

The Division Digest

A newsletter from the Office of the Superintendent



*Building relationships
one student at a time.*

Superintendent's Message

Dear Staff,

It is amazing that we have finished 26 weeks of school as we enter the windy month of March. Perhaps all of the snow and ice is behind us and only spring temperatures are ahead, although I have heard that we are due a large snowstorm this month. That seems highly unlikely when I see the gorgeous yellows of daffodils and forsythias beginning to bloom.

The county was awarded a \$10 million Qualified School Construction Bond (QSCB) last week that will go toward the renovation of APS. This is a zero-interest loan, which is great news, and will save the county several million dollars in interest over the life of the loan. We anticipate that the renovation work will begin at APS this summer and will continue during the next school year. We applied for the QSCB in November and were among only 33 Virginia school projects that were approved. J.E. Jamerson & Sons will be doing the renovation work at APS. Bill Gillespie, the project manager, has met with staff at APS to gather input and will be meeting with parents at an upcoming PTO meeting to present plans.

The bathroom/lobby area of ACHS by the gym will also begin a facelift this month, using federal Stimulus funds. These bathrooms are not ADA equipped at present and are in need of major repairs in order to make them handicap accessible.

The House and Senate of the Virginia General Assembly have met and new bills are in the hands of Governor McDonnell, who has 30 days to sign, amend, or veto them. The final version of the budget is closer to the Senate option, which is more favorable for school divisions. We will be discussing the 2011-12 school division budget again at the March 10 and March 24 School Board meetings, which begin at 5:30 p.m. You are always invited to attend.

It was with sadness that I gave you the news of Mr. Bobby Mitchell's death on February 19. Mr. Mitchell was a long-time School Board member and will be greatly missed in our community.

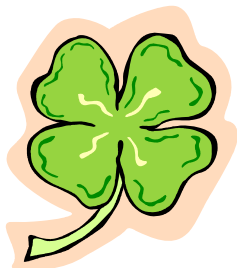
Virginia law requires that a vacant interim board seat be filled within 45 days. Those persons interested in applying may pick up an application at the School Board Office. Those applications must be completed and returned by March 15. The School Board will interview applicants March 24 and then choose a person to fill the interim seat until the election in November 2011.

Thank you for the work you do with the students in ACPS. As indicated below, our work is not easy, but our students are worth our efforts:

"Whatever is good to know is difficult to learn." (Greek proverb)

Dorinda G. Grasty, Ed. D.
Division Superintendent

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March School Board Meetings:

Interim School Board Meeting	Thursday, March 10, 5:30
Regular Business Meeting	Thursday, March 24, 5:30
Joint Meeting with Board of Supervisors	Tuesday, March 29, 5:30

Cafeteria Corner

Niki Kempton

The Great Potato Debate is ON!!!

On March 3rd and 4th, students and staff had the opportunity to vote on which blended potato they prefer – **original mashed** or **homemade smashed**. On March 10th and 11th, the vote will be for the favorite fry – cut-in-house, **oven-roasted wedges** or **original wedges**. The vote will help café staff determine what potato items will be offered in 2011-2012.

We are trying out a couple new entrees in March at AES, AMS & ACHS, vegetarian style – Herb & Three Cheese Potato Skins and the Bean & Cheese Burrito. Please be sure to let the café staff know what you think about these dishes and if you'd like them offered more regularly.

National School Breakfast Week is March 7-11! Show your support for “the most important meal of the day” by having breakfast at your school! AES, AMS & ACHS offer a wide variety of healthy and palate pleasing entrees to choose from, such as the Fruity Yogurt Cup and whole grain cereals.



Appomattox Recycles!

Over the past three months we have recycled 6000 pounds of paper and cardboard that would have otherwise ended up in the landfill. Thank you to all teachers and staff who have helped with the recycling program this year!



One potential goal of the recycling program is to collect enough paper and cardboard to be worth it to store and sell to Sonoco in Lynchburg, the profits from which would go toward increasing other recycling efforts, such as collecting plastic and cans. The program could potentially grow large enough to support other programs, such as student gardens and environmental speakers.

