



Virginia Middle School Association Newsletter

OCTOBER 2013

Liz Phillips, Editor

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Virginia's best middle school-focused conference a week away!

Hopefully you are already registered for this year's Virginia Middle School Association Annual Conference. The event organizers and board members are looking forward to facilitating an excellent program and spending the day with attendees from all over the Commonwealth.

Event organizers have arranged for the sale of Debbie Silver's top-selling books, *Drumming to the Beat of Different Marchers* and *Fall Down 7 Times, Get up 8: Teaching Kids to Succeed*, at the conference.

For those of you who like to plan ahead, here is a listing of workshops and roundtable discussions scheduled for the 2013 VMSA Conference at JMU on Friday, October 25, 2013.

1. The Grooving and Creative Way to Pair Fiction with Non-Fiction
2. Gangs Taking Over
3. Building a Balanced Assessment System
4. Creating Opportunity in the Digital Classroom
5. Review You Science Carnival, A Cooperative Project
6. Soaring to Excellence Through the Use of an Effective School-Wide Discipline Program
7. Dynamic Approaches to Mathematics Instruction
8. From SARS to STARS: Helping Students Become Successful
9. Student Led Conferences
10. Getting the Lead Out-Writing Strategies for the Common Core & More
11. 212: How Smith Became a 212 School--That's Hot!
12. Building All Students Towards Rigor
13. Getting Off the Stage: Putting Students to Work
14. Critical Thinking and Writing in Social Studies
15. A RtI Friendly Master Schedule
16. Building and Monitoring a System of Interventions and Supports
17. "F" for Flipped, Not Failure
18. Writing that Works
19. Using Online Tools for Classroom Assessment/Instant Item Analysis
20. Engaging Middle School Students in PTSA
21. New and Effective PTA Programs to Engage Families
22. Teacher Self Care: Vital Tools for Teaching
23. Social Emotional Learning: People Skills for Middle Schoolers
24. Schools to Watch Introduction
25. Success Beyond Academics
26. Creating a Positive Learning Environment
27. Using Rubrics to Increase Writing Achievement for all Learners

Shuttle service is provided free of charge to conference attendees. Once you arrive at the conference center, you will see the registration desk where you can pick up your nametag and receive a conference brochure. Please remember to visit the vendor tables and register for door prizes.

If you know anyone who wishes they had registered for this year's conference, encourage them to register as there is still some space available in the conference hall for the keynote program and lunch. Send an email directly to Lisa Norris. Email address: norrislw@jmu.edu by noon Tuesday, October 22.

DISTRICT DIRECTORS SHARE NEWS

REGION 1 NEWS

Best Practices Become a Regional Discussion

When Chesterfield County decided to examine best practices in middle school education as a key initiative this school year, their Director of Middle Schools reached out to Bridging Richmond, an emerging cradle to career partnership that spans nine jurisdictions, to assist in making this a regional discussion. The goal of the regional collaborative effort is to jointly research, share, plan and ultimately implement best practices for middle school education. Through collaborative planning, a “middle school summit” was held on the campus of VCU on July 31st, bringing together approximately 90 administrators, curriculum specialists, technology directors, and central office personnel to examine our needs and shape a vision for middle school education in the area. A second summit, to be held on October 24th at the Math/Science Innovation Center in Richmond, will build on the work of the first summit, bringing together a planned 175 middle school educators, university personnel, and interested community partners to build on the work of the first summit. The work will continue throughout the school year, with plans to share the data produced and researched-based best practices for middle school education for use by all surrounding districts. Those interested in this work can contact Dr. Michael Gill, Director of Middle Schools for Chesterfield County Public Schools at (804) 594-1756.

—submitted by Dr. Mike Gill, Region 1 Director

REGION 4 NEWS

Greetings, Region 4 Educators

As your Regional Director, I am very interested in gathering information related to professional development needs in your school/district. By collecting this information, we can plan for some regional professional development in the Spring 2014. Look for an email in early November with a link to a quick survey. Your feedback will be greatly appreciated!

Hope to see you at the Conference on October 25!

—Submitted by Barbara Nichols, Region 4 Director

Sorry!

The backpack and organization problem got zero responses. That means no one won the \$10 Starbucks gift card the newsletter editor had to give away for the best/most useful response. Let's try this again with a new prompt!

