

RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY SCHOOLS PANTHER PRIDE NEWSLETTER

DR. DONNA MATTHEWS, SUPERINTENDENT

RCPS TEACHERS PREPARE FOR STUDENTS' RETURN FROM WINTER BREAK

After a restful holiday break, RCPS teachers returned to school on January 4th to prepare their classrooms and instructional plans for their students who would be returning the following day. Part of this preparation was a continuation of the ongoing professional development that had begun last summer around the implementation of performance-based assessments (PBAs). Directed by the General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education has instructed all public school divisions in the

Commonwealth to implement PBAs beginning in the areas where Standards of Learning (SOL) tests have been removed. Rappahannock County has hired a PBA consultant, Dr. Shannon King, Manager of Best Practices of Teaching and Learning and professor at George Mason, to strategically train all teachers in methodology and evaluation of these new alternatives to standardized testing. She has been providing ongoing training to elementary teachers since August and began training teachers at the high school on January 4th.



Performance-based assessments are assessments used to measure students' abilities to apply knowledge of skills learned through a task that challenges students to use critical thinking and problem solving, usually resulting in a product or completed process. Dr. King gave RCPS staff an example that everyone can relate to:

"We can all remember taking our driving test to get our license. But, if I asked you about the questions on the written test, you probably couldn't tell me what was on the test unless you struggled with a particular question. However, we all can remember almost every detail of our driving portion of the test. This was a performance-based assessment—meaningful learning that transfers to the future. This is what PBAs are designed to do for content and something that multiple choice tests cannot achieve."

RCPS administration is confident in the ability of the staff to, not only implement these assessments, but to create meaningful, fun, and relevant tasks aligned to required standards in order to meet the state's goal of educating Virginia's youth in hopes of graduating "life-ready" individuals prepared to tackle the world's toughest problems.

Enrichment Opportunity: Longwood EPF Online

RCPS will again partner with Longwood University to allow high school students to take an online summer course to earn college credit. As many of you know, Virginia state regulations require that all students in high school must take at least one virtual course as well as an economics and personal finance course in order to graduate. Longwood University is offering a four-week Economics and Personal Finance (EPF) online course that will not only count for high school graduation credit, but also fulfill the graduation requirement for both the economics and personal finance course and virtual course, as well as provide students the opportunity to earn three official college credits. Better yet, if students opt to attend Longwood upon graduation, an additional three credits will be applied as a scholarship. Thus, one student can earn up to six college credits in four weeks!

This course is a self-paced interface. This is a very viable option for gifted students looking to take a high school credit over the summer that will fulfill two graduation requirements in one. We are willing to offer the course to highly motivated, hardworking current 7th graders, as long as they have a strong background in math. Registration will open April 1st and the cost is \$400. The dates of the course will be June 19 – July 15. Contact Michelle Papa if interested.



LEARNING TEAMWORK

Students problem-solve together in reading class

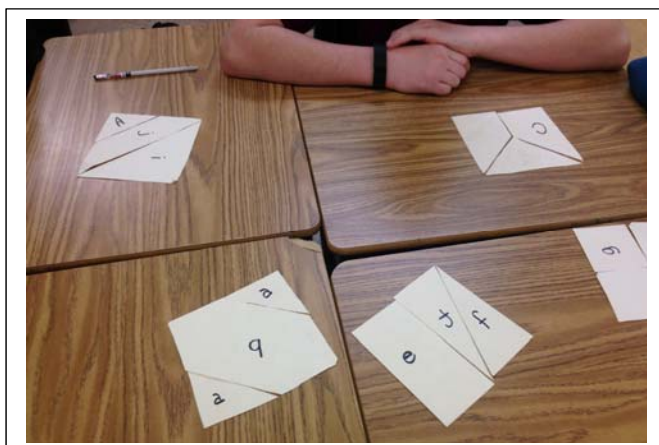
In the quest for helping students become “life-ready,” an important attribute for RCPS youth is to be collaborative. These teamwork skills are essential for success in all prospective pathways students may choose, and as such, it is increasingly important for teachers to facilitate activities in which these skills are practiced and thought through in a critical way.

Mrs. Wolfe’s sixth grade reading class returned after a long Christmas break to a specially designed activity to

concentrate on teamwork and problem solving. Students were each given an envelope with puzzle pieces that made two particular shapes. The object of the activity was to reconstruct the



puzzles using one another’s randomly selected pieces without being able to take them from each other, but only give a piece at a time to one another. “The major learning outcome,” said Mrs. Wolfe, “was to teach students to be mindful about noticing what others need.” The rules of the puzzle activity proved not to be as simple as it looked when students were forced to look at the needs of others and build each other’s puzzles together. After completing the activity, students reflected in their daybooks—journals used in Mrs. Wolfe’s classroom to think and write about experiences in class—and discussed observations about group interactions.