We have been looking for grant assistance to provide a storage vehicle for the recycling program. If you come across any recycling grants or have any ideas on how to improve our program, please email nakempton@appomattox.k12.va.us.

ACHS School News

Mike Myers, Principal

Marie Morgan – “Students Will Miss the Chip System”

Each year, in every school division, some teachers make the decision to retire. ACHS recently learned that one of our leaders on staff, Marie Morgan, has decided to make the 2010-2011 school year her last. We are happy that she wants to return and help out in some capacity with tutoring or remediation at ACHS.

Ms. Morgan began teaching 31 years ago beginning in 1980. After graduating from Longwood College she spent two years in Charlotte County and has spent the other 29 years in Appomattox. She was hired by Principal Donald Armentrout, and she said it was Mr. Lloyd Walton's kindness as superintendent that was the reason she decided to accept the position.

She has been a leader during her tenure at ACHS. I originally met her as the leader for the Memorial Garden Project when I first arrived at ACHS. Ms. Morgan has also served as the Junior Class sponsor, National Honor Society sponsor, SCA sponsor and countless other committees. She served as co-chair of the School Review Team. She was the Math Department Chair for several years, and even served as the Director of Student Activities for six years.

Ms. Morgan started utilizing a “chip system” in her classroom in 1995. She attended several workshops on Cooperative Learning Groups and she wanted to see if it was really true that students learn by teaching others. After using this system for over 15 years, she says the answer is “yes”, students really do learn by teaching others.

Here's how it works: Students are placed in groups of 3-4 and work together on all work except for quizzes and tests. She changes the groupings every three weeks. Groups are formed with a mixture of abilities and study habits in each group. Students earn chips throughout each period in many, different ways, such as, answering questions during lecture, getting group problems correct, scoring high group averages on graded work, making positive comments in class, coming in for tutoring before or after school, following class rules, having their homework on their desk when the tardy bell rings, and catching Ms. Morgan when she makes any type of mistake. At the end of each class period, the class counts the chips and Ms. Morgan writes their count on the board. At end of the week, the team with the highest number is crowned the winner. The biggest reward is their pride in being the winner, but Ms. Morgan gives the winning team members candy that they may eat in class.

According to Ms. Morgan, the chip system makes it easier to enforce rules, helps students understand better, provides variety in class during the long block of time, forces students to listen to Ms. Morgan, promotes positive peer pressure, and students don't leave class with wrong information.

Recently, a graduate came by to see Ms. Morgan after completing basic training and told her the letter she wrote him during basic meant the most to him of all the letters he got. Why? When he opened the letter, a blue chip fell out in his lap which made him remember his time spent in her mathematics classroom at ACHS. Many ACHS students will have fond memories of Ms. Morgan and her chip system. On behalf of the students Ms. Morgan, thank you for all you have done to make a difference at Appomattox County High School.

School News



APS News

To jump start Dr. Seuss Week, Appomattox Primary School hosted a special guest, the Wizard of Reading, Mr. Dean Allen. Mr. Allen combined magic and his love of reading to engage and immerse students in the life of Theodor Seuss Geisel.

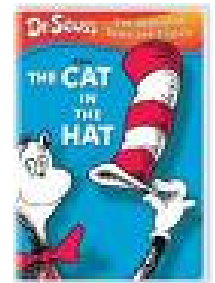
Students use their magic fingers to help create a new hat for the Cat in the Hat.



Mr. Dean Allen
The Wizard of Reading



A student helps create a new hat for the Cat in the Hat only to find that she created a multicolored hat instead of the traditional red and white.



Important Dates

March 8 and 9	SOL Writing Tests for Grades 5, 8 and 11
March 10	Interim School Board Meeting and Budget Work Session, 5:30 p.m.
March 24	Regular School Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
March 24	Staff Development Day
March 25	Parent Conference Day
March 23	End of Third 9 Weeks
March 28	Fourth 9 Weeks Begins
March 29	Joint Meeting of Board of Supervisors & the School Board, 5:30 p.m.
March 31	Report Cards Go Home
April 14	Interim School Board Meeting – 5:30 p.m.
April 18-22	Spring Break
April 28	Regular School Board meeting, 3:30 p.m. & Tour of Schools, 10:30 a.m.

