



The Buzz

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Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

Public invited to comment on Strategic Plan

The Thomas County School System is nearing the end of a year-long strategic planning process that will establish the goals and priorities to guide the system for the next three to five years. The draft plan is now available for public input before it is finalized and adopted by the school board this March.

System officials began the strategic planning process with a Community Engagement Meeting which involved more than 300 representatives from student, teacher, parent and community stakeholders in March 2013. This comprehensive process developed by the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) and the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) helped the school system create universal ownership and support for both district and school improvement.

A diverse planning team that represented stakeholder groups met in June 2013 for two days. Team members analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the school system as well as threats to the school system.

In September, five action teams met for a day and developed the mission, vision, beliefs, goal areas and other elements of the strategic plan. On January 23, 2014, members

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Trista Jones to Become Next TCCHS Principal



Future Principal Trista Jones meets in her office with Kacy Jones (from left), Victoria Talbott-Cortez, and Drucilla Thomas.

Thomas County Central High School Assistant Principal Trista Jones has been appointed principal designee to assume the role effective July 1 following Ken Harper's retirement.

Jones earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia in 1992, and joined the faculty of Thomas County Central High School that year as a French teacher. She earned a master's degree in educational leadership from Valdosta State University in 1997 and an educational specialist degree from VSU in 2004. She was named Assistant Principal of TCCHS in 2004. Jones is in her ninth year as an assistant principal in the Thomas County School System.

Jones always knew she wanted to work in education.

Jones said, "The business of education has always been a part of my family. My father was an assistant principal and

vocational supervisor and my mother taught French and English. So, I honestly don't recall when there wasn't a discussion about school in our home."

Jones has been a part of the Thomas County School System for the past 21 years.

"When you have a leadership role in a school, I feel that understanding the history of why certain decisions have been made regarding curriculum, athletics, academic programs and facilities is important to know and understand as you continue to make successful decisions for the future," said Jones. "Education as a profession is constantly changing and as professionals we are required daily to spend countless hours in planning lessons and assessments while also providing support for the social

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The Thomas County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin, sex, or disability.

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Feb. 14 - Regional Science Fair

Feb. 17 - TCMS Blood Drive, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Feb. 18 - TCMS FFA Day at Georgia Capitol

Feb. 20 - Science Night at Garrison Pilcher, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Feb. 21 - TCMS National History Day

March 3 - 7 - National School Breakfast Week "Take Time for School Breakfast"

March 8 - Hand-In-Hand's Lucky Scramble Golf Tournament, Country Oaks, 8:30 a.m.

March 11 - Board of Education Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

March 17 - Teacher/Student Holiday

Please visit the school websites for a complete calendar of events.

The Buzz is a monthly publication of the Thomas County Schools. Send suggestions or comments to Melanie Hester, 200 North Pinetree Blvd., Thomasville, GA 31792; 229.225-4380, ext. 115; mhester@thomas.k12.ga.us. *The Buzz* is available online at www.thomas.k12.ga.us, News and Events tab.

Kristi Keve Becomes One of TCMS Techno Experts



Students work together in Kristi Keve's seventh grade class using their technology for a classroom reading comprehension activity.

Seventh grade teacher Kristi Keve recently allowed her students to use electronic and mobile devices during a classroom reading comprehension activity.

"Several days before the lesson, I sent home a Remind 101 message to inform parents that we would be using mobile devices for this particular lesson," said Keve. "I asked students to download a Q.R. Code Scanning app, so that wouldn't have to be done in class. It's amazing how a small change in delivery can change the attitude of an entire classroom of students."

Students read a section of informational text and summarized the text on a post-it note. After students finished summarizing the assigned section, they placed their post-it note on a poster titled with the section they read. The posters for each section were hung around the classroom. Students circulated around the room to gather data from the sections they did not summarize. Once they finished collecting data, students scanned eight QR codes that were linked to a comprehension

question for the text. Students used the data they gathered to answer the comprehension questions.

By allowing kids the opportunity to use their mobile devices, students were engaged and on task. Keve said, "Students who are typically disinterested were involved and couldn't wait to scan the next code. The instructional focus was no longer on me as a teacher; the students became their own teachers as they worked through this self-paced lesson."

Keve suggested having a back-up plan when using technology for instruction. Not all students have a mobile device, and they shouldn't be left out of the lesson because of it. She suggests allowing them to use the student computers or some other type of technology.

