



The Lion's Roar

Vernon Independent School District Newsletter

March 2008

DISTRICT NEWS

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization Process

Occasionally we see stories in the newspaper about this law which is actually the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It became known as the NCLB Act the last time it was reauthorized with the current testing requirements.

The process to reauthorize the bill has been ongoing for the past year. The US House of Representatives has a draft version in place at this time that changes the structure of this bill. At last count, the House version would require 46 new reports to be generated for the US legislature. The Senate Education Committee has not been able to complete a draft for reauthorization. Currently Senator Kennedy's and Senator Enzi's staffs are working on the draft bill. The full committee has not met lately to draft a new bill.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings plans to visit each state to seek support for reauthorizing this bill in its current form. The administration is also in the process of defending the bill in court through a case known as Pontiac vs. Spelling. This case challenges whether districts are required to comply with the act since the federal government has not fully funded the requirements as stated in the law.

One change that most agree on is to modify the law to allow states to adopt a growth model to measure individual student progress instead of the one time snapshot that we get with the current standardized tests.

Other changes that have been recommended is to provide some flexibility in the highly qualified definition for smaller schools addressing the funding issue, providing flexibility in the testing of special

education students, and flexibility in the testing of English language learners.

It appears at this time that no changes will be made until after January of 2009, but in the meantime we will continue to see draft language being developed.

FAMILY PLUS (Parents Leading Uniting & Serving) By Trisha Dillingham, VISD Social Worker

Monday, March 31st

Middle School Library 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
What to look for: Signs and Symptoms of Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Parents will learn Preventative Strategies
Speaker: Margory Smith, Prevention Specialist
STAR COUNCIL

Monday, April 7th

Middle School Library 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Part I: Talking to your Children About Sensitive Issues

Are you prepared to talk to your child about alcohol, drugs, and sex?
Speaker: David Gordon, Education Specialist
Region 9

Monday, April 21st

Middle School Library 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Part II: When and How to talk to my Children about Sensitive Issues

Speaker: David Gordon, Education Specialist
Region 9

Door Prizes, Refreshments, Free Childcare at the Boys & Girls Club (front entrance)

Family Learning Event

By Marylin Leasure, Assistant Superintendent
for Curriculum & Instruction

Vernon ISD will sponsor the annual Family Learning Event on Thursday, March 13, 2008 at 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. in the Wilbarger Auditorium Empire Room. Pre-K through 12th grade Students and Parents/Grandparents/Guardians are invited to attend this learning event together. Learning stations for the whole family will be displayed. Learn more about special programs including Title I, Migrant and Special Education while having an enjoyable time together. Local agencies and Vernon College will have a booth with information. A light snack will be provided.

VERNON HIGH SCHOOL NEWS

Vernon High School Roarin' Lion Band News
By Stephen Morgan, Band Director

Hi, all!!!

Our band students had a great day at the UIL solo/Ensemble contest this weekend! Here are our results:

Twenty-three Vernon High School Roarin' Lion Band members competed in the UIL Region Solo and Ensemble Contest held at Wichita Falls High School on Saturday, February 23.

Earning a Division II, or Excellent, rating for their Class II solo performances were: Elizabeth Martin, Clarinet; and Audrey Schaffner, marimba.

Earning medals for a Division I, or Superior, rating for their Class III solo performances were: Krystal Nice, flute; and Catherine Garmon, marimba. Earning a medal for a Division I rating on his Class II solo was Ethan Alexander, tuba.

Earning medals for a Division I rating for their Class I solo performances were: Daniel Alaniz, horn; Brady Craighead, trombone; Jeremy McLain, baritone; Mykel Byersmith, tuba; and Arturo Camacho, tuba.

Earning a Division II rating for their Class II ensemble performances were: flute trio Lee

Moore, Krystal Nice, and Briana Rejino; and mixed brass quartet Kayla Allen, Shane Handley, Bradley Pennartz, and Tanner Warren. Earning medals for a Division I rating for their Class II ensemble performance was mixed brass quartet Dakota Holcomb, Jose Lopez, Jose Pedraza, and Dalton Wiest.

