

RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY SCHOOLS PANTHER PRIDE NEWSLETTER

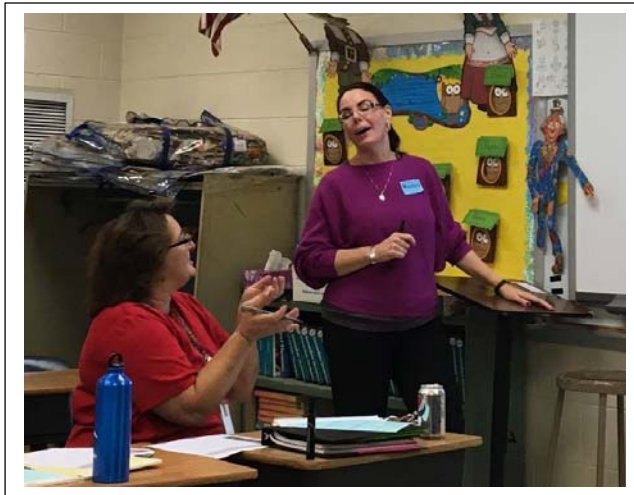
DR. DONNA MATTHEWS, SUPERINTENDENT

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AT RCES

Teachers design new performance-based assessments

The staff at Rappahannock County Elementary School came back together on November 11th with Dr. Shannon King, Performance Based Assessment Consultant, to continue their work on revising the way they will be assessing student learning. Under the guidance and direction of the Virginia Department of Education, teachers are creating hands-on, task-based assessments that allow students to both demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired in a lesson or unit and to participate in authentic use of that knowledge. For example, in 7th grade Civics, students will take the information they have learned about due process and the 5th and 14th amendments and

act as a court reporter writing a news article about an exciting court case. These types of engaging assignments allow students to use knowledge and skills in realistic ways that build life ready skills.



With Dr. King, teachers spent their time on the 11th creating rubrics, which are descriptive guides for student work. Rubrics contain a set of criteria that include descriptive levels of student performance. These tools are useful for both the teacher and the student. Students who have access to a rubric are able to understand what the expectation for their work will be before they begin and how they should perform to achieve their desired result. These assessment tools allow teachers to give specific feedback to students so that they know exactly what they did well and where they may need to improve. Effective rubrics will show students what the desired performance is and what it looks like, providing them with a tool for success. This process supports our students in monitoring their own learning and allows the teachers to focus on what they intend students to learn rather than what they intend to teach. The end result is improved instruction. Teachers at RCES are looking forward to using rubrics along with their newly designed Performance Based Assessments throughout the school year.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITY

Bland Music Contest

Registration is now open for the annual Bland Music Contest. The music contest is open for Rappahannock County K-12 students in the categories of Instrumental or Vocal Performance in high school or elementary-middle. In order to be eligible to participate, students must provide complete sheet music and perform the piece as written in no more than eight minutes. The music must be memorized, and vocalists and instrumentalists must provide an accompanist if the composition requires it, unless performing as a vocalist or pianist. Cash prizes will be awarded to the best performances in both the high school and elementary-middle categories: \$100 for 1st place, \$75 for 2nd place, \$50 for third place, \$25 honorable mention. Local winners who perform at the state level can win up to \$2500. Interested students should see their music teacher for an application. Deadline to apply is Friday, December 16.

COMMUNITY PARTNER HELPS BRING SCIENCE TO LIFE

Earth Doctor, Inc. expert visits AP chemistry class

Last week, students in Mr. Naser's advanced placement (AP) chemistry class gained some top tier scientific experience with equipment typically not seen outside a college or industrial laboratory. The class had the opportunity to hear from an expert in the field, Mr. Ken Edwards of Earth Doctor, Inc., who brought along an analytical balance and two spectrophotometers, instruments with which students were able to gain valuable experience as they utilized them in the classroom.



Analytic Balance



Spectrophotometer

Students learned that an analytical balance is capable of measuring to the nearest ten thousandth of a gram. Used in the classroom to determine the amounts of sulfate and copper ions in a complex coordination compound, students were able to reach a level of precision normally unavailable with routine classroom lab equipment. The spectrophotometers were put into operation to determine the concentration of copper solutions. Having these pieces of high tech hardware allowed students to prepare solutions which were then tested for absorbance qualities.

Modern lab equipment such as this is typically out of reach to most high school science labs due to the prohibitive costs. Enabling our students to work with tools that cost thousands of dollars presented a rare opportunity to complete some of the experiments and procedures firsthand that typically are only read about in texts or seen on video presentations. This community partnership with Earth Doctor truly served not only to bring science alive, but to also put collegiate level science tools in the hands of RCHS students, helping to elevate their knowledge to the collegiate level as well.