Keve benefited from the Techno Expo offered by TCMS in January which exposed teachers to various instructional technology tools used in classrooms today. Mr. Hugans, TCMS Assistant Principal is impressed with TCUE/TCMS teacher's response from the

Techno Expo.

"Any tool teachers can use to instructionally engage students is a benefit," said Hugans. "Technology is just

one of the tools teachers have in their repertoire to help increase student performance and provide exposure to real world applications."



CROSS CREEK VISITS THRONATEESKA HERITAGE CENTER - Cross Creek's third graders had a great day of learning at Thronateeska Heritage Center in Albany. The center is housed in a former train station, where students learned about the history of railroad transportation in southwest Georgia. The guided tour included real railroad cars and a visit to the actual loading platform. Students had recently discussed the civil rights movement in social studies class, so they were interested in hearing about the way passengers were segregated in the past. Students also enjoyed the science museum, where they were able to climb and "dig" for artifacts, examine fossils, experiment with sound, and explore outer space. Students and teachers alike said they had a better understanding of the relationship between the earth, the sun, and the moon after the exciting show in the dome-shaped planetarium. Another favorite activity for the students was in the weather center, where students saw how a "green screen" works, and enjoyed seeing themselves on television.



FBLA REGION I CONFERENCE - FBLA students attended the FBLA Region I Conference and Competition in Moultrie, GA on January 17. The students retained the Region I Sweepstakes Trophy completing a "Three-Peat" in winning all three years since the award has been created. There was a total of 44 students competing in more than 50 events ranging from Job Interview to Web Design to Impromptu Speaking and Business Math. Students took home 23 first place metals, 10 second place metals, and 11 third place metals competing against 22 other schools from Southwest Georgia! Many other students also placed and qualified for state and 30 will compete at the state conference March 13-16.

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of the planning and action teams met for the presentation of the Strategic Plan report presented by Action Team Leaders Mrs. Beth Adams, Dr. Bob Dechman, Ms. Carol Sprague, Dr. Scott James, and Mrs. Lisa Williams.

"Our school system belongs to the people of Thomas County, and it is important for the community to have a voice in the work of our system. This process began in March with the Community Engagement Meeting where several hundred people had the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas as we set the goals and priorities for guiding our district for the next five years," stated Dr. Dusty Kornegay, superintendent of the Thomas County School system.

"It is evident that you are involved in the right work when you work for a year to develop a comprehensive, transparent plan with true involvement from all stakeholders," said Melanie Chavaux, associate superintendent with the Thomas County School system. "The numerous conversations that were shared during the days of planning this past year created an understanding for what we want for all students in the Thomas County School System," Chavaux added.

The Strategic Plan was presented to the Board of

Education on Tuesday, January 28, 2014. The Strategic Planning report is now available for public review online at www.thomas.k12.ga.us.

The public is invited to provide feedback by completing the accompanying online survey by February 20, 2014. Both the report itself and the survey are available on-line.

The final strategic plan report will be presented to the Thomas County Board of Education in March 2014 for final approval.

Citizens who would prefer to review a paper copy of the strategic plan and to complete a paper-pencil version of the survey may pick one up from the Thomas County Board of Education Office or from any Thomas County school office.

"I am grateful to the Georgia School Boards Association for their partnership in this effort and for their professional expertise that was invaluable as we navigated this process. I am also especially proud that our planning and action teams included parents, other community members, school system partners, teachers, administrators, and board members," said Kornegay. "I would also like to thank Melanie Chavaux for leading the district through this process," Kornegay added.

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well-being of all of our students."

Harper believes the Board of Education could not have made a better choice in naming Jones principal. "Trista loves TCCHS and has the staff and students' best interest at heart," Harper said. "I've never known anyone to have such a great understanding of high school curriculum as she does. I feel she will be an outstanding

principal for our high school."

Jones added, "As I begin to transition from my role as assistant principal to principal, I appreciate the Board and Dr. Kornegay giving me the opportunity to work closely with Mr. Ken Harper on the day-to-day decisions that principals have to make, and I look forward to my role as principal of TCCHS."



