

RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY SCHOOLS PANTHER PRIDE NEWSLETTER

DR. DONNA MATTHEWS, SUPERINTENDENT

RCPS CELEBRATES COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

Hour of Code Activities Offered to RCPS Students

This week was Computer Science Education Week, an internationally recognized week in schools across the world to encourage young students to experiment with computer coding in recognition of the birthday of computing pioneer, Admiral Grace Murray Hopper (December 9, 1906). The "Hour of Code" initiative sprouted out of this dedicated time when a coalition of global partners leveraged resources in order to offer free coding tutorials and activities for students wishing to learn more about the world of computer science. Among the global partners that serve on the Computer Science Education Week Advisory and Review Committees are Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and the College Board. The "Hour of Code" is a global movement that now reaches tens of millions of students in more than 180 countries.

Rappahannock County Schools recognizes this event through enrichment activities offered to students wishing to dabble in computer science. At the elementary school, Mrs. Lilo Wolfe hosted an "Hour of Code" event after school on Thursday, December 8th, for 5th-7th

grade students who wanted to participate in the activities. The program used in Mrs. Wolfe's event was a module created by Microsoft and Code.org with a new Minecraft tutorial developed by LeX where students learned the basics of coding and game design. The tutorial included Minecraft characters and Minecraft-inspired challenges, making the concept of computer programming both approachable and fun.



GT Advisory Presentation

Looking Ahead: Planning for Enriching Experiences at the High School Level

The Rappahannock County Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Committee will be presenting information about options students have for enrichment at the high school level. Topics to be discussed will be the Academic and Career Planning process, Advanced Course Offerings, Dual Enrollment, AP, Virtual Virginia, Mountain Vista Governor's School, and Career and Technical Education. The information is geared toward parents of elementary to middle school students wishing to learn about what awaits at the high school level, as well as for parents of high school students wanting to learn more about the vast opportunities available at Rappahannock County High School.

The meeting is open to the public and will be held in the high school library at 5:30 PM on December 15th, 2016.



RCES STUDENTS EXPERIENCE A COMMUNITY OF GIVING

Real-life lessons about gratitude this season

Students at Rappahannock County Elementary School benefit daily through the donations and volunteerism of many generous individuals and organizations in our community. In return, students are being encouraged to give back. At the start of the school year, many community donors provided backpacks filled with school supplies for elementary school students. So far, more than 35 backpacks stuffed with supplies were given to students in need. Many of the same donors continue to provide for these students by funding field trips and donating mittens and hats during the winter to help those who need assistance.

In addition to community members providing support through material needs, the "Back Pack" program provides nourishment to young scholars and their families with extra food for the weekend when school lunches are not available. This program is a well-organized collaboration between the elementary guidance department and the Rappahannock Food Pantry. RCHS students in the LEO Club and National Honor Society also assist by volunteering their time every Wednesday to prepare these bags that are delivered by Food Pantry volunteers every Friday to RCES students.

For the last 25 years, in a coordinated effort to give back to the community and model this same giving spirit, RCES guidance counselor, Candace Lamma, has organized an opportunity for the young Panthers help others. Mrs. Lamma leads a school-wide food and gift drive each year to produce holiday baskets for families in need. RCES families received a suggested list this week, differentiated by each grade level, with ideas for products and gifts that can be contributed for this initiative. The Student Council Association (SCA) helps support this event by collecting the donations and wrapping the gifts to put in the baskets. These baskets are then delivered to homes that have not otherwise been assisted through the many other organizations in this county.

RCES is so appreciative of these individuals and organizations that make these opportunities and provisions a reality for the students of Rappahannock County. Students truly learn so much about what gratitude and generosity look like in the process.



TIERED SUPPORT FOR READING INTERVENTION: MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

Instructional offerings at RCHS have been expanded to include an intervention component for English that not only improves reading and language arts skills but also provides another opportunity for inclusive collaboration between students with different abilities. Utilizing the LANGUAGE! Live program, authored by renowned reading specialist Dr. Louisa Cook Moats, additional instruction is provided to students to offer them an extra opportunity to refine the reading and writing skills necessary to meet SOL benchmark requirements for the verified English credits needed for graduation. The class delivers leveled practice that guides students through customized reading instruction using an online program consisting of two main components, Word Training and Text Training, in addition to a comprehensive and integrated assessment system. Online practice is balanced with workbook-skill activities intended to provide students with prescriptive small group instruction that also offers a more traditional opportunity for reading and writing practice. The program, initiated during 2015-2016, not only facilitated a second tier of reading support for our older students, but also promoted an increased SOL pass rate for RCHS, where students with disabilities improved in reading pass rates by 18%. This supplemental reading instruction offered by RCHS supports best practices by utilizing a response to intervention model promoted through attention to universal screening practices, tiered levels of intervention and support, as well as progress monitoring. By targeting identified eighth graders for inclusion in this program, RCHS is providing the support necessary for a successful academic experience in high school and beyond.



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES CLASSROOM COMES TO LIFE

New lab provides hands-on learning for students

One of the exciting new initiatives undertaken by Rappahannock County Public Schools this year has been to bolster its already successful Farm to Table and Environmental Science programs through a new classroom dedicated to environmental studies. Although the physical space of the lab itself is located at RCES, it is utilized by all RCPS students, as well serving as a location for community experts to help facilitate discussions around local environmental issues.

