

The Carson Courier

Volume 14, Issue 6

February 2012

*"Rediscovering... the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in."
from Rachel Carson's "A Sense of Wonder"*

A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents,

Many of you may have seen Time Magazine's January 22nd edition in which reporter Kayla Webley examined the impact of the federal No Child Left Behind law on the 10th anniversary of its passage. Rachel Carson Middle School was featured as a high achieving school that did not make the federal government's "adequate yearly progress" benchmark for the 2011 school year. In the article the reporter, who spent two days at Rachel Carson talking with staff, students, and parents, highlighted the achievements the school has earned since it opened its doors in 1998. While she questions the law's validity if a school like Rachel Carson could not meet these standards, we have nonetheless been diligent in examining why our SOL test results did not meet the standard and what we can do to ensure that every child achieves at the highest level.

This school year, as in the past, we continue to commit ourselves to ensuring that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum and a host of opportunities to expand their interests through extra- and co-curricular activities. We also have in place a multitude of support programs that provide students with additional time to learn and be successful, with several new initiatives this year designed to specifically address the identified areas for improvement. These programs occur during the school day, after school, and on Saturdays. Our staff is dedicated in creating a learning environment that addresses the needs of adolescent learners.

The Time article moved me to reflect on our progress over the past 14 years. I came across a principle that we held in high regard as we built our vision and mission for a successful middle school. It compares the two concepts of EXCELLENCE and PERFECTION. I would like to share this with you since I believe it is still applicable to our mission.

Excellence is willing to be wrong.

Perfection is being right.

Excellence is risk.

Perfection is fear.

Excellence is powerful.

Perfection is judgment.

Excellence is spontaneous.

Perfection is control.

Excellence is accepting.

Perfection is judgment.

Excellence is giving.

Perfection is taking.

Excellence is confidence.

Perfection is doubt.

Excellence is flowing.

Perfection is pressure.

Excellence is journey.

Perfection is destination.

-Author Unknown

At Rachel Carson we have always strived toward excellence. Excellence for us means having a heart for children and doing everything we can to support them in being successful.

August Frattali, Principal

Carson Student Recognition!

1. **3rd Annual Carderock Math Contest (sponsored by the Naval Warfare Research Laboratory)** – RCMS teams won 2nd place and 5th place team awards at the competition in January. In addition, two RCMS students won 7th and 8th place individual honors. One student was chosen to participate in the “countdown” round and earned the 7th place award.
2. **Creative Kids Magazine** – An RCMS student’s story was published in a recent edition of the magazine.
3. **Arena Stage’s 2012 Student Playwrights Project Ten-Minute Play Competition** – One RCMS advanced drama student was selected as a winner and a second RCMS advanced drama student was awarded honorable mention in this competition from among over 800 submissions. The honorable mention student’s play will be read onstage by Arena’s professional actors. The student who was named a winner (the only middle school grand prize winner) will participate in playwriting master classes at Arena and the winning play will be performed by professional actors at Arena. The winner will also receive a cash prize.
4. **Science Olympiad Competition at Fairfax High School** – Carson’s teams faced tough competition against 25 other teams but succeeded in capturing 5th, 7th, and 11th place awards.

NOTES FROM THE OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES

As we begin the second semester, it is a time for students and parents to reflect on their child's academic successes and to especially note academic areas in need of improvement. Report cards were mailed home on Friday, February 3. If you have not seen the report card, please call the student services office for a copy. As a reminder, we would like to reiterate Fairfax County's policy for promotion to the next grade:

Promotion Policy

To qualify for promotion, seventh and eighth grade middle school students must demonstrate knowledge and competency based upon identified standards of achievement in the four core areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. To guarantee promotion, students must demonstrate proficiency in the foundational knowledge and skills in each of the four core subject areas and earn a passing final grade based on grade level expectations. Students who earn an “F” as a final grade in one or two core subjects are retained, at the Principal’s discretion, and encouraged to participate in an intervention program. Based upon the extent to which a student demonstrates knowledge and competency of identified standards of achievement in an intervention program, he/she is promoted or retained. Students who are promoted may receive continued intervention throughout the following school year. If students do not participate in an intervention program, they are retained at the discretion of the Principal. Students who earn an “F” in three or four core courses are retained, at the discretion of the Principal.

