

# Nelson School News

Nelson School News

Volume 8, Issue 1

Fall 2008

## Superintendent's Message

Dear Parents and Friends:

The school year is upon us! For several weeks now, students and staff have been focused on and actively engaged in a variety of learning challenges. From pre-school to college level courses, learning never stops in our school buildings.



New beginnings are filled with anticipation, excitement, and energy. As we partner for future success, consider the latest facts regarding the *technical* world in which we live:

### Did you know ?

(transcribed from on-line video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMcfrLYDm2U>)

- College graduates in 2006: US - 1.3 million; India - 3.1 million; China - 3.3 million
- One in four workers has been with their current employer less than one year
- One in two workers has been with their current employer less than five years
- The Department of Labor estimates today's learners will have ten to fourteen jobs by age 38
- Emerging opportunities – organic agriculture, e-business, nanotechnology, homeland security
- Today's 21 year olds have: watched 20,000 hours of TV; played 10,000 hours of video games; talked 10,000 hours on the phone; sent/received 250,000 emails or instant messages
- More than 50% of the population in the U.S. will have created content on the world wide web by age 21
- By age 4, 70% of the children in the U.S. have used computers
- Years it took to reach a market audience of 50 million: radio - 38 years; TV - 13 years, internet - 4 years
- The number of internet devices in: 1984 – 10,000; 1992 – 1,000,000; 2006 – 600,000,000
- The first commercial text message was sent in December 1992
- The number of text messages sent today exceeds the population of the planet
- The internet started being widely used by the general public in early 1995
- Founded in 1996, eBay revenue in 2006 was \$6 billion
- More than 2.7 billion searches were performed on Google this month
- MySpace visitors: 2004 – 10,000,000; 2005 – 25,000,000; 2006 – 60,000,000
- More than 230,000 new users signed up for MySpace today
- If MySpace were a country it would be the 8<sup>th</sup> largest in the world
- YouTube visitors since 2005 – over 100,000,000
- There are over 540,000 words in the English language – about 5 times as many as during Shakespeare's time
- More than 3,000 books were published today
- Technical information is doubling every 2 years and by 2010 it is predicted to double every 72 hours



## Internet Education

Few would argue that the Internet has had a profound influence on education, and has provided unprecedented access to resources, opportunities for collaboration across geographic and temporal barriers, and engagement in global communities. The high-speed Internet has made the Web much more interactive by expanding communication possibilities beyond the written word. While young people tend to adopt new technologies more quickly than adults, many possess neither the experience nor the knowledge to understand the potential risks. Parents, educators, and community members must encourage students to take advantage of the Internet's benefits while reducing its risks.

**Personal safety on the Internet:** Students must understand that people often misrepresent themselves and that predators are always present on the Internet. They should never give out personal information without an adult's permission, especially if it conveys where they can be found at a particular time. In addition, students should recognize the various forms of *cyber bullying* and should know what steps to take if confronted with that behavior.



**Information on the Internet:** A discussion of acceptable sites to visit and what to do if an inappropriate site is accessed should be conducted between parents and their children. Young people should also be informed about various Web advertising techniques and should realize that not all sites provide truthful information.

**Activities on the Internet:** Likewise, students and their families should discuss acceptable social networking and communication methods and the appropriate steps to take when encountering a problem. Students should be made aware of the potential dangers of emailing, gaming, downloading files, and peer-to-peer computing which include viruses, legal issues, harassment, sexual predators, and identity theft.

With a common sense approach and an open discussion of the dangers involved in Internet usage, everyone can reap the benefits of this educational opportunity.

### Superintendent's Message *continued*

- Third generation fiber optics have recently been tested that push 10 trillion bits per second down fiber. That is 1,900 CDs or 150 million simultaneous phone calls every second. It is currently tripling every six months. The fiber is already present. Workers are improving the switches on the ends which means the marginal cost of the improvements is effectively zero.
- Nearly two billion children live in developing countries. One in three never complete the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2005 the one laptop per child project (OLPC) set out to provide laptops to these children. The first shipments were in 2007. Kids who have never held a textbook will hold the world and be connected to you.
- Predictions are that by the time children born in 2007 are 6 years old, super computers capabilities will exceed that of the human brain. Predictions further out than 15 years are - a \$1,000 computer will exceed the computing capabilities of the human race.
- **We are currently preparing students for jobs and technologies that don't yet exist in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet.**

I am sure you found many of these facts as interesting as I did. Preparing Nelson students for the global opportunities that lie ahead is one of our top priorities.



