



The Buzz

AUGUST
2015



Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

Message from the Superintendent

It is an exciting time to be a part of the Thomas County School System! The theme "Endless Possibilities" highlights the comprehensive nature of our school system.

ENDLESS Possibilities

Four years ago, we made a concerted effort to raise the academic rigor of our secondary program through the implementation of the MERIT program. Since that time, we have seen many students reach national levels of competition in numerous fields, record numbers of students named Advanced Placement Scholars including our system's first National AP Scholar, record numbers of Duke TIP students, and more students than ever earning college credits on AP exams and through the Move on When Ready Program. In the spring of 2015, Thomas County Central High School students surged ahead of both state and national averages on Advanced Placement exams.

Thomas County students scored six percentage points above the state average and two percentage points above the national average according to data recently released by the College Board. Thomas County students had 100% pass rates in Advanced Placement Literature and Composition and AP Music theory and pass rates above 90% in several

other areas.

Those who think that the Advanced Placement program serves a small, elite group of students may be surprised to learn that 118 Thomas County students participated in Advanced Placement courses. When combined with college dual enrollment credits, more than 200 Thomas County students earned over 800 college credits during the 2014-2015 school year at Thomas County Central High School.

We have become the area's "hands down leader" in pre-engineering preparation combining digital information and computer programming with highly successful Advanced Placement Physics and Advanced Placement Calculus programs. No other school in the area, public or private, matches our pre-engineering program.

Our pre-medical program is equally impressive with a package of courses including highly successful Advanced Placement Biology, Advanced Placement Chemistry, Advanced Placement Calculus and honors anatomy courses.

To achieve this level of

results, academic acceleration cannot begin at the high school level; students must begin preparing early in their school careers. Thomas

County Middle School offers seven high school level courses designed to help prepare students for advanced work at Thomas County Central High School.

The seven high school credits available to Thomas County Middle School students are ninth grade literature, Algebra I, high school physical science, two years of high school Spanish, ninth grade agriculture, and Introduction to Digital Technology, a prerequisite course for Advanced Placement Computer Programming.

During 2014-15, 21% of Thomas County Middle School students completed a high school course. Thomas County Central High Schools' 2015-2016 freshman class includes 184 students who earned high school credits while they were in middle school; 79 of those students entered high school with two years of high school foreign language credit.

Shortly after fall break, we will announce one of the most

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

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Aug. 27 - TCCHS Junior Ring Ceremony, 7:00 p.m.

Aug. 28 - Varsity Football vs. Valdosta at the Jacket's Nest, 8:00 p.m.

Sept. 2 - 4 - Hand-in-Hand Celebrates Grandparents Day

Sept. 4 - Varsity Football vs. Riverdale at the Jacket's Nest, 8:00 p.m.

Sept. 7 - Labor Day Holiday

Sept. 9 - 11 - Cross Creek Celebrates Grandparents Day

Sept. 11 - Varsity Football vs. Americus-Sumter in Americus, 7:30 p.m.



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.

Message Continued on Page 2

Thomas County Schools Awarded Driver's Education Grant

Thomas County Central High School is pleased to announce it has received a \$32,160 equipment grant from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) through the Georgia Driver's Education Commission.

The grant will help finance a new automobile and related equipment, plus a computer and printer.

The new car, a Ford Fusion, will better meet the needs for the high school's program. The vehicle previously used in the Driver's Education program was a 2008 Nissan Altima with approximately 100,000 miles. Due to the age and wear on the vehicle, the car needed to be replaced. In addition to the new car, the TCCHS Driver's Ed program received related equipment such as a braking system, rear-view mirror, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, signage, and traffic cones.

High school students benefit greatly from the training provided in the Driver's Education program taught at Thomas County

Central High School. The current program is designed for all students progressing through the curriculum at the high school to receive the classroom portion of Driver's Education training during the school year when they take the required Health Education class. To receive the six hour behind the wheel training, students must sign up for the after-school driving session with one of the system's certified training instructors.