Should your child be in danger of not passing his/her courses, please seek assistance from your child’s team counselor. We recommend that you call the counselor and set up a conference with the team teachers and/or any other teacher of a subject in which your child is having difficulty. The school can assist by recommending teacher help after school, suggesting strategies for studying at home, initiating weekly progress sheets, and generally working with parents and students to find the best methods to be academically successful. It is never too late to guide your child toward positive

change. The student services staff is here to work with you and your child. The student services office number is (703) 925-3614.

REGISTRATIONS

During the months of February and March, the counseling staff will be busy registering students for courses they will take in the 2012-2013 school year. Students will be working with their counselors on completing the course selection sheets. When these are brought home, please review with your child his/her course selections and have your student return the signed course selection sheet to school as soon as possible. For information about curriculum and the registration process, please attend the parent orientation for your child's grade level and if you have questions, please call your child's counselor.

SOL TESTING

This year the SOL testing windows are March 5-8 and May 16-June 3. All eighth grade students will be taking tests in English (Reading/Literature/Research), Social Studies, Science, and Math 8. End-of-course tests such as Algebra I and Geometry I will be taken on line along with the other core course subjects. Seventh graders enrolled in Algebra I will take the Algebra I SOL test and all 7th graders will take the 7th grade History test on line this year as well. All 8th graders will take the Math 8 test and Algebra I or Geometry I if they are enrolled in these courses. These tests are very important for all of our students, as they are indicators of academic growth. SOL test results for high school credit courses are counted toward verified units of credit for graduation. During the testing time each day for the eighth grade writing SOLs, all seventh graders will be taking a practice writing prompt and reviewing for history and math SOLs. We would encourage you not to make any medical appointments at this time that would take your child out of the testing sequence. All testing will begin after a shortened first period each day. The tentative schedule for the SOL writing test is as follows:

March 6	Writing Test/Multiple Choice
March 7	Direct Writing Test/Direct Prompt
May 16 – June 3	Remaining SOL Tests & Make Ups

The May 16 – June 3 non-writing SOL schedule will appear in the March Courier.

Please encourage your child to do his or her very best on these tests.

- Plan to have students attend school. No dental or other appointments should be scheduled during the testing time.
- Students need to be on time to school.
- Help your child to be successful by ensuring that he or she is well rested.
- Students should have a nutritional breakfast.
- Students should be prepared by having #2 pencils ready for each testing session.

SOL Writing Field Test (Practice Test): Beginning with the spring 2013 test administration, the SOL writing tests will be administered online. In preparation for these changes, a full scale field test for the online writing tests will occur in spring 2012. *Note: The regular paper/pencil test administration of the spring 2012 writing test will occur as scheduled on March 6 & 7, 2012.*

All students who are scheduled to take the grade 5, grade 8, and end-of-course writing tests in spring 2012 will also participate in the online field test. The SOL writing field test has an online multiple-choice/technology-enhanced item (MC/TEI) component and an online short-paper component. The field test window for the short paper component is February 13 - March 2, 2012 and March 12 - 30,

2012; the field test window for the online MC/TEI component is March 12 - 30, 2012. Schools must be done by March 30, 2012.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance at school is necessary for students to achieve academic success. All Virginia schools are required to refer students to the school attendance officer when a student has accumulated five days of unexcused absences. With the sixth unexcused absence, more severe action will be required which could end in a petition to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. If a child is refusing to attend school for any reason, please call your child's counselor or administrator so that we can be of assistance to you and your child.

REMINDERS

Parents, if your home or work numbers have changed please send a note with these changes to Ms. Lloyd, Guidance Assistant. Should you move during the school year, it is imperative that you provide us with proof of residency (house contract or lease agreement) as well as the new address. Thank you for your assistance.

If your child needs to take a medication here at school, please be sure to fill out the proper paper work for this to occur. All medications must be brought in by a parent, not the student.

