



# The Panther PAWS

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Poplar Tree Elementary

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Sharon S. Williams, Principal

Hallie Dillon, Asst. Principal

Arian Hadley, PTA President

Kathy Dennis and Betsy Pettis,  
Coordinators

## Principal's Message~Words of Williams



Upon the leaves,  
The falling leaves,  
I see the crescent moon,  
Upon the leaves,  
The falling leaves,  
birds chirp melodic tunes,  
Upon the colors,

of falling leaves, I see a blue tint sky,  
Upon the helm, of falling leaves,  
Thanksgiving is drawing nigh.

~SSWilliams 2011

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*November is here and parent/teacher conferences have begun. An active partnership among our school community is an essential building block towards Excellent student achievement. Thus, having an ongoing collaborative dialogue with your child's teacher now and throughout the school year will help support this belief and ensure that we are indeed "Learning Together and Reaching our Potential". Enjoy your parent/teacher conversations! I am certain you will glean a lot about your child's academic and social goals and the great teaching and learning that take place each day at Poplar Tree. Thank you for all you do!*

~Mrs. Williams

### Featured Articles

AAP Newsletter 8-9

**NEXT ISSUE:**  
**December 2nd**



### Calendar of Events!

|                |                                                                       |                |           |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| November 10    | Veterans Day Assembly                                                 | 9:30am         | Gym       |
| November 15    | PTA Meeting                                                           | 7:00pm         | LA Room   |
| November 17    | Annual Thanksgiving Lunch                                             |                | Cafeteria |
| November 18    | Progress Reports Go Home!                                             |                |           |
| November 23    | Two-Hour Early Dismissal! Students dismissed at approximately 1:20pm. |                |           |
| November 24-25 | Thanksgiving Holiday! Gobble! Gobble!                                 |                |           |
| November 30    | Fifth Grade Choral Production!                                        |                |           |
| December 3     | PTA WINTERFEST!                                                       | 10:00am-3:00pm |           |

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

## School Attendance, Absences and Tardies

Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between successful school performance and attendance at school. School engagement is everyone's responsibility. Parents have a responsibility to encourage, support and help children learn effectively, while the students have a responsibility to be active participants and to develop responsible behavior. The school staff also has a responsibility to address ways to intervene and help students who experience difficulty engaging in education.

Student absences and tardies are recorded as excused or unexcused each day. Please refer to the student handbook for the explanation of what defines an excused and unexcused absence. Tardies to school can also cause an impact on school performance. The first bell at Poplar Tree is 8:35. All students should be in their classroom no later than 8:40 a.m. Students are not counted as tardy if they are late due to a bus delay. We want students to be fully engaged in their school work and that starts with being here, on time and actively participating in all of the day's events. For more information on school attendance, check the FCPS website at: <http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/ssaw/attendance/> If you have any questions or concerns, please contact either of the school counselors, Shari Hirsch or Carol Hoffman.

## Parent Resources

We often have parents asking us for specific information on a variety of subjects. While we can provide that, there is already a wealth of information available right at your finger tips (or keystrokes) on the FCPS website for parents. Here are some examples:

**Bully Prevention/Good Mental Health:** <http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/ssaw/violenceprevention/index.shtml>

**Internet Safety:** [http://fcpsnet.fcps.edu/it/offices/ito/nss/data\\_security/documents/InternetSafetyBrochure\\_r1.pdf](http://fcpsnet.fcps.edu/it/offices/ito/nss/data_security/documents/InternetSafetyBrochure_r1.pdf)

Fairfax County Public Schools offer both parenting classes as well as classes and resources through their Parent Resource Center. Here are a few links for these:

Parenting Classes: <http://www.fcps.edu/cco/fam/resources/classes/index.shtml>

Parent Resource Center: <http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/index.shtml>

For a complete list of all upcoming workshops and activities go to the PRC web site <http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/workshops.htm>

### **Upcoming Parenting programs:**

Wellness, "Join us for a relaxing morning to focus on taking care of yourself and your relationships.

