

## Congratulations to our Educators of the Year!



*Koren  
Dellinger*

*SES*

*Lucy F. Simms  
Educator of  
the Year*



*Michelle  
Garber*

*KES*



*Crystal  
Roach*

*HHS*



*Kim  
Tinkham*

*SMES*



*Krista  
Smiley*

*SKMS*



*Jennifer  
Evans*

*SSES*



*Michelle  
Swartley*

*THMS*



*Jennifer  
Wright*

*WES*

## Bluestone Building Bluestone Community

Participating in any building project is an adventure, whether it be a backyard garden, a mountain cabin, or a new school in the “Friendly City” of Harrisonburg.

In the beginning of the Bluestone Elementary project, there were the shared hopes and dreams of a group of parents, teachers, school board members, and school leaders. A well-orchestrated visioning process followed, led by an innovative group of architects (VMDO) with excellent listening skills. A building design emerged that encapsulated the desire to create a child-centered, inspiring, collaborative learning environment, as well as a building whose systems would work together to support human health and environmental sustainability.



We broke ground on April 22, 2016, and since that day, over 150 individuals have come together on Garbers Church Road to bring their expertise to this project. Although the building site was very cold in February, the generally mild winter supported the daily activities of masons, plumbers, drywall installers, engineers, welders, carpenters, etc. and accelerated progress toward completion of the building. Today, the builders are installing glass, wiring for lighting and technology, laying floors, painting drywall, and readying the HVAC system, while the principal is working closely with the design team to complete the furniture order and approve the graphic design plan. Trees are being planted, the basketball court has been paved, and the construction trailers are disappearing!

As beautiful as the building is, the school is the people: those who come together with a common purpose. It is the quality of the interactions that take place, and the relationships that develop over time, that will bring definition to Bluestone Elementary School. Since late fall, we have hired over 55 staff members who are coming together to “build a culture of connected learning and collaborative voice.” Our focus is an image of the child as strong, prepared, and capable of taking on his or her own learning. As we come together, we will dedicate time to knowing each other and fostering a context of listening. As much as possible, we will give voice to the ideas and inquisitions of our students as we plan for teaching. Our hope is to create an educating community where learning is more continuous and less segmented.

We believe all members of our school community are seeking connection and meaning, and this tenant guides our actions. Our work to build strong connections within the Bluestone community began in April of this year, as we planned for three *School Community Meetings (SCM)* across the Bluestone attendance area. Teachers, trained as “listeners,” worked with small groups of parents, utilizing “The World Cafe” protocol that supports collaborative dialogue around questions that matter. We learned so much as participants answered questions such as, “How are you feeling about your child attending Bluestone?” and “What are your dreams for your child’s education and how can we work together to make those come true?” We will continue to hold SCMs throughout the 2017-18 school year, as we identify our long-term vision for Bluestone and the mission statement that will move us in that direction. Together, we have an amazing opportunity to create a school that will inspire learning and build pathways toward the dreams of students for years to come.

## Smithland Family Literacy Nights

Come by the library at Smithland Elementary School on a Monday evening and share a story, make a craft, or create a memory around the love of reading. The idea for opening the library on an evening for families came from a library conference. At Smithland, we were eager to provide opportunities for families to enjoy the library together and check out additional books. So, for the past two years, the library has been open once a month from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. for *Family Night in the Library*. We have coordinated our schedule with Smithland's Comité de Padres Latinos (Latino Parent Committee), which meets on the same night in the cafeteria from 6:00-7:00 p.m. This has provided many of our Spanish-speaking families the opportunity to stop by the library with their children once their meeting has finished.



Attendance has been very good, with many families attending regularly! Each night centers around a special theme, with crafts and an English/Spanish story time corresponding to the topic. Families can open a family account and check out 5 books per child. New library books are available for families to read and review. The school's bookstore is open with a selection of used books for 50 cents each, again giving our students and families more opportunities for book ownership. We are pleased with the positive response to Family Night in the Library and plan to continue offering it next year.

## THMS

## THMS Has Talent!



Thomas Harrison Middle School's SCA hosted its first talent show recently. It was a delight to see! There was an audience of about 215 who came to enjoy the talented students of THMS. One could feel the excitement in the air as the students took the stage.