The fall semester RCHS environmental science class has been involved in getting the classroom lab setup with a variety of stations, with supplies funded through the Chesapeake Bay Foundation grant. Awarded to RCPS in the amount of \$25,719, the grant was given to the schools for their creativity in designing a classroom solely for environmental studies. These interactive stations include hands-on demonstration models that illustrate watershed-related issues such as pollution, drinking water sources, coastal environments, wetland functions, hazardous materials, and waste management. Lab setups also include stream tables, used to show erosion from water runoff from protected and unprotected land surfaces; a trout rearing tank, where students are able to care for trout eggs, hatch them, then release in local streams in the late spring; and green roofs which students constructed on a small framed house that can support a palette of succulent plants to monitor runoff and compare effectiveness to a shingled side versus the green side.



Also featured are microscopes for examining wastewater and stream water samples, chemical water testing supplies to test water for pH, chlorine, and a variety of other water health benchmark indicators, and a riparian buffer plant station to grow plants used for reducing erosion alongside streams. There are maps decorating the classroom which showcase the watersheds in Rappahannock County, Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay as well as a river ecosystem tank to study the biodiversity of a river ecosystem.

Illustrating the value of the new lab, community experts such as Bev Hunter and Rachel Bynum from RappFLOW, Pamela Parker from the Sperryville Wastewater Treatment Plant, and Cliff Miller have all facilitated local trips for students to extend their learning from the classroom to the field. The students were then able to return to their workspaces in the new environmental lab, further exploring the concepts learned at the local field destinations. Additional trips are planned for the spring. We look forward to further developments into second semester with the spring Environmental Science class working to create lessons for younger students when their class comes to the lab.





RCHS THEATER EARNS STATE RUNNER-UP

Another state title for RCCHS

The Virginia High School League announced its state championship winners and Outstanding Actor Awards in the 1A, 2A, and 3A State Theater Festival which took place this week in Charlottesville at Monticello High School. The Rappahannock thespians earned second place, the State Runner-Up title for their performance of an original play, *Thieves of Mercy*, written by RCCHS English and drama teacher, Russell Paulette. The play illustrates the exploits of Hamlet while taken by pirates, a moment only briefly alluded to in the Shakespearean tragedy, *Hamlet*, in Act IV Scene 6, where Horatio learns through a letter about Hamlet's captivity. The performance required many countless hours of structured practice, incorporating theatrical strategies as well as Shakespearean style. RCCHS junior, Trusten Murrah, earned one of the coveted 1A VHSL Outstanding Actor Awards for his portrayal of the lead character, Hamlet. Well done, Panthers!



Photo: courtesy of David Hong

FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM

A Community Involvement Committee will gather on January 26th, 2017 at 6 PM in the RCCHS library to review the current curriculum standards for Family Life Education (FLE). Virginia state law 22.1-207.1 requires that all public schools provide instruction in a sequential, comprehensive manner incorporating the standards of learning for FLE to include age-appropriate education of family living and community relationships, the value of marriage, abstinence education, adoption as a positive choice for unwanted pregnancy, human reproduction and sexuality, dating violence and sexual abuse, etiology, prevention, and effects of STDs, and mental health education and awareness. The meeting is open to the public. For questions about this process, please contact Executive Director of Academic Services, Shannon Grimsley at 540-227-0023.

The current curriculum is available for download on the RCPS Instruction page at the following link:

<http://www.rappahannockschools.us/Default.asp?PN=Forms&L=2&DivisionID=18544&DepartmentID=20607&LMI D=846699&ToggleSideNav=>



Upcoming Events and Announcements

- ❖ December 9-13: SOL testing at RCHS
- ❖ December 10: District Band auditions at RCHS 7:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- ❖ December 10: East Coast Pro Wrestling event at RCHS 7:00 PM
- ❖ December 14: Band and Choir concert at RCES 6:30 PM
- ❖ December 15: GT Advisory meeting RCHS library 5:30 PM
- ❖ December 16: Pre-K performance at RCES 1:00 PM
- ❖ December 19: Kindergarten performance at RCES 6:30 PM
- ❖ December 19 & 20: RCHS semester exams
- ❖ December 21: Early release for students 12:30 PM
- ❖ December 22-January 4: Winter Break
- ❖ January 5: First day back for students
- ❖ January 9: PTO meeting at RCES library 6:30 PM
- ❖ January 26: Family Life Review RCHS library 6 PM

For upcoming athletic events visit the RCPS Sports Page:

<http://rappahannockcountyhs.schoolteams.com/>



Commit to Be Fit check-ins will be held on Monday, Dec. 12th – Tuesday, Dec.

20th. Use this link to schedule an appointment:

www.SignUpGenius.com/go/4090B4BA5A629A3FE3-c2bf1

Or, come to our open check-ins at the School Board Office on the following dates:

Friday, December 16- 7:30am-1:00pm

Saturday, December 17- 9:45am-11:00am

Monday, December 19- 3:00pm-7:00pm

Tuesday, December 20- 2:00pm-7:00pm

Collectively, as a community working toward greater health and wellness, we are already seeing great results. At our first check-in, we recorded a total community weight loss of 214.8 lbs! Total waist inches lost: 119.15"!

Keep up the great work. We can do this together.



RCPS Vision Statement:

To empower every student to reach his or her full potential.