AES MAGIC: A FIELD TRIP TO ACHS

What is better than a movie and popcorn? How about a trip to the Appomattox County High School auditorium for a Reward Activity. During the cold winter day, AES students' hearts were warmed with a magical movie for their positive contributions to AES! These students completed homework, obeyed school rules, filled buckets of kindness, and participated actively in class discussions—with cooperation that was once invisible and now visible!

Thank you, AES Students, for making our school a positive place for learning. ☺

Remedial and Special Education

Beth Haught, Supervisor



Summer School 2011 will be held July 11-29. Classes will be held at Appomattox Elementary School (for both APS and AES students) and at Appomattox County High School (for AMS and ACHS students).

Teacher hours will be 8:00 am – 12:00 pm with student hours being 8:30 – 11:30 am at AES and 8:30-11:45 am at ACHS. Positions available for all schools include summer school coordinators (1 for each level), teachers, and substitutes, with 1 instructional assistant and 1 library aide at AES only.

Applications will be accepted March 3-April 1. Information was posted on the division website as well as in each school on March 3rd. Applications should be returned by April 1 to building principals who will forward them to the School Board Office. Notification of selection will be provided as soon as possible following presentation to the School Board members for approval, which is anticipated to be in mid-April. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions. See you this summer!



Curriculum and Instruction

Annette Bennett, Director

K-12 Literacy Committee Divides to Conquer

Our K-12 Literacy Committee is made up of English and Language Arts Teachers, Reading Specialists and Media Specialists from each of our schools.

The overall goals of the committee are to design and evaluate a K-12 vertical curriculum that will promote literacy for all students and evaluate and distribute valuable resources to teachers in the area of literacy.

This year the committee has chosen three areas on which to specifically focus.

- 1) Book selection guidelines.
- 2) Vocabulary strategies.
- 3) Writing K-12 scope and sequence.

Sub-committees were formed for each of these areas and we have begun to meet to discuss these in depth. English teachers in our division can expect to be getting more information as the committees complete their tasks.

Thank you to the following teachers for your work on these projects:

With Sympathy



School Board Member, **Mr. R. W.**

"Bobby" Mitchell passed away

February 19, 2011. Mr. Mitchell

was a current and long-time

School Board Member for our division. He was elected in November 1997 and began his term in January of 1998. During his terms, he served as Vice

-Chairperson in 2001, 2002, 2008, and 2009. Mr. Mitchell was very active with the Virginia School

Boards Association (VSBA) and regularly attended many VSBA functions, including the Annual Legislative Conference, Governor's Conference, and the Regional Forums. Mr. Mitchell served as the

regional chairman for the Southern Region of VSBA for two years and also served on the VSBA Board of Directors. Mr. Mitchell was an avid supporter of our schools, our students, and our employees. His presence, commitment, and service will be greatly missed by the Appomattox County School Board and the community.

Writing Curriculum: Jean Doherty; Julie Bloomfield; Kelly Hall; Brenda Peck

Book Selection: Nancy Williams; Susan Williams; Janet Jackson; Katie Barber; Alison, Paulette; Judy Johnson

Vocabulary: Charlotte Land; Lara Peterson; Tracy Hoffman; Samantha Raitter

Bullying Incidents Dramatically Drop

Recent analysis of the Discipline, Crime, and Violence report that is made to the Virginia Department of Education shows a dramatic decrease in the number of bullying incidents that were reported over the last two years. According to this report, the incidents of bullying were 40% lower in 2009-10 than 2008-09.

The school division began a formal bullying prevention program known as Olweus several years ago to address the growing concerns on a local, state, and national level related to bullying behavior among our youth.

Congratulations to our staff for your work with the Olweus program and all related programs that have been used to support this goal.