"Currently our Driver's Education program is the only option for students to obtain the accident-preventative training for students in our school system," said Joey Holland, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operation. "The nearest program available is 50 miles away in Valdosta. Financially, the awarding of this state grant takes pressure off of our local budget to maintain the Driver's Education program at TCCHS."

The program is primarily designed for students in the Thomas County School System, but students from



Thomas County Schools Resource Officer Deputy Leila Spires and Christian Harvey, TCCHS junior, enter the new Ford Fusion to complete the driving portion of the driver's education course.

nearby school systems and home schooled students have completed the driving portion through the high school's program.

"We are very fortunate to receive this grant," said Thomas County Schools Drivers Education Coordinator Sam Holland. "This will allow the students of Thomas County to get their driver's education locally, helping not only our students, but serving other students in the community."

Insurance companies recognize the importance of students receiving Driver's Education training through the awarding of policy discounts for students successfully

completing the program. Parents realize the instructional program will result in saved lives. Thomas County Central High School's program is designed to give all students the knowledge, training and strategies needed to prevent auto accidents.

"The Governor's Office of Highway Safety is committed to keeping everyone safe on our roads and highways, from the smallest precious cargo to the most seasoned drivers," said GOHS Director Harris Blackwood. "This grant will help Thomas County Central High School reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Georgia roadways."

Message Continued from Page 1

sweeping literacy initiatives to be undertaken in Thomas County history. This program will offer opportunities for future and current students that were previously unimaginable and will provide comprehensive new resources to all Pre-K through eighth grade classrooms.

Our school board is also considering a call to extend the E-SPLOST program to fund

numerous building renovations and the largest technology initiative in school system history, a program that will place a computer device in the hands of every student, third grade and above.

It is a great time to be a Yellow Jacket and truly a year of "Endless Possibilities!"

Dust Komegy

4th Annual

THOMAS COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

JACK O' LANTERN JOG

5K & FUN RUN

Save the date!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2015

Bishop Hall's Trammell Selected for Exclusive NASA Workshop



Trammell is shown with his certificate of completion from the Lunar and Planetary Institute and NASA for completing the Mars Through Time Teacher Workshop.

Bishop Hall Charter School teacher Scott Trammell was invited to participate in a selective summer teacher workshop called Mars Through Time at NASA Johnson Space Center and The Lunar Planetary Institute, both in Houston, Texas. Trammell was one of only 20 teachers who were selected nationwide to participate in this exclusive workshop.

Mars Through Time is a four-day, high school teacher professional development training session focusing on Mars science and exploration and the nature and process of science. Participants explored the relationship between technology and science using the history of Mars exploration as an example. Participants also learned about and discussed the nature and process of science with each other and invited speakers.

The 20 teachers who attended the workshop were split into five teams.

Trammell's team researched two of the missions that NASA sent to Mars. Their team had the opportunity to work with one of the scientists who helped on the Mars Phoenix Mission which was launched in 2008.

"I applied for this workshop never thinking that I would be selected," Trammell said. "It was such an honor to represent Bishop Hall and the Thomas County School System. I applied to attend during a night school class at Bishop Hall where my class and I had discussed Mars. I was very surprised that my students were so engaged and interested in learning about Mars and whether it could be inhabitable."

After Trammell was accepted, he learned that parts of the workshop included in-depth discussions about the Mars Curiosity Rover. He immediately told his class, and they helped him devise very specific questions the class wanted to have answered while he was at NASA. One of those questions was, "Who designed the tire tread patterns?" The students also wanted to know what tests and data supported the design of the tires and tread pattern of the Curiosity Rover.

Trammell said, "I learned that the Curiosity Rover was very unique because of its on-board ChemCam. The ChemCam is able to shoot a laser at any rock to learn and understand its geology and make up."

ChemCam is able to distinguish different elements because each chemical



BACK TO SCHOOL BLITZ A HUGE SUCCESS - Sponsored by Thomas County Family Connections in partnership with the Thomas County and Thomasville City School systems, the ninth annual Back to School Blitz was a success. Hosted by Thomas County Schools this year, the event was held in the Thomas County Central High School gym. Pictured from left to right are Marie Johnson, Cross Creek cafeteria manager, Marie Ragan, TCCHS cafeteria manager, and Katie Eidson, Thomas County Schools Nutrition Director.

element has its own unique "fingerprint." Sparks from different elements and rock types also have their own color. Knowing which atoms are present in the target rock tells ChemCam scientists its composition.