Teacher Evaluation Files

Do you have a fantastic way to keep up with all your teacher evaluation files so that you don't go crazy with deadlines conflicting with your teaching responsibilities? Some school systems have a paper-based portfolio system, and others are automated. Regardless, teachers can use excellent tips, so share!

Submit your idea to the editor by emailing ljphillips@wcs.k12.va.us on or before Wednesday, November 6, 2013.

DISTRICT DIRECTORS SHARE NEWS

REGION 6 NEWS

VMSA Conference Inspires College in Six Program in Roanoke County

Principal Tammy Newcomb attended last year's VMSA Fall Conference at JMU and went away inspired to start a new program for her students at William Byrd Middle School in Roanoke County. Borrowing from the success of a similar program in Loudoun County, Newcomb worked with her leadership team to develop and implement a "College in Six" program. The College in Six Program is based on research that suggests that middle schools need to start preparing students as early as sixth grade for post-secondary education. The William Byrd plan will include specific activities at each grade level, beginning with a visit to a college campus for all sixth graders. Seventh graders and their families will have the opportunity to hear directly from college officials about admissions requirements and financial aid. Eighth grade students will write a personal statement to start them thinking about college applications and also participate in a college fair. The program has met with such enthusiasm that it has spread to all five Roanoke County middle schools.

—submitted by Dr. Ken Nicely, Region 6 Director

A CALL FOR ARTICLES FROM VMSA MEMBERS

Category 1: Diversity and the Holiday Season

There are holiday traditions in every school and in every family associated with a school. Some schools have more diverse student populations than others, but every teacher has to balance cultural diversity and holiday tradition. If you have a story to tell or ideas to share about how to celebrate the holidays with students at this time of the year, we would love to hear from you.

Category 2: Best Practices for Vocabulary Acquisition and Deliberate Practice of Vocabulary Skills

We can talk about Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary acquisition till the cows come home, but when it comes right down to the bottom line, copying terms from the back of a textbook is not the best way for our students to build working vocabularies. There are plenty of suggestions by experts about how to teach students specialized vocabulary associated with each discipline, but what we want to know is this: What works in your classroom? How do you get students to become active vocabulary learners? Share your ideas. Give pointers!

Send articles and inquiries to Liz Phillips via email—ljphillips@wcs.k12.va.us.

Do you subscribe to the VDOE e-News that is delivered to teacher mailboxes each week? Do you need the latest and newest resources sent directly to you so you never have to hunt for them? Don't wait!



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INTERESTING CALENDAR OBSERVATIONS

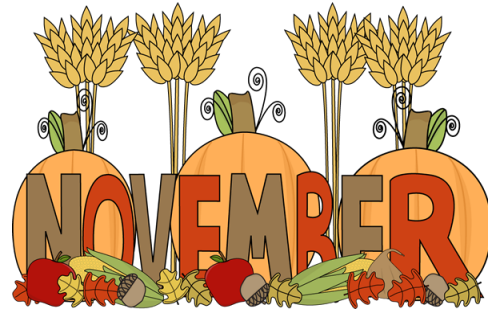
- 21 National Babbling Day
- 22 National Nut Day
- 24 National Bologna Day
United Nations Day
- 25 World Pasta Day
- 26 World Make a Difference Day
- 29 National Frankenstein Day
- 30 National Candy Corn Day

Special Weeks in October

Red Ribbon Week, October 23-31
National Magic Week, 4th Week

October

Computer Learning Month
Cookie Month
Eat Country Ham Month
Sarcastic Month
National Clock Month
National Dessert Month
Family History Month
National Hispanic Heritage Month
National Pasta Month
National Pizza Festival Month
National Popcorn Popping Month
National Roller Skating Month
National Stamp Collecting Month



INTERESTING CALENDAR OBSERVATIONS

- 2 Book Lovers Day
Deviled Egg Day
Look for Circles Day
- 3 Sandwich Day
- 4 King Tut Day
- 6 Saxophone Day
- 9 Chaos Never Dies Day
- 11 Veterans Day
- 12 Young Readers Day
- 13 World Kindness Day
- 16 Have a Party With Your Bear Day
- 17 World Peace Day
Homemade Bread Day

Special Weeks in November

National Chemistry Week, Week 1
Game & Puzzle Week, Week 3

November

Aviation History Month
Child Safety Protection Month
National Novel Writing Month
Native American Heritage Month
Peanut Butter Lovers Month
National Sleep Comfort Month