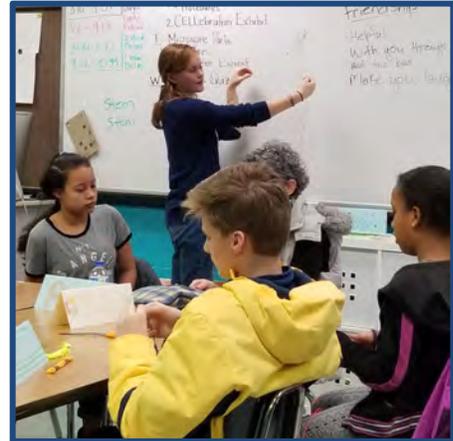


THMS

Educational Partnership in our Community

EPIC is an after-school club for students new to the United States who are learning English. Focused on building conversational English and relationships, the club meets on Monday afternoons at Thomas Harrison Middle School after school until 5pm. Community volunteers are students from Harrisonburg High School, Turner Ashby High School, James Madison University, Bridgewater College and members of a local church who volunteer to serve as tutors. The Thomas Harrison students are in sixth through eighth grades and range in English language proficiency from Newcomer to exited out of English language support.



THMS students are paired with a tutor as a conversation partner to work on activities together as well as with the whole group. A community volunteer recently observed, "It is amazing and a joy to see the students blossom as they become more confident in their language skills and their place in the school. One student wouldn't make eye contact in the fall and seemed to prefer not to talk at all. Yesterday she was bubbly, chatty and funny! What a blessing!"

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KES

Dr. Seuss Day



On March 7, Keister Elementary School celebrated the life and work of Dr. Seuss. Students were surprised to see many of their teachers and other staff members wearing Keister t-shirts that read, “Look at me! Look at me! I love to READ!” Additionally, community leaders, school board members, central office staff and parents came into the school to read their favorite Dr. Seuss book to a classroom full of excited students.

Grade levels and classes also planned other special activities to celebrate Dr. Seuss. Many of the kindergarten students and teachers enjoyed a “Wacky Wednesday!” Each kindergarten class read the Dr. Seuss book *Wacky Wednesday* and then came to school dressed up in a wacky way. We saw children with their clothes on backwards, inside out, funny hair and even shoes that didn’t match.



Our reading specialists also focused on rhyming words and read many Dr. Seuss books to the students throughout the day. Students worked on rhyming and writing. Some wrote notes to Mr. Miller and Mrs. Zook, telling them what they like to read about and ending their note with, “What do you like to read?” Mr. Miller and Mrs. Zook wrote notes back to each of these students. We love to read at Keister!!

Upcoming Events

- March 26-30: Spring Break - No School for Students
- April 3: School Board Meeting – City Council Chambers – 7:00 pm
- April 6: Teacher Workday - No School for Students
- April 17: School Board Work Session– School Board Office – 5:30 pm

SSES

Social Skills: A Collaboration Between Resource Room & Speech Therapy



Every Friday Mrs. Kirkpatrick, Speech Language Pathologist, and Mrs. Driver, resource teacher, co-teach three different social skills groups. The groups are made up of students that both Mrs. Kirkpatrick and Mrs. Driver serve. The students range from grades Kindergarten through 5th. The sessions are 30 minutes long.

Social Skills training have included turn taking with targeting blurting/interrupting others, giving compliments, and controlling body space. Students also participate in functional living skills including cooking (slime, Witches' Brew, and cookie decorating), answering intraverbal questions (serving both educational and social comprehension) while studying themed units and household chores (raking leaves, delivery service), and table manners (family style dining).

Future plans include but are not limited to mail delivery throughout the school, Easter activities (dyeing eggs and egg hunt), and spring activities (Unicorn Dip, gardening).

These students benefit from learning socially significant behaviors related to functional living skills. Mrs. Kirkpatrick and Mrs. Driver collaborate to form their plans well in advance by providing modifications for individual needs of students.



Elon Rhodes

Inclusivity in the Classroom



When you walk through the hallways at Elon Rhodes, you will see students from all demographics playing, laughing, and learning together. What people may not notice is the practice of inclusivity in all of our Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) classrooms both at Elon Rhodes and at Keister Elementary. This practice incorporates students with and without disabilities in a classroom where they learn and grow together. This is possible because all VPI teachers in Harrisonburg City Schools are dual certified in both Early Childhood Education and in Early Childhood Special Education birth to 5 years old. Each classroom has a lead teacher with one or two

instructional assistants. The teachers have all had internships in both inclusive preschool classrooms as well as in early intervention services.

There is also one Early Childhood Special Education self-contained classroom. These students are usually three years old and participate in a half day schedule in hopes that they will be full time VPI students when they are four years old. These teachers are trained to differentiate instruction on a daily basis and think through tough scenarios where the “typical” response might not always be the best response. These teachers all have classrooms packed full of differentiated toys, differentiated seats, and fidget toys galore!

Throughout the school day, teachers and instructional assistants work with children who have disabilities while also meeting the needs of the 16 or 17 other students in the classroom who also have diverse strengths and needs. Through hands-on exploration and play, teachers can naturally integrate IEP goals and social interaction with typically developing peers. Preschool is a critical first year of education for our students and the practice of inclusivity in our classrooms teaches the students and teachers even more. The students learn tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation that we are all unique individuals.



SMES
Rockets' News Channel

“What structures can we create to allow for student expression, leadership, and power?”

In Smithland Elementary’s last Insider article, we shared our goal of creating spaces where students can gather and their leadership can emerge. Another space for Smithland students to join together and be creative leaders is our Rockets’ News Channel. This after-school club began in February and consists of eight fifth graders, two fifth grade teachers, and guest teachers and students. They decided on a goal of broadcasting our morning announcements every other Friday. The students included all the components of our morning announcements, but creatively added some other elements which allows them to have guest speakers. The fifth graders are in charge of everything except editing the final cut together. During the first week of their two-week creation period, they watch their last video, reflect upon what went well and what improvements are needed, set goals together, and then write the script for their next show. They keep this basic outline each newscast:

- Greetings/Date/Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Weather
- Sports
- Teacher Highlight/Do It Yourself Activity
- Jokes (Funny Fridays)
- Announcements



The content changes with each episode. When the students are writing their script, they are doing research and checking facts on the information they want to report. The students are driven to complete the writing and taping. They have fun along the way and enjoy accomplishing their goals. So far the school community has enjoyed two Rockets’ News Channel broadcasts and we are looking forward to being entertained by future broadcasts!



Highlighting Excellence in Harrisonburg City Public Schools



Photos by Bob Adamek