New Year Updates from Special Services

Special Games Planning

RCPS special needs students have been invited to participate in the Special Games sponsored by Culpeper County Public Schools in May. This event is similar to the Special Olympics and is intended to foster physical fitness and teamwork in an atmosphere that celebrates the accomplishments of the individual. While the definite date is still being decided, the event will be held at Culpeper High School in collaboration with Madison, Orange, and Louisa Counties. Invitations for RCPS students will be distributed by case managers to students who would benefit from this experience for parental permission to participate. These Special Olympians will then practice the 50 and 100 meter sprint and receive trial times to qualify for the event. Participants will receive special games t-shirts, enjoy a picnic lunch, and participate in additional field day activities. If you are interested in having your child considered for this year’s Special Games, please contact Carol Johnson at 540-227-0259 or cjohnson@rappahannockschools.us.

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting

The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) will be held on January 19, 2017 at 6:00 in the RCES auditorium. The SEAC of RCPS is a group of parents, school staff, and community members who meet at least four times per year to receive information on current issues and resources in special education as well as to discuss needs of the program. The January meeting will feature a presentation from the Moms in Motion Group that will provide information on how to access financial resources and other supports for special needs children. Child care and light refreshments will be provided.



RCHS FLEX PROJECTS EXTENDED

Students continue service to the community

As the High School settles into the new semester, one valuable carryover from the fall is the continuation of the Community Service Learning flex classes. On flex days, typically Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, students are grouped by grade level and use their flex time to identify and document community needs, formulate a proposed action plan, and create an end product. End products range from ongoing volunteer commitments to specific one time actions or creations. All end products are designed to help with the local, state, or national need that was identified. The ultimate objective of the flex project is to, not simply perform community service, but to learn essential “life-ready” skills through service to the community.

Over the last month of the fall semester, each flex project group (some classes worked on a project as a whole group, others had several separate groups within the class) met with an advisory board comprised of Principal Mike Tupper, Assistant Principal Jimmy Swindler, Director of Academic Services Shannon Grimsley, and RCHS teacher and service learning coordinator Beth Gall. Students presented their projects to the board, were quizzed on their findings and proposals, and usually left with a seal of approval, sometimes with some well received recommendations on how to improve their proposal.

Projects that have been screened have ranged from collections of supplies for the local animal shelter to creating an awareness campaign to stop strip mining in western Virginia, and many worthwhile causes in between. One specific project featured sixteen RCHS sophomores sorting, bagging and tagging donated clothing, blankets, sleeping bags and household supplies, to include 160 decorated snack bags for children. All of these supplies were then taken to a poverty stricken community and distributed directly to those in need.

Community members have been a large part of the process, coming to classrooms to speak to the various Flex groups about their proposals and potential community needs. Representatives from the County Social Services Office, the Food Pantry, and the Animal Shelter are just a few examples, and of course students have gained a newfound awareness of the rewards of community service and the benefits of giving back to the community in which we all live.

Flex projects will be on display in March at the first ever Flex Fair, to be held in the RCHS gym on March 27, 28 and 29, from 2:30 until 3:10. Each day approximately one third of the Flex Class projects will be on display, and all RCHS students will have the opportunity to view the works of their peers. A project review committee will be assessing all projects during the Fair with plans in the works to award placement ribbons and prizes.

COMMIT TO BE FIT CAFETERIA UPDATES

Collaboration between cafeteria staff and nutritionist

As students walk into the cafeteria at the elementary school, they may notice a winter themed bulletin board with a favorite character encouraging healthy choices. Nutritionist, Amanda Grove, has been on the scene, working with cafeteria staff to plan new menu items based on student surveys and taste testing data. A taco soup and salad bar have already been added, and more exciting options will debut next month. There will also be additional options for fresh produce sides as well.






Upcoming Events and Announcements

- ❖ January 16: Holiday—**No School**, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- ❖ January 20-21: Middle School Band travels to Fauquier High School
- ❖ January 21: C2BF Dance-A-Thon RCES gym 9:00 AM
- ❖ January 26: Family Life Review RCHS library 6:00 PM
- ❖ February 6: PTO meeting at 6:30 PM
- ❖ February 15: Reality Store for 8th graders
- ❖ February 21: After School Tutoring Begins
- ❖ March 6: Winter Sports Awards Celebration
- ❖ March 27-29: Flex Fair
- ❖ April 8: Prom
- ❖ April 29-30: Spring Musical, *School of Rock*









For upcoming athletic events visit the RCPS Sports Page:
<http://rappahannockcountyhs.rschooteams.com/>





Saturday, January 21st
 Rappahannock Co. Elementary School Gym

Other activities include: Kid's Yoga (ages 2-12), Smoothie Samples, Monthly Check-in Opportunities, & Prize Drawings! This will be fun for the entire family!

<p>9:00am</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>A blend of Latin rhythm and easy to follow dance moves</p> <p>Presented by Certified Zumba Instructor, Drianna Robinson</p>  </div>	<p>10:00am</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>A high energy, low impact, country dance inspired workout</p> <p>Presented by Certified Country Heat Live Instructor, Cat McMaster</p>  </div>
<p>11:00am</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>A blend of Ballet, Pilates, and Yoga</p> <p>Presented by Certified Master Balletone Ambassadors Holly Jenkins & Holly Scott</p>  </div>	<p>12:00pm</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>An addictive fusion of the latest dance styles and hottest new sounds puts the emphasis on having fun & breaking a sweat</p> <p>Presented by Certified Drianna Robinson</p>  </div>

RCPS Vision Statement:
To empower every student to reach his or her full potential.