



# Charlottesville City Schools Report

Charlottesville City Schools May, 2006

## Letter from the School Board Chair

Dear Students, Staff, Parents, and Community Members,

With the last day of school quickly approaching, it is time for us to take a close look at the year, evaluate our accomplishments, and plan for our continued challenges. During the 2005-2006 school year, the board focused on two major initiatives--the superintendent search and the strategic plan. We look forward to welcoming Mrs. Rosa Atkins on July 1 and are grateful to Mr. Robert Thompson for his year of service as Acting Superintendent. The draft strategic plan, still under construction, will be discussed publicly at our May and June Board meetings. Staff members have, however, already begun implementation of many of its components including development of a stronger curriculum, communication processes, assessment systems, and others. Though not necessarily headline-making news, these initiatives have laid the groundwork for implementation of the plan and have provided us with needed tools to better support classroom instruction. Much work remains, but under the leadership of our new superintendent and with a comprehensive strategic plan to guide our way, we feel the division can move forward quickly and provide all children with the quality education they deserve.

On July 1, the school division will also welcome Charlottesville's first elected School Board members. Congratulations to new board members Leah Puryear and Juandiego Wade and to returning board member Ned Michie.

Julie Gronlund, Chair, Charlottesville School Board

## Strategic Plan Nears Completion

Completion of the school division's five-year strategic plan will mark one of the most important accomplishments of the year. Under the supervision of Acting Superintendent Robert Thompson and Associate Superintendent Gertrude Ivory, board members, staff, and community members participated in developing five overriding goals and specific objectives to support each goal. Current efforts are under way to establish implementation and evaluation strategies. Development of the strategic plan should be considered an ongoing process. As its elements unfold and their impact on student success is measured, changes will be made to reflect the new information and developing needs. Following is a summary of draft goals and objectives that form the plan, the blueprint for efforts to help all of our students succeed. Your comments are invited. The Board will finalize the Strategic Plan at the end of June.

### **Goal 1: To increase academic achievement for all students and close achievement gaps.**

Academic achievement will be measured in a variety of ways as staff look at students individually and at the division as a whole. Draft objectives include:

- increasing the graduation rate;
- having all schools meet federal and state benchmarks;
- increasing the number of students participating in higher level coursework;
- increasing the percentage of students performing at or above grade level;
- providing more opportunities for students to use technology in the classroom; and
- evaluating existing programs.

**Students in the Freshman Academy** at Charlottesville High School learn quickly that the teachers are there to support their learning needs, so that they can learn how to be successful within a rigorous high school environment. This means that the teachers work within a paradox where they must maintain high standards, while also ensuring that students have the support they need to reach these standards. "The strength of the Academy lies within the team approach, which allows teachers to reinforce concepts across disciplines and to monitor the needs of students closely," said coordinator Josh Walton.



Students in the Freshman Academy complete three hours of community service each month through the *Teens GIVE Learn and Serve* program. Alumni of the program describe *Teens GIVE* as one of the most memorable and positive parts of their 9th grade experience.

**Goal 2: To support the whole child.**

The physical, social, and emotional well-being of students has a direct impact on their performance in school. Recognizing that these factors weigh heavily in student achievement, draft objectives include:

- collaborating with outside agencies to address the physical, social, and emotional needs of students;
- promoting student health and well-being through research-based health, physical education, nutrition, and school safety programs and activities; and
- providing fine and performing arts opportunities to all students.

**Goal 3: To increase family, school and community involvement and collaboration.**

Draft objectives include:

- improving relationships and trust between the school and community;
- enhancing communication among school, home, and the community at large;
- increasing opportunities to involve families in their children's education;
- expanding meaningful partnerships with business, higher education, and community organizations; and
- increasing collaboration with other school divisions.

**Goal 4: To recruit, retain and support diverse and effective leadership, teachers and staff.**

The school division plans to meet this need by:

- maintaining a competitive salary structure and attractive benefits for CCS employees;
- meeting all NCLB requirements for highly qualified instructional staff;
- increasing the percentage of minority teaching faculty; and
- providing support to staff through strong and relevant professional development.

**Goal 5: To provide all students and staff with an environment conducive to learning.**

A positive school culture is critical to meeting the needs of all students. Draft objectives include:

- increasing cultural understandings among staff and students;
- implementing strategies to address inappropriate behavior and minimize loss of instructional time;
- reducing the number of students who are habitually absent or tardy;
- refining the student Code of Conduct; and
- ensuring the quality of school facilities based on effective delivery of instruction and other services to students.

**The Buford Middle School Choir** received an excellent rating from district festival judges at a regional music festival held at the MLKPAC. This school year the 32-member choir is under the direction of first year teacher, Mr. Travis B. Clark. Mr. Clark has attracted a dedicated corps of talented seventh and eighth grade singers. The choir performed two pieces, *Season of Love* from the movie *Rent* and *Bound for The Promised Land* by Brad Printz.



Students, staff and parents enjoy International Night at Buford. This annual event, sponsored by the Buford PTO, provides students, families, staff and community members an opportunity to talk and socialize in a relaxed setting.

**Ely Named Middle School Teacher of the Year**



Dorothy Ely, Gifted Education Specialist at Walker Upper Elementary, has received Phi Delta Kappa's Middle School Teacher of the Year award. Ms. Ely was honored at PDK's annual dinner meeting in March. She was nominated by her colleague, Julia Lacy who states, "Mrs. Ely's outstanding instructional style, peer collaboration, and soft-spoken, caring approach to teaching exemplify the qualities to which we educators strive."

