



# The Panther PAWS

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Poplar Tree Elementary

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Coordinators

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**NEXT ISSUE:  
February 3, 2011**

## Principal's Message ~ Words of Williams

### ~The Mind of a Child~

*A child's mind is very unique,  
a constant journey, so much to seek.  
The mind of a child is a thinking tool,  
ready to work, at home or school.*

*The mind of a child should be handled with ease,  
their thoughts and ideas, ready to appease.*

*When the teacher cares, and finds teaching a pleasure,  
the mind of a child is a lasting treasure.*

*A child's mind, filled with purity,  
seeks understanding, hope, love, and security.*

*The mind of a child, molded by a teacher,  
with confidence and patience,  
can help **lead** the future.*

*The caring teacher, seek and you will find,  
a fountain of dreams, in every child's mind.*



~SSWilliams'93

January earmarks a special time to pay honor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spent tireless hours paving the way for our future leaders. Dr. King believed in equality for all and wrote many speeches that encouraged all of us to dream, hope, and simply be the best that we can be. I continue to see many examples of teachers teaching our future leaders the true purpose and meaning of Dr. King's dreams. We are now halfway through the school year and there is so much more to learn and discover. To fully reach and teach our students how to dream, how to succeed, and how to exceed, we must continue to tap their creative and thirsty minds as we prepare tomorrow's leaders today.



## Calendar of Events!

|                        |                                                                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 15             | Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday!                                            |
| <b>January 16</b>      | <b>Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday ---NO SCHOOL!</b>                          |
| January 17             | PTA General Membership Meeting, 7:00pm, Cafeteria                                |
| January 17-February 29 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter eCART Testing Window, Math and Language Arts, Grades 3-6 |
| January 20             | -Mini Bookmarks Due!!<br>-4-6 Talent Show, 7:00pm, Cafeteria                     |
| January 25             | Just Say No Club, 3:30-4:30pm, Cafeteria                                         |
| January 27             | Second Quarter Ends!                                                             |
| <b>January 30-31</b>   | <b>Teacher Workdays – No School for Students!!</b>                               |
| February 1             | Third Quarter Begins!                                                            |
| February 6-10          | National School Counseling Week!                                                 |
| February 10            | -Report Cards Go Home!!<br>-PTA Family Fun Night—BINGO, 6:30pm, Cafeteria        |
| March 15               | Many Cultures, One School—Heritage Night, 7:00pm, Cafeteria                      |

# Counselors' CAREGRAM by Mrs. Hoffman and Mrs. Hirsch

## Parenting Programs in the Chantilly Pyramid

The K – 12 school counselors in the Chantilly pyramid are working together to provide a variety of parenting programs to all parents. Below is a list of what the remaining scheduled programs for this school year. ALL parents, regardless of their child's school, are invited to all of these programs. More information is available from Mrs. Hirsch or Mrs. Hoffman

Tuesday, January 17, 2012, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Greenbriar West Elementary School  
“Cyberbullying & Internet Safety” phone: 703-633-6700

Thursdays, January- February, 2012 (six sessions), 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Greenbriar East Elementary School  
“How to Talk So Kids Will Listen” phone: 703-633-6464

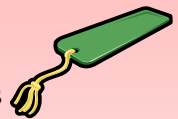
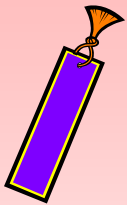
Thursday, January 19, 2012, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Brookfield Elementary School  
“It's Not Too Early to Think College – Chantilly High Counselors”  
Phone: 703-814-8700

Thursday, March 22 & 29, 2012 (Two-Part Presentation) 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Brookfield Elementary School  
“1-2-3 Magic Parenting, Discipline & Encouragement” Phone: (703) 814-8700

Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. Poplar Tree Elementary School  
“Anxiety in Children” by Dr. James Crist (published author) Phone: (703) 633-7400

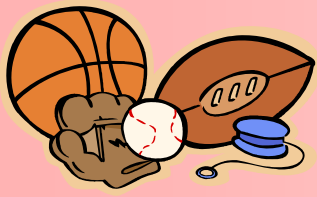
Thursday, May 8, 2012, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Brookfield Elementary School  
“Summer Learning at Home” Phone: (703) 814-8700