Congratulations!! Employees of the Month



APS - Mary Mason

AES - Ashley Ferguson, Regina Moore,
Kelly Gilliland

AMS - Alice Matthews

ACHS - Peggy Staples

ACHS School News

Sports

Ron Carter, Athletic Director

Athletics at Appomattox County High School

The ACHS winter sport season was finalized last week when our boys and girls basketball teams competed in the Region B tournament. Both teams however, could not pull out a victory against two of the top rated teams in the state. The 2010-11 winter season did produce a championship as the wrestling team won the Southern Sectional tournament. This is the first team wrestling championship in school history. The spring sport season is in full swing and scrimmage games will be played the first two weeks in March with regular season games to begin March 14. Come and cheer on the Raiders this spring as they strive to represent our school and community as champions.

FFA Wins Area Mechanics Contest



Appomattox FFA hosted the 2011 Southside Area Agricultural Mechanics Career Development Event (CDE). Teams from across southside Virginia were eligible to compete.

Dylan Garrett, Tyler Wallen, and Corey Hodges participated in the Junior Agricultural Mechanics event. The individuals had to use a variety of precision measuring tools, troubleshoot small engines, identify over 100 hand tools, evaluate electrical equipment and circuits, calculate a bill of materials, perform various mechanical calculations and answer a variety of questions about mechanics. Garrett was the 3rd high individual, Wallen was the 2nd high individual

and Hodges placed 1st. The junior agricultural mechanics team placed first in the Southside Area Agricultural Mechanics CDE.

William Gauden, Rob Thomas, and Caleb Baker were on the Senior Agricultural Mechanics Team. Participants were required to operate surveying equipment, evaluate and select arc welding electrodes, make small engine repair selections, and answer a variety of questions pertaining to electricity, small engines, arc welding, and land measurement. Thomas was the 4th high individual. Baker was the 3rd high individual. Gauden placed first in the entire contest. The Senior Agricultural Mechanics Team placed first in the Southside Area Agricultural Mechanics CDE.

Both of these teams may represent Appomattox at the 2011 State FFA Convention Agricultural Mechanics CDE's in June.

The **Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY)** has awarded a \$2,000 Y-Street Mini-Grant to the Appomattox High School Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Through **Y Street**, the youth empowerment movement founded and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, students actively apply social-marketing techniques to promote positive lifestyle choices to reduce and prevent youth tobacco use and childhood obesity. Twenty-nine high school members attended a four hour training held at the high school in October. These students have been actively working to spread the word on the dangers of using tobacco products and the tactics used by tobacco companies to lure younger consumers to use their products. In January, the students hosted a dance at AMS to show

the younger students an alternative to using tobacco and to educate them on the marketing schemes directed at them. The \$2000 will be used by the club to help defray the cost of attending the FCCLA State Leadership Conference and Competition in Virginia Beach, VA from April 28 – May 1st where they will take part in STAR events, Power of One programs, educational seminars, and be recognized for their hard work on community service projects.



School News

AMS NEWS



On February 7, at two o'clock in the afternoon, you could hear the unusual hustle and bustle of feet moving about the middle school campus.

Students were moving to participate in their second club meeting of the year. This school year, students have the opportunity to participate in one of many clubs, including the Science Club, FFA, Builders Club, Scrapbooking, Volleyball, Wii Club, and Crochet Club, to name a few. Students say they enjoy going to clubs because they get to see friends they do not normally see, participate in activities that are fun, and work with different teachers.

Club Day



Human Resources

Bruce McMillan, Director

For anyone considering retirement, here is what VRS says about the retirement timeline. They say that it normally takes about 90 days for the employee to receive their first retirement check from the time they (VRS) receive all of the paperwork. As an example, if VRS receives all of the paperwork by May 1st, the employee could expect to receive their first retirement check on or about August 1st. If you have any questions, please let Tracy or me know as soon as possible.

VRS website - Many of you have asked recently how to check on your specific VRS retirement information. Registering for the *my* VRS website – the website is varetire.org. Once there, look for the “*my* VRS Access” drop down box (right under the VRS Logo in the upper left). Select the “member log-in or register” link and follow the step-by-step instructions.

