

## **December 17, 2014 – Staunton City Schools Tip Sheet**

**Contact:** Brenda Lovekamp  
School Board Clerk  
540-332-3920

### **Lee High in the Running for VHSL Wells Fargo Cup**

Now that the fall athletic championships are complete, the Virginia High School League (VHSL) has announced the Wells Fargo Cup standings. Robert E. Lee High School is among a group of six schools who have moved to the top of group standings and are all aiming to win their first Wells Fargo Cup.

The Cup was first awarded 1990 and goes to the school in each group classification that has achieved the best overall record in VHSL state-level competition in 27 athletic and academic activities. The winner of the Wells Fargo Cup is determined by a point system based on performance in state championship events. In the event of a tie, the schools receive an equal number of points based on the number of schools that tie and the number of schools that finish higher in the standings. For example, semifinal losers split third and fourth place points (37.5 points each). Schools earning the League's Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity Award earn 50 points each.

"We are excited to be in the running for the Cup at this point. The success of our fall teams have placed up in a favorable position thus far. We are fortunate to have a great deal of talented students and will continue to work hard," said David Tibbs, Activities Director.

### **Elks Members present Dictionaries**

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America includes in their mission statement that they "will serve the people and communities through benevolent programs, showing that Elks Care and Elks Share." Through this effort, the club members have provided a dictionary to all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students as a resource to use at home or at school to increase their understanding and use of written language. Three members of the local Elks chapter visited McSwain Elementary on December 15 to present the dictionaries to the students.

Ms. Nancy Dickerson began the morning with a group discussion about the Elks Club and the purpose of a dictionary. She was then joined by Mr. Paul Hively and Mr. Matt Sutton in presenting a dictionary to each member of the third grade classes. Students volunteered that dictionaries are useful for checking the meaning or background of a word and correct spellings of words. Third grade student Olivia Messin said, “Having them come here was really awesome. I have never seen an elk before. They are like really big deer. The club uses the elk like football teams use mascots.” Another student, James Sutton added, “It was pretty cool. They were really nice to give everyone a dictionary. I’m going to use my new dictionary whenever I need to use new words or spell words.” And the whole third grade said, “Thank you!!”



Paul Hively and Nancy Dickerson hand out dictionaries to Elise Bradley, Reid Trybus and James Sutton as part of the presentation to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.

### **Developing New Ideas for Expanding Young Minds**

Teachers at McSwain Elementary explored several ideas for increasing student engagement during a professional development meeting in December. Teachers are constantly searching for ways to enhance presentations and develop students’ abilities. One of the ways to reconnect students in the classroom is to treat the students as learning partners. Students all come to school with past experiences and passions. Tapping into that well of knowledge allows students to be more connected with the process of learning and teaching.

In the present age of technology, many ideas are found by sharing resources on the internet, and yet it is a long-standing tradition for teachers to share with their colleagues. With that thought in mind, on December 9, teachers spent some time sharing ideas with each other. For many people, kinesthetic (hands-on) learning is vital. Teachers had an opportunity to explore lesson plans utilizing Keva planks, which are simple wooden blocks that can be used for an infinite variety of tasks. Children who play with blocks tend to do better in mathematics and science. Physically handling the blocks builds a fundamental understanding of quantities, equality, geometry, and other math skills.

New technology also provides a motivational element in the classroom. Teachers experimented with an iPad app for recording voice along with drawing, adding text and incorporating images. Grade appropriate tasks were designed by Math Coach Heather Smith-Reeps to get teachers thinking about how to use the technology at their students' ability level. Another important task for teachers is getting feedback from the students. Ms. Erin Barney, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, shared ideas on how to use an app called Plickers to gather student answers. The software provides the teacher with individual answers as well as a graph indicating how many students gave each answer.

Excited conversations throughout the meeting were brainstorming the use of each technique in a variety of learning situations.



McSwain teachers work with hand-on learning tools during a professional development meeting.



Teachers experiment with new technology during a professional development meeting at McSwain.