

## ***Growing Enrollment at HHS***

Harrisonburg City Public Schools has formed a committee of stakeholders to discuss possible options to address growing enrollment at Harrisonburg High School. Members of the committee represent the diverse population of Harrisonburg and include teachers, city council members, taxpayers, parents, and students. The committee began meeting in March to carefully study the enrollment trends and projections to verify the capacity concerns and explore options to solve the issue.



The proposed options are:

1. **Build an annex**
2. **Build an addition to the existing school**
3. **Build a new school**

There are three upcoming opportunities for members of the public to share their thoughts:

**May 11:** Community Meeting and Open House – Harrisonburg High School – 5:00-8:00 pm  
(enter at North 3 doors)

**May 16:** Public Hearing at School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm

**June 6:** Public Hearing at School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm

### Upcoming Events

- April 29:** HCPS Spring Fling – refer to last page for details  
**May 2:** School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm  
**May 11:** Community Meeting/Open House – HHS – 5:00-8:00 pm  
**May 16:** School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm

*Please note that the last day of the school year will be June 7, 2017.*

## HHS *That Was Then*

The Harrisonburg High School One Act play, *That Was Then*, co-written by HHS seniors Genevieve Cowardin and Eleanor Alger, won the VHSL State Championships this past autumn after advancing through District and Regional competitions. This is not the first time HHS drama has taken 1st place in VHSL competition, but it is a testimony to the quality of work that continues to be produced within HHS's Fine Arts programs.

What is even more notable, however, is how well this same production did in the Virginia Theater Association competition in Norfolk, Virginia. This statewide competition pitted over 50 high schools against one another, and for the first time ever, HHS won 1st place! In winning this honor, HHS earned the opportunity to advance to US regional competition at the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC). The SETC High School Theater Competition brings together 20 schools representing 10 southeastern states to perform the productions that won the 1st and 2nd place awards in each state.

This competition was held in the Lexington Opera House in Kentucky over the weekend of March 4. The HHS One Act troop had remarkable success once again and represented the state of Virginia admirably, taking 2nd place overall among these 20 outstanding competitors.

Perhaps the most gratifying outcome of the SETC conference, however, was the award presented to HHS's drama teacher, Stan Swartz. Mr. Swartz is in his 29th year at HHS, and has directed dozens of productions, including our musicals and one-act plays. While HHS has taken 1st and 2nd place in state VHSL competition multiple times, winning first place at the VTA and advancing to US regional competition at SETC was a first for Mr. Swartz, and is a tremendous accolade in itself. But even more exciting for the HHS community is the fact that from all of the outstanding theater programs participating at the SETC conference, Mr. Swartz was chosen as Director of the Year. This is among the greatest honors a person can receive in Mr. Swartz's capacity as educator and director in a Virginia high school.



The HCPS community recognizes Mr. Swartz, Ms. Alger, Ms. Cowardin and the entire cast and crew of *That Was Then* for their remarkable accomplishments in this year's many One Act competitions. And we thank Mr. Swartz for his continued commitment to quality instruction and mentorship to the students at HHS.

## Spotswood *Spanish Spellers*

Fourth grade Spanish students at Spotswood Elementary showed off their Spanish spelling skills in the third annual Spanish Spelling Bee on March 24. It was a fun way to celebrate students' accomplishments and mastery of the Spanish language. All fourth graders took a written spelling test during their FLES Spanish class. The three students who spelled the most words correctly on the written test were asked to participate in the school spelling bee. Students met after school twice to hone their oral spelling skills and learn the rules of the competition. When the day came, they were prepared and ready to show their strengths! After a heated competition between the final contestants, Ashley Martinez-Lanza and Miguel Osorto-Osorto, Ashley won by correctly spelling two consecutive words. Both Ashley and Miguel and 3rd place winner Luis Nieves-Lopez advanced to the city-wide spelling bee on April 5.

