



The Buzz

DECEMBER
2013



Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

Message from the Superintendent

Public education: the pride of our community and our nation

I recently discovered a new book by one of my favorite education authors, Diane Ravitch. The title of her new book is *Reign of Error: the Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*.

I discovered Ravitch's writing in 2010 when her previous book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, was recommended to me by a fellow educator. Ravitch served from 1991-93 as assistant secretary of education during the administration of President George H.W. Bush. She was later appointed to serve on the National Assessment Governing Board by President Bill Clinton.

In *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, the author recants her previous support for high-stakes testing, test-based accountability, competition, and school choice. She concludes by calling for a "strong and vibrant public education system . . . [that is] once again the pride of our nation."

In her latest book, she proclaims, "Public education is not broken. It is not failing or declining. The diagnosis is wrong, and the solutions of the corporate reformers are wrong." Ravitch dedicates the last several chapters of her new book to outlining solutions that would really make a difference-- things like

high-quality early childhood education for all children, smaller classes for young children, and wrap-around services for children of poverty. These things are harder than blaming teachers and take longer to show results than test-prep strategies that may raise test scores without impacting long-term student achievement.

Like Ravitch, I am skeptical of "pedagogical fads, enthusiasms, and movements." Over the years, I have fallen for a few educational fads myself, but in the end, these movements don't make much difference for children; it is the passion, dedication, and commitment of teachers and other educators that make a lasting difference.

If you have grown weary of criticisms of our profession, I encourage you to find some time to read one or both of the books mentioned above. Ravitch will give you a renewed

sense of purpose in public education. Yes, governmental mandates must still be implemented, but I urge you to cling to your initiative, your craft, and your enthusiasm. You, just like other professionals, need to feel "competent, effective, and admired."

My faith in public education is not based on reform initiatives or accountability measures. My faith in public education is based on the calling of great teachers who provide the very best education that they can provide to their students every day, not because someone is monitoring them, but because it is the right thing to do.

Thank you for the passion that you bring to your profession every day. I hope that you and your family have a Merry Christmas and a wonderful holiday season!

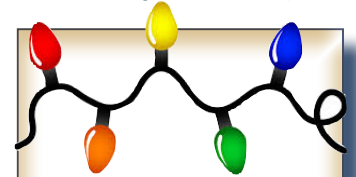


Congratulations to Sophie Anderson!

Plantation Wildlife Arts Festival (PWAF)
Poster Contest Winner

See complete story on Page 2

The Thomas County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin, sex, or disability.



CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Dec. 5 - District-Wide Spelling Bee, BOE Auditorium, 4:30 p.m.

Dec. 10 - Board of Education Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Dec. 12 - 6th Grade Band Christmas Concert, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 14 - Shop With a Yellow Jacket (SWAY-J), 9:00 a.m.

Dec. 15 - 7th/8th Grade Band Christmas Concert

Dec. 16 - TCCHS Chorus Winter Concert

Dec. 20 - Jan. 3 - Winter Holiday

Jan. 6 - Teacher Workday/
Student Holiday

Jan. 20 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year!

Please visit the school websites for a complete calendar of events.

The Buzz is a monthly publication of the Thomas County Schools. Send suggestions or comments to Melanie Hester, 200 North Pinetree Blvd., Thomasville, GA 31792; 229.225-4380, ext. 115; mhester@thomas.k12.ga.us. *The Buzz* is available online at www.thomas.k12.ga.us, News and Events tab.

TCMS and TCUE Will Hold Techno Expo on January 6, 2014

On January 6, 2014, Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School will hold a “Techno Expo.” During the morning on this professional learning day, teachers will attend sessions in order to learn how to integrate more technology into their classrooms. The sessions will be conducted by teachers and other staff members from the school.

Some sessions will include information on how to use Edmodo, post instructional videos to teacher webpages, design polls using Poll Everywhere, create QR codes, and how to find information using GALILEO.

Mr. Melvin Hugans, assistant principal, is organizing this event. “We feel that the more teachers use technology in their classrooms, the more engaged the students will be. This event will allow teachers in our school to share their knowledge of different technology tools so that other teachers will be able to use them as well,” says Hugans.