Earning medals for a Division I rating on their Class I ensemble performances and qualifying to compete at the UIL Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest (TSSEC) were: baritone/tuba quartet Mykel Byersmith, Arturo Camacho, Brady Craighead, and Jeremy McLain; and percussion ensemble Caitlin Ansley, Catherine Garmon, Krystallyne Robinson, Audrey Schaffner, and Craig Woody. The UIL TSSEC will be held on Saturday, May 24th, at Texas State University – San Marcos.

Congratulations to all of these students for their hard work and accomplishment!

Valentine's Day Celebrated by Life

Skills By Sarah Lehman, Teacher

Brandon Callaway, Tim Charro, and Steve Taylor came out to the Life Skills building on Valentine's Day to help Cassandra Garcia and Nina Edmonds prepare for a Valentine's Day party. They cooked appetizers, sampled candy and cookies of different flavors and textures, and exchanged Valentine gifts. The punch was even red! The days prior to the party consisted of making Valentine cards, colorful heart people made of felt shaped hearts, and colored pictures of cupid and hearts.

2008 Golf Team News

by Coach Kloiber

The Golf Season has taken full swing and the 2008 Vernon Golf team has been working very hard to try to make it to the regional tournament in Odessa Tx. The Girls team consisting of Senior Krystallyne Robinson, and Juniors Mackie McDuff, Kasey Bocharhardt, and Jenifer Alaniz are trying to make a return trip to the regional tournament. The girls have competed in three tournaments this year and have placed in two out of three. Their low round team total is 406. They are doing a great job.

The boys team is made up of Senior Aaron Weitner, Juniors: Bryson Henry, Kyle Railsback, Garret Waggoner, Jarret Dittmore, Jacob Hammes, Sophomore: Shane Hanley, and Freshman Skyler Campbell. They have competed in two tournaments winning on and finishing second in the other. They are improving everyday and doing a great job.

It does matter!! It does count!!

Recently, I was talking to a colleague about a conversation he had last year with a parent in Vernon shortly before TAKS week. He was calling with the purpose of reminding the parent about the TAKS and asking them to help ensure their student was prepared with a good nights rest and a healthy breakfast. The response he received was something like this: "Those TAKS tests really don't matter until their junior year."

Standardized testing (TAKS) is the basis for holding school districts accountable for learning--it is a fact of life in our state. Ignoring this fact of life is not a fruitful endeavor for anyone! The opinion that 'the TAKS test doesn't matter until a child's junior year' is far off the correct mark. For those who hold the opinion of the parent discussed above, I beg you to consider the bigger picture. Each year, the TAKS results for Vernon are important to the community, to the school district, to the teachers, and most importantly to the students.

The community benefits by good scores in a number of ways. They are a source of pride for a community. If the scores are good, we can show them to business owners looking for a place to start a new business. If the scores are good, we can show them to families looking for a new home. More business leads to more employment opportunity which leads to increased community income which leads to improved services (such as smooth paved streets) which equals more reasons for people to come here and stay here, etc. This does not happen overnight, and it will not happen when businesses pass on the community.

Poor TAKS results hurt the School District. The District is funded by the state using a complicated formula. In this formula, attendance and total district wealth are key factors. Over years, as schools within the district perform poorly, some families will move their children into other school districts that perform

better. As the number of students goes down, the amount of funds for the district goes down. As businesses close (partly as a result of declining population), total wealth decreases and thus less funding for the district. As people move out of the district, the number of teachers has to be decreased and the number of classes that can be taught decreases. Less funding is not a good thing when it comes to educating kids.

Poor TAKS scores that result from students who are not trying is problematic. Core subject teachers are judged by the performance of their students. It is simply wrong to judge teachers based on the performance of students who are being told at home that 'it's no big deal...it doesn't count until your junior year anyway.' All teachers in the school are marked on their evaluations by the TAKS results, even if they do not teach a TAKS subject. Teachers who are seeking employment in another school district are looked at less than favorably when they come from unacceptable districts or unacceptable campuses. The staff at VHS is working toward student success.