The spelling bee is a unique way to highlight the strengths of our bilingual students in Harrisonburg.

In the past, the honor of participating had always been earned by heritage Spanish speakers here at Spotswood. Often these are students who have received schooling in a Spanish-speaking country before arriving in the United States. This year, for the first time ever at SES, non-heritage Spanish speaker Marta Gebretsadik qualified to participate in the bee, and held her own beautifully, correctly spelling "cuaderno," "bravo," and "usted." According to Marta, who also speaks Tigrinya and English, participating in the spelling bee has encouraged her to continue her language studies and made her feel proud of her language abilities.



Other participants shared that it was their first time on a stage in front of an audience and they felt proud when their peers and teachers cheered for them. After the spelling bee, participants were congratulated again by their teachers and families and met one more time as a group to debrief and celebrate their accomplishment. All agreed that they had learned a lot by challenging themselves to participate in a spelling competition and that it had been an experience well worth the effort.



## Waterman *A Fresh New Look*

The library at Waterman has been getting a fresh new look with an artistic twist this year. Throughout the year, several projects have been in process to help brighten and make the library feel more child-friendly. Thanks to the help of parent volunteers, the transformation began with a new welcome sign above the entryway.

In February, an opportunity provided by the Any Given Child program brought mosaic tile artist Beryl Stolla into the school for a day, working with fourth graders to create a mosaic crayon, which wraps around one of the columns in the library. Each fourth grade student took part in this project, whether it was planning and designing, breaking tiles, applying tiles and grout, or the all-important job of clean up! The mosaic adds a bright, colorful spot to the space.



The final project combined the talents of six Waterman staff members as well as two former Waterman students who have remained best friends since their time at Waterman. These artists created 3'x4' canvas paintings depicting fairy tales, some influenced by a culture other than the one portrayed in the original story, to represent the many heritages found within our school. Over 300 hours of planning and painting went into this project.

The fairy tales depicted are:

- "El Ratoncito Perez" painted by Sylvia Whitney Beitzel, Homeschool Liaison
- "Hansel and Gretel" with an Asian influence painted by Sarah Nicklas, Kindergarten Teacher
- "Jack and the Beanstalk" painted by Susan King, Teaching Assistant
- "Little Red Riding Hood" painted by Amy Siever, Former Waterman Student
- "Rumpelstiltskin" with a Middle Eastern influence painted by Jennifer Rodriguez, ESL Teacher
- "Rapunzel" painted by Janna Blosser, Teaching Assistant
- "The Little Match Girl" painted by Melody Neff Ludholtz, Former Waterman Student
- "The Princess and the Pea" with an African influence painted by Kristi Strine, Art Teacher



"The mural created by Waterman fourth graders and the fairy tale paintings created by Waterman faculty, staff, and community volunteers have really brightened up the library," said Dana Lehman, Waterman's librarian. "I'm so pleased to have this beautiful artwork in our library!"

There is an opening reception planned for Wednesday, May 3 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. in the Waterman Library. We hope you will take a moment to stop in and see the new permanent fairy tale installation, as well as the other projects!

## Skyline

## *Advancing Learning and Celebrating A.R.T. Day*

At Skyline Middle School, we find multiple ways to help ALL our students SOAR to new heights academically and artistically. Our programs for Advancing Learning, led by our specialist Ms. Judie McNett, continue to expand throughout the building. Ms. McNett can be found everywhere!

In the morning, she can be found reading enriching novels with groups of students in our art alcove and in classrooms. In the library, Ms. McNett and Ms. Parks are partnering for an exploration of inventions, emphasizing citation skills. In the afternoon, around a big table in a team office, Ms. McNett leads students in math games. And, after school, she's outside making nitrogen ice cream with the JMU-sponsored science club. Wherever you find Ms. McNett, exciting learning for ALL is always happening!

