

VIPER News

Volume 3, Issue 1 October 2010

“Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights.”

~Pauline R. Kezer



Our new school year has begun and for most of us it has been a time of great excitement mixed with some apprehension. For our faculty and staff, there has been the hustle and bustle of organizing classrooms, attending meetings and preparing lessons. For our students there are new classmates to meet and new subjects to learn with new teachers to guide their learning. For most of our students, the rhythms and routines have begun to make sense and it is becoming easier to engage in the assignments with a sense of confidence.

Of course, school probably doesn't look or sound like the one you went to when you were in middle school or junior high. Just as in our homes, technology has become ever-present and indispensable to education. In fact, our students have the benefit of attending schools that are outfitted with an array of technology that was the stuff of science fiction when I was their age. Students may be "answering" via a wireless device like the ActiVotes and the teacher may be streaming a video from the Internet instead of using a film strip or video tape.

Fortunately, today's students have grown up with all manner of technology and most find it as familiar as we would have found our land-line telephone or the television with a pull-on knob. Each generation has knowledge and comfort with the current gadgets that may baffle their parents and grandparents. I can still remember my parents asking me to program the VCR! Perhaps that is still a familiar scene at your house but now it's the DVD player, Internet, cell phone or iPod that your child has to help you use.

As with anything new and unfamiliar, half the battle is knowing where to find the right instruction or resources. As our teachers have increased their use of technology such as ANGEL, we have made a commitment to standardize teachers' ANGEL pages so that its navigation and use will be easier and more effective. In addition, there will be tutorials for students and parents on our website that will also assist in its use. We hope that this will provide the resources that you need at home to help your child be successful.

With all the tools that may seem unfamiliar, education is still fundamentally the same because it is still all about student learning. The most important thing any school can teach students is to think and reason because that will serve them throughout their lives. Technology is a part of our world and by incorporating its use along with fundamentally good teaching, we are preparing our students for the future that they will inherit and create.

Kathy Rohacek, principal

Late-breaking great news!

**VCMS ranked 4th out of 467 Georgia middle schools on
www.schooligger.com !**



Welcome Back!

Welcome back to all our returning students and their families. If you are new to VCMS or an incoming 6th grader we would like to welcome you and we are very glad to have you join our VCMS family. The PTO is very fortunate to have such wonderful families at VCMS and we look forward to the participation of the students and their families.

We are so lucky to have such wonderful teachers, staff and volunteers at VCMS. They all work very hard to teach and create a wonderful and safe environment for our children. I would like to thank them for all their hard work and continued support for the PTO.

As president, I am thrilled and honored to serve another year for your children and the school. We have a lot of great things planned for this year including dances, Red Ribbon Week, the A's and newcomer's breakfast and more. We also provide volunteers for the workroom, school store, hospitality, label program and create the newsletter. I would like to take this opportunity to thank last year's PTO board and committee's members and welcome all the new and returning members. These members are dedicated and work hard for our children. Thank you!

We are continuing our "SAY NO" to fundraising. Our membership drive started off great and will run from Open House until our raffle for the netbook in early October. The PTO understands how busy all our families at VCMS are so we are trying to support our budget based on membership NOT fundraising. Your membership contributions provide student agendas for the 2010-2011 school year as well as providing funds for our teacher grant program and various committees.

Once again, welcome to VCMS and if you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me at any time.

Jodi Bond
PTO President
atltree@aol.com

Board Members: Jodi Bond as President, Rae Butler as Vice President, Jennifer Fon as Secretary, and Debra Priest as Treasurer.

Committee Chairpersons: Linda Gillespie, Joan Bell, Lisa Bridges, Darlene Drost, Brenda Erb, Ruth Hahn and Julie Royal.

6th grade



ELA:

6th grade Language Arts has had a wonderful time getting to know our new 6th grade students so far! We have already had our Media Center Orientation and our first book checkout. Also, this first nine weeks will include a Narrative piece of writing, a review and more in-depth study of all eight parts of speech, and learning and implementing the Elements of Literature. We are looking forward to getting to know our students even more as the year goes on!

Math:

We hope that all of our 6th grade students and parents have found the transition to middle school a smooth one. As with any new school year, there is a lot of time spent establishing, teaching, modeling, learning, and practicing new routines. We have been so impressed with our new 6th graders! They have come out of the gates focused and ready to learn. We look forward to working with them and you throughout the year to ensure a successful year for everyone!

In 6th grade mathematics we are wrapping up Unit 2, *Fun and Games* (number theory). Your child will soon be starting Unit 1, *Gathering and Using Data*. This unit relates to constructing, analyzing, and interpreting graphs. These concepts are vital to gaining a deeper understanding of data. We encourage you to be working with your child at home to reinforce these skills and concepts. *Gathering and Using Data* is a four to five week unit that will carry us into the fall and the end of September.

