyth Awards are presented a certificate of appreciation, a plaque, and a check for $1,000. Nominations for this honor are gathered from fellow employees, parents, and community members at the end of the school year. Then, an anonymous committee reviews all of the nominations and ultimately determines who best deserves this recognition.

As a community member you, too, can participate in the nomination process. By paying close attention to <u>all</u> staff members throughout the school year, you may submit the name of an employee who, in your opinion, has exceeded job expectations and is deserving of this recognition. You then download a nomination form from our website at <u>www.nelson.k12.va.us</u> during the month of May. After you have completed the form and noted the occasion when you observed an employee going "above and beyond the call of duty," you simply mail the nomination to the address on the form. The committee then has the arduous task of selecting the winners from the list of deserving nominees.



From the Instructional Corner

It is exciting to share information about three different opportunities in which Nelson County students are able to participate. All of these programs began at least two years ago and continue to expand.

Last year, Rockfish River Elementary School offered an after-school foreign language class in Spanish. This year, students in grades three through five at Tye River Elementary also have the opportunity to learn the Spanish language by remaining after school two days a week. Research shows that languages are more easily grasped at a younger age, and these classes are a great opportunity for our elementary students to learn a language that is so much a part of our society.

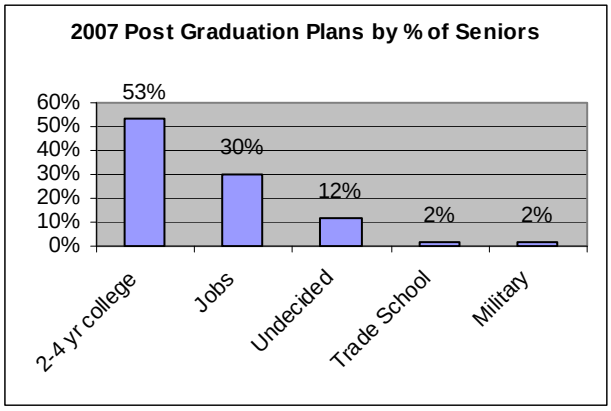
For many years, Nelson Middle School students have been able to take three or four high school level courses. As of this year, the middle school is offering eight high school level classes as part of the seventh and eighth grade curriculum. Algebra I, Spanish, French, art, agriculture, earth science, keyboarding, and geometry are now options to students at NMS. By taking advantage of these high school classes, students open their schedules for more opportunities to take advanced classes or other electives in high school.

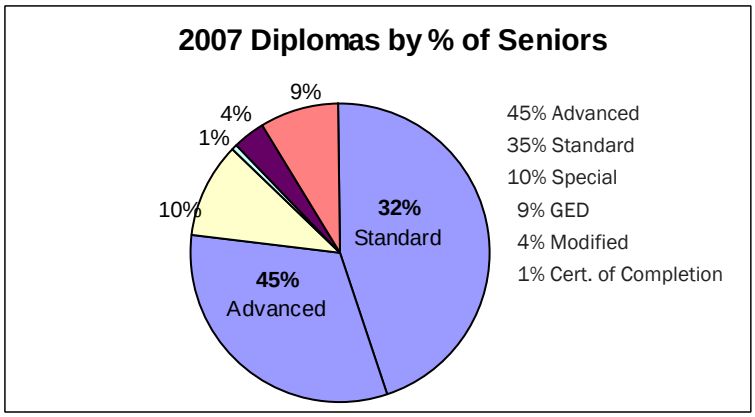
Nelson County High School continues to offer opportunities for students to take college level courses during their high school experience. Both Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment (DE) courses, taught by a member of the NCHS faculty or taken online, are available for students who have fulfilled the required pre-requisite courses. College credits are earned by students making a grade of "C" or better in the DE classes, and AP students may receive college credit for their AP courses and test scores based upon individual college requirements. The following courses are taught by NCHS staff members: AP calculus, AP government, AP U.S. history, AP English, DE English, DE Biology 101, and DE Biology 102. In addition, students may receive college credit for online course work via the Internet through Piedmont Virginia Community College or another college. Currently, twenty-seven students are taking the following online classes through the Nelson Achiever's Lab: DE sociology, DE psychology, AP psychology, DE U.S. history, AP statistics, and AP engineering. Next semester, the number of students will increase as there are forty-seven students signed up to take advantage of these online courses.

With our elementary children learning a second language, with our middle students taking high school classes, and with our high school students earning college credits, our school division is working diligently to provide Nelson's students with expanded educational opportunities and increasing their competitive edge in today's world. In fact, these programs offer the students of Nelson County more opportunities to learn beyond the traditional boundaries of education.

The Class of 2007!

Nelson County High School seniors, receiving numerous scholarships to assist them with plans for the future, graduated with style this past spring. One hundred and sixty-two seniors received their diplomas in 2007, and 53 percent of those graduates planned to attend either a four-year institution of higher learning or two-year college. An additional 5 percent went into the military, planned to attend trade schools, or pursued other options.





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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.

Volunteers Needed

PIEDMONT FUTURES needs tutors, career speakers, and participants in career and job fairs for the K-12 schools.

PIEDMONT FUTURES, the new business-education alliance of Nelson, Greene, Fluvanna, Albemarle, and City of Charlottesville public schools in collaboration with PVCC, engages businesses and organizations for career education in the area schools.

Call 434-961-6530 or email ehughey-commers@pvcc.edu for more information!

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

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