

VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1



Director's Note: Dr. Nicole DeVries, Ph.D.

It is hard to believe that the holiday season is over and we are looking onward to the remainder of the school year. It has been a pleasure taking time this first semester to understand the intricacies of the amazing work accomplished by the gifted resource teachers in support of gifted education in Virginia Beach. I am inspired by their dedication to gifted learners in our school division. The *Gifted and Talented Bulletin* is designed to highlight information from the VBCPS gifted program that is of interest to parents, including parent/community involvement, learning opportunities for gifted and talented students across Virginia Beach City Public Schools, and links to additional resources for parents of gifted learners. This issue of the *Gifted and Talented Bulletin* features a spotlight on various school gifted programs in action, information on a new series of advocacy workshops offered for gifted learners and educators, as well as information on other citywide gifted program events. The gifted administrators in The Office of K-12 and Gifted Programs appreciate you taking the time to read the latest information for gifted education in Virginia Beach. Thank you for your ongoing support!



Spotlight on Gifted: Landstown Elementary School

Contributed by: Ms. Kim Biemann, Gifted Resource Teacher

Over the past three years, students at Landstown Elementary have researched, planned, and built outdoor learning spaces related to sustainability. Using the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model (in which students are given a real-life challenge they must creatively solve), students have created the Earthtastic Sustainability Lab and the Pollinator Paradise Garden using grant funds. Now that construction is complete, students have been finding ways to use the vegetables grown in the Earthtastic veggie beds, and the honey produced by the bees in the Pollinator Paradise hive. This year, the Earthtastic Garden and Culinary Club is working with the school district's scratch chef, Kip Poole, during its after school meetings.

VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1



Spotlight on Gifted: Salem Elementary School

Contributed by: Ms. Melissa Ross, Gifted Resource Teacher

Students in Mrs. Lacerna and Mrs. Raftery's cluster classes recently accepted the challenge to participate in Mystery State activities. These risk takers embraced a series of lessons intended to strengthen mapping and questioning skills in order to deduce the home state of another class in the United States who they met with using Google Meet. Prior to the culminating activity, students were introduced to the concept of creating strategic questions based on major map features to eliminate states efficiently and ultimately locate the home state of their opponent class. Cluster Teacher, Mrs. Lacerna, suggested the Mystery State activity during a gifted collaboration meeting. After an initial introduction, students engaged in lessons focused on mapping skills and collaborated during practice meets where they set goals for collaboration and communication, practiced assigned jobs, and used their questioning skills to arrive at an efficient answer.

Students in Mrs. Lacerna and Mrs. Raftery's cluster classes recently accepted the challenge to participate in Mystery State activities. These risk takers embraced a series of lessons intended to strengthen mapping and questioning skills in order to deduce the home state of another class in the United States who they

Spotlight on Gifted: Princess Anne Middle School

Contributed by: Mrs. Cathy Smith, Gifted Resource Teacher



An aerospace engineer designs spacecraft probes and interstellar vehicles while working alongside astrophysicists who study the physics and chemistry of objects in space. Pulling from the Parallel Curriculum Model's Curriculum of Practice, Mrs. Zajac designed an activity where her eighth grade science students used the tools, thinking skills, and problem-solving mindset of an aerospace engineer. Students first brainstormed why a scientist would want to land on a comet—what could a scientist possibly learn from it? What barriers are in the way? What mathematical calculations

need to be made? Students also wondered if a comet has enough gravity for a lander to stay put—and if not, what do you do then? Students then researched the purpose of the Rosetta Mission and its lander, *Phila*, and they learned how to “fly” the Rosetta space probe, by deploying the lander and landing it in a location that was relatively free of crevasses and jagged outcroppings. They also collected and recorded data, and transmuted the data back to Earth. The students had to work together to collect data while not being destroyed by chunks of a comet!



VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1



Spotlight on Gifted: Cox High School

Contributed by: Mrs. Kay Roberson, Gifted Resource Teacher

Gifted students in Mrs. Molodow's English 11 Honors classes are challenged to "think like a professional" as they create a "Family Heritage" film. The targeted gifted benchmark for this project allows students to compare their ideas, abilities and goals to those of practicing professionals. This project culminated in an essay that students were assigned to describe their family history through a series of reflections and interviews with their family members. Students were to identify key ideas from their essay to convey a beginning, middle and end to their family heritage story, as well as a take away message for their audience. Laura Dember (LMS), David Pughand (ITS), and Kay Roberson (GRT) worked collaboratively to provide students with in-depth instruction on how to use tools of the discipline such as Storyboards, wevideo.com, and the citation tool, Easybib in order to achieve a professional quality final product. Students were encouraged to consider questions adapted from the Parallel Curriculum Model of Identity and Practice. The overall goal centered on challenging gifted students to create films comparable to those found in the professional world of film and video production.

VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1

Advocacy Workshops



The Office of Gifted Education recently developed a new workshop, "Advocacy without Alienation: Amplifying Student Voice" as a tool for gifted students and teachers of the gifted. The workshop is grounded in the VBCPS 2015-2020 *Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted*, the *Compass to 2020 Strategic Plan*, and the Strategic Action Agenda for 2018-2019. The workshop aligns with the division's focus on Transformational Learning by fostering student agency through promoting and supporting students as they regularly self-assess and reflect on their learning process and develop and strengthen self-advocacy skills. Deb Douglas, author of *The Gifted Kids Guide to Self-Advocacy*, defines self-advocacy as a four-step process: Understanding Your Rights, Understanding Yourself, Knowing Your Options, and Knowing & Connecting With Partners in Advocacy. Likewise, advocacy is the process of recognizing and meeting the needs specific to one's learning ability without compromising the dignity of one's self or others. Overall, the workshops served as resources to help students understand themselves in a deeper way, by identifying their strengths and potential areas of growth.