## School Wide Opportunity! Safe & Drug Free Youth Bookmark Contest



The annual Safe & Drug Free Youth Bookmark Contest is open to all students here at Poplar Tree Elementary School. This contest is sponsored by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The theme for this year's contest is “**Making My School and Community Drug and Bully Free**”. Information has been passed out on the flyer for making the small bookmark. All initial bookmarks will be made this way, not large poster board. Teachers will select one entry from their class to compete in the school wide contest. One winner from Grades K- 3 and one winner from grades 4 – 6 will be selected to enter into the county contest. The two winning entries will need to redo their bookmark onto the official poster size of 22 X 7 for entry.

ALL mini-bookmarks class winners are due into the office by **Friday, January 20<sup>th</sup>**. The final winners will be announced on Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. Those two winners then must redo their mini-bookmarks into large posters by Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> in order to enter the county contest. For any questions, see Mrs. Hoffman or Mrs. Hirsch, School Counselors.



## Just Say No Club

The Just Say No Club would like to thank ALL of Poplar Tree for your generous support in the December toy drive. The items, ten large boxes full, were donated to Our Neighbor's Child who truly appreciated your support. Our next Just Say No club meeting is Wednesday, January 25, 2012. Thank you again parents for your prompt pickup at 4:30 p.m.

## Counselor's Care Gram

Happy New Year! We are almost half way through the year, if anyone can believe that! This has been the month to look at both New Year's resolutions not only at home but in school. Classes have reviewed goals and are looking ahead to see what students are aiming to accomplish in the second half of the school year.


Mrs. Hoffman's grade level lessons have focused on responsibility and goal setting. **Kindergarten** is learning about responsibility through the story, *The Three Little Pigs*, so they can learn to take their time and be responsible just as the pig who built his house out of bricks was in the story. **Second and fourth** grades are looking at the learning goals they have set for themselves for the rest of the year. Fourth grade is getting an introduction to how to make a New Year's resolution into a SMART goal. Sixth grade is completing a career unit that started earlier this year. This is being tied into the class planning they will be starting next month in their middle school course selections. Sixth grade parents should be watching for more information coming on middle school transition. Small groups are continuing around organization and study skills. These will be reviewed at the end of the quarter and reorganized based on the needs of the students. Additional personal/social groups on friendship skills will also be added at lunch time.

Mrs. Hirsch continues with CARES (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-Control) skills for her lessons with Grades 1, 3, and 5. CARES skills teach students the social and emotional skills needed to be successful students. This month both **first and third** graders are learning about the skill of self-control. They learned that self-control means taking responsibility for what you say and what you do. Third graders re-wrote the story of Goldilocks—giving her the gift of self control—while first graders learned how to control their words and actions via their very own “remote control.”

In **fifth** grade, students learned about cooperation via STEM careers. Students learned about STEM careers—science, technology, engineering, math and science—and how professionals in those fields use cooperation. Then fifth graders had a chance to use their civil engineering skills by creating an “egg tower”—a tower made out of only straws and tape, but strong enough to hold an egg!!



## Panther P.E. Playbook

First of all, Coach Stuart and I would like to thank you for all the wonderful and thoughtful gifts from all of the families. We are always overwhelmed with your generosity. We are so happy to be a part of your community. Thanks for making us feel so appreciated. 

It's a fresh start and a new year in the gym. We will go over some New Year Resolutions for the gym. These include:

- ◆ *Do your personal best,*
- ◆ *come prepared to PE with the right shoes and the right attitude.*
- ◆ *Give your best effort in our warm ups and all the activities.*
- ◆ *Play safe and have fun.*

We will offer a fun Volleyball unit. Volleyball is always a fan favorite. We will learn the basic skills...the set shot, the bump and the serve. We will learn basic game play...play your position, rotation, teamwork and scoring. Our theme is Beach Volleyball, so we will play some fun beach music during the games.