EMPHASIZING THE "I" IN "IEP"

The RCPS special services program is committed to providing education for students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in the least restrictive environment based on the unique needs of the child. While the Virginia Department of Education encourages student inclusion in the regular education classroom, the target of 68% inclusion acknowledges the individual nature of appropriate student placement. Our fifth grade team is implementing a student-centered approach to placement designed to meet not only the intellectual needs of the student, but the social, emotional, and physical needs as well. A recent visit to Mrs. Alexander's fifth grade resource class portrayed students receiving instruction on grade level reading standards through whole group editing practice, speed reading passage challenges, and a Scan x2 activity that supports students in previewing reading passages for greater comprehension. These students returned to their general education classroom for a class meeting with Mrs. Vickers that provided a lesson on how to read emotions in others by listening to their words and observing their body language as well as voice tone. This weekly class meeting is grounded in the Olweus anti-bullying program, but also emphasizes the social skills needed by many of our students with different abilities. The students with IEPs then went back to their resource class with Mrs. Alexander for appropriate math instruction. A lesson on step math was conducted, which started with utilizing physical steps to solve an addition problem, followed by written practice, and finally computer application of the skill through finger step support; alternately, another student was able to work on addition with regrouping during this time. Throughout this resource period students received frequent breaks and constant encouragement in a small group setting that allowed them to feel safe and confident in their abilities. The majority of the rest of the students' day proceeded in the general education setting with the support of the special services staff and appropriate accommodations. By participating in the best that both settings can provide, our fifth grade students are benefitting from a truly individualized approach to teaching and learning.

RCES STUDENTS EXPRESS THEMSELVES

A careful study of facial expressions through self-portraits

Third graders had fun participating in an art lesson this week with Mrs. Grady that also supported an important life skill. While creating self-portraits, our third graders had the opportunity to explore an incredibly important aspect of human life-- emotions. Students were taught about the ability to read people's emotions as an integral part of human communication. Through recognizing facial expressions, students can learn to get a sense of how someone is feeling and learn to practice empathy. Further, students discovered that facial expressions are universal across cultures and throughout the world. Even if we speak a different language than another person, learning to read facial expressions and related emotions can help us to better understand each other.

In this recent art lesson, the third grade students learned what facial expressions are and how the human face takes on different expressions depending on how we are feeling. Students were asked to select four different emotions and used mirrors to draw their own faces depicting these different feelings. The end result became wonderful works of art depicting students' perceptions of emotions.



WELLNESS INTEGRATION IN THE CLASSROOM



Commit to Be Fit initiative underway

Beginning last week, Commit to Be Fit wellness integration specialist, Jacqui Lowe-Barton, met with teachers to challenge them to incorporate more movement into their instruction. She shared at faculty meetings that data shows an overabundance of sit-time students endure due to the culture of testing. Ms. Lowe-Barton impressed upon the faculty that movement need not be intrusive or disruptive, but can be a routine part of every teacher's repertoire, even at the high school level. This type of movement has even been shown to increase student engagement and improve student achievement. She then offered to help teachers integrate more movement as part of their own lessons, develop lessons around a particular topic for teachers, or collaborate and co-teach a normal lesson with teachers, showing them how simple kinesthetic movement can enhance a lesson. Ms. Lowe-Barton has since been very active in both elementary and high school classrooms with teachers enthusiastically inviting her to help integrate more movement into students' daily activities, collaborating to meet one of the objectives of the Commit to Be Fit grant project in reducing student sit-time.





Upcoming Events and Announcements


- ❖ November 19: Commit to Be Fit Turkey Trot at Blue Rock track 9:00 AM
- ❖ November 19: RCHS Volleyball to States at VCU
- ❖ November 21: Career Day at RCHS
- ❖ November 22: 3rd Grade Market Day from 1:30 PM to 2:30 PM
- ❖ November 23-25: No School—Thanksgiving break
- ❖ December 5: Scholastic Bowl at RCHS 5:00 PM
- ❖ December 5: PTO meeting at RCES 6:30 PM
- ❖ December 5: End of Course SOL testing window opens at RCHS
- ❖ December 10: East Coast Pro Wrestling event at RCHS 7:00 PM

For upcoming athletic events visit the RCPS Sports Page:

Sports Page:

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



TURKEY  **TROT**

C2BF Participants will be entered into a drawing for:

Slow Cooker Gym Membership
Turkeys Apples

This Saturday, Nov. 19th at 9:00 AM, Blue Rock Middle School Track Loop

RCPS Vision Statement:

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