Learn and share practical strategies to help manage stress and improve wellness. Thursday,

November 10, 2011, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Dunn Loring Center

Flyer: <http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/resources/events/documents/Wellness.pdf> Social Skills Solutions for Children with Special Needs, "Specialists from the Office of Special education instruction will present strategies to help children with special needs improve their social skills at this free workshop for parents!" Tuesday, November 29, 2011, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. Burke Centre Library.

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Flyer: [http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/resources/events/docs/SocialSkills\\_flier.pdf](http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/resources/events/docs/SocialSkills_flier.pdf)

ADHD: Boys vs. Girls: Does Gender Matter? “Learn how gender not only affects symptoms of ADHD, but also social skills, coexisting conditions and various treatment modalities. Thursday, December 15, 2011, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm, Woodson High School

Flyer: <http://www.fcps.edu/cco/prc/resources/events/documents/Flyer->



# Just Say No Club



Our Just Say No club kicked off the school year with a great Red Ribbon Week for all the students at Poplar Tree. While everyone had a lot of fun with the various “spirit” days, we also hope the students received a strong message of choosing healthy and safe choices in their lives. Our next Just Say No Club meeting will be Wednesday, November 16, 2011 from 3:30 – 4:30. If you have a 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade student who is interested in joining, they still can. Applications are available in the front office. We appreciate all the parents being on time to pick up promptly at 4:30 p.m.

**Do you work in a **science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) career?**  
If so, we need your help!**

The 5<sup>th</sup> grade team is creating a database of STEM careers. Research shows that students are more likely to pursue a career in science, technology, engineering or math if they know someone in that career. So we’ll use the information we gather from parents like you to help students make the connection between what they are learning in the classroom and careers like yours.

If you are willing to help, we’ll ask you to complete a short survey about your interests in elementary school, the classes you loved in school, your college major, and your experience in the work place. Your information will only be used to help Poplar Tree students explore the world of science, math, technology and engineering!

Want to help? Contact:

Shari Hirsch

School Counselor

[Shari.hirsch@fcps.edu](mailto:Shari.hirsch@fcps.edu)

703-633-7458

## Panther P.E. Playbook



November will be a fun month in PE. We hope to be outside for grades 3 thru 6 playing soccer. Make sure you bring a sweatshirt or jacket. We will learn the basics of soccer including the dribbling, throw ins, punting, passing and shooting. Students will get to play in our lead up game called Zone Soccer. They will be evaluated at the end of the unit for their skills.

Grades Kindergarten thru 2nd will be participate in a Soccer Unit as well but with more focus on dribbling and passing. We will play some games outside so it is important to bring a sweatshirt or jacket.

The end of the month will feature our big event the Turkey Bowl. This annual tradition is a fun game where students will work on their scare-crow throws and celebrate Thanksgiving down in the gym. As always we will start each class with jogging and a fitness warm up.

*PE Teachers ~ Rob Thompson, Greg Stuart , Diane Morris*

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



Thanks to all parents, students, and teachers who came to the book fair and supported the library by purchasing books during the fair. The book fair was a great success. The money that was made from the book fair will help us purchase new technology for the library. Past purchases have included library computers, printers, book shelves, and my wonderful wall-mounted Smart Board! Without your support, we would be unable to update our technology and stay current with new equipment.



We have many students with "Long Overdue" books. Parents, please, if you receive an overdue notice in the mail, please check with your child to see if they have returned the book to the library or call the library office to check. We appreciate your help in getting these books back to the library.



\*Second grade artists created fantastic buildings using crayons, that gave a clue of what they are selling inside.

\*First grade students finished printing an edition of two prints from their styrofoam printing plate.



\*Sixth grade students created prints of a special place from a vivid memory.

\*Fifth grade students made a sketchbook and are using it a lot. They created some great self portraits.



\*Fourth grade students illustrated time phrases.