I encourage each of you to schedule a visit to our schools soon. Your participation, input and support are welcome and necessary as we continue the teaching and learning process. Have a great school year!

Division Superintendent

## Community of Readers

Last year, in the fall newsletter, the school superintendent envisioned Nelson County as being one of the top rural reading communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia and we are continuously striving to attain that worthwhile goal for our county. Students acquire many skills in school with reading for understanding as the most important. Furthermore, reading has connections to all subject areas. There are many benefits that a student reaps from reading regularly. The following are only a few of those benefits:

- Reading develops creativity which allows students to create in their minds how a particular character looks or to imagine how a scene plays out.
- Reading skills improve a student's ability to comprehend concepts and ideas.
- Reading develops critical thinking, thus ensuring that students will be able to think and make good decisions for themselves.
- Student's fluency in communications skills are markedly improved by reading.
- Reading introduces a student to new things and has the ability to broaden individual interests.
- Reading on a regular basis enhances vocabulary for both written and spoken language.
- Developing student's reading and comprehension skills better prepares students for "real-world" experiences and societal expectations upon their graduation.

In order for reading to be important to students, students need to perceive that reading is valuable to the adults around them; consequently, the Nelson community must encourage all children, from newborns to seniors in high school, to read. The school division continues to encourage students to read on a daily basis. Our educational staff also strives to instill in our students the joy of reading by encouraging silent reading time in many classes, by hosting book clubs, or by special reading nights at the elementary schools. With the help of all the Nelson community members, children can see how important reading is to everyone. As a community member, you can help us in this endeavor by implementing or participating in the following:

- Reading to a young child from newborn until the child can read to you
- Modeling the importance of reading to your family by reading everyday
- Talking about the books, magazines, or newspapers that you read with a child
- Having a child read to you
- Talking to our students about the books they are reading in and out of school
- Taking a child to the local library
- Designating a recurring reading time for all family members in your home
- Creating book discussion groups including both adults and students
- Supporting our local library



Photo: Stephanie Gross

With the knowledge and creativity evident in the Nelson community, even more ideas could be developed to encourage all students to read and become better readers. Join our staff as reading takes top priority throughout Nelson County.



*Bugsy Malone is the bee's knees ... you don't want to miss it!*



Don't be a *wet blanket*! Throw on your *glad rags*, hop in your *hayburner* and come out for the Nelson Middle School production of *Bugsy Malone*. This *nifty* musical, set in the Roaring Twenties, is a non-violent spoof of an old gangster flick. Fat Sam and his gang of *hoods* take on Dandy Dan and his Splurge-wielding goons. Will Bugsy Malone save the day, or be *left holding the bag*? Support Nelson Middle School students as they sing, dance and show off their talents while entertaining the audience. This will be the second annual musical performance, and is sure to be a hit!

**Date:** Thursday, November 6  
**Time:** 5:30 P.M. Dinner by Chicken Coop; 7 P.M. Showtime  
**Where:** NMS/NCHS Auditorium and NMS Cafeteria  
**Cost:** Adult Dinner and Show- 12 *clams*  
 Adult Show only- 5 *clams*  
 Student Dinner and Show- 8 *clams*  
 Student Show only- 3 *clams*

**1920's Slang**

- Wet blanket** - a solemn person
- Glad rags** - "out on the town" clothes
- Hayburner** - gas guzzling car
- Nifty** - great, excellent
- Hoods** - hoodlums
- Left holding the bag** - to be blamed for something
- Clams**—dollars
- Bee's knees** - awesome, cool

*NCHS Students Help Design Sheriff's Uniform Patch*

The Nelson County High School Fine Arts Department has been collaborating with the Nelson County Sheriff's Office to design a new patch for the deputies' uniforms. The patches currently being worn have been on the shoulder of every uniform for so long that no one can remember a previous design!


