



Virginia Middle School Association Newsletter

JANUARY, 2013

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VMSA Region 5 Has New Director



Betsy Wilcox, a language arts teacher at Wilson Middle School in Augusta County, was appointed Region 5 Director at the VMSA Board Meeting held on October 24, 2013. Ms. Wilcox has come highly recommended and hopes to promote the role middle school educators play in the lives of early adolescents, not only in her region, but across the Commonwealth.

PROBLEM-SOLUTION OF THE MONTH

If you have the best suggestion or solution for this middle school problem, send an email to the editor! There's a \$10 Starbucks gift card in it! Deadline is January 31, 2014.
editor.vmsa.newsletter@gmail.com

After the long holiday break and plenty of bad weather that interrupts the school week during winter months, what steps do you take to make sure your students keep knowledge and skills sharp so that they keep up and build on their success?

VIRGINIA SCHOOLS TO WATCH ANNOUNCES 2013-2014 DESIGNATIONS

State director Sandy Dutemple reports that visiting committees have made final decisions for Virginia's 2013-2014 Schools to Watch. There are three different categories this year.

NEW SCHOOLS:

Lake Ridge Middle School in Prince William County
Harmony Middle School in Loudon County
Northside Middle School in Roanoke County
Wallace Middle School in Washington County

REDESIGNATION I:

Bull Run Middle School in Prince William County
Gainesville Middle School in Prince William County
Phillips Michael Pennington—1-8 in Prince William County
Stone Hill Middle School in Loudon County
Stonewall Middle School in Prince William County

REDESIGNATION II:

Blue Ridge Middle School in Loudon County



“Virginia Schools to Watch is quite proud of these schools and looks forward to Celebrations ahead,” Dutemple said on behalf of the organization and its visiting committees.

VMSA 2013 TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

PHYLLIS COPELAND

GRADE 6 U.S. HISTORY
WALLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA

Mrs. Copeland has taught at Wallace Middle School for sixteen years, and no matter which subject she teaches—U. S. History, Science, or Language Arts, her students have fun while learning. Principal David Lambert says, “It is obvious that students enjoy being a part of her class.”



(L to R) Husband Edsel Copeland, Phyllis Copeland, and Principal David Lambert at the 2013 VMSA Conference

Student Dylan F. wrote, “It was obvious to me and everyone in my class that Mrs. Copeland loved to teach. She made it easy to love learning. I loved going to her class every day.”

Teaching allows Mrs. Copeland to be creative and autonomous. She is passionate about what she teaches and brings that excitement into the classroom. She loves learning and is highly motivated to spend personal time taking classes and planning vacations so she can gather artifacts and materials. “If I could impart a message on each child that I come in contact with, it would have to be that they possess inner strengths that need to be cultivated to make them feel their self-worth and fulfill their goals in life.”

KATIE DEAL

GRADE 7 MATH
GLENVAR MIDDLE SCHOOL
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

Mrs. Deal has been a teacher for twelve years, and as a math teacher and educational leader to her peers, “to reach out and impact all learners is her heart’s desire. Sharon Hill, an instructional coach at Deal’s school says “The students in Mrs. Deal’s classes witness her commitment to them and teaching by the many hours she dedicates to planning and lesson delivery of fun, educational activities.”

Principal James Soltis reports that “Mrs. Deal refuses to let failure be an option for her students by refusing to give up on them. She simply lives by the creed of teaching every student as if she or he were her own child.”

Student Trevan H. wrote, “Mrs. Deal taught me math and about life...When I said I couldn’t do something or wouldn’t do it, Mrs. Deal always showed me that she cared and had faith in me.”

Mrs. Deal believes “all students can succeed when given a positive educational experience.” She keeps tabs on each student’s progress in learning basic math skills that can be applied in real life situations beyond a standardized test. She tries to help students see *why* they need to learn math skills, and she models the importance of collaborating with others as she serves on committees, advises peers, and learns the latest teaching methods for her discipline. “I want to be a positive role model to my students on a daily basis. Yes, math is important, but I also want my students to be respectful, responsible, and courteous every day...Math can be challenging; when students know they can succeed, they will want to succeed.

REGION 1 NEWS

from Dr. Mike Gill, Director of Region 1

On October 24th, over 175 middle school administrators, teachers and counselors in Region 1 joined with community service providers, such as the President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Richmond, Tim Joyce. The objective was to discuss the most pressing needs for middle schools in the Region 1 area and how community service providers might assist in those efforts. Hosted at the MathScience Innovation Center in Richmond, and facilitated by Bridging Richmond of VCU, this second "summit" built upon an earlier summit held at Virginia Commonwealth University in the summer, at which nearly 90 middle school administrators, central office administrators and college professors gathered to discuss the most prevalent challenges facing today's middle schools. This summit series will continue in 2014 with a third summit, a culminating event, as well as research and recommendations for best practices presented by Bridging Richmond. Those interested in learning more about the summit series may contact Dr. Michael Gill, Director of Middle School Education for Chesterfield County Public Schools at (804) 594-1756.

