

School News



Where success is measured one student at a time

October 23, 2009

R-328



Happy Birthday Dr. Brown!

Staff and students, pictured above, at Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School celebrated the birthday of the school's namesake on Wednesday, Oct. 21. Students gathered outside and released environmentally friendly balloons, sang **Happy Birthday**, participated in a birthday parade around the school, and created cards and doctor hats in class to prepare for the event. This is the second year the school has celebrated Brown's birthday, which is Oct. 17, 1747.

Board approves seventh high school for county

The Board of Education voted Oct. 13 to move ahead with a request to the state to build a new high school despite reservations about future operating costs.

Voting 5 to 2, Board members accepted the recommendation of Superintendent James E. Richmond to ask the state for approval for the Waldorf-area high school that will relieve overcrowding and add another high-tech facility for student and community use. Richmond acknowledged Board members' concerns about a lack of a long-term funding commitment; however, he said the school system needs to work with the county and take advantage of a positive building climate to get the best construction costs.

"After looking at the situation and the number of students at each high school and in portables, I think we need to go ahead with the high school and request planning approval. The opening is three to four years down the road and we need to work with the county for operating costs sufficient enough to open the school without compromising programs or staffing at other schools," Richmond said.

Vice chairman Roberta Wise said the school board has already compromised with the county on the building design, but she believes the window of opportunity for low construction costs narrows each day the Board delays. "We have discussed class size and we keep adding educational cottages. Everything I

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Two-hour early dismissal

The next two-hour early dismissal for students is Thursday, Oct. 29.

Schools closed for students

Schools are closed for students only on Thursday, Nov. 5.

Time to fall back

Don't forget to turn your clocks back one hour on Sunday, Nov. 1, as standard time begins.

PAC meeting

The first Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the 2009-10 school year is 7 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 27, in the Board Room at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building.

MAC meeting

The next Minority Achievement Committee meeting is 4:30 – 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 4 in the Board Room at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building.

Don't wait for snow

Sign up now to receive instant e-mail or text message notification of inclement weather school closings from Schoolsout.com. Register at www.schoolsout.com. E-mail service is free, and cell phone text message notification is available for a fee.

Stone celebrates the big "40"

Thomas Stone High School is celebrating its 40th anniversary at 11 a.m., Saturday, Nov. 14, in the school cafeteria. Contact Stone Vice Principal Michael Meiser, mlmeiser@ccboe.com, for more information or to RSVP.



Notebook

Upcoming Road Shows

Charles County Public Schools is hosting Road Show information sessions this fall for parents and community members. Sessions are scheduled by high school regional locations, and include middle and elementary schools.

Maurice J. McDonough High School's Road Show is 6 – 8 p.m., Oct. 26 at Eva Turner Elementary School in Waldorf. Participating schools are McDonough, Turner and Dr. Gustavus Brown elementary schools and Benjamin Stoddert Middle School.

Topics covered include understanding testing and assessments, advocating for children and accelerated programs, success strategies and parent communication tools.

North Point High School's Road Show is 5 – 7 p.m., Oct. 29 at the school. Other participating schools include William A. Diggs, William B. Wade and Arthur Middleton elementary schools and Theodore G. Davis Middle School.

Topics covered include mathematics activities, Web-based resources, summer learning opportunities, homework and study skill management, preparing for middle school, understanding college entrance exams and state assessments, and the Scholars program.

On the cover

Pictured on the cover are exemplary employees recognized at the Oct. 13 Board meeting. Pictured, from left, are: Theresa Tipword, special education teacher, Maurice J. McDonough High School; Carol Eaton, first-grade teacher, Gale-Bailey Elementary School; and Christi Hoffmaster, fifth-grade teacher, Mary H. Matula Elementary School.

Student enrollment grows by 53 students

Charles County Public Schools grew by 53 students this school year, according to revised enrollment counts for the 2009-10 school year.

Enrollment is 26,780 students, up 53 students from 26,727 last school year. This is the third consecutive year that enrollment increases have been less than 100 students. The enrollment count, taken on Sept. 30, is not official until it receives final verification by the Maryland State Department of Education. Maryland school systems take official student counts for the year on the last school day in September.

Enrollment growth has slowed, but the number of new students to Charles County Public Schools shows a trend of continued high mobility among students. There were 3,051 new students enrolled this year. Of those students, 1,610 are first-time students in prekindergarten and kindergarten. The remaining 1,441 new students are spread out among schools and grades 1-12.

The three schools located on the North Point educational complex reported the highest enrollments. North Point High School is the largest high school with 2,204 students. Theodore Davis Middle School, with 1,139 students, is the largest middle school. William A. Diggs Elementary School has the highest elementary enrollment with 1,032 students.