All grades will participate in this unit, but lessons will be modified according to grade level. Our goal is to start the new year with some "summertime" fun! Happy New Year!

## Library News *Mrs. Uncles & Ms. McMillan*



Students in all grade levels have been reading a group of books from the library that are part of the "Virginia Readers' Choice" program. K-3 students have been voting for their favorite book as they finish reading the 10 titles. Students in grades 4-6 must read at least four of the ten books in order to vote. We will vote in March, prior to Spring Break for our favorites. Be sure to ask your students about their favorite book. Students across the state of Virginia are reading these books as well. We will know in May the titles of the books that were the overall favorites.

It's not too early to begin thinking about our April book fair. It will be held the week of April 23-27. We will be looking for volunteers to help set up, take down, assist students in making their lists, and selling. If you are interested in volunteering, please call Mrs. Uncles in the library office at 703-633-7412. A volunteer form will be coming out sometime in February.

Parents, please check with your students to see if they have books that are due back in the library. We have been averaging 120-170 students per week with overdue library books. We will begin mailing home notices next week for students who are long overdue. If you receive a letter from the library telling you that your student is overdue, and you feel that you received the letter in error, please let me know by calling the library office. Otherwise, please help your child locate the book/books and return them to the library.



Kindergarten completed a drawing titled, *Winter Break at My House*. As usual, they did a great job.



Third grade completed painting their houses. They used a background with features to show depth.



Second grade is starting a weaving project. We are learning about texture and will be weaving with very unusual choices.



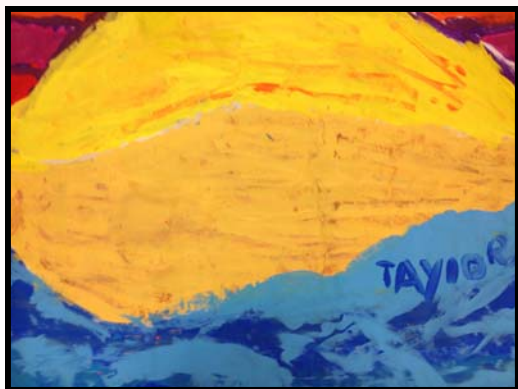
Fifth grade students incorporated world architectural elements in their playground or amusement park ride.



Head start and special needs classes recycled paper with glitter to create a snowy picture.



Mrs. McHugh is back from maternity leave and all of the art classes are in full swing. Most of the students are getting messy working on landscape paintings. Kindergarteners are doing snow day pictures, while the second graders are working on their own seasonal landscapes. The fourth grade class is focusing their landscapes on representing the regions in Virginia. The first grade classes are still reminiscing about the holidays with their family paintings. They are turning out really great and I can't wait to see the results!! The fourth graders are marching onward and working on animal clay vessels and the sixth graders are honing their portrait skills. It should be an exciting month in the art room!





## "Note-able News!"



*"A painter paints pictures on canvas. Musicians paint their pictures on silence." (Leopold Stokowski)*

We are pleased to announce that the following 8 sixth grade students have been selected to represent Poplar Tree School as participants in the Sixth Grade All-County Choral Festival. Congratulations to the following students that were selected to participate in this opportunity: *Aidan Aronhime, Nikki Christian, Kate Croxton, Robert Dunning, Marissa Joyce, Olivia Madigan, Neha Sampathkumar and Kimberly Vo.* The festival will be held on Friday, April 27 and Saturday, April 28, 2011, at Hayfield Secondary. The festival will include approximately 1000 sixth graders from all over Fairfax County. The guest conductor will be Dr. Barbara Tagg, Professor of Music at Syracuse University and Director of the Syracuse Children's Chorus.

