

Kizner's Corner **A message from Dr. Scott Kizner, Superintendent of Schools**

College for All?

Every once in awhile I am asked why I believe we should prepare all students to go on to college. Often what I want to ask in return is one of two questions: "Did you go to college?" and "If you had children would you expect them to go to college?" I avoid those questions because they may come across as defensive and they don't provide any reasons for why we are working towards the goal of every student obtaining a high school diploma that prepares them for college acceptance. A standard or, preferably, an advanced diploma will be what our students will pursue with very few exceptions. An advanced diploma requires greater proficiency in math, science, foreign language and career technical education than does a standard diploma. It should be clearly stated that a standard diploma opens the door to many college opportunities as well.

The real reason Harrisonburg City Schools is working towards the goal of discontinuing diplomas that have limited post-high school value (such as modified standard diploma, certificate of accomplishment or completion, etc.) is that the options after high school then become restricted. I realize that someone reading this is saying they know folks with just a high school diploma or GED diploma who are making good money doing And I congratulate those folks. But from talking to business and trade leaders I can confirm that many skilled jobs such as electricians, computer programmers and technicians, mechanics of small and large machinery, diagnostic medical technicians, etc. require formal coursework after high school.

Let's look at the facts and then we can draw our own conclusions. According to the *Monthly Labor Review* (January 2012) published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the fastest growing fields with the highest salaries (Occupational Employment Projections to 2020) will require a college degree. Greatest growth will occur in fields that require a Master's, Doctoral, or Professional degree. The median annual wage in 2010 for high school graduates was \$20,070 compared to a median annual range for college degree workers of \$61,590-87,500. (Of course, it would be great if teachers - who help students become successful college graduates - would get compensated somewhere in that range but we will save that discussion for a future article.) My last piece of data to help answer the question "College for All?" comes from the September 2012 unemployment figures. Those with a high school diploma or less had an unemployment rate of 8.7-11.3% and those with a 2-year or higher college degree had an unemployment rate of 4.1-6.5%.

It is clear that the higher your education level the greater your chances of being employed and of receiving better compensation. We know not all of our graduates will continue their education at the college level. That is a decision left to the student and their family. It is our job as a school system not to predetermine that decision but to provide our students the foundation to consider multiple pathways as a young adult. The importance and value of a Harrisonburg High School diploma will be strengthened by our division goals of having all entering 8th graders complete a college and career readiness plan that will be reviewed at minimum once a year and of having all of our students work towards a degree that offers college as a real option. These are important goals because truly the diploma becomes a passport to a brighter future and the journey to independence and self-sufficiency.

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What's Happening

- Oct. 23: Parent Education Workshop (see below) – HHS – 6:00 pm
- Oct. 29: Schools Closed for Staff Development Day
- Nov. 5: Parent Teacher Conference Day
- Nov. 5: Community Resource Fair (see below) – SKMS – 11:30 am - 6:30 pm
- Nov. 6: Schools Closed for Election Day
- Nov. 6: School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm
- Nov. 13: Early Release Day
- Nov. 20: School Board Work Session – School Board Office – 5:30 pm
- Nov. 21-23: Schools Closed for Thanksgiving

Workshop: How to Help Your Student Survive and Thrive in High School

DATE: Tuesday, October 23rd

TIME: 6-7pm

LOCATION: Harrisonburg High School Auditorium

Presentations will address areas pertaining to how parents can help their students with academic/post-secondary, personal/social, and emotional success in high school.

Community Resource Fair

DATE: Monday, November 5th

TIME: 11:30am - 6:30pm (during parent/teacher conferences)

LOCATION: Skyline Middle School

All HCPS parents are invited to attend this fair to learn more about local agencies and their services.

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Technology
News



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Parent Portal Update

Letters have been mailed out to parents of students in middle and high school with the information they will need to log in and view their children's grades. If you did not receive a letter or need help getting set up, contact Mike Cox - Phone: 540-437-3328, Email: mcox@harrisonburg.k12.va.us or Shannon Secrist - Phone: 540-437-3339, Email: ssecrist@harrisonburg.k12.va.us. Middle and high school students will also have access to their grades online. It can be of great benefit for students to be able to monitor their progress. Elementary parents will be provided access during second semester.

Let Us Know What You Think

Parents, students, and teachers are invited to share their opinions about the use of technology in education by participating in SpeakUp 2012. This is a nationwide survey that asks students about how they use - and how they would like to use - technology for learning. Teachers and administrators will be asked which tools they use, what they want to use, and how prepared they are for technology use; parents will be asked how they feel about the role of technology in their children's lives and learning.

To participate, visit this link: <http://www.speakup4schools.org/speakup2012/>

Select your or your child's school and use the secret word "hcps". The results of the survey will help us plan for technology in the future.

Looking for a part time job working with kids?

The Harrisonburg Police Department is currently seeking two Crossing Guards for Waterman and Keister Elementary Schools. All training will be provided. If you are interested, contact Lt. Rod Pollard at Rgpollard@ci.harrisonburg.va.us.



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Keister Elementary

Beginning with Motivation in Mind

Every morning is an exciting one as students arrive at W.H. Keister ready to learn. And it is clear, on any given day, that there is variation in student motivation, as learners participate and engage in the “instruction of the day.” This year at Keister, we are carefully considering the challenges of student motivation and how we can explicitly plan with motivation in mind.