In the spirit of true artistic tradition, a contest, involving NCHS students only, was held last spring to develop ideas for the design. Students from every grade participated, and over forty creative designs depicting nearly every aspect of Nelson County life were submitted. After much deliberation, the designs of four finalists were chosen for review over the summer; those students were Laurel Schablein, Jade Kim, Brandi Seamster, and Joshua Morris. This month, the Sheriff's Office entered into the final stages of development for the new patch using the design submitted by **Brandi Seamster**, now a junior at the high school. Brandi's design was selected for its crisp, clean imagery, and it will be incorporated into the new patch along with the ideas of members of the Sheriff's Office. The patch will be completed in the coming months, and everyone looks forward to seeing it on the uniforms later this year!



*The Class of 2008 Excels*


**2008 Post Graduation Plans of Seniors**

2 - 4 Year College	53%
Other Educ. Plans	4%
Jobs	4%
Military	4%



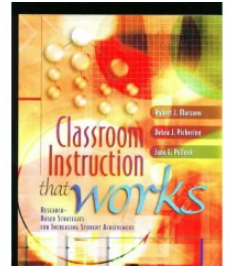
One hundred and seventy seniors graduated last spring from Nelson County High School with goals and diplomas in hand. Of that number, 53% graduated with plans to continue their education at a two or four-year institution of higher education. To assist them monetarily with those plans, seniors received scholarships in the amount of \$548,335 of which \$212,335 were from local funds..


**Percent of Diplomas Received by Seniors Spring 2008**

Advanced		39%
Standard		41%
ISAEP/GED		16%
Modified Standard		2%
Special		2%

## Elementary School Online Collaboration Aims to Improve Student Learning

Tye River Elementary and Rockfish Elementary school teachers will be using technology to discuss and share their thoughts in a book study. These teachers will be reading *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* written by Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. The book presents instructional strategies that research suggests can improve student achievement. By reading the material and responding online, teachers at both schools will have the opportunity to reflect on their daily instructional practice and to integrate new strategies which will enhance current instruction and lead to improved student success. Improving instruction is a focus for the teachers and staff at both schools; therefore, the opportunity to share ideas easily and to learning from each other is a valuable tool that will have an impact on all students.



 The online application called **Google Groups** will be used to set up an online learning community. This application will allow the teachers to respond to a reflective question by posting their thoughts to the online group discussion. In addition, participants will also be able to read and then respond to comments posted by other members. The group is not limited to only discussion; members can also post and share files or useful web links that will enhance the discussion. One of the greatest advantages of using an online forum for a book discussion is that members can post their responses at anytime during the day or night; it also offers the opportunity for collaboration without distance being a factor.

Through this unique program, the elementary teachers in Nelson County will have the opportunity to learn new instructional strategies and to gather innovative thoughts from each other, thereby improving the achievement of their students.

## Students Publishing School News

Noteworthy school news will be published by a group of fourth and fifth grade students at Rockfish River Elementary School this year. The idea of creating a student newspaper was generated by several fourth graders last year. With help from a parent sponsor, the young writers worked after school for several weeks in the spring to create the first edition of **What's Up Rockfish** which was copied and distributed near the end of the school year.

Interest in continuing the project remains, and a community partner has volunteered to assist the students. Tommy Stafford, editor of Nelson County Life magazine, will provide advice and guidance for the student journalists this year. He will meet with the newspaper club to offer instruction on writing quality news stories, layout style, editing and proofreading.



The students are to be commended for their initiative and willingness to work after the school day has ended to improve their writing skills and to provide another form of communication to Rockfish students, staff, and families. Motivated students, parent volunteers, and community partners make a powerful and effective educational team!

## Division Activities Calendar

In order to help busy families plan and know what activities are scheduled for all division schools, we have added a **Division Activity Calendar** to our web-site.