The idea for the Techno Expo came after a team of teachers from TCUE/TCMS visited Booth Middle School in Fayette County. The school has

a Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) policy. Students in the school are encouraged to bring their own devices (phones, tablets, etc.) to use when the teacher designs instruction to include technology.

Members of the team that traveled to Fayette County included Robin Cartright, Lindsay Thompson, Kevin Keve, Danna Golden, and Kathie Craven. Also in attendance were Media Specialist Erin Rehberg, Instructional Technologist Matt Casper, and administrators, Dr. Scott James and Melvin Hugans.

Cartright said, “I enjoyed watching the students become engaged in the learning process through the use of their own technology. Even the students who did not have a device to use were actively working with a partner who did have a device to use. While all activities we saw could have been completed without the use of technology, it was obvious that the use of technology was a motivator in completing the assigned tasks.”

The teachers and staff members that went on the trip will share ideas with other teachers at TCUE/TCMS at the Techno Expo.



Winner Sophie Anderson (left) is supported by Jocelyn Rivard, Thomas County Central High School’s art teacher.

Anderson Wins Best in Show for PWAFA Artwork

TCCHS Sophomore Sophie Anderson won “Best in Show” for her artwork in the Junior Wildlife Arts Contest for 6th-12th graders, a part of the Plantation Wildlife Arts Festival. Her “Wild Pheasant” in watercolor, ink, and acrylic, was chosen among 350 entries from all of the local schools. Of the 50 entries accepted for exhibition, TCCHS had eight works selected this year.

Sophie received a \$1,000 scholarship toward a one-week summer intensive art camp

at the Savannah College of Art and Design. In addition, TCCHS’s art program received \$500 for having the “Best in Show” winner.

Artwork had to be based on the “Game Birds in Flight” theme. First Place for the 11th to 12th grade division went to TCCHS Senior Lyndsaie Madden, for her “Band-Tailed Pigeons” in ink and watercolor pencil.

The annual art contest is sponsored by the Thomasville Center for the Arts and Flowers Foods.



GEORGIA AUTHOR VISITS TCMS - Georgia author, William Rawlings, visited Mrs. Deann Garcia’s Georgia History classes to discuss writing, research, and his experience with learning history related to Georgia. He shared with the students his love of writing and his constant search for truth through research about various topics. He has written both fiction and nonfiction journal articles and novels. Mrs. Garcia said, “The experience of meeting and learning from William Rawlings was an invaluable opportunity for both the students and myself. Mr. Rawlings has a wonderful way of inspiring aspiring writers and Georgia history buffs!”



TCMS SELLING YELLOW JACKET FLIP FLOPS!

Thomas County Middle School has TC Jackets flip flops in stock and ready! They are \$15 per pair and range in sizes from extra small to large. The flip flops would make great Christmas gifts. Contact Carolee Guyton at 225-4394 or at cguyton@thomas.k12.ga.us to purchase a pair or for more information.



District-Wide Spelling Bee

TCBOE Auditorium

December 5, 2013

4:30 p.m.



SPELLING BEE WINNERS AT TCMS - Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School held grade level spelling bees on Tuesday, November 19. These students were the champion spellers in spelling bees that were held in the school gym in front of their grade level peers. Pictured are the winners from left to right: Travis Wright, 5th grade; Hayden Pike, 6th grade; Sarah Fulghum, 7th grade; and Joseph Riglioni, 8th grade. A spelling bee championship round was held later that week to determine who would represent the middle school at the county-wide spelling bee on December 5. Hayden Pike was the winner, and Sarah Fulghum was the runner-up. Good luck in the county-wide competition!

CROSS CREEK WINNERS!

Cross Creek Elementary recently held its Geography and Spelling Bees. Congratulations to the winners!