Once you register, you will be able to: 1. Create and save estimates to view in their *my*VRS account. 2. View your own information, including service and compensation reported to VRS. 3. Check the status of applications such as service retirement, purchase of prior service credit and refunds, and 4. View employer contact and coverage information.

To create your online account, please be prepared to provide the following information: Social Security number, Last name, Date of birth, the name of your first VRS employer .

2011 License Renewals – if your license expires this June and you have not already met with your principal and turned in your renewal paperwork to me, please keep working on it. Remember, we have a local technology requirement that must be met before I can process the paperwork.

If your license expires next year (June 2012), please begin thinking about how you will earn the 180 points to renew. For those of you thinking about taking a college class this summer, a 3 credit-hour college class counts as 90 recertification points. If you have a Master’s Degree, you can take just about any college class. If you do not have a Master’s Degree, you should take a college class in your area of endorsement. If you are not sure if a class meets the requirement, feel free to call me or email me.

Technology

Brette Arbogast, Director of Technology and CTE

Your Data is Secure

Your technology department has completed the DR Site (Data Recovery Site). What does this mean? If your technology center located in the front of the high school goes down, your files are mirrored on another virtual center located at the School Board Office. One of the technicians will need to travel to the School Board Office and initiate the virtual servers to bring everything back online. We currently have a specific replication schedule for each server. For example, the PowerSchool server is replicated every hour. This means that the maximum data loss would be one hour, depending on when the center goes down.

Many of you have heard of the cloud technology; Appomattox County Public Schools has its own. This has no recurring costs and allows less time of the technical department to recuperate after an outage.

If you have begun to facilitate the use of your “My Site” on SharePoint, you will be using the cloud technology, which will allow you to retrieve your data from anywhere in the world that has internet access. If you are still saving your documents to “My Documents,” then this will allow you to retrieve your data anywhere within the school division; but the use of SharePoint opens this up to allow you to upload and download your data from anywhere. If you are one of the users that insist on using mapped drives, we encourage you to contact one of your ITRT’s and begin the migration to use the SharePoint portal.

The virtualization technology that we have adopted is VMWARE. We are running a VEEAM data recovery console within VMWARE that allows us to facilitate this backup solution. In conclusion, rest assured that your data is secure.

Thin-Clients

Your technology department has begun to place thin-client computers throughout the division. This solution requires less maintenance and overall costs for hardware and support, while allowing the use of old servers that were replaced by the virtualization implementation. The thin-clients will not allow high graphical programs, but will enable teachers to use an internet ready machine to perform basic functions such as AR tests, etc.

New Phone System at School Board Office

Some of you may have heard the auto attendant if you have called the School Board Office or APS in the past month. This new system is part of the VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol). The new phone system has progressively started to replace the old system, and we hope to start the new implementation at ACHS by the end of March. The new phone system has already replaced the old phone system at the Technology Center, Maintenance Building, Alternative Ed, and APS. The technology department hopes to complete the roll out for the entire county by the end of June. This system uses our existing computer network which reduces the total costs of ownership by eliminating paid technical support to a local phone provider. The new phone system will allow the user more integration with our existing network and even allow you to eventually receive your voice mail messages through your e-mail.



Swipe Technology

The technology department has begun to investigate a new technology implementation to help in the attendance tracking at ACHS. During this evaluation phase, the county will not encounter any costs, nor make any commitments until the usefulness and effectiveness of this new system has been tested. We are the first division in the state to use any system like this and hope that we can experience the same effectiveness that so many school divisions in Maryland have received. The company, Swipe K12 School Solutions, is based out of Maryland and is currently talking with Northern Virginia schools about the effectiveness of this program to increase student attendance and time in class. As with any new technology, it must be evaluated and proven before we will accept its implementation. However, due to ACPS being the first, we will try the system out in a full roll-out period of three weeks before we can make a true evaluation of its effectiveness. The program will roll the data directly into our existing PowerSchool. Please feel free to send your comments or suggestions to the Director of Technology, Brette Arbogast, on this topic. The link to view more information and see actual videos using this technology is <http://www.swipek12.com/Swipek12/>.