# LITERACY LINKS

by: **LITERACY LINKS**

## What is the DRA?

*Mrs. Majkowski, Reading Specialist*

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2) provides teachers with a method for assessing and documenting students' development and behaviors as readers over time. Its purpose is to identify students' reading level, defined as a text on which students meet specific criteria in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Additionally, and more importantly, it helps in identifying students' independent reading strengths and weaknesses thus helping to plan for instruction and monitor reading growth. The assessments are conducted during one-on-one reading conferences as children read specially selected assessment texts. A set of leveled texts, which increase in difficulty, are used for the assessment. The DRA evaluates the major aspects of reading that are critical to independence as a reader. The aspects of this test are based on current research in reading from sources such as the *National Reading Panel Report (2000)* and *Reading for Understanding (Rand Education, 2002.)*

At Poplar Tree, teachers use this assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to drive their instruction and meet your child's need. Teachers will be sharing your child's reading strengths and weaknesses at your Fall parent/teacher conferences. A reminder that once you know your child's DRA2 level, there are books that correlate with the DRA2 in the reading room that may be checked out by families and used for reading support at home. Should you have questions about these books or the DRA2, please contact Julie Majkowski, Reading Specialist, at [jlmajkowski@fcps.edu](mailto:jlmajkowski@fcps.edu).



## "Note-able News!"



*"Life is one grand, sweet song, so start the music." (Ronald Reagan)*

Music is alive at Poplar Tree! On Thursday, October 20, 55 Poplar Tree Sixth Graders attended and participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual **Chantilly Choral Pyramid Concert**. We are so proud of our students that participated in this wonderful event.

Fifth Grade Chorus is diligently rehearsing in preparation for their Winter Concert, **"Shine Your Light!"** on Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 in the cafeteria.

On Thursday, November 10, all Poplar Tree students will participate in the school-wide **Veterans Day Assembly**. All kindergarten through sixth grade students will sing a military medley to include the Army, Navy, Marine, Coast Guard and Air Force songs in addition to "The Star Spangled Banner" and our school song, "Rockin' Panthers."

This month we would like to spotlight **SINGING** in the General Music Program. Singing activities are designed to develop each child's potential use of the voice. Our philosophy is that all children can sing and should be encouraged to use the voice as an instrument of expression and communication. These experiences can help the child toward a positive self-image and give each individual child a chance to enjoy a feeling of group spirit and unity.

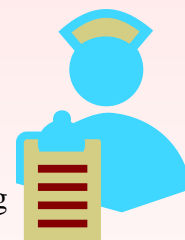
**NOVEMBER SONG OF THE MONTH:** "America the Beautiful"

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



## Clinic News

Please consider becoming a volunteer for the School Health Room! Volunteers in the School Health Room can assist the School Health Aide with care of the sick and injured, help with vision and hearing screening and provide coverage for short periods of time for the School Health Aide!



Please join us for a brief School Health Room volunteer training if you are interested in becoming a volunteer in the school clinic!

**Volunteer training will be held at the Herndon Reston District Office located at: 1850 Cameron Run Drive, Reston VA. on November 16, 2011 from 12:30-2:30pm in the Multi-Purpose Room, First Floor.** If you are unable to attend the November 16th training, we will offer the training again on January 10, 2012 from 10:30-12:30pm at the same location.

Please consider this great opportunity to volunteer in your school! Please contact the School Public Nurse or the School Health Aide for further questions regarding this opportunity!



## Keep in Touch (KIT)

Keep In Touch is Fairfax County Public Schools' notification system

### KIT Basic (Automatic Enrollment)

Parents of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) students are automatically enrolled in the KIT Basic service. FCPS schools use KIT Basic to communicate emergency information, attendance, and outreach messages (news and announcements from Poplar Tree). Basic contact information from the student information system is uploaded to the KIT system. It is important for parents to keep their child's emergency contact information up to date.

### Updating KIT Basic Contact Information

Parents may view and update their child's emergency and contact information online through [weCare@School](#), a feature of [FCPS 24-7 Learning \(Blackboard\)](#) using a Parent View Account. Parents may also direct requests to update student contact information to the student information assistant at their child's school.