Another exciting and enriching learning experience at Skyline Middle School this month was our fourth annual Art+Read+Think (ART) day, co-organized by our librarian Sandra Parks and art educator Holly Bess Kincaid. They joined forces with the community to celebrate an arts-infused read-aloud marathon. Guests sat in a rocking chair on the red carpet and shared favorite books with an art or music focus in honor of Youth Art Month and Music in our Schools Month.



Students were delighted to hear stories from Superintendent Dr. Scott Kizner, Mayor Deanna Reed, Skyline Middle School Principal Daniel Kirwan, local musician and Judy Chops lead singer Molly Murphy, and Smithland Elementary Principal Janis Churchill, as well as numerous teachers and other local community leaders.

Teachers brought groups of students to the SKMS Gold Square to sit under our banner proclaiming "We're Glad You're Here" to hear stories all day long! Stories were read in English, Spanish, and sung with guitar accompaniment. The smiles on students' faces showed what an impact sharing stories can make when we take the time to read aloud.

Whether we're investigating and solving problems in small groups, or singing songs and reading in Spanish, at Skyline we celebrate enriching learning for ALL our students, every day!

## Elon Rhodes

The newly constructed Elon Rhodes Early Learning Center, which is attached to Smithland Elementary, will open in August 2017. Currently HCPS houses 16 preschool classrooms. There are 11 Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), one Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), and four Head Start (HS) classrooms. Those classrooms serve a total of 280 children. We provide 36 scholarships to three private preschool programs via the VPI mixed delivery grant. Those programs (JMU Young Children's Program, Harrisonburg/Rockingham Day Care, and Roberta Webb Child Care) will continue as VPI placement options next year with eight additional scholarship slots. In August, the four Head Start classrooms will be housed in modular units at Stone Spring Elementary and the remaining 12 classrooms (11 VPI and 1 ECSE) will move to the Early Learning Center (ELC). The preschool team recently visited the construction site and was excited to see the progress. We are even more excited to build a stronger program that will benefit our community. Recently we created the new mission and vision for the ELC.

### Mission Statement

*Our mission is to partner with families and the community to provide high quality inclusive early childhood education and care that fosters each child's social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development in a safe, healthy, play-based learning environment that respects and celebrates the culture, creativity, and unique differences of every child and their family.*

### Our Vision for the Future

*All children in our city will have access to high quality early childhood education that ensures school readiness and growth toward reaching their fullest potential as happy, healthy, productive members of our community.*

Preschool teachers in Harrisonburg are required to be dual endorsed in Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Special Education. This dual endorsement allows our programs to be inclusive, serving at-risk preschoolers with and without disabilities. Each classroom also has an assigned instructional assistant. Additional support onsite will be provided by the Early Learning Services Coordinator and the Early Learning Diversity Specialist, as well as the Smithland administrative staff and support staff.



To qualify for VPI, a child must be four years old by September 30 of the enrollment year AND meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Household income at or below 200% of poverty level
- Family is homeless
- One or both parents have dropped out of high school
- Child has a disability or special need
- Other factors to consider are single parent household, abuse or domestic violence in home, child is not in custody of parents, English as a Second Language, incarcerated parent, military deployment of parent, child has significant medical condition

To apply for preschool, please call the Welcome Center at (540) 433-3644.



Highlighting Excellence in Harrisonburg City Public Schools



*Photos by Bob Adamek*



Free

Come join Harrisonburg City Schools for our...

# Spring Fling

Supporting families in the friendly city

Saturday, April 29th

11:00 am-1:00 pm

Harrisonburg Recreation Center  
305 South Dogwood Dr.  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Food

Face Painting

Balloon Animals

Door Prizes

Community Resources

Children's Activities

Stress and trauma are a part of life- it happens to all of us. Opportunities for a 30 minute presentation will be provided during the event that will help parents understand the impact of stress and trauma on the body, the brain and behavior of their children and themselves. It will also provide tools for increasing the resilience of the whole family.