Far more important than the previous reasons, poor TAKS scores hurt kids. Failure is never a good option for students. What seems like no big deal because 'it does not count until your junior year' marks that failing student in various ways. First, the student will be enrolled in tutorial classes the following school year rather than being placed in an elective class of their choosing. Since the TAKS tutorial class does not count toward state credit for graduation, the student will automatically get behind in their graduation plan. Additionally, for every TAKS tutorial class that gets put in place, there is one less regular class the teacher can teach which means all students have to be in classes with a greater number of students than could be possible without the TAKS tutorial classes. TAKS score reports are very detailed and teachers use those scores to plan instruction. Think of the time wasted on a student having to go over lessons they mastered already but chose not to prove it on the TAKS test. I will promise you that the students who are coming prepared to learn and making an effort to learn ARE being prepared sufficiently to do well on the TAKS test.

All of us working together can improve the circumstances of all our children.

**CLAY TARPLEY, PRINCIPAL
VERNON HIGH SCHOOL**

VERNON MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS

Jump Rope for Heart Event

By Sally Reeves, Teacher

The middle school physical education and health classes participated on February 13 in helping raise money for the *American Heart Association*. The *Jump Rope for Heart* event was sponsored by Coach Reeves, Coach Gonzales, and Coach Hoover. The total amount raised was \$1,342.38. Jordan Cox, Tyler Fritze, and Hailey Ramirez all raised \$100 each. Each student who participated received a fruit roll-up and a sticker along with other prizes depending on the amount of money each raised. A big thanks goes out to these students who participated in raising money for this good cause!

Regional Science Fair

By Pam Surber, Teacher

The following students were excused all day on Thursday, February 28, to participate in the Regional Science Fair in Wichita Falls.

6th Grade

Colbert, Rachel
Dudley, Ty
Graf, Kelsey
Owen, Ben
Perez, Lexi
Sanmann, Kayla

7th Grade

Beebe, Mikayla
Draughon, Emily
Kennon, Maggie
Lee, Sydney
Parum, Brady

8th Grade

Borchardt, Cody
Kinney, Makayla
Moore, Rose
Thompson, Alana
Townson, Miranda

From the Vernon Middle School Library

By Mary Castleberry, Librarian

Our new Follett Destiny automation system is now in place, and the Vernon Middle School

learning community may enjoy its many features! Students have been impressed by the latest "Visual" search, where one may search books by categories, observe the picture cover of a book, and read about its contents before deciding to check out the book. Students may also use the "Power" search, as they learn to put into practice their knowledge of "limiting" words, such as "and," "or," or "not," when searching for titles. Our new automation system reinforces use of better technology skills and search techniques that will be extremely valuable to all our patrons.

TOP TEN TITLES circulated last week in Vernon Middle School: (We love this new enhancement generated by Destiny!)

1. ***Teen Ink: Friends and Family***, edited by Stephanie Meyer.
2. ***Boots and the Seven Leaguers: a rock-and troll novel***, by Jane Yolen.
3. ***The Call of the Wild***, by Jack London
4. ***Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Greg Heffley's Journal***, by Jeff Kinney
5. ***The Good Housekeeping Illustrated Book of Desserts***, edited by Jeni Wright
6. ***Invasion of the Boy Snatchers***, by Lisi Harrison
7. ***The Journal of Patrick Seamus Flaherty, United States Marine Corps***, by Ellen White
8. ***Lion Hound***, by Jim Kjelgaard
9. ***Lizzie for President***, by Alice Alfonsi
10. ***Strider***, by Beverly Cleary

"EBSCO" and "Britannica Online School Edition" have been added to our Desktop Favorites on our CATT Lab computers and in the VMS Library! These databases enable students to learn genuine research skills from authoritative sources, and include the highest quality of periodicals, biographies, primary source documents, essays, encyclopedia articles, almanacs, reference books, pamphlets, newspapers, transcripts, photos, maps, and more.



Shive Elementary School News

4th and 5th Grade Projects

By Janet Hughes, Teacher

All 4th and 5th graders will be starting their work on the annual Science Fair projects. The Shive Science Fair Judging will be held on March 26th and all the boards will be able to be viewed on Monday, March the 31st from 6 to 7 pm. We have covered Nature of Science, Physical Science and are now finishing up Earth Science in Mrs. Hughes' classes. We still have Life Science to cover before we start reviewing for the TAKS. Time flies when you're having fun!! They are working also on their "Water is Life" conservation posters for the annual poster contest. It will be fun to see who wins and if someone's poster from our campus becomes part of the new book covers for next year. There is a lot going on in the Science department at Shive Elementary.