We are also pleased to announce the following 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be participating in the Chantilly Pyramid Area Elementary Honors Choir. Congratulations to these students: *Nadine Alkaragholi, Aidan Aronhime, Julie Buschor, Lexie Buswell, Courtney Butler, Nikki Christian, Katie Colonna, Carolan Corcoran, Kate Croxton, Danielle DiCarlo, Robert Dunning, Izabela Estrella, Alyssia Farkouh, Emma Gustafson, Brandon Han, Jacob Lewe, Olivia Madigan, Megan Meyers, Ryan Morris, Erika Rathburn, Neha Sampathkumar, Dean Satouri, Katie Simi, Sonya Spiewak, and Kimberly Vo.*

**SPOTLIGHT ON MUSIC READING:** In grades K-2, students begin pre-music reading skills and activities. In grades 3-6, students begin to read traditional music notation. Students learn to interpret music symbols and use music vocabulary. Elementary students acquire music reading skills that allow them to continue to enjoy music in their lives on a level commensurate with their individual skills and interests.

**JANUARY SONG-OF-THE-MONTH:** "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

**By: Charlie Ring, Cindy Noble and Sarah Pramstaller**  
**Poplar Tree General Music and Chorus Teachers**

## TECH TALK

**Technology @ Home** enables parents to purchase products for student home technology use, directly from vendors at educational discount rates.

These programs are managed by the vendors and provided as a community service. FCPS is not permitted to make product suggestions and is unable to answer questions about purchases, or to provide product support.

We recommend reviewing technical requirements available on vendor websites, prior to making purchases.

Most vendors only allow one purchase annually per student, and require verification of affiliation with FCPS.

To view products available and learn more about this program visit the related page on the fcps.edu website at <http://www.fcps.edu/it/technology/TechnologyHome.shtml>

# LITERACY LINKS



## How to Help a Struggling Reader

Reading strategies are divided into two categories: decoding and comprehension. Before a child can receive help with comprehension skills, he must demonstrate proficiency in decoding skills. Here's how you can help.

### Decode the Word

For some children, a basic understanding of phonics increases reading fluency. Phonics instruction helps a child break down words into bits and pieces he can pronounce and then combine those sounds to say a word. If your child skips words while reading, sounds out a word incorrectly or attempts to say a word that doesn't make sense, extra help in phonics might be a solution to consider.

Your child should be able to recognize simple words. Consider using Dolch vocabulary words. These sight words are commonly seen in books and help children learn pronunciations for the various combinations of letters. Lists of Dolch words are available online.

Chunking occurs when a child covers a chunk of an unfamiliar word with his finger. When he pronounces the first part correctly, he moves onto the next chunk. Finally, he puts the chunks together to form the word. This strategy works especially well if a parent reads aloud with his child.

### Comprehend the Word

A primary indicator that your child needs assistance in comprehension is if he can decode words but cannot answer high level questions regarding the text.

Re-readings text lets your child narrow the focus to a specific section. This reinforces information your child has read and limits the amount of material needed to find an answer.

Predicting, or using before, during and after questioning strategies, establishes a connection between the reader and the reading material. Include the title, picture or key words to predict what he knows about a story (before), ask questions about the reading material (during), and answer the questions (after) to show what your child has learned.

Another strategy that strengthens comprehension is to focus on the main ideas. Ask your child to summarize the story. Help him learn how to narrow the summary to a few sentences. This skill helps your child to recognize details and to separate those details that do not advance a story.

Adapted from: <http://life123.com/parenting/education/children-reading/ways-to-help-struggling-readers.shtml>

## PTA President's Message

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had a relaxing and enjoyable winter break.

In the coming months, the PTA will be sponsoring several exciting family events. The fun starts with the student Talent Shows on January 13th and 20th. Those will be followed by Bingo in February and, of course, the Carnival in March. Watch for more information to be sent home or check the PTA's website at [www.poplartreepta.com](http://www.poplartreepta.com).

The January PTA meeting will be on Tuesday, January 17th at 7pm. It will be a general membership meeting and members will vote for a Nominations committee. The committee will be charged with putting together a slate of nominees for the PTA Executive Board positions. Vacancies for next year include President, Vice-President 1 and Vice-President 2.

The Spotlight on Learning on the new progress reports (report cards) originally scheduled for the January meeting has been postponed until a later meeting. I will let you know when we will be discussing that topic again.

As always, please talk to me or any officer if you have concerns or suggestions for the PTA.