"My students understood how important this data would be to a scientist, but in the back of their mind, they questioned the longevity of Curiosity Rover if the Martian environment and terrain were to deteriorate or break the tires," said Trammell. "If the rover could not move, the mission could be limited, if not cease to exist."

"During this workshop, I was very excited and proud of my students' involvement," Trammell continued. "While I was there, NASA released an article to the press entitled, 'Wheel Worries: Mars Rover Curiosity Dealing With

Damage.' When this was announced to the workshop, one of NASA instructors for the day made a comment that 'those students from Georgia were spot on!' I felt so proud of my kids."

Trammell is thankful for the experience and the ability to bring back the knowledge gained to the Thomas County School system.

Trammell added, "Now that school has started, my Bishop Hall students will get to benefit again from the workshop. The students will get to address the Chief Researcher on the Curiosity Rover at the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, CA, via Skype. The students already have questions about NASA's new super rover being sent to Mars in 2020. I'm excited that this could be a way our Thomas County students' ideas help NASA to think outside the box."

Summer Enrichment Program Valuable for Migrant Students



Jesus Altamirano (L-R), Emmanuel Rios, Erika Franklin, Cristian Rivas, and Valeria Hidrogo review their projects on the government.

A summer enrichment program in Thomas County went beyond outdoor games and crafts. This special camp took a group of children, who tend to move around a lot, and gave them life lessons they can use anywhere.

The month-long session was for children in kindergarten through eighth grade whose parents are migrant workers. Teacher Valarie Williams, who has worked in the program for three years, said she enjoyed watching the children learn and break out of their shells.

"It was challenging at times," said Williams. "First of all, it's hard meeting new people, but then the participants are learning new things, trying to master them, and do it in a different environment."

Erika Franklin, Student Service Provider for the Migrant Education Program, also helped teach a group of students. Franklin said, "It's a good idea to have programs like this. It helps reinforce their skills that they learned during the school year."

During this past summer, students set up shop for a lesson in economics. They sold things like bracelets and snacks. Once the students were finished, they were asked to count up their money. One group made \$34 while the other group made \$48.

Franklin expressed that the goal was to teach them how to make a product and sell it, as well as teach to save and spend money.

"I have a great advantage in teaching these students during the summer session because I work and see these kids during the regular school year," added Franklin. "I feel very fortunate to have a growing relationship with these kids and their parents who are both very respectful and appreciative of what we do in school."

Thomas County Schools has hosted this camp for more than a decade. According to Williams and Franklin, they had a big party at the end of the camp which is always highly anticipated.

"Ms. Franklin and Mrs. Williams do an excellent job

teaching our enrichment program," Dr. Bob Dechman, Director of Federal Programs, Accountability, and Assessment said. "This past summer was no different. The summer allows them to do creative activities that might not fit within a 60-minute class during the school year. We are pleased to offer a Migrant Summer Enrichment program that

will make our students even more successful in their future studies."

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) is a federally funded program designed to support comprehensive educational programs for migrant children to help reduce the educational disruption and other problems that result from repeated moves.