TCMS VISITS MISSION SAN LUIS - The 8th grade MERIT Team from Thomas County Middle School recently took a trip to Mission San Luis in Tallahassee to learn about Spanish colonial history in northern Florida. The students visited an archaeological site in which Spanish colonists and Apalachee Indians created a heterogeneous society during the 1600 and 1700's. Students are seated in the replica of Apalachee meeting house. Students in photo are: Johnna Carter, Chardai Paytee, Jennifer Wilson, Shivani Patel, Courtney Powell, Daniel Holland, Andrew Allensworth, Huntley Rodgers, Jackson Nesmith, Kailey Swearingen, and Morgan Allen



TCCHS Engine Building Team Placed Second in Nation

Thomas County Central High School's engine building team recently placed second in the nation during the Hot Rodders of Tomorrow Engine Challenge national competition. The national competition was held during the Performance and Race Industry Show in Indianapolis.

The team consisted of five members and one alternate: Tyler Boyette, Alan Mayfield, Brice Evans, Justin Rogers, Grayson Ott and Andrew Graham. The team's average time was 19:34 of four builds in

which the team first broke down and then rebuilt an engine.

The second place prize included a trophy and \$57,000 in scholarship money, which was split evenly between the team members. Each member received \$9,500.

The team also attended some technical training seminars that dealt with various areas of automotive technology during the competition.

Miller also said the program is branching out at TCCHS and an all girls team has just been formed.

FIRST® LEGO® League Teams Bring Home Awards from Region



Thomas County Green team members on the front row from left to right are Austin King (kneeling), Isaiah Manning, Case Carter, Bradley Dechman, Abigail Beamon, and Alan Brinn (kneeling). Pictured on the back row from left to right are Zachary Lisk, Nathan Gibson, Jason Weeks, Kyle Clark, and Isaac Swope.

Two of Thomas County's FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL) teams brought home awards from recent region competitions. Thirty-two teams from across southwest Georgia competed at the region tournament held at Columbus State University. Thomas County sent five teams to the competition. The teams are made up of students from Cross Creek Elementary, Thomas County Upper Elementary, and Thomas County Middle Schools.

Thomas County Green Team brought home the Mechanical Design award. This award recognizes a team that designs and develops a mechanically sound robot that is durable, efficient and highly capable of performing challenge missions. This team is coached by Michelle Brinn.

The CyberStorm team, coached by Lisa Stephens and Laura Kornegay brought home the innovation award. This award recognizes a team's solution that is exceptionally well-considered, and creative,

with good potential to solve the problem researched. This team developed an app and a website to help provide information to help people prepare for and stay safe during floods.

FIRST LEGO League (FLL) is an international program for 9 to 14 year-old children created in a partnership between FIRST and The LEGO Group in 1998 to get children excited about science and technology – and teach them valuable employment and life skills. Children work to design, build, and program autonomous robots using LEGO MINDSTORMS® or EV3 technologies and create an innovative solution to a problem as part of their research project. The competition season culminates at high-energy, sports-like tournaments.

Children and their coaches from thirty-two teams gathered at the event, held at Columbus State University, to celebrate science and technology and present their



CyberStorm team members are (first row, L-R) Tristin Scuddard, Dakota Stewart, Keaton Stephens, and Georgia Rose Patton. Pictured from left to right on the back row are Kaitlyn Mercer, Sierra Stephens, Jax Hodge, C'lee Kornegay, Joshua Caleb Stephens, and Kaleb Ward. Standing in the back is Columbus University Representative Steve Michaels.

engineering solutions as part of the FLL "Nature's Fury™" Challenge. The competition was judged in four areas: project presentation; robot performance; technical design and programming of the robot; and teamwork, with a consideration of the FLL Core Values.

The Thomas County teams spent months researching problems related to natural

disasters, each focusing on one problem and developing an innovative solution. Several community experts helped them by sharing food safety issues they deal with in their professions. Students visited the National Weather Service and WTXL in Tallahassee. FEMA representatives visited TCMS to explain how people prepare for and recover from natural disasters.



The Thomas County robotics teams competed at the RoBugs FTC qualifier recently. The CyberStinger Blue team brought home the Connect Award. This award was given to the team for its involvement in helping the community understand FIRST® and FTC. The team conducted several outreach events during the year, volunteered during science camp, and participated in the Thomasville Christmas parade. Pictured left to right are Emily Kornegay, Garrett Castleman, William McCray, and Kacy Jones.