SENG Parent Group



The Office of Gifted Education offered six parent workshops during late-September and October highlighting the innovative work from the 2018 *Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted* (SENG) conference that staff members attended last summer in San Diego, California. As a result of the collaborative work from the SENG Model Parent Group Facilitator training, a parent group was formed. This group employed the SENG model and was formed to serve as a vehicle for a small group of fifteen-twenty parents to come together and discuss social emotional issues that impact gifted children. Parents participated in a six-week novel study with a variety of topics, including communication, motivation, perfectionism, and family relationships. The sessions were designed for parents of elementary identified gifted students who attend Emerging Scholar Initiative (ESI) schools. For more information, please contact the Office of Gifted Programs: (757) 263-1188.

VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1

Five-Year Plan Subcommittee: Development of the Local Plan for Gifted Education

The Office of K-12 and Gifted Programs is preparing to develop the *2020-2025 Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted*. Once developed, the five-year plan will be submitted to the School Board of the City of Virginia Beach and the Virginia Department of Education for approval. This plan will guide the work of the Office of Gifted Education through the year 2025. Parents of gifted students are invited to participate in one of the subcommittees that encompass each area of the Local Plan. Three meetings will be required of subcommittee members between February/March, June and December 2019. Any parent of a currently identified gifted student who is interested in serving on a Local Plan subcommittee should contact Jenny Shires in the Department of Teaching and Learning by Feb. 15, or by phone at 263-1070 or via email at jsshires@vbschools.com

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for the Gifted News

The Community Advisory Committee for the Gifted (CAC) meetings during for the 2018-2019 school year began on September 10, 2018. In addition to establishing school site visit schedules, CAC members participated in round-table discussions with neighboring school division gifted education representatives on October 15, 2018, in order to share best practices for serving gifted students. As 2019 begins, CAC members will continue to conduct site visits to various schools in order to see various elements of the gifted program in action. Interested parents can apply to serve on the Gifted CAC and must be the parent of an identified gifted student and a resident of their child's school zone regardless of which feeder school their student currently attends. Interested persons should call Davida Lawrence-Griffin (263-1188) to receive an application via email. In general, meetings are held once a month on Mondays (no meeting in December) from 6:30 - 8:00 PM. Regular meeting attendance is an expectation and the appointment is a three-year commitment.



VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1



NAGC Conference

The Office of K-12 & Gifted Programs recently sent a leadership team to attend the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Nearly 3,000 individuals from around the world attended the NAGC 65th Annual Convention (NAGC'18). During this conference, gifted educators, administrators, and specialists networked and engaged with gifted education leaders, parents, teachers and administrators to create ideas, share experiences, discuss policy, and research based best practices for gifted education. The keynote speaker, Dr. Michelle Borba, shared her profound expertise and insights from her work on building empathy and resilience in order to strengthen all students' social/emotional development. The big idea's from Dr. Borba's session highlighted her seminal texts, *End Peer Cruelty*, *Build Empathy* and *Unselfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About Me World*. Overall, representatives from the Office of K-12 & Gifted Programs Leadership Team were able to attend a multitude of outstanding sessions at the conference which will assist the leadership team in providing high-quality professional learning for gifted resource teachers, K-12.

VBCPS Gifted and Talented Bulletin

Volume 18, Issue 1

Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Dr. Aaron C. Spence, Superintendent

2512 George Mason Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0038

Produced by the Department of Media and Communications for the Department of Teaching and Learning.

For further information please call (757) 263-1070.

Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy

Virginia Beach City Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation/gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition, disability, marital status, age, genetic information or veteran status in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. School Board policies and regulations (including, but not limited to, Policies 2-33, 4-4, 4-6, 4-43, 5-7, 5-19, 5-20, 5-44, 6-7, 7-48, 7-49, 7-57 and Regulations 4-4.1, 4-4.2, 4-6.1, 4-43.1, 5-44.1, 7-11.1, 7-17.1 and 7-57.1) provide equal access to courses, programs, counseling services, physical education and athletic, vocational education, instructional materials and extracurricular activities. To seek resolution of grievances resulting from alleged discrimination or to report violations of these policies, please contact the Title VI/Title IX Coordinator/Director of Student Leadership at (757) 263-2020, 1413 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23451 (for student complaints) or the Section 504/ADA Coordinator/Chief Human Resources Officer at (757) 263-1133, 2512 George Mason Drive, Municipal Center, Building 6, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456 (for employees or other citizens). Concerns about the application of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act should be addressed to the Section 504 Coordinator/Executive Director of Student Support Services at (757) 263-1980, 2512 George Mason Drive, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456 or the Section 504 Coordinator at the student's school. For students who are eligible or suspected of being eligible for special education or related services under IDEA, please contact the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children at (757) 263-2400, Laskin Road Annex, 1413 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23451.

Alternative formats of this publication which may include taped, Braille, or large print materials are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. Call or write The Department of Teaching and Learning, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2512 George Mason Drive, P.O. Box 6038, Virginia Beach, VA 23456-0038. Telephone 263-1405 (voice); fax 263-1424; 263-1240 (TDD) or email: Nicole.DeVries@vbschools.com
www.vbschools.com