Regards,

Arian Hadley

PTA President

[hadley@mindspring.com](mailto:hadley@mindspring.com)

703-817-0296

## Catch the Wave of Fun at Panther Beach!

Carnival is March 10th, 11am to 3pm!

Be sure to mark your calendar and don't miss a minute of this fun and very popular school event.

Room parents be sure to attend one of the following meetings:

Monday, January 23rd at 10:00 am in the Language Arts Room

Tuesday, January 24th at 7:30 pm in the Language Arts Room

**Boardwalk fun and games for everyone!!!**



## FAMILY FUN NIGHT FEB. 10th

Mark your calendar, it's almost time for another FAMILY FUN NIGHT! This great event with a Valentine's twist will be held on Friday, Feb. 10 starting at 6:30pm. Sponsored by the Poplar Tree PTA, tickets are \$3 a person and include 5 games of Bingo, 1 can of soda and snacks. Bring your best sweetheart(s) for a family night out to kick off the Valentine's Day weekend! Red carpet/date night dress encouraged. Pizza can also be pre-ordered for \$2 a slice, so make it an easy night out, dinner included!

Advance registration is strongly suggested as this event often sells out. Look for the FAMILY FUN NIGHT flyer and registration form in this edition of the newsletter, and also in Friday folders Jan. 27 and Feb. 2. Return your form to school as soon as possible to guarantee your spot. Registration is limited to 320 people due to space considerations.

Adult and teen VOLUNTEERS are needed to help at this event. Teens needing service hours are welcome. Please contact Co-Chairs Lori Barnes ([loriwbarnes@gmail.com](mailto:loriwbarnes@gmail.com)) or Jen Brunner ([jenbrunner@verizon.net](mailto:jenbrunner@verizon.net)) to volunteer or if you have questions. C'mon out and have some fun!



# ENGINEERING FUNDAMENTALS WITH LEGO CLASSES

GRADES 2-6

AT POPLAR TREE ELEMENTARY

OPEN TO GIRLS & BOYS

The winter session begins Monday, January 9th, 2012

immediately after school until 2:30pm in Resource Room 2.

**The winter class is FULL!**

If you missed the opportunity to register for the fall or winter class, we have GOOD NEWS...The Poplar Tree PTA and Play-Well TEKnologies is offering a spring class. The spring session will be on Mondays immediately after school until 2:30pm, March 26-June 4th. On-line registration for this session will open on Monday, February 6th. Look for more information in your child's Friday folder and on the PTA website.

Space is limited, so please mark your calendar.

Contact Chelese McClain at [cpmclain715@yahoo.com](mailto:cpmclain715@yahoo.com)  
or 703.802.3044

Here's a picture of our very first Engineering FUNdamentals class at Poplar Tree. Congratulations to all the participants. Everyone had a BLAST!!!



## Third Annual Poplar Tree Chili Challenge Winner(s)

We had a record turnout for the third annual chili challenge that takes place as part of the Poplar Tree Winterfest. Nine very different and excellent chilies competed for 2 first place prizes – the Popular Vote and the Guest Judge Choice.

The Guest Judge was a new twist this year. R.B. Cobean, General Manager of the Hard Times Café in Fairfax provided a \$25 gift certificate for each winner and had the difficult task of picking one. His choice was the spicy Hokie Pokey Chili submitted by *Matt Joyce*. Matt is a 3-time entrant (VA Tech fan) who always has a top-rated chili. Congratulations Matt!

Our second winner was chosen by the masses and yet again, the student entries bubbled to the top.

- ◆ *Ted Ellis* entered a Cincinnati Chili that the Bengals would be proud of.
- ◆ *Alex Yee* served up a hearty Serrano Fire Chili
- ◆ *Aiden Ganeshan and dad Navin* spiced it up with a colorfully beautiful Spicy Vegetable Chili.
- ◆ *Zachary Velis' and dad David's* Jamaican Zombie Sweet and Hot Chili was so good there was none left to bring home to the Zombies.
- ◆ *Alexandra and David Reaves* added some sweetness to the group with their Sweet Corn Chili.
- ◆ *Sam Brunner and dad Tim* provided a Black Bean Belly Buster (aka: 1-vote wonder) chili – there's always next year.
- ◆ *Luke Van de Vijver* continued the history of family chili cook'n excellence with his Game Day Chili - beat in the popular vote by only.....