### KIT Plus (Subscription Service)

Anyone interested in news, events, and updates from FCPS may [subscribe](#) to receive information on the following topics:

Adult and Community Education (ACE) classes and news

Current issues (budget, boundary studies, summer programs)

Delayed openings and school closings

FCPS job opportunities

Magnet schools and advanced academic programs

News releases and media tips

PTA, PTSA, PTO information

School Board news and updates

Special education services

In addition to these topics, subscribers may also receive announcements from up to five schools of their choice. KIT Plus is a **self-subscribing, self-updating, and self-unsubscribing** service. **Note: schools and offices cannot update or delete subscribers.** Subscribers are responsible for updating and removing themselves from the subscription system.

To avoid duplicate messages or continuing to receive message from a school when your child moves to other schools in or out of the FCPS system, parents of FCPS students are **not** encouraged to subscribe to the "News and announcements" for the school where their child attends if their e-mail is already listed in the contact record for their child (see KIT Basic).

### To become a new Keep in Touch Plus subscriber

Go to: <https://signup.blackboardconnect.com/fcps/>



# Advanced Academics Newsletter

Laura Moorhead - Advanced Academics Resource Teacher

November 2011

## ***Level I Lessons in the Classrooms –***

**Grade K** – Students talked about things that change and gave examples such as seasons, plants, clothes. They then had to draw something and show that it undergoes change.

**Grade 1** —A better toothbrush was the subject of the student’s creativity. They looked at a regular toothbrush and then talked about what else could be included on the toothbrush. Some had mini-tvs, iPods, floss and toothpaste dispensers.

**Grade 2**— Students talked about how sometimes you have a “perfect day.” We shared some of those and then talked about how to design a “perfect day.” They drew a picture of themselves on their perfect day and shared with each other.

**Grade 3**— Students discovered, through questioning, that there are different kinds of questions. They observed, that most questions are defined by the answer. Closed questions brought specific, short answers. Open questions were asked if you want a long, involved answer with opinions or explanation. Examples of both were shared and then each student created one open and one closed question. They asked each other their questions and reflected on the answers.

**Grade 4**— Students, as in grade 3, examined questioning and how to determine what kind of questions to ask. They determined that what you are looking for in the answer, determined whether an open or closed questions was required. They then practiced writing open and closed questions.

**Grade 5** – Students determined that it was important to learn about your teacher in order to be successful in learning from him/her. They designed a playground bench specifically tailored to what they knew about their teacher so far. We had a lot of Redskins themes and TVs and foot massagers included. Many found they had to ask their teacher questions in order to proceed.

Deadlines for Referral for *AAP Level IV*

*February 3, 2012 AAP Level IV Referral Form and optional materials due (2nd graders not in pool and 3rd– 6th)*

*March-April 2012 Central Selection Committee meets*

*End of April 2012 Eligibility decisions mailed*

*May 1-11, 2012 Full-time AAP orientations held at Level IV sites*

*June 1, 2012 Appeals due to AAP Office*

*Fall 2012 Eligible students grades 3-8 may attend full-time Level IV AAPs beginning 1st semester 2012-13*

*Report Cards—Parents of Level III students will receive the first report card at the end of the second quarter.*

Contact Information:

**Laura Moorhead**

**Advanced Academics Resource Teacher**

[laura.moorhead@fcps.edu](mailto:laura.moorhead@fcps.edu)

703-633-7467



### **Level III Pull-out -**

**Junior Great Books** – Students read stories and then discussed the stories in terms of author meaning and how the author leads the reader to understanding. Questions that arose while reading were also discussed to achieve further understanding of the stories.

**Word Masters** – The words for the first test of the year have been prepared and distributed to students. They should study one or two words per night. The first test will be the first week of December. Analogies were reviewed and practice tests will be taken before the first test.

**Strategies Lab**—New games were purchased that are especially designed to teach students strategies. They are kept in the AART room and time is allotted for students to choose and play these games.