We had a variety of performances. Students displayed their musical gift through dancing, singing, and playing instruments. Students wowed the audience when they played the piano, violin and flute. Also, laughs were heard as a young comedian performed a comedy act, and the audience sat in

amazement as another student did card tricks. Afterwards, we all watched in stunned silence as one young man walked across the stage on his hands and then did a forward flip out into the audience. We listened intently as a young lady played her ukulele while her friend sang to its melody. Our show concluded with a student's outstanding job of lip-syncing to "Hamilton" and "The Newbies."



The attendees had a wonderful evening as they sat back and enjoyed the variety of THMS talents. Thank you to the THMS SCA for organizing this entertaining event.

***We want to hear from you!***

[Click here](#) to submit your comments on the options to address overcrowding at the high school.

## **Keister** You Can Do It! It's Time to Prove It!

On the afternoon of Wednesday, May 3, the Keister Elementary School cafeteria was filled with students and teachers alike, cheering on the 3rd and 4th graders as they approach their upcoming SOL tests.

While there was a clear message that the students are ready to “Rock the Test,” the overall theme was a celebration of learning by the entire Keister community. The two upper grades entered the cafeteria to the music of Katy Perry’s “Roar,” loud



applause, student-made signs with motivational messages, and high-fives from administrators and teachers. This upbeat entrance was followed by unique student cheers from each grade level, Encore teachers, and support teachers. When asked about the SOL pep rally, a 4th grader shared, “It was awesome because I felt that everybody was supporting me! My favorite part was the younger kids singing their cheers for us.”

The highlight of the celebration for most students (and teachers!) was the “Safety Snippet” skit and accompanying video. At each all-school meeting, students look forward to the skit and important message shared by the “Safety Snippet” crew of teachers who take on student personas. This school meeting was no different! Each character displayed a different emotion as they left school and went to bed the night before the first SOL test. This reiterated to students that it is normal to have mixed feelings prior to a test. Once the video, a parody of Taylor Swift’s “Bad Blood,” began, all eyes and ears were on the screen. Students enjoyed watching their teachers sing, dance, and use their strategies to take a test in this parody video. Each student should have walked out with the clear message: “You can do it! It’s time to prove it!”

To complete the celebration of learning, all students sang the Keister school song and then went outside by grade level to enjoy a popsicle. This sweet treat was a reminder to all teachers and students to celebrate all of their learning and success from this year. The extra time and effort put into preparing for this meaningful celebration is just one example of the dedication Keister teachers and staff put into their daily work. Everyone in the Keister community had a hand in making this celebration possible, whether it was practicing a cheer with a classroom of students, staying before and after school to record the parody, singing and recording the song for the video, creating motivational signs, organizing the flow of the assembly, writing cheers, or spending hours upon hours recording and editing! What a beautiful celebration of working together and celebrating learning to motivate and celebrate our students!

## **SSES** Counting Down to Summer



*Enjoying Creative Works Farm on Field Trip Day*

A is for Art. B is for Book Buddies. C is for Cooking. At Stone Spring Elementary School, we are celebrating the last 26 days of the school year while reviewing the alphabet. Each day, students get to participate in fun activities related to a letter. For example, on B Day – Book Buddies, classes that participate in the Book Buddy program did activities like blowing bubbles, bouncing balls, or batting balloons with their buddy class. Another day was Friendship Day in which students read friendship stories, wrote notes to their friends, and were good friends to all of their classmates. We also had Dance Day, Game Day, Hats and Hair Day, and Ice Cream Day. Upcoming days include Lunch Day, Lollipops, and Limbo Day, Outside Learning Day, Puzzles Day, Summer Birthday Day, Water

Day, and X-tra Recess Day. Teachers and students have enjoyed the celebrations on each day and can't wait to make it through the rest of the alphabet!



*Mrs. Farkas's class is all smiles after completing a workout on Exercise Day!*

Highlighting Excellence in Harrisonburg City Public Schools

Photos by Bob Adamek



### Upcoming Events

- May 29: No School – Memorial Day
- June 6: School Board Meeting – 7:00 pm – City Council Chambers
- June 7: Last Day of School
- June 10: HHS Graduation
- June 20: School Board Meeting – 5:30 pm – School Board Office