Students should be bringing home their math binders each day to complete homework and/or study. Although the work can sometimes be challenging, together we can make each day a successful learning experience by keeping a positive attitude, working together, and doing our best each and every day!

Reading:

Jody Franklin - 6th, 7th, 8th Reading- The goal of this course is to help students become strategic, independent readers---readers who can recognize and solve their own problems. Course content is aligned to the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Georgia Performance Standards. The standards will be taught through the following units: Reading Strategies, Literary Elements, Vocabulary Skills, Text Features, Text Structures, Reading Comprehension, and Genres. Comprehension Strategies to be covered include: monitor comprehension, making connections, visualization, and organization, determine important information, and ask questions. Comprehension skills to be covered include: main ideas and details, sequence, cause and effect, evaluate evidence, compare and contrast, make inferences, prediction, theme, character and setting, author's purpose, nonfiction text features, and visual information.

Science:

Over the next week science will continue to build on our work with the Habits of Mind standards that include lab safety and scientific process skills. We will then find ourselves investigating our first formal sub-discipline of Earth Science -- that of meteorology. As hurricanes come in and the season begins to cool we will investigate such phenomena such as dew points, fronts, global wind patterns, and local breezes. The unit offers many opportunities to hone our Habits of Mind skills as students participate in a mix of hands-on activities, quick projects, and formal study.

Social Studies:

In sixth grade, students will focus on the world outside the United States. The domains of geography, government, economics, and history are integrated into our study of Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and Australia. The geography domain teaches students to see the correlation between human and physical geography and each region's development. Through the government

domain we examine various types of governments to help students understand how governments distribute power and how citizens participate in the political process. In the economics domain, students learn about the economies of each region and analyze their effectiveness in relation to standard of living. Within the domain of history, students explore the milestone events of each region and make connections between past events and current conditions. Many unique activities and projects are incorporated into our curriculum throughout the year. We are looking forward to working with your child as we begin an exciting year of exploring the world in 6th grade social studies!

During the month of September we will begin unit two by exploring the geography of Europe. Students will describe the location of major countries and analyze the location's impact on its people. Later in this unit, students will learn about the diversity of European culture by examining languages, religions, and literacy rates among nations in the region. Students will be able to see how the people of Europe have overcome barriers created by diversity of cultures. In the latter part of unit two, we will study the forms and organizational structures of modern European governments and the purpose of the European Union (EU). Students will learn how European citizens participate in government and how governments in this part of the world distribute power.

Spanish:

¡Bienvenidos a la clase de español para el mes de septiembre! This month we will continue with our 1st unit – “Welcome to Middle School.” We’ll be learning useful classroom vocabulary and commands, numbers, and greetings and closures. We’ll also be preparing to take our trip to Spain. The students are excited about going to another country – virtually, that is! ☺

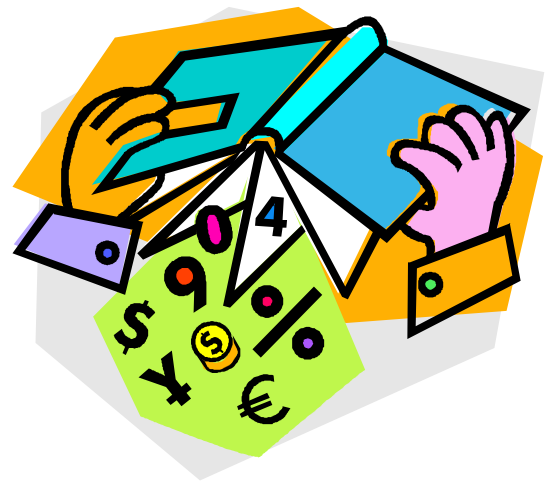
7th Grade:

ELA:

7th Grade Language Arts will spend the majority of the first nine weeks focusing on two areas: grammar and story elements. A variety of short stories, websites, and in class writings will be utilized during the presentation of the story element unit. Students will participate in a parts of speech review at the beginning of the nine weeks and then transfer this knowledge to a unit on clauses, sentence types, and comma usage.

Math:

Ms. Trollinger, Ms. Booker, Ms Higgins, and Ms. Foster will instruct seventh grade students in Math. All students have been reviewing basic computation skills including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals. Students have completed their first summative “Big 20” test on these skills. The first major unit of study focused on data analysis and reading and interpreting graphs. The following Georgia Performance Standards will be covered in the second unit titled “Patterns and Relationships” – M7N1 – Students will understand the meaning of positive and negative rational numbers and use them in computation and M7A3 – Students will understand the relationship between two variables.

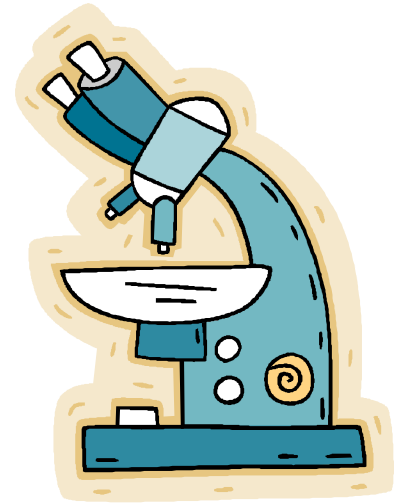


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Science:

Welcome, Vipers, to 7th Grade Life Science! We are very excited to share the wonders of the world we live in with you! Our year begins as we explore the basic unit of all living organisms – The Cell! Our journey through life then takes us to the study of the living world: The Kingdoms – from Bacteria to Animals. Did you know we are part of the Animal Kingdom? We will then study our own Human Body and all the amazing systems that work together for our survival. Do you look like someone in your family? After our Human Body unit, we will then study how the living world inherits characteristic – Genetics. Finally, we put the pieces of our year together and study how it all interacts with one another in our final unit – Ecology.



Social Studies:

In seventh grade Social Studies, students continue to increase their knowledge and understanding of major world regions. Africa and Asia are the focus of study and historical, geographical, political, and economic aspects are considered.

Spanish:

This year in 7th grade Spanish students will be studying a variety of topics. There are a total of four units taught throughout the year. The first unit is entitled “Getting Started” and in this unit students study the basics of Spanish (numbers, alphabet, greetings, school vocabulary). In the next unit, “Life With My Host Family” students will learn to describe people in Spanish using adjectives and the verb “to be”. After learning to describe people, students will learn to use present tense verbs correctly in the third unit, “House and Home”. The fourth and final unit is “Discovering South America”. Students will have the opportunity to practice all grammar concepts and vocabulary taught throughout the year while learning about the continent of South America.

8th Grade:

ELA:

Welcome back 8th grade students! The Language Arts teachers are so excited about this school year. We have many great plans ahead that will also excite you and help you succeed in school. We will be writing a lot this year, but don't worry it will be fun and engaging! We will also be studying the usual grammar and mechanics along with reading novels and other literature. Mrs. Boggs, Mrs. Valadez, and Ms. McEntyre look forward to a great year with you!

Math:

The 8th grade Georgia Mathematics Curriculum focuses on actively engaging students in the development of understanding concepts and performing basic skills. Our program places an emphasis on problem solving, reasoning, representation, connections, and communication in efforts that our students become authentic problem solvers. Our first unit is titled *Outcomes & Likelihoods*, which is a study on Probability. For more details, please visit georgiastandards.org and view the 8th grade Mathematics frameworks.

Reading:

Jody Franklin - 6th, 7th, 8th Reading- The goal of this course is to help students become strategic, independent readers---readers who can recognize and solve their own problems. Course content is aligned to the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Georgia Performance Standards. The standards will be taught through the following units: Reading Strategies, Literary Elements, Vocabulary Skills, Text Features, Text Structures, Reading Comprehension, and Genres. Comprehension Strategies to be covered include: monitor comprehension, making connections, visualization, and organization, determine important information, and ask questions. Comprehension skills to be covered include: main ideas and details, sequence, cause and effect, evaluate evidence, compare and contrast, make inferences, prediction, theme, character and setting, author's purpose, nonfiction text features, and visual information.



Science:

The 8th grade science classes are well underway learning about scientific inquiry, the metric system and matter. This year of physical science includes physics and chemistry. We will be learning some basic chemistry first, followed by physics and will end the year with more chemistry. Is air matter? You can't see it. So, is it matter? Students will be learning all about the physical and chemical properties of matter. Can a solid change directly to a gas, skipping the liquid phase? Your student will be able to tell you all about phase changes as they learn about matter, energy and the relationship between them. Horizon science has discussed Science Fair, established our time line, and prepared the logbook. All students performed labs in the classroom regarding SI measurement of matter and lab safety. In the next weeks we will be applying these skills to learn all about matter and its properties. These items are described in the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), S8P1 and S8P2, for detailed information please visit:

<https://www.georgiastandards.org/Standards/Georgia%20Performance%20Standards/EighthGradeApproved7-12-2004.pdf>

Although Horizon Science goes much deeper into content areas to prepare students for advance high school science the eighth grade GPS is the foundation on which our learning is built. As always keep in touch via email. The email distribution list has been established and initial emails have been sent. If you are not receiving emails please email with that data to be included.

Social Studies:

In eighth grade Georgia Studies, students explore their state through the eyes of a geographer, historian, economist, and political analyst. Because Georgia cannot be studied in isolation, students examine Georgia's progress as it relates to the rest of the country. The course begins with a unit on Georgia's physical geography in which students describe each region of the state and evaluate the impact of climate on Georgia's development. Other units of study include:

- Native American Cultures and European Contact
- Colonial Georgia
- Georgia in the American Revolution and Statehood
- Georgia Expansion and Growth
- Civil War and Reconstruction
- Redemption Period and the New South
- Progressive Era
- Georgia During WWI and the Great Depression
- Georgia During WWII
- Civil Rights Movement and Modern Georgia

Spanish:

In 8th grade Spanish we are off to a very good year and we're having fun rapidly reviewing material learned last year in 7th grade Spanish from a unit of study called En la Escuela (in school). This unit covers school subjects, supplies, days and months of the year, the numbers and simple greetings. Students are encouraged to ask, answer and share both basic and practical information. This unit lasts approximately 3-4 weeks when we will be moving on to reviewing vocabulary and grammar associated with our 2nd unit entitled Family and Friends.

Connections & Physical Education:



Art: We have been very busy in the VCMS art room students are working on their third project.

All grade levels started with a pencil drawing of a still life, and then each grade level traced half of their drawing to be used in another project. Sixth grade learned about color schemes and applied that knowledge to their small still life. Seventh grade created a mixed media piece with magazine images, colored pencil and marker. Eighth grade wrote a story about the still life and then wrote their story in the background of their drawing to create a composition that utilized images and text. Examples of all of these projects can be found on the bulletin board across from the art room (525) in the connections hall.

Eighth grade is working on their first self-portrait of the quarter. Students have designed the cover to a video game based on their life, as well as a storyboard for the video game trailer. Seventh grade is studying the elements of art; line, color, shape, form, space, texture and value. Sixth grade is learning ways to draw things in proper perspective with a landscape drawing.

Computer Literacy: The Computer Literacy program at VCMS allows the students to experience multiple types of technology and computer applications. The program is designed to teach grades sixth through eighth technology and computer literacy standards while reinforcing and “connecting” to standards that the students are learning in their curriculum classes. The computer literacy lessons are designed so that students are able to learn in new and different ways that enables them to reinforce and retain academic information.



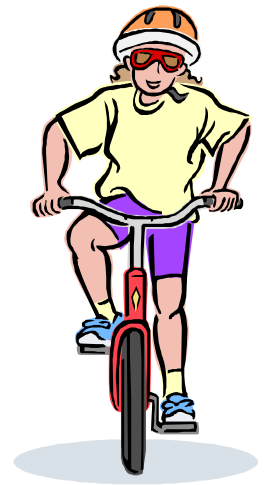
The yearbook program at VCMS allows the students to learn how to create a yearbook using an on-line system. This program teaches the students journalism, caption writing, photography, layout and design, and many business essentials necessary to budget, sales and marketing. This opportunity is offered to 7th grade students after winter break. It is a program that is applied for by

the student body and runs the last 9 weeks of their 7th grade year and the first 18 weeks of their 8th grade year during connections classes. All questions about this program should be directed to kracine@forsyth.k12.ga.us.

Please go online at www.yearbooksonsale.com to purchase your child's book today!

Enjoy the outdoors and protect your family and yourself by following these simple sun safety tips:

- ☀️ **If possible, avoid the sun between 10am and 4pm. It is best to be out when your shadow is longer than you are tall.**
- ☀️ **Seek shade if outside during peak hours.**
- ☀️ **Apply a broad spectrum sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB, with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30.**
- ☀️ **Reapply sunscreen every two hours when outdoors, even on cloudy days. Also, reapply after prolonged swimming, perspiring, or toweling off.**
- ☀️ **Wear protective, tightly woven clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt and pants.**
- ☀️ **Wear a 4-inch wide broad-brimmed hat even when walking short distances and doing yard work.**
- ☀️ **Wear UV protective sunglasses.**
- ☀️ **Protect children by keeping them out of the sun, minimizing sun exposure, and applying sunscreen.**
- ☀️ **If you see a change in the size, shape, or appearance of a mole, see a dermatologist.**



Resource: Olansky Dermatology Associates

Do you enjoy volunteering?

Our PALS (Peers as Leaders) program is in need of parent volunteers at this time.



Your role would be to supervise a small group of students while they are engaged in helping other students study or complete assignments.

If you are interested please contact Amy Ingram
aingram@forsyth.k12.ga.us

or call 770-667-2580 ext. 230310.

Being in school is cool!

As involved parents, you know how important it is for your child to be at school every day unless they are truly too sick to attend. Please make every attempt to schedule non-urgent appointments outside the school day or during school holidays. Also, please remember that family trips or vacations during school days will be considered unexcused.



When your child must be absent, please remember that an excuse or medical note is required within five days. These can be faxed or sent in with your child. It is always a good idea to check Campus Portal after your child is absent to be sure the attendance has been correctly recorded. For more information on our county's attendance policies, please review either the county or school website.

www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/vcms