**Jason Project**— Students studied the weather measurements necessary to predict weather and they looked at designs, and some built, instruments that record wind speed, pressure, dew point, rainfall and wind directions. We then studied how all of these variables come together to form tornadoes, hurricanes and other violent weather systems.

**Chess**— We have had a couple of class periods where we have been able to squeeze in some play. New students who have never played chess are being instructed so they can get up to speed.

**Problem Solving**— Students were presented with two riddles to solve. They had multiple steps and required extensive analytical thinking. Most figured them out.

**Stories with holes**— Good questioning was required for students to figure out what was missing from a series of stories. They could only ask yes/no questions.

### **FCPS Advanced Academic Programs: A Continuum of Services**



**Elementary School Opportunities**

#### **Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies, Grades K-6 (Level I)**

The Advanced Academic Resource Teacher and classroom teachers teach nine higher order thinking strategies across all subject areas and grade levels. The strategies are embedded in lessons that incorporate 21st Century thinking skills and extend and enrich the Program of Studies (POS) for all learners. Student responses to the lessons are also used to collect evidence of advanced academic potential in order to ensure equity and increase access to advanced academic programs.

#### **Differentiated Lessons in Areas of Academic Strength, Grades K-6 (Level II)**

Differentiated lessons are offered to students in areas of specific academic strength. The Advanced Academic Resource Teacher collaborates with classroom teachers to provide additional challenge through resources that extend and enrich the FCPS Program of Studies.

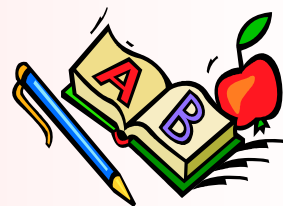
#### **Part-Time Advanced Academic Program, Grades 3-6 (Level III)**

Students identified by a local school screening committee for advanced academic services (Level III) are challenged through models and strategies designed to extend and enrich the POS in the four core subject areas. Students receive direct instruction from the Advanced Academic

Resource Teacher in one or more areas of academic strength at their local schools.

#### **Full-Time Advanced Academic Program, Grades 3-8 (Level IV)**

Students found eligible for placement in a full-time Advanced Academic Program (Level IV) through a central selection process receive a highly challenging instructional program in the four core subject areas. The Level IV program is designed to meet the needs of advanced learners with a strong emphasis on higher level thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. Students have ongoing opportunities for reflection and self-assessment that develop an understanding of the characteristics, demands, and responsibilities of advanced intellectual development.



## PTA President's Message



November is the traditional time for giving thanks. I want to tell you again how much I appreciate the fantastic support that all of you are giving to Poplar Tree and the PTA.

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Vision and Hearing Screenings, Class Picture Day and the Book Fair. Special thanks to Lori Barnes and Jen Brunner for organizing a great Family Fun Night; Charlotte Matthews for arranging for dinner for the custodial staff and Halloween treats for all the staff members; Joyce Baker and Dina Hanigan for collecting and counting the box tops and labels you sent in last month; and Joanne DiCesare for arranging the cultural arts assemblies, including last month's "Little Red Hen", which received rave reviews from students and staff.

**Election Day is November 8<sup>th</sup>.** This is your chance to vote for School Board members. Every seat is up for election and there are 27 school board candidates on the ballot. To learn more about the candidates, please visit [www.fccpta.org](http://www.fccpta.org). FCCPTA created a questionnaire for the candidates and their responses are posted on the website.

**Winterfest is coming!!!** On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, come on down to Poplar Tree for Winterfest – a fabulous family event that includes the opportunity to get some holiday shopping done. There will be a Lego challenge, chili cook-off, crafters, and the **Silent Auction**. The committee has been working hard to make this a super family event and fundraiser for the PTA. We look forward to seeing you there!

Our next PTA meeting is November 15<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Language Arts Room. We'd love to see you there! As always, feel free to contact me with any comments and ideas.

Wishing you and your family a happy and safe Thanksgiving holiday!