Pictured below from left to right are Lauriana Waddell, 2nd place, Geography Bee; Osmarie Tolentino-Deleon, 1st place, Geography Bee; John Henderson, 1st place, 3rd Grade Spelling Bee; Kaleigh Fender, 2nd place, 3rd Grade Spelling Bee; Col Rewis, 1st place, 4th Grade Spelling Bee; and Alyssa Barlow, 2nd place, 4th Grade Spelling Bee.



FOOD DRIVE SUCCESSFUL AT GARRISON PILCHER - Students from Mrs. Lauren Strickland's second grade class brought in canned goods for the annual food drive. Donations are accepted through Friday, December 6, and will be given to the local food bank. Pictured from left to right are Marice Maynor, Zachary Lee, Gabriel Smith, and Samantha Jennings.



BEE PARTNERS RECOGNIZED AT VOOM - Thomas County School System's Business Education Exchange (BEE) Partners were recently recognized at a chamber of commerce Voice of Our Members (VOOM) meeting. Thomas County Middle School Principal Kathy Keown recognized Little Caesars Pizza as their BEE Partner for the first nine

weeks. Little Caesars shared free pizza with the entire staff during pre-planning. Other schools' BEE Partners are as follows: Hand-in-Hand, Country Oaks Golf Course; Garrison Pilcher, Wendy's; Cross Creek, McDonald's; TCCHS, Mom and Dad's Italian Restaurant; and Bishop Hall, Gross Vault and Monument. The Business Education Exchange initiative, better known as BEE, is now 13 years old and for the past 10 years has selected one outstanding business annually to receive the prestigious BEE Partner of the Year Award.



FUN FOR ALL AT TCMS FALL FESTIVAL - New teachers at TCMS visited with the Chick-fil-A cow during the recent Fall Festival. Pictured from left to right are Ariel Brock (Dance), Megan Palmer (Family & Consumer Science), and Emily Holton (Art).

TCCHS FFA Team to Compete in State Championship



The Environmental/Natural Resources Career Development Event is a four-person team event including students Jon Ellis NeSmith (left to right), Jonathan Robinson, Colby Melton, and Justin Tanner.

The Thomas County Central FFA Chapter placed first in the region for the Environmental/Natural Resources Career Development Event (ENR CDE), and will be competing in the State Championship at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) on Saturday, December 7.

Designed to develop an understanding of Georgia's natural resources, the competition also allows students to explore and

prepare for possible careers in Natural Resources and Environmental Science. The purpose of the ENR CDE is to acquaint students in grades 9- 12 with the different areas of the Natural Resources that are found throughout the state and to foster skill development in each student's chosen area of study.

Each team member is scored during the competition and all scores count toward the team's total score.

News from BISHOP HALL CHARTER SCHOOL



9-11 Memorial Garden Established at Bishop Hall

Eleven years ago, Bishop Hall Charter School designated a portion of its courtyard area as a memorial in honor of the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. In collaboration with students, Mr. Richard Johnson, headmaster, and Dr. Doug Haydel, English department chair, designed the monument using natural objects symbolic of eternal truths.

Among a circle of crushed rock, two rough-hewn standing stones were placed on the northeast edge of this circle in the precise position and relationship of the original Twin Towers. A young weeping willow tree was planted immediately outside the circle so that its branches swept over the monoliths. A pair of small, evergreen, conical fir trees were also planted opposite one another on the periphery of the

circle. Three additional large, irregular stones were placed within the circumference of the circle, one to represent the Pentagon and two others intended to be emblematic both of lives sacrificed and hopes yet unattained.

Earlier in the current school year, Mr. Moses Gross, owner of Gross Vault and Monument, donated a granite marker that permanently identifies the site.

Each year, on the anniversary of the event, students and faculty gather in a circle, joined by clasped hands, for a moment of meditation and remembrance. The trees have quadrupled in size just as the stones have endured the passing years, signs of hope and faith that continue to remind each new class of what was lost and of what should be cherished.

Bishop Hall wants to congratulate Verna Dean Jackson Wiggins, Guidance Counselor & Graduation Coach at Bishop Hall Charter School, who received her Doctor of Education Degree in Instructional Leadership from Argosy University, Atlanta, on November 16, 2013. Congratulations Dr. Wiggins!