Central Elementary School News

Mileage Club

By Carrie Castleberry, Teacher

For the second year in a row, Central students are counting their miles. In addition to the regular PE curriculum, the students are walking and running to a healthier body. For every five miles they complete they earn a toe token to put on a chain. Mrs. Castleberry and Mrs. Anderson monitor and log the number of laps completed, and then reward the students upon completion of every five miles. This is a wonderful program for all children. They are able to work at their ability and level and all students can be successful. We live in a generation where childhood and adult obesity is a major medical issue. Our desire is that this additional program will encourage kids to be physically active for a lifetime. Encourage your children to earn those tokens, and as parents and adults we need to set the example for them by being

physically active ourselves. Get out there and MOVE!!!

Central Elementary Creates Memories

By Janice Manlove, Principal

Each six week Central Elementary has an honor assembly to recognize students that are on the honor rolls and those with perfect attendance. Each honor roll student receives a sticker that is placed in their pride folders. For perfect attendance students are given a "Wee Bean" and get to enter their names in a drawing or a chance of winning a brand new bike at the assembly in May. Central faculty members also plan a skit to perform for the students at each honor assembly. Stephani Swan is in charge of these productions. Mrs. Swan states, "Students may not remember all facts and skills that they are taught, but they will remember that their teachers were fun and put effort into making them feel important." Honor assembly programs have included black light shows, choreography with music, patriotic assemblies, and game shows to mention a few. In the picture the teachers are acting out the song, "She Will Be Coming 'Round the Mountain".



See if you can identify the performers!

McCord Elementary School News

Pre-Kindergarten at Work and Play

By Pam K. Bell, Teacher

We have been very busy this past six weeks. February 7th marked one hundred days of school and we celebrated by doing all types of activities using 100 items. The children made posters of 100 things, necklaces with 100 Fruit Loops, decorated headbands, and each child brought 100 pieces of an ingredient to make Trail Mix. Yes, we counted them all! At the end of the day we were 100 times more tired than we had been in a while. We also read books and learned facts and a song about past presidents, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington.

Valentines Day week was really buzzing around the Pre-Kindergarten halls with all the children making and giving Valentines. We learned that there really was a priest whose name was Valentine and the reason that we enjoy Valentine's Day now. I'll bet you thought it was a holiday created by the flower and candy companies so they could sell more roses and chocolate. There were math activities where we counted how many of each color were in a box of Conversation Hearts, and graphing to see if an individual package of M&M's had the most, the least or the same amount of pink, red, or white candies. Of course, we had to eat the candy after all that hard work.

We did a one week unit on cowboys and cowgirls that ended with some of the Waggoner Ranch Cowboys coming to tell us first hand about life as a cowboy. They showed us a saddle, rope, leggings (chaps), spurs and they brought some of their horses with them. We were amazed and very well behaved. Thank you so much to Josh Stacy, Kasey Frazier, Jimbo Glover, and Randy Barnett. It was great!

First Graders Celebrate 100th Day of School

By RaeAnn Stevens, Teacher

First graders at McCord Elementary started off the 4th Six Weeks with a day full of excitement in celebration of the 100th Day of School! Many activities were planned throughout the day all revolving around the number 100. Family projects, such as posters filled with 100 items, were brought by some of the first graders. Other activities included 100 day art projects, 100 day counting activities, 100 day sorting activities, 100 day graphing activities, and a 100 day fashion show. The day concluded with a 100 day autograph party. During the fourth six weeks, first grade students read various stories about people and animals on a ranch. To help get a better understanding about what life on a ranch is really like, first grade students were visited by cowboys from the Waggoner Ranch. The cowboys conducted a presentation about daily activities on the ranch, the equipment they use, and horses they ride. First graders were also visited by Flumpa the frog. The children learned many interesting things about rain forests and why the rain forest is such an important part of our world. Our first graders are learning more and growing more with each passing day.