During the spring of 2012, the Keister staff had an opportunity to work alongside two psychology professors and founders of the Motivation Research Institute at JMU to explore the topic of motivation. Small focus groups met together with Kenn Barron and Chris Hulleman to share perceptions related to the motivation of students, the barriers to student motivation and the strategies that are effective for improving motivation. Findings from these meetings are being shared this fall as we review the research related to motivation, consider motivation theory and develop a common language related to the topic. During a staff development session last Monday, teachers were introduced to the formula, $M = E(\text{expectancy}) * V(\text{value}) - C(\text{cost})$, as a way to simplify and discuss the complex construct of motivation. We are starting to talk about student motivation in these terms: What is a student’s expectancy that they can complete an assigned task? Does a student value a given task or learning event? Is it important to them? Do they view it as fun or worthwhile? What is the cost of participating or completing a given task? What are the obstacles or barriers that would prevent a student from engaging? By examining more deeply these roots, the Keister staff will be able to more explicitly plan for instruction with motivation in mind.

As always, the goal at Keister is that every student will learn to high expectations! We continue to create a climate for learning where students are supported as they take risks, develop confidence in their abilities, understand that learning is tied to effort, and where student interests and ideas are given great consideration. It is in this regard that we continue to plan instruction with “motivation in mind.”

Thomas Harrison Middle Bright Spots

As we close the first quarter of the 2012-13 school year and reflect on the first nine weeks, we are extremely proud of the progress our students are making.

The mission of Thomas Harrison Middle School is to enable every student to acquire the knowledge, motivation and skills necessary to become a productive, healthy, lifelong learner. It is our goal to provide challenging educational experiences in a safe, enriching environment and to celebrate the unique qualities each participant brings to the educational process.

All students can learn! That is the place to begin, and the staff at THMS has a responsibility to provide such opportunities in a way that engages the very heart, mind and soul of every learner. In an increasingly competitive global community, it is not enough for students to acquire subject-level mastery alone. Skills such as creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, communication and analytical thinking are necessary for all levels of success, from entry-level jobs to engineering and technical fields. Creating a love of lifelong learning and helping others to direct their own learning path will result in all students thriving and excelling now and in the future.

Focusing on the three R's (not the traditional reading, writing and arithmetic but Rigor, Relevance and Relationships), we are helping each of our students grow in new ways. From the new administrative team down to each and every classroom we have established high expectations for students to be appropriately challenged with rigorous instruction. Helping students to understand the relevance of their learning through applications to real life situations brings deeper meaning and understanding for the learning process; most importantly, building positive relationships helps students to feel safe and comfortable in a positive learning environment.

A few Bright Spots follow as examples of the excellent learning opportunities at THMS:

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On October 4, more than 500 students participated in “Walk and Roll” To School Day where students were encouraged to celebrate an awareness of the importance of ongoing healthy physical activity by walking or riding bikes to school. Students who rode the buses were encouraged to participate by walking two laps around the track when they arrived at school.



On October 3 and 4 all sixth grade students participated in a field trip to Sandy Bottom and Riven Rock parks to explore macroinvertebrates, hydrology, water samples and habitats of the areas as a part of their science unit.

Ms. Thompson’s 8th grade art classes completed a project called Gorilla Art in which they created and designed various works of art to be displayed throughout the school. Each group had to create a proposal and develop a Powerpoint to present their proposals to Mr. Vale for approval. The proposals had to include design, material costs, safety, intended message or purpose along with a prototype.



The THMS STEM Explorations Academy had an exciting start to the school year. Students used an Engineering Design Process to design and build hovercrafts. Then, students used those hovercrafts to learn about force and motion as well as having some fun challenging each other in speed, control and direction races in the hallway.

Smithland Elementary Partners with JMU Pre-service Teachers

For the 2012-2013 school year, Smithland Elementary School is partnering with James Madison University and pre-service teachers in the R.O.T.E. (Raising an Organization of Trained Educators) Program. The main purpose of R.O.T.E. is to raise educators who are trained to be competent and well-rounded professionals ready to take on the diverse classrooms of the 21st century.

The R.O.T.E. program is unique in the fact that a cohort of students stays with the same school for all four years of their schooling. In this way, they build positive relationships with the staff members, and the staff can see them as part of the school community. The students also job shadow in many areas of the school so they can better understand all the different components that make a school effective.



Hannah Prestiy is working with a group of Kindergarten students at Smithland Elementary

Smithland began implementation of the R.O.T.E. program in early October. There are nine education majors who are job shadowing different positions and forming positive relationships with Smithland staff members.

Hannah Prestiy is one of the pre-service teachers in the program. When asked why she wanted to participate in the program, she responded, “I wanted more experiences in the schools and wanted to bring these extra opportunities to a job interview.”

Stone Spring Elementary

Students Can't Get Enough of STEM!



Third and fourth grade students at Stone Spring Elementary recently completed their first i-STEM units. The units integrate science, technology, engineering, and math and align with the Virginia Standards of Learning. Throughout the units, students were involved in a process of planning, designing, creating, testing, and sharing.

Third graders participated in a lesson titled "Build a Beak." Students researched different types of birds and their beaks. They paid special attention to the differences between the beaks of carnivores, omnivores, and herbivores. Each student then designed and created a beak for an injured bird that would pick up its prey. Students shared their beaks as well as whether or not their bird would have survived based on how much food it was able to pick up!

Fourth graders researched different types of "wacky" weather, such as thunderstorms, tornadoes, and hurricanes. WHSV TV-3 meteorologist Josh Knight visited fourth graders to explain his career, as well as how he uses weather instruments each day to predict the weather. Students were given the challenge of working in groups to design and build structures that would withstand a hurricane, tornado, or thunderstorm. At the end of the week, each group went outdoors to test their structures against a simulated version of their storm!



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