Westlake High School has the second largest enrollment with 1,510 students. Mattawoman Middle School, with an enrollment of 1,002, is the second largest middle school. William B. Wade and Berry elementary schools had 784 and 778 students respectively, making them the second and third highest enrolled elementary schools.

Enrollment data by school for this year and last year is located on the Fast Facts page of the school system Web site at www2.ccoeb.com/aboutus/fastfacts.cfm.

School

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read and hear indicates the economy is moving in a positive direction. I think we should move forward with this for our children," she added.

Maura Cook, board member, expressed reservation about the lack of commitment from the county about operating costs. "I still have deep concerns about the recurring costs," she said. However, she added she would continue to push the commissioners for funding and what is needed for children.

If approved by the state, the new four-story high school would be located on Piney Church Road and contain a science center with a digital classroom and Science on a Sphere, a courtyard with an outdoor classroom, an alternate natatorium, an auditorium and a 2,000-seat gymnasium. It will also include green features such as geothermal energy, solar hot water, day lighting and rain-water harvesting.

Pam Pedersen said, "My responsibility as a board member is to do what is right for education and I must push, scream and yell for funding and what is best for our students, teachers and community." She added that she would also continue to push for funding to open the school right and not on the backs of students and our teachers.

Wise made the motion, seconded by Charles Carrington, to accept the new high school and ask for planning approval. Chairman Donald Wade, Wise, Carrington, Cook and Pedersen voted in favor of the motion. Board members Jennifer Abell and Collins Bailey voted against.

Abell said she wanted to be clear that her negative vote does not mean she is against the high school. "We need the high school. We are already overcrowded and the original design has been completely changed due to the value engineering imposed by the county commissioners." She added that the commissioners in the last meeting with the Board of Education on Sept. 28 would not commit to funding the \$18 million needed to open and operate the high school the first year and \$14 million needed each subsequent year to run it. "I cannot in good conscious vote for it," she concluded.

Bailey attempted to amend the motion to include a requirement that the commissioners provide a written, binding agreement to fund the operating costs of the school that also included the percentage of the county's budget that they would commit to education. The motion, seconded by Abell, did not pass.

Westlake students demonstrate Digital Library at Library of Congress

A group of students from Westlake High School participated in a once in a lifetime opportunity last month at the Library of Congress' demonstration of the World Digital Library (WDL), held Sept. 15 at the Thomas Jefferson building. Westlake history teacher Mark Howell, along with Westlake seniors John Buntz and Leo Pierce, juniors Asia Lamar and Alexia McGowan, and sophomores Taylor Brooks and Kimberly Garcia-Torres, presented the WDL, an Internet-based library, to more than 100 guests in attendance and demonstrated the educational aspects on a Smart Board.

Howell said the opportunity to participate stemmed from his involvement in the Civics Mosaic and Civic Voices programs. "I chose six of my best students from last year and this school year to present. I merely introduced them to the crowd and gave my students an assignment that they would likely have encountered in their social studies classes. They navigated the Web site and showed the crowd how the site works," Howell said.

The students gave their presentation in the WDL display area in the Jefferson Building that includes two computers where visitors can explore the WDL and its features. The WDL brings together rare and unique documents on a single Web site, including books,



Westlake High School social studies teacher Mark Howell, left, looks on as sophomore Taylor Brooks, right, talks about educational opportunities available to students through the Library of Congress' World Digital Library. Howell and six of his students were invited to demonstrate the Internet-based library during an event held Sept. 15.

journals, manuscripts, maps, prints and photographs, films and sound recordings, that represent important features of United States and world history. The site, which was launched in April, offers browse and search features, and descriptions of each item to enhance student learning.

Howell said his students preliminarily made their presentation to directors of the WDL and to members of the Civic Voices program before making their final presentation. "We practiced for several days to get our 'touches' down. We demonstrated our moves to the directors of the WDL and they liked what we were doing," he added.

The WDL functions in seven languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish – and includes content in several languages. The site was developed by a team at the Library of Congress and technical assistance is provided by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina of Alexandria, Egypt, which also hosts a site similar to the WDL. Material is contributed from 45 partner institutions in 29 countries.

For more information or to access the WDL, visit the Web site at www.wdl.org.

Magic Planet takes students to the moon and back in a moment

Students in five schools will soon be able to leap out of their science textbooks and into an interactive world of Smart Boards and magical globes with a new teaching tool called Magic Planet.