HS CREDIT COURSES

If your child has dropped a high school credit course such as a language, algebra or geometry, and you wish to have the grade removed from the transcript, a request must be made in writing to the high school that your student will be attending prior to the beginning of the next school year. Please note that the middle school cannot remove the grade after the first nine weeks for rising 9th graders.

IMPORTANT FUTURE DATES

Feb 3	Report cards mailed home
Feb. 17	HS registrations/7 th grade Read-in
Mar 2	Progress reports and interims go home
Mar 5-7	8th grade Standards of Learning (SOL) writing tests; 7th grade practice SOL writing tests
Mar 22 & 23	Elementary student orientations - 9:30-11:00
Apr 12	Showcase – 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Apr 13	Report cards and progress reports go home
Apr 18	Parent Advisory Council

May 14 through June 1 - Standards of Learning tests (SOL) for all 8th grade students, 7th grade History SOL (on line) and 7th and 8th grade End-of-Course SOLs (on line) for 7th and 8th grade students in algebra and geometry.

SUMMER PROGRAMS AND CAMPS

Information about summer enrichment programs and camps are coming into the student services office on a daily basis. We will maintain a folder/box with information about these programs. If you are interested, please stop by and look through the folder/box. As of now, we do not have any information on the FCPS programs offered this summer. However, more information about summer enrichment opportunities can be found by contacting the Fairfax County Association for the Gifted at <http://www.fcag.org/>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

About this time of the year, our counselors receive many school and summer program referrals and recommendation requests. This year in particular, we have gotten quite a few. Due to the many obligations of counselors and teachers, we would ask that you please allow a two-week window to have these requests processed and returned. We would also recommend that the student come and ask the counselor or staff member to fill out the recommendation in lieu of dropping it off at the front desk. We may have questions regarding the application and that is a perfect opportunity to obtain any necessary information.

BLACKBOARD ACCOUNT

In order to facilitate timely communication for our teachers, we request that parents take the time to log onto Blackboard with their student and make sure a current and accurate e-mail address is listed there.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' MESSAGE

Looking back at the first semester, the administrative team at Carson applauds the excellence that our students and staff have demonstrated. Students have participated in a wide variety of activities that range from the winter music concerts to math competitions to after-school activities. We are confident that the second semester will be as exciting, rewarding, and fun as the first.

As you may know, our focus with students at Carson is on the "Three Rs" (ready, respectful, responsible). We are happy to report that our students are respectful towards each other and towards staff members and are responsible in managing their schedules and their difficult workloads. The area which remains a concern for us is that of readiness - in some cases, student attendance (excused or unexcused) is an area to focus on for improvement during the second semester. We would like to ask for your help with making sure students are ready for school and their classes. Having effective morning routines, good attendance rates, and the required materials are all important contributors of readiness. We feel that with improvements in this area, students will be better prepared and even more successful at Carson, throughout their academic careers, and in the work force.

Currently, we are beginning to think about and plan for next year. By the time this Courier is out, we will have had our rising 8th grade parent orientation evening, and high schools will be preparing to welcome the rising 9th graders to their curriculum nights. As we look ahead to the future in 8th and 9th grade, it is important to keep focused on doing well in classes and taking full advantage of all the after-school activities available here at Carson. High school graduation may seem far away, but students at Carson are laying the groundwork for all the things they would like to do in high school and beyond, and doing well now translates into more opportunities later.

We're looking forward to a fantastic third quarter as we continue to work together to make Carson a great place for kids to learn, explore, grow, and succeed.

Tamara Ballou, Sybil Terry, and Phil Hudson

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

With the close of the first semester behind us, our after-school program continues to be a success! We have many students, staff members, and parent volunteers involved with our program. Thank

you to everyone for your continued support of the program! This program would not be possible without the collaboration amongst the school community!

On the horizon, we have numerous competitions/conferences/performances by our students. Please check in with the individual sponsors if you need more details about these. Student behavior and expectations at these events are the same as when in the school building. Please remind your child to behave appropriately and actively participate when appropriate.

After-School Program Reminders for you...