**The Buford Middle School Band Program** recently reached another milestone at the Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors' Association Concert Festival, receiving straight Superior Ratings from the panel of 4 judges. This marks 23 consecutive years that the Buford Band program has achieved a Superior rating at the District Level.

**The CHS Orchestras** earned two superior ratings, first and second place in the Atlanta Fiesta-Val Competition in April. The 103 – member combined CHS String Orchestra won first place in Division 5, and the 44 member CHS String Ensemble earned second place in Division 6, the most difficult division of music. Both CHS Orchestras earned the highest ranking of superior from all three judges.



**Walker Upper Elementary** students have been testing their engineering skills with the help of Larry Richards, Associate Professor at the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at the University of Virginia. Professor Richards, along with some of his students, have been working with Walker Upper Elementary Science students to build Hovercrafts. Walker Upper Elementary is one of several schools participating in the pilot project to design Hovercraft kits for use nationwide.

## City Schools Collaborate with the University of Virginia

Community members frequently suggest that the school division take greater advantage of having the University of Virginia in its back yard. Already UVA students and faculty work closely with the City schools in a number of capacities, and new ideas for collaboration come up regularly. Here is just a sampling of efforts that are currently in place:

**A Day in the Life** - UVA students provide mentoring and tutoring to students who are not performing up to their academic potential. This occurs during a learning lab, after-school extension program.

**America Reads** - Graduate students in the Curry School are placed in classrooms to do literacy-related work.

**The Big Sibling Program** - matches children in kindergarten through fourth grade with a Big Brother or Big Sister from UVA.

**Madison House Volunteers** - provide many services to students, such as emotional and academic support.

**Boosters** - UVA students volunteer weekly to work with groups of students in the classroom. They develop unique relationships with students and assist with reading, spelling, math, sports and art projects.

**UVA Curry Placements** - undergraduate and graduate students who have practicum or student teaching experiences are placed in regular and special education classrooms. Students have opportunities to observe, work with small groups, teach lessons, etc.

**Teachers for a New Era** is a collaborative effort with the University, including the Curry School. Members of the group:

- serve on the TNE Steering committee which oversees the advisor component of the grant;
- train advisors of novice teachers;
- have University faculty conduct workshops for novice teachers;
- match novice teachers with University faculty for content expertise and support;
- have division advisors help train the clinical advisors of practicum students.

**Ratcheting up the Challenge: Instruction that Promotes Active, Knowledge-Centered Learning** - A Curry faculty member has provided professional development to Walker teachers throughout the year.

**My Teaching Partner** - Curry School Interdisciplinary Team, under the direction of Dr. Robert Pianta - provides mentoring which involves research, technology and the implementation of literacy and social-emotional development curriculum.

**JumpStart** - Curry School under the direction of Dr. Paige Pullen - a national program where college students mentor preschool 4 yr. olds. This program works with 5 of the 9 preschool teachers and classes.

**Early Childhood and Developmental Risk Program at UVA** under the direction of Dr. Mary Margaret Dunkle Vorhees, ECDR Coordinator - works with specific preschool teachers as clinical instructors for 288 practicum students at UVA.

**Development and Revision of the PreK PALS** instrument under the direction of Dr. Marcia Invernizzi at UVA. Preschool teacher representatives and the Preschool Coordinator have been involved with this project since its inception.

## **School Wellness Policy Nears Completion**

The School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) assists with the formulation of health policy and advises on school health issues including health education, the school environment and health services within the school division.

This year your SHAB has been researching and developing a school wellness policy to support healthy eating and active living in our schools. Check out the CCS website for the latest draft. Look under "Recent News" at <http://www.ccs.k12.va.us/news.html>. Final policy recommendations will be presented to the School Board for approval later this month. Implementation of the policy begins in the fall '06.

## **CALENDAR**

**May 18** - School Board Business Meeting, CHS

**May 19** - City Council/School Board Luncheon,  
City Hall Basement **CANCELLED**

**June 1** - School Board Study Session **CANCELLED**  
7:00 pm CATEC Graduation  
MLK, Jr. Performing Arts Center

**June 6** - 7:00 pm CHS Graduation  
MLK, Jr. Performing Arts Center

## **City Elementary Students Get New Bikes**

Physical education teachers in the Charlottesville City Schools now have more to work with when they teach the bicycle safety unit to third-graders. Thanks to the help of the Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation, the school division now has 15 new bicycles to add to their fleet of 25, creating two classroom sets of bikes that rotate among the six elementary schools throughout the school year.

All Charlottesville elementary PE instructors are trained to deliver an in-class, experience-based bicycle safety curriculum created by *BikeSmart Virginia*, a program of the Virginia Department of Health. The new addition of a second classroom set of bicycles allows schools to provide bicycle safety training to every Charlottesville third grader every year. "The purchase of these new bikes makes it possible for elementary physical education specialists in Charlottesville City Schools to provide complete and meaningful instruction to all third grade students," said Venable Elementary School PE specialist Francesca Zavacky. "This will allow us to have a real and immediate impact on the safety training we are able to offer our students, providing longer and more thorough coverage of our bicycle safety unit." ACCT secured funding for the bicycles through its Safe Routes to School initiative and a grant from the Federal Highways Administration.

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