*Arian Hadley*

Arian Hadley

PTA President

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

703-817-0296



## SPOOKY BINGO FAMILY FUN NIGHT A SUCCESS!



Poplar Tree's Family Fun Night "Spooky Bingo" on Oct. 28 was a sell-out success! Thanks to everyone who came out for a great night of fun and fundraising – over \$1,400 was raised for the PTA and costumed guests showed lots of spooky spirit! Everyone in costume got a second Bingo card free and there were plenty of princesses, morphmen, Jedis, witches and even one very nerdy guy pulling the Bingo balls.

Many thanks to our generous sponsors: Greenbriar Domino's Pizza, Buffalo Wing Factory, Giant Food, Sweet Frog Frozen Yogurt, Fair Lakes Bagel Buddies, Tony's NY Pizza, Target, Wal-Mart and AMF Bowling in Centerville. Please be sure to give these folks your business and say thank you for their support of our school.

A big congratulations goes to our Bingo Night winners: Wendy Acevedo, Kathy Gustafson, Ava Bartnik, Lexi Rickard, Kevin Powers, Emma Gustafson, Natalie Forello, Amanda Enga, Grace O'Shea and Jean Bayer! Our raffle winners were: Owen Morgan, Claire Myers, William Hardmon and Kellen Hadley.

Thanks to Chris Barnes and Tim Brunner for serving as our announcers for the night, and to our volunteers: Michael Nelson, John Nelson, Heather Ellison, Kim Blitzer, Jill Ruehle, Jared DiCesare, Naomi Atughonu, John Imperial, Brady Ryan, Julia Brunner, Peri Cooper, Tara Hackett, Caroline Barnes and Kate Wozniak.

Our next family fun night is schedule for Friday night, Feb. 10, 2012. Mark your calendar! We will see you there.

## WINTERFEST!!!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual **Poplar Tree Winterfest** is coming on **December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 10am-3pm**, and we are planning fun for the whole family! Stop by and shop at the silent auction or craft fair, sample some chili at the chili cook-off, or try your hand at the LEGO Brick Challenge contest.

The popular silent auction has already collected over \$7,000 worth of items for bidding; including autographed sports memorabilia, kids books signed by their famous authors, artwork, bowling parties, theater tickets, gift cards, and much more. Priceless items that are only available at this event will also include the "Principal for a Day" package or the reserved front-row seats to the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Show in June, just to name a few. We will be accepting credit card payments for the first time this year, so plan to do some holiday shopping and get a great bargain at the same time.

If you do not win your auction of choice, you can also shop at the **craft fair** for one-of-a-kind gifts by local artisans. Shop among vendors selling handmade gemstone jewelry, hope chests, fleece gifts, holiday greenery, and other goods.

Starting in early November, more details will be available on the PTA website regarding auction items and crafters. **Keep checking back, as the lists keep growing!** Information will come home in your child's backpack about how to participate in the chili or Lego contests.

We also need youth and adult volunteers to assist with set up on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and the event itself on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please contact either of the event co-chairs below if you can help, or for any other information related to **Winterfest**. See you there!

**Liz Zielinski – 703-961-8445 or [elizabeth.zielinski@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.zielinski@gmail.com)**

**Mary Yee – 703-378-0297 or [tuliptreemom@verizon.net](mailto:tuliptreemom@verizon.net)**



**December 2011**

## **Food and Nutrition Services Energy Zone**

**ChooseMyPlate is the new food icon based on the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Guidelines encourage all Americans to eat a healthy diet and be physically active.**



Enjoy your food, but eat less.

Avoid oversized portions.

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

Switch to fat-free or low fat (1%) milk.

Make at least half your grains whole grains.

Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals – and choose foods with lower numbers.

Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov>

## **NUTRIFAX**

### **Fighting Childhood Obesity**

Today, childhood obesity is a major national health crisis affecting about 25% of all students. Poor diets and lack of exercise are the major causes of this epidemic. Parents are role models who must take an active role in guiding their children's food selections and encouraging physical activity. It is recommended that children exercise at least 60 minutes a day and spend less time in front of the television or computer.