- Discuss your child's after school plans with him or her ahead of time to avoid any confusion in the afternoon.
- Due to the large number of students who stay after each day, it is extremely difficult to get personal messages delivered to students. Plan appropriately and discuss things with your child ahead of time.
- Detailed program information can be found on the "RCMS School Community" Blackboard page.
- In the event of a 2-hour-early closing or school cancellation, all after-school activities will be cancelled. All students will be sent home on their regular buses. Parents should monitor the FCPS website and radio/television during times of inclement weather for emergency notices.

Have questions or need more information about the after-school program? Contact Mrs. Bromberg, After-School Program Specialist, TLBromberg@fcps.edu

CARSON STAFF IN THE NEWS!

Congratulations to two of Carson's teachers on recent honors. Cindy Burgett, RCMS Civics teacher, was named VFW Post 8469's "Teacher of the Year" as part of the VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award Program in the middle school category. Mrs. Burgett will receive a cash award to recognize her contributions to the citizenship education of our community's youth. She will also be honored at a dinner in February. Josh Bickford, RCMS Drama teacher, received word that one of his advanced drama students is a winner and one student was awarded honorable mention in the Arena Stage's 2012 Student Playwrights Ten-Minute Play Competition.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES



With the start of a new semester, student supplies such as pencils, paper, binders, tissues, etc., may be running low. Please check with your child to see if any additional supplies are needed.

ANNUAL PTA BOOK FAIR

This year's RCMS PTA book fair will be held in the library from Monday, March 19, through Friday, March 23. Students will visit the book fair with their English classes. Anyone wishing to volunteer to help with the book fair during the week should contact Jennifer Ayoub at ayjenn@yahoo.com.

PTA NEWS

The second half of the school year has begun and heralds numerous activities. This month, the PTA will be hosting a reception for all Reflection participants and their parents. I am pleased to

announce that we had two students win second place awards at the Fairfax County level in the areas of literature and music composition. I would like to give my thanks to Deepa Sivakumar and her committee for pulling together the RCMS Reflections program in only a few short weeks at the beginning of the year.

Volunteer opportunities abound in the coming weeks. The annual book fair will be held March 19-23, and volunteers will be needed for set-up and sales. The 8th grade Finance Park trips will occur the week of March 12th and upwards of 25 parent volunteers will be needed each day. And 8th Grade Celebration sub-committees are forming to help plan all aspects of this fun year-end event. If you submitted a volunteer contact form (yellow or blue) at the beginning of the year, you will receive emails to sign up for these activities. If you didn't send in a form, send an email to the PTA at rcmspta@gmail.com and let us know you'd like to receive our volunteer opportunity mailings.

Lastly, keep an eye out for information on the 8th grade flower bulb fundraiser this month. This is the main fundraising event for the 8th grade celebration and helps keep student ticket costs down. (The flowers are really beautiful!) If your child doesn't come home with an order form, extra forms will be available in the main office.

Our next PTA meeting is Tuesday, February 21, at 7:00 pm in the Library. All parents and teachers are welcome. I know so many of you help out in many ways - after school clubs, office help, teaching team support, as well as PTA activities. Your dedication is making a difference. Thank you for helping to make Carson Middle School such a wonderful place to educate our kids.

Diana Tycer-Bice
RCMS PTA President
dtycer@gmail.com

NUTRIFAX
FROM THE FCPS OFFICE OF FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

The two major oral health diseases are tooth decay (dental caries) and gum (periodontal) disease. Both diseases are influenced by nutrition and diet. Nutrition plays an important role in the development of teeth and oral tissue. Dental caries result from the interaction between the tooth, oral bacteria, and dietary carbohydrates (sugar and starch).

Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that forms on our teeth and turns the sugars and starches in our food into acids. These acids act on the tooth enamel and cause tooth decay. If high-acid producing or sugary foods (raisins, cookies, cakes, potato chips) are consumed, they should be eaten with meals, not as snacks. Cheeses, popcorn, raw fruits and vegetables are low-acid producing food and make healthy snacks.

To prevent dental disease, remember to:

1. Brush teeth after every meal with fluoridated toothpaste.
2. Floss teeth daily.
3. Visit the dentist and dental hygienist regularly.
4. Eat a nutritionally balanced diet.
5. Avoid foods that stay in the mouth a long time and stick to teeth (raisins, hard candies, and caramels).