Magic Planet is a digital video globe being tested through a pilot program at Mattawoman Middle School and Berry, William B. Wade, Malcolm and Walter J. Mitchell elementary schools. Science teachers at the five schools recently received training to learn about the projection display device that allows students to view and explore digital media of the earth and other planets. "The addition of Magic Planet to the curriculum is a dynamic tool that teachers will be able to use to nurture the natural curiosity that exists in children," said Monique Varlas, instructional specialist for STEM.

During training, teachers traveled from the moon to the earth with a click of a button. Press one button, and teachers are on the moon, exploring craters and reviewing flight data and information from Apollo space missions. Press another button and the teachers are back on earth, reviewing capitals of nations and testing their geography skills as they try to identify countries by sight. Press the button again and video information about the devastating tsunami in Samoa and earthquakes in the South Pacific pops up on the globe.

Magic Planet provides a way to teach scientific method and facts through high-tech modeling. Magic Planet is better than a picture and more engaging than a video, Varlas said. "Having Magic Planet as a teaching resource provides growth for the teachers and students. Our students are being taught in earlier grades how to use inquiry to construct their learning therefore preparing them to pursue science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) related coursework in the higher grades. These programs take the fear out of STEM subjects and demonstrate content mastery is attainable and fun at the same time," Varlas said.

Produced by Global Imagination, Magic Planet is a projection display globe that provides a 360-degree line of sight with a sphere-shaped screen controlled by a computer application or other video source such as a streaming media server. Topics included in the training were biosphere, climate, geology, current events, geography and more. While teachers can use it as an instructional tool, students can also learn by creating presentations to show on the globe, similar to a digital science fair project, said program trainer Kevin Lockwood of Global Imagination.

The school system has one Magic Planet, which will be loaned on a rotating basis to the five pilot schools.

Personnel

Apply for positions online at www.ccboe.com/hur. Positions are open until filled unless otherwise noted. All teaching positions require a bachelor's degree and MSDE certification requirements.

Job openings

Food Service Substitutes – Openings at all schools. Apply by Nov. 3.

Painter II – Maintenance Shop, 12-month position. Apply by Oct. 28.

Food Service Manager – J.C. Parks Elementary School, six-hour position. Apply by Oct. 23.

Multiple Intense Teaching Instructional Assistant – F.B. Gwynn Educational Center, 10-month position. Oct. 23.

Instructional Specialists – Future openings at all levels, 10-month positions.

Special Education Resource Room Teacher – Walter J. Mitchell Elementary School, 10-month position.

High School Instructional Resource Teacher – Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 10-month position.

English Teacher – Westlake High School, 10-month position.

Science Teacher – Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, 10-month position.

Library and Media Specialists – Openings at Theodore G. Davis Middle School and at the elementary level; 10-month positions.

Life Skills Teacher – Piccowaxen Middle School, 10-month position.

Physics Teacher – High school level, 10-month position.

Special Education Teacher for Science – Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, 10-month position.

Special Education Teacher for Social Studies – Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, 10-month position.

Special Education Teacher – Westlake High School, 10-month position.

Gifted Education Resource Teachers – Future openings at all levels, 10-month positions.

Reading Resource Teachers – Future openings at all levels, 11-month positions.

Kindergarten Teacher – Location to be determined, 10-month position.

Elementary Teacher – Location to be determined, 10-month position.

Extra pay positions

Thomas Stone High School has the following opening:

- Boys' freshman basketball coach
Contact Principal Larry Martin, 301-753-1756, for details.

La Plata High School has the following opening:

- Freshman boys' basketball coach
Contact Principal Evelyn Arnold, 301-753-1754, for details.

Maurice J. McDonough High School has the following opening:

- Junior varsity winter cheerleading coach
Contact Principal Jervie Petty, 301-753-1755, for details.

Staff notes

Celebrate school psychologists

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley recently issued a proclamation declaring the week of Nov. 9-13 as Maryland's School Psychology Week. The proclamation recognizes the work that school psychologists do on behalf of children.

Charles County Public Schools has 31 school psychologists on staff who help children succeed academically, socially and emotionally. They collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy and supportive learning environments for all students that strengthen connections between home and school. Additionally, they create solutions for each student and situation, bridging learning, social and emotional performance, and use different strategies to address students' needs.

School psychologists also work with students in groups and individually to enhance their achievement and school functioning. For more information on what school psychologists do, visit the National Association of School Psychologists Web site www.nasponline.org.

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The mission of Charles County Public Schools is to provide an opportunity for all school-aged children to receive an academically challenging, quality education that builds character, equips for leadership, and prepares for life, in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning.