A Note from the Principal

At VCMS, our primary goal is to provide the finest educational opportunities for our students. We emphasize that focus through our mission statement - The relentless pursuit of the highest performance for all. But so much more than academic excellence goes into creating the kind of school we have. Ultimately, it is about the kind of environment we create and the relationships we nurture between our students, staff and parents.

Of course, as this new semester begins, I cannot help but reflect back on the events of December, both locally and nationally. As a school, we lost one of our own precious children and as a nation we witnessed the horrific and unexplainable tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary. Both of these losses, in very different ways, compel me to a renewed focus on what is important – our children.

As parents, you send your children to VCMS for a great education with the expectation that they will be safe. Fortunately, we live in a very safe community but then that is exactly what the parents and teachers of Sandy Hook Elementary believed of their school. Our Superintendant and his cabinet, along with the Board of Education have been reviewing and discussing ways in which we can improve the safety and security of all our schools. We too at VCMS have been taking a fresh look at how we can improve our own practices and procedures.

The challenge is to provide a warm and welcoming environment which is also safe and secure for our students, staff and visitors. None of us really wants to go to the extremes of setting up an “airport-like” security system but we know some things must change. To that end, as you visit our school in the coming weeks, you will notice some small changes to our school to enhance safety and security.

Of course, all the security measures in the world may not stop someone determined to cause harm. We have all heard and seen the devastating actions of those who feel disconnected, disrespected or ignored. Therefore, along with enhanced safety procedures, it is important to create an environment where everyone is valued and respected; where we seek to include everyone as a part of our school family. To that end, I would continue to encourage you to have your child get involved with some type of extracurricular group activity.

### Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>All A’s Celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL - MLK Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>PTO Board Meeting 9am</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>VCMS Basketball Pep Rally 3:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/1 and 2/2</td>
<td>VCMS Musical @ WFHS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4 and 2/5</td>
<td>8th Grade Parent Meetings @ WFHS 6:30 pm</td>
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<td>2/7</td>
<td>Progress Reports</td>
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<td>2/11-2/14</td>
<td>Benchmarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL - Presidents Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25-3/1</td>
<td>Book Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>Spring Pictures</td>
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A Note from the Principal (continued)

If your child has not chosen a club, team or organization in which to participate, I would strongly encourage you to make that an expectation. Educational research consistently shows that students who participate in extracurricular activities have the greatest academic, social and emotional success. These afterschool activities may be at VCMS or found in our surrounding community. Whether they are academic, dramatic, athletic, musical or club activities, each of them provides the time and place for children to experience success and to feel a sense of belonging and purpose. These group experiences provide valuable lessons about collaboration, goal setting, conflict resolution, team work, and persistence; skills and character traits which are essential to a fulfilled and successful life.

The second semester brings with it a sense of renewed commitment to our students and each other. Together, our school community can provide the experiences and environment that will nurture our students as they grow toward a healthy adulthood. Thank you for your continued commitment and support of our school.

Respectfully,

Kathy Rohacek, Principal

Clubs - For more info check the Extracurricular tab of the VCMS website or contact the sponsors

Art Club – sponsor Debbie Pollack
Book Club-sponsors Carolyn Boggs and Stephanie Bruen
Jr. Beta Club-sponsor Cathy Shirkey
Chamber Choir-sponsor Melissa Grizzle
Chess Club –sponsor Derek Piper
Drama Club-sponsors Melissa Grizzle and Kiril Slavov
Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA)
Fiber Arts Club-sponsors Gini Morgan, Kathy Rohacek, Carrie Beth Rykowski and Sue Sabo
Friends of Rachel-sponsors Ms. Carter, Ms. Bruen, Ms. Bennett, Ms. Crosby, Mr. Hammond, Ms. Lowrey
Gardening Club-sponsor Kerry Carter
Green Group-sponsor Sandra Minsk
History Club-sponsor Delroy Thompson
Karate Club-sponsor Malina Maldonado
Technology Students’ Association (TSA)-sponsor Michael Cono
Volleyball Club-sponsors Tracy Ward and Stephanie Bruen
Y Club-sponsors Denise Gregory and Greg Whitt
Young Authors-sponsor Sandra Harrison
The Counselor’s Office

On January 7th, Kyle Maynard, a motivational speaker, author, entrepreneur and athlete was here at VCMS speaking to our students. Despite being born with arms that end at the elbows and legs near the knees, Kyle’s wrestled for one of the best teams in the Southeast, set records in weightlifting, fought in mixed martial arts, and most recently became the first man to crawl on his own to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. His story has been featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Larry King Live, ESPN’s Sportscenter, HBO’s Real Sports, ABC’s 20/20 and Good Morning America, and as a cover story in USA Today. He delivered a very inspiring message to our students about perseverance. He believes that no obstacle is too great for one to overcome. We are so pleased the he was able to share his positive message with our students.

8th Grade News

The 8th grade has had a great first semester and are looking forward to the exciting activities that second semester has to offer. The students will need to focus their attention on the upcoming benchmarks, CRCT, and EOCT. However, as a nice incentive they will have the Savannah trip, the formal and the 8th grade picnic in their sights.

Eighth grade science students have been studying the properties of waves. They know the difference between a sound wave and a light wave, that the speed of light is 300,000 km/sec, and how to make a glass sing using resonance. They can even play “Mary Had a Little Lamb” using test tubes and water. After our unit on wave and wave energy, students will finish up the physics portion of our curriculum in January with magnetism and electricity. Students have a popular project to look forward to using holiday lights. We will then be ready to begin chemistry. Students will learn about the periodic table, solutions, acids and bases, chemical formulas and chemical reactions. As we approach April and May, we will spend some time reviewing for the CRCT and the EOCT. This next half of the school year promises to be challenging and rewarding as we prepare our students for high school.

The 8th grade Georgia Studies classes are working on a government unit. In this unit they will analyze the role of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Mr. Newton’s and Mrs. Crosby’s classes will be taking part in a Georgia General Assembly simulation in which they will legislate their own bills. We will also study the role of local governments in the state of Georgia.
The Spanish Department is currently studying Unit 3, “Mi Casa”. This unit covers vocabulary and grammatical structures necessary to describe a house and some activities/actions people do inside a home. The students have presented short oral presentations in their classes on their own homes.

8th grade math is completing a unit on the Pythagorean theorem and volume. This unit has given students the opportunity to see how math can be applied outside the classroom. Our students are preparing for their first performance based task where they will be presented a problem that must be solved and explained. This will be a challenge for many of our students as they try and determine the best way to solve the problem and then write about their solution and how they got there. Our 8th graders are really stepping it up this year as we all learn about the new common core standards. They are being challenged in different ways this year many of them surpassing their own expectations. Great first semester 8th graders, let’s finish strong.

Eighth grade language arts classes are busy preparing for our up-coming state writing test later this month. Focusing on thesis statements, topic sentences, detailed body paragraphs, writing style and conclusions, we write almost every day. And since October Sky is now one of our eighth grade novels, all eighth grade students enjoyed a Skyped, live presentation with two NASA engineers who are currently working on CPAS, the parachute being developed for the Orion descent to earth after a space flight. Afterwards, students were able to ask questions of the engineers. They loved it! Finally, we must continuously practice grammar and reading skills, so our ELA days are packed full!

Congratulations Ms. Mallory and Mrs. Carter

Ms. Mallory and Mrs. Carter were each honored by Georgia United Credit Union and Star 94 as a Making a Difference Teacher. There were 600 applicants in the North Metro Atlanta area with 75 finalists.
are students doing whatever it takes to reach their potential or bringing out the best in others.

SPONSORED BY TANNER’S GRILL at VICKERY VILLAGE

6th Grade- December Winners
Camille Morton    Ashley Schell
Jacob Weldy       Ian Withrow
Sam Tuck          Luis Cuevas
Brittany Brown

7th Grade- December Winners
Catherine Deleon  Charles Mason
Tanner Robbins    Joshua Nash
Kelli Dzuiba

8th Grade- December Winner
Doug Barco
Getting to Know You

In this section of the Viper News we profile the staff and faculty members of VCMS. This edition highlights the 8th Grade teaching team.

English/Language Arts

Allene Gossman – teaches 7th grade Horizons/Advanced ELA and 8th grade ELA and is a veteran educator of 32 years. She has taught all ability levels from remedial to gifted and all ages from 12 to 68. Her love of travel has brought her many places including most of the continental U.S, Hawaii, Canada, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Paris.

Carolyn Boggs – has been teaching in Georgia for the past 12 years; 8 years in Forsyth county. Teaching has carried over to her personal life as well where she had her 3 daughters journal while they traveled throughout the US and Europe. Today all three of her children have careers that involve writing or editing.

Emile Jacumin-Simmons – teaches 6th, 7th and 8th grade ELA/Special Education. She began her career in the financial services industry but now has a MA in teaching with a concentration in teaching exceptional children. She has been at VCMS for 3 years, beginning as a student teacher, then a paraprofessional and now a teacher. In her free time she plays tennis and golf, rides horses, ATVs and motorcycles and enjoys spending time with family.

Social Studies

Lynn Rogers – teaches 7th and 8th grade and has taught in North and South Carolina as well as here in Georgia. She takes pleasure in spending time with family and cooking, reading, hiking, traveling, riding her bike and just hanging out with friends.

Lisa Crosby – teaches 8th grade Horizon/Advanced Georgia Studies and has been an educator for 27 years - 7 of them at VCMS. She has been singing with Cherokee Community Chorale for 15 years and is studying acting at the Alliance Theater in Atlanta.

Kent Newton – is teaching Georgia Studies in this, his 20th year of teaching. When not teaching he enjoys playing golf.

Foreign Language

Cathy Shirkey – teaches 8th grade Spanish and has taught French as well. Family, faith and travel give her enjoyment. Her favorite pastimes are beach vacations, reading, live theater and movies.

Nicole Henderson – holds a Masters degree in Spanish language from the University of Salamanca in Spain and has taught Spanish for 8 years at VCMS. Outside of school she keeps busy with her husband and their two year old daughter and loves cheering the Georgia Bulldogs on to victory.
Getting to Know You  (continued)

Science

Michelle Mace - has been a teacher at VCMS for 9 years and has taught at the 6th, 7th and 8th grade levels. In her free time, she loves to take her dogs to the lake and spend time with her family.

Beth Herren - has spent 20 years teaching science to 6th through 11th grades. She enjoys reading, spending time with family and science!

Math

Kendall Davis – has been teaching for 2 years and teaches both 6th and 8th grade Math. She enjoys running, traveling and spending time with family.

Tylene Foster - has spent 32 years teaching middle school and 2 years at NGCSU teaching educational courses. Spare time is filled with water skiing, target practice and hanging out with her golden retrievers.

Michael Cheek – has taught Math at VCMS for 4 years after a career as a manager at Enterprise Rent-a-Car. He is also the coach of our 8th grade Vipers basketball team. He and his wife have three children. He stays active by trail running, biking, participating in Mud races, and playing wiffle ball, basketball and ping pong