Rachel Carson Administrative Office
Ph. 703.925.3600
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

August FrattaliPrincipal
 Cheryl Weaver.....Director of Student Services
 Tamara Ballou Assistant Principal
 Sybil Terry Assistant Principal
 Philip Hudson Assistant Principal
 Tracy Bromberg.....After-School Program Specialist
 Eileen Harrington..... Finance Technician
 Nancy Hofrichter..... Administrative Assistant
 Margie McCarthy Office Assistant
 Traci Nicol Office Assistant

Rachel Carson Attendance Line
Ph. 703.925.3636

Accessible 24 hours a day
7 days a week!

If you prefer to use your computer to notify us when your child will not be in school for any reason (except early check-out) or if he/she will be tardy, just send an e-mail to

CarsonMS.Attendance@fcps.edu.

Please do not send homework requests or early dismissal requests to this e-mail address.

Pre-arranged absence requests must be submitted three (3) school days in advance. If you know your student will be absent, have him or her bring a note to the front office giving the dates and reason for the absence. We will start the pre-arranged absence process, which will notify the attendance secretary as well as the teachers, and the student will be given his or her assignments for the time he or she will be out. At that point the pre-arranged absence form is submitted to the administrator for review. Pre-arranged absences may or may not be considered excused.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS

Parents are welcome to bring forgotten items to the front office.

Instructional time will not be interrupted to inform students when an item is dropped off.

It is the student's responsibility to check for forgotten items. Students are frequently reminded of this policy throughout the school year.

Please refrain from calling the Carson MS office asking that a message be delivered to your student. We cannot interrupt instructional time to give messages from home to students.

RCMS Student Services
Ph. 703.925.3614
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Cheryl Weaver Director of Student Services
 Brenda Humphrey Lead Counselor
 Esther Ferrell..... Counselor
 Joni Fraundorfer..... Counselor
 Rebecca Little Counselor
 Jamie Mahoney..... Counselor
 Lesa Lloyd..... Guidance Assistant
 Mikela Burris Clerical Assistant
 Donna Winston..... Social Worker
 Stephanie Harris Psychologist
 Danilda Bassols Parent Liaison
 Ph. 703.925.3603
 Jackie Plunkett..... School Health Aide
 Ph. 703.925.3610
 Kathleen Snow Public Health Nurse
 Ph. 703.925.3611

Please visit our school website and bookmark it as a "Favorite." Check the website often for the latest news about RCMS, *Couriers*, curriculum, calendars, lunch menus, PTA news, and links to FCPS 24/7, Keep in Touch, and emergency announcements.



Rachel Carson MS Website:

<http://www.fcps.edu/RachelCarsonMS>

VISITING RCMS

All outside doors are locked at all times. Our staff and students have been instructed not to open any locked doors for visitors. All visitors are directed to the main entrance marked **Door #1**. Press the doorbell located on the wall to the right of the right-hand set of doors, and when asked, display your photo ID and state the nature of your visit. When the door latch is released, pull the door open and proceed to the **Main Office** on your right.



Remember that we ask for photo identification when you pick up your student or visit the school.

February 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 RCMS Rising 8 th Grade Parent Orientation 7:00 p.m.	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17 Read-In HS Counselors meet with 8 th graders	18
19	20 Presidents' Day School Closed	21 RCMS PTA Meeting Library 7:00 p.m.	22	23 RCMS SCA Dance Cafeteria & Gym 3:00-4:30 p.m.	24	25
26	27	28	29 Spring Pictures Pre-Pay Only			

March 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 RCMS Rising 7 th Grade Parent Orientation 7:00 p.m. Break-out Sessions 6:15 p.m.	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 Music in our Schools Concert 7:00 p.m.	16 RCMS Talent Show 7:00 p.m.	17
8 th Graders Visit Finance Park March 12 – 16, 2012						
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
PTA Book Fair RCMS Library March 19 – 23, 2012						
		RCMS PTA Meeting Library 7:00 p.m.				
25	26	27 Parent Coffee 8:15 a.m.	28	29	30 3 rd Grading Period Ends	31