Maintenance Department

Timmy Garrett, Supervisor

The Maintenance Department is in the process of sprucing up for spring time and with that comes preventive maintenance on all of our cooling systems. Hopefully, they will once again keep our students and staff cool. Our lawn equipment is getting pulled out and serviced for another grass cutting season.

A long list of plans for summer projects includes: painting and plumbing repairs, summer restoration of class rooms, and upkeep of playground equipment throughout our schools. Mr. Arbogast also usually has a long list of technology wiring/installation requests for us to complete.



Transportation

Matt Lair, Supervisor

Bus Driver Qualifications



Many people have asked what kind of training and qualifications does someone need to become a bus driver. It's not like it used to be in the good old days when Mr. Paulette would put a prospective driver behind the wheel to drive a few miles. Today every prospective driver must be 21 years of age or more, have no felonies on their criminal history, and have not had two moving traffic violations per year or a DUI in the last five years. In addition, they must take a drug test, pass a physical, pass a T.B. test and provide two references that state that they are of good moral character. Every bus driver in the state of Virginia is on a random list to be drug and alcohol tested at any time. After all of this, then they must be fingerprinted, be investigated by Social Services and then the training starts.

The most important lesson that any driver must learn is section 2.1 of the Regulations Governing Pupil Transportation which states; "The greatest care shall be exercised at all times in the transportation of school children."

Every bus driver in the state of Virginia must be trained a minimum of 48 hours which in our case is non-paid. First, they must go to DMV and pass written tests to get a CDL learner's permit. The training consists of 24 hours of lectures and videos, 12 hours driving an empty bus with an instructor and 12 hours driving a loaded bus with an instructor. The hardest part of this training to get a commercial driver's license is preparing for and passing the pre-trip and driving test with DMV. When drivers go to DMV to take their pre-trip and road test, they must be able to name and tell the significance of each part of the bus inside and outside. This includes crawling under the bus and pointing out various things. Then they take the road test. During the pre-trip inspection part of the exam they can't leave out any of the parts of the bus. When they take the road test, they can't make any mistakes. If they leave out one part of the bus, don't explain the significance of a part or make one mistake on the road test, they are disqualified.

After they have passed their CDL test, they are somewhat ready to start driving if they have passed the "Matt and Velma" test. They have all the skills to drive but they don't know any of the routes and the stops. We try to never put a new driver on a route that they haven't ridden, but that is not always the case. Sometimes we hand them a map with the route highlighted, the address of the first pickup and the time of the first pickup. As you may have imagined by now, all of this can be overwhelming to new drivers. Our children are safer when the regular driver is on the bus because they know the stops, they know who will normally meet the student, and where they might possibly leave a student if no one is home and this comes with experience that a new driver doesn't have but will learn over time.

Business and Operations

Steve Edwards, Director

I was surprised to learn the budget only occupies about one third of my life, then I came to realize that I am somehow responsible for a variety of crisis, and have the opportunity – as part of the division's crisis management plan – to go to the scene of any wrecks, floods, threats and/or tornado sightings. Oh! The things you fail to learn in the interview process!

Anyway, I'm starting to settle in and glad that the Virginia General Assembly has agreed on a compromise budget that is slightly more favorable to K12 education than the Governor's initial proposal. I should be getting the official allocations from the Department of Education any day now and begin the serious budget preparations for FY 12.

The PPEA Committee, composed of representatives of the School Board and County Board of Supervisors, recently heard the recommendations of Mr. Bill Gillespie, Project Manager, and recommended to the School Board that we pursue a proposal submitted by J.E. Jamerson and Sons for the APS renovation and addition. The funding for this project **does not** come from operating funds.

In other construction related notes, the ADA required renovations to the bathrooms at ACHS actually began this past weekend with the removal of a tree and satellite dish. Real "bricks and mortar" type work should begin around the third week in March.