**Steven Risi and Harrison Shay who teamed to cook up a 3-Meat chili that captured just over 30% of the popular vote. CONGRATULATIONS Steven and Harrison!**

If you missed it, be sure to stop by and have a taste next year. We're also always looking for the brave few (student, parent or even teacher) willing to put their chili up against the best of Poplar Tree.



**Poplar Tree PTA • Fairfax Collegiate  
After-School Classes**

Fairfax Collegiate and Poplar Tree Elementary PTA are partnering up to provide fun, exciting, and educational after-school classes to Poplar Tree students. Classes are taught with curriculum adapted from Fairfax Collegiate's highly successful summer program, with over 900 students attending robotics courses for its Summer 2011 program. Instructors have authoritative knowledge of robotics, as well as experience working with children. Small class sizes of 8-12 students, top of the line equipment, talented teachers, and a proven curriculum come together to create a great class where kids will have fun and learn!

**Become a Robotics Master!**

Our Robotics courses introduce students to engineering and programming, and help students build skills like teamwork and critical thinking, while having a great time.

**Mobile Robotics (Grades 4-6, Wednesdays, Feb 8 - March 28)**

This is an introduction to LEGO Mindstorms NXT robotics for older elementary school students. Students learn to build and program mobile robots using the graphical NXT-G programming language. Activities include programming exercises with NXT-G, experimenting with wheel sizes and gear ratios, implementing robot speed control and turning, making robots respond to sounds, and programming robots to detect and avoid obstacles.

**WeDo Robotics (Grades 1-3, Thursdays, Feb 9 - March 29)**

WeDo Robotics introduces young students to simple robotics systems. Students will build Lego models with functional motors and sensors, and learn how to control them with basic programming skills. Through a variety of tasks and activities, students get a chance to learn and gain confidence with simple robotics skills before moving on to more advanced concepts.

**Sign up Now!**

- Location: Classes are held at Poplar Tree in Resource Room 2
- Time: Classes are ninety minutes long, and last from 3:30 - 5:00 pm.
- Course Fee: \$195 (\$180 for eight ninety minute classes + \$15 materials fee.)
- Refund Policy: Parents may cancel in writing at any time to receive a prorated refund for the remaining classes.

Classes are capped at 12 students and spaces are limited, so sign up now! Please return registration form and payment to the box labeled Fairfax Collegiate. Contact Chelese McClain (cpmclain715@yahoo.com) for more information.

**www.FairfaxCollegiate.com  
703 481-3080 • Info@FairfaxCollegiate.com**

# Poplar Tree PTA • Fairfax Collegiate After-School Robotics Registration Form

## Mobile Robotics Grades 4-6

- Dates: Wednesdays from Feb 8 - Mar 28 for eight classes
- Time: 90 min classes from 3:30 - 5:00PM
- Course Fee: \$195/student (includes \$15 materials fee)

## WeDo Robotics Grades 1-3

- Dates: Thursdays from Feb 9 - Mar 29 for eight classes
- Time: 90 min classes from 3:30 - 5:00PM
- Course Fee: \$195/student (includes \$15 materials fee)

Forms must be returned to the school (**box labeled Fairfax Collegiate in the front office**) and checks made out to Poplar Tree PTA. Please contact Chelese McClain with any questions (cpmclain715@yahoo.com). Space is limited, so act now to ensure your spot.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the for the class(es) you'd like to register for:

Mobile Robotics:

WeDo Robotics:

## Refund Policy

Classes may be cancelled based on low enrollment, and full refunds provided. Parents may cancel in writing at any time to receive a prorated refund for the remaining classes.

[www.FairfaxCollegiate.com](http://www.FairfaxCollegiate.com) 703 481-3080 • Info@FairfaxCollegiate.com