Link to Summit 2 video highlights: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF7dokWDXyw&feature=youtu.be>

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEWS

from Jacquelyn Kelly, VDOE

The following opportunities may be of interest to many VMSA educators, so please take note:

Nominations for the 2014 John Marshall Foundation Teacher Awards

Since 1987, the John Marshall Foundation has awarded two \$2,500 checks to one high school teacher and one middle school teacher from the Commonwealth of Virginia in the history and social studies area who demonstrate excellence in teaching the U. S. Constitution. [Nominations](#) must be postmarked by Friday, March 28.

Nominations for the 2014 Standards of Learning (SOL) Item and Test Review Committees

February 14 is the deadline for submitting nominations for the 2014 Standards of Learning (SOL) Item and Test Review Committees. The committee meetings will be held in Richmond according to the schedule and information found in [Superintendent's Memo #304-13](#). All individuals who wish to serve on the committees, including those who have previously served, must submit an online [application](#) through the Assessment Committee Application Processing System (ACAPS).

VIRGINIA PTA CONNECTIONS

From Debbie Kilpatrick, Virginia PTA Vice President of Membership

There will be a couple of great PTA programs created just for middle school students that Virginia schools may want to participate in. The links for more specific information and flyers are included.

2014 BLAST

Building Leaders for Advancing Science and Technology (BLAST) offers exciting, on-campus, summer experience designed to increase 8th or 9th grade student interest and curiosity in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The program is free to selected students and provide hands-on activities and demonstrations to raise student interest in STEM careers. Application deadline is **February 1, 2014**. For more information: <http://www.blast.spacegrant.org/>

EIGHTH GRADE GRAD NIGHT

On **May 16th**, 8th grade grads totally OWN Busch Gardens. Ride cool coasters, rock out to hot DJs and live entertainment and see animals up close! Experience thrill rides under the stars during this safe and fun event. They'll have a total blast! Come and join the fun! Flyer Link: <http://origin.library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1101641155271-960/BG+2014+8th+grade+grad.pdf>

Halifax County Middle School, 7th Grade Math Project

Region 8

By Dr. Virginia R. Jones

At Halifax County Middle School (South Boston, Virginia), the 7th grade math department teachers, Mrs. Amy Lewis, Mrs. Christy Crowder, Dr. Virginia Jones, and Mr. John Deal used an exemplary project all seventh grade math students, algebra 1, algebra 1A, and math 7, as an opportunity to earn a test grade in a non-traditional way. This project was presented at a conference many years ago and the school decided to offer this project across the department as it allowed students to use multiple intelligences, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning to develop a personalized license plate. The project was introduced in classes by asking the students to pretend their parents were offering them a chance to put personalized plates on their own vehicle when they are old enough to drive! What a wonderful opportunity – they could create a plate that exemplifies the “real” you!



The criteria sheet detailed the steps for the license plate with the mathematical application of developing an equivalent equation utilizing the order of operations rule (PEMDAS – Parentheses, exponents, multiplication and division, and addition and subtractions). The bulk of the grade (80%) was for the equation and 10% each for creativity and neatness. Each letter used on the license plate was assigned a numerical value and limited use of numbers was allowed. Students decorated either a foam board sized license plate replica, a piece of cardboard, or any other appropriately sized medium they wished to use. The front of the board was the “license plate” with the back using the letters and their numerical equivalents to show the equation.

Students were allowed to choose any state – not just Virginia – and decorate with stickers, creative artwork, or photos from the internet to design their plate. As you can see from the results, student enjoyed the ability to design and create their projects. Equations used ranged from simple addition and subtraction to the complex use of parentheses and exponents.

All students enjoyed the opportunity to “test” their mathematical skills in this nontraditional method.

To view the directions for this lesson, please go to vmsa.newsletter.weebly.com and click on January Resources.



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JANUARY



Interesting Tribute Weeks in January

- International 3-D Week (7-10)
- Universal Letter Writing Week (8-14)
- National Vocation Awareness Week (13-19)
- \Bald Eagle Appreciation Days (18-19)
- Clean Out Your Inbox Week (19-25)
- Hunt for Happiness Week (19-25)
- National Handwriting Analysis Week(19-25)
- No Name Calling Week (20-24)

8	Bubble Bath Day
9	National Static Electricity Day
10	Peculiar People Day
11	Fruitcake Toss Day
	Stomp in a Puddle and Splash Day
15	National Hat Day
	Humanitarian Day
17	Kid Inventors' Day

JANUARY Interesting Days of Significance

18	Winnie-the-Pooh Day
	Thesaurus Day
19	National Popcorn Day
20	National Day of Service
23	National Handwriting Day
	National Pie Day
24	Compliment Day
	Belly Laugh Day
	National Peanut Butter Day
25	Opposite Day
27	Chocolate Day
	Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day
28	National Kazoo Day
29	National Puzzle Day
31	Backward Day

SPECIAL DATES FOR FIRST FEW DAYS OF FEBRUARY

- Children's Authors & Illustrators Week (2-8)
- International Coaching Week (2-8)
- Just Say No to PowerPoint Week (2-8)

5	National Pancake Day	9	National Stop Bullying Day
	Digital Learning Day		Read in the Bathtub Day
7	Bubble Gum Day		Autism Sunday