View the calendar at the following address: <http://www.nelson.k12.va.us/schoolboard/DivisionActivityCalendar.htm>.



*Virginia State Accreditation for All Nelson County Public Schools Expected!*

**NCPS Continue to Celebrate Student Success on SOL Assessments**

While we await official state accreditation results by the Department of Education, the Nelson County School Division family celebrates the anticipation of "Full Accreditation" for all four of our schools. State accreditation is based upon the pass rates for all students in the four core subjects of English (includes reading and writing), math, science, and social studies/history. The maximum expected pass rate is set at 75 percent but varies depending on the subject and/or grade level.

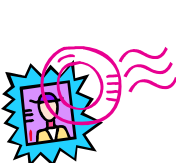
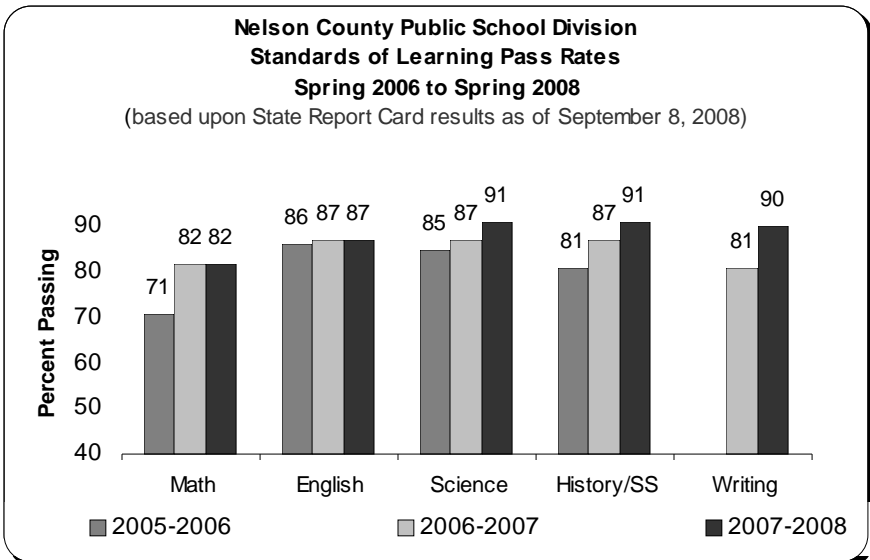
In addition, our individual schools and the entire division have collaboratively met or exceeded 97 percent of the federal benchmarks known as the "Annual Measurable Objectives" (AMO's). Federal "Annual Yearly Performance" (AYP), in contrast to state accreditation, focuses on performance of students in specific subgroups in the areas of only reading and mathematics, participation in the assessments, and one other indicator per school. In the area of reading, the expectation is that 77 percent of our students will pass the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, and in math, 75 percent of our students must pass the SOL test. Federal expectations will continue to increase by four percentage points each year raising the bar for reading to 81 percent and math to 79 percent passing for all subgroups this year. Pass rates will continue to increase each year leading to an objective of 100 percent proficiency by 2014.

A balanced assessment of a school's success measured by the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) objectives can be made by comparing the number of AMO's that a school met with the total number of AMO's. Nelson County Public Schools met 140 out of 145, or 97 percent, of the NCLB AMO's.

Based upon the school report cards this year, NCPS students exceeded the overall state pass rates in writing, history, and science. Our students demonstrated a 4.5 percent gain in history and science, and in writing, they improved their pass rates by 11 percent. In reading and mathematics, overall student performance remained the same as the previous year with reading at 87 percent passing and math at 82 percent passing. However, Nelson students performed equally as well in reading as the students in the Commonwealth. While our overall pass rate in mathematics remained the same as last year, when we scored above the state by 2 percentage points, the state pass rate for mathematics rose only 2 percentage points above Nelson County Public School's 82 percent passing. School report cards with pass rates for specific subgroups are available on the Virginia Department of Education's website at <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/>.

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All who are involved, not only in our schools but also in our homes and communities, are to be congratulated for continued success on the SOL assessments.



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



Thank you for your continued interest in school division news.