NEW EMPLOYEES

Bishop Hall

Wesley Sampson

Maintenance

Jacob Smith

TCCHS

Kelly Arno

Terrie Barnes

Cindy Beethe

Zachary Bell

Jason Butler

Jacquelyn Dennis

Jackie Dixon

Karen Franklin

Richard Gainey

Leonard Guyton

Amanda Layne

Will Lewis

Caitlin Muse

Michael Patterson

Ashleigh Pollock

Michael Rigdon

Delois Robinson

Phil Slaughter

Evelyn Stewart

Lauren Strickland

Ryan Strickland

Michael Thomas

Tracy Tucker

Board of Education

Kevin Cronin

Wes Davis

Sunshine Denney

Danny Mainprize

Pathways

Heather Clark

Sara Jenkins

Seema Patel

J.C. Skeen

Kristine Solberger

Shantyl Tomlyn

Cross Creek

Linda Baggett

Cara Camp

Frances Ford

Amber Foster

Elizabeth Reffitt

Sarah Rigdon

Anika Taylor

TCMS

Jennifer Adams

Shamicka Atkins

Kathryn Buechner

Amber Butler

Deborah Cobb

Kasey Cooper

Luisa Cordova

Taz Dixon

Kristen Holland

Anna Holton

Marcie Johnson

Mark Layne

Layne McDermond

Meggin Nix

Kendra Reeves

Jackie Rose

Alexandria Sheppard

Sharon Sherrod

Hannah Shoop

Brenton Smith

Gary Smith

Sandra Smith

Amy Starr

Wanda Steele

Samantha Sturrrup

Claudia Upton

Garrison Pilcher

Roger Brown

Diane Gloster

Audrey Harper

Lila Lafary

Laura Long

Lisa Lovejoy

Jennifer Parparian

Shelly Ryan

Misty Taylor

Elizabeth Varas

Hand-in-Hand

Haley Conn

Heather Eaton

Taylor Fallaw

Marquita Guyton

Tiffanie Harris

Davina Horton

Dale Hughes

Lauren Huite

Valarie Humphries

Patricia Kearce

Susan Stanton

Bridget Still

Ashlyn Youngblood

Transportation

Mary Barrow

Jacqueline Cason

Evie Goff

Brandon Howard

Paul James

Angela McCall

Magnus Nixon

John Perkins

Paul Swift

Crystal Turner





Seniors Jacob Hancock and Guanghui Li (L-R) learn how to create an account in Schoology, a learning management system (LMS).

TCCHS Leads in Engineering Prep

Today's high school students cannot imagine life before computers, tablets, and cell phones, and now they are preparing to enter a job market where computer skills are a basic requirement for a rapidly increasing number of jobs. Thomas County School students will now be able to take advantage of computer science courses to prepare them for the ever-changing world of technology.

Computer Science (CS) is the newest pathway offered in the PREP Academy at Thomas County Central High School. As a part of the Information Technology career cluster, the goal of this pathway is to prepare students with a strong foundation in computer science principles to prepare them for the Advanced Placement computer science exam. The three courses in this pathway include Introduction to Digital Technology, Computer Science Principles, and AP Computer Science.

"The introduction of computer programming completes our package of courses designed for students

planning to pursue an engineering major in college," said Thomas County School Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay. "We offer highly successful AP Calculus, AP Chemistry and AP Physics classes along with robotics, and now computer programming, all courses that are needed to prepare students for the demanding coursework in engineering programs like Georgia Tech. We are proud to offer students the area's leading pre-engineering prep program," Kornegay said.

This new pathway will complement many of the other programs already offered at TCCHS including the Business program, which recently earned its Industry Certification, and the Robotics program, which has elements of programming embedded in its courses. Students will have access to a variety of organizations and competitions while taking courses in this pathway including Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and statewide robotics competitions.

"I am very excited about offering another opportunity

for the students of Thomas County that will help prepare them for both college and career success," said Beth Adams, director of career, technical and agricultural education. "Computer programming can open doors for students interested in a variety of careers that are currently in demand. Providing our students access to these skills while they are still in high school definitely gives them an edge as they make plans for their future."

In addition to offering the first two courses in the pathway at TCCHS this year, the Introduction to Digital Technology course is also available to eighth graders who desire to learn more about programming while earning a high school credit at Thomas County Middle School.

"My goal is to introduce programming and computer science to young people in Thomas County because there are no computer programming courses available in this area," said Patricia Beach, computer science teacher. "Not only are computer science and programming fun, computer science is a high growth career field. The U.S. Bureau of Labor predicts that IT jobs will be among the fastest-growing and highest paying over the next decade. These jobs typically

offer higher salaries than other jobs requiring similar levels of education."

Beach added, "Females and minorities are underrepresented in the field of Computer Science. Right now, four of the 20 top-paying jobs for women are in computing, a broad field in which only about one-quarter of workers is female."

Computer Science counts toward graduation requirements in Georgia. Beginning in 2015-2016, Computer Science courses will meet the requirements for a fourth science, mathematics, or foreign language.

TCCHS Senior Jacob Hancock is taking the advanced class this year. "I'm looking forward to learning about website and app construction," Hancock said.

Another senior, Guanghui Li, said, "Everything in the world now is about technology. I believe I will benefit greatly from what I learn through the course."

Beach participated in the Computer Science Principles for High School (CSP4HS) work group this summer. This is a group of Computer Science educators who completed a six-week course, gathered for a three-day workshop, and will continue to meet online throughout the year.



Computer Science teacher Patricia Beach teaches students how to follow the course outline for Computer Science Principles.

Rigor and Understanding: TCCHS adds two AP courses to schedule, eyes AP Humanities School status



AP Latin students C'Lee Kornegay, Cole Donovan and Austin Yeomans discuss a translation with their teacher Cary Riggs.

By Teresa Williams, TCCHS

Thomas County Central High School is continuing its efforts to provide rigorous courses for students seeking challenging content.

This year, the school has added two more Advanced Placement, or AP, classes to its roster: AP Latin, taught by Cary Riggs, and AP Environmental Science, taught by Laura Kornegay.

"Our AP program continues to expand and grow to meet the needs of our student population," TCCHS Assistant Principal James T. Rehberg, who coordinates gifted and accelerated instruction, said. Kornegay said AP Environmental Science "is an important course that relates to all students" because "keeping our environment healthy is important to everyone." She's wanted TCCHS to offer it for a few years, and now that the school's AP program has grown, she's "happy to teach it."

"We should all learn what impact our actions have on the environment and how we can minimize negative impacts," Kornegay said. "The

main goal is for students to learn about factors that affect the environment and to form opinions on environmental issues based on fact. Of course, I also hope that all my students will make a 5 on the test and get college credit for the course!"

Rehberg said TCCHS has been an AP STEM School (students test in at least two AP math and two AP science courses) for the past few years and this new course "expands our offerings to students interested in science, technology, engineering, and math fields."

AP Environmental Science student Kacy Jones said, so far, she loves the class.

"I wanted to take this course so that I could gain a better understanding of the environment," Jones said. "This class will benefit me by not only showing me how my everyday life affects the Earth but also what I can do to help the planet."

Classmate Logan Herring likes the rigorous content. "I wanted to take this course

because of the rigor it provides while teaching valuable information about the world we live in," Herring said. "I've enjoyed the class so far, and can't wait to see what things I can learn in the future."

AP Latin is also a course its instructor has wanted to teach for a few years, but Riggs said he had to wait for his Latin students to be ready.

"We've been working toward giving this course since I came here," he said. "Students need at least about three years to get ready to be able to do the level of work required. We do have two students who just finished Latin II, but they are particularly good and I think they are ready to take on the challenge."

Rehberg said this addition to the school's AP offerings expands the students' range of choices from the humanities field. He anticipates TCCHS will qualify to be an AP Humanities school this year. The classification, added in 2015, means TCCHS will test students in at least one ELA course, two social science courses, one fine arts course, and one world language course.

"Students looking for advanced study in foreign languages or just getting a firm foundation in Latin for a career in law or medicine will really appreciate this advanced level of instruction," Rehberg said.

The course will feature Virgil's "The Aeneid" and Caesar's "The Gaelic War." It will explore the history and ideals behind these works and their time periods. Students will translate lines, and discuss them during class.

"The AP Latin exam is known as one of the harder exams," Riggs said. "It is very challenging vocabulary/ grammar wise and analysis wise."

AP Latin student Cole Donovan likes that this class is "more rigorous" than his past Latin courses and that he'll learn more about grammar in relation to the Latin language. "It's my senior year and I wanted to take the highest level of Latin that I could, and earn some college credit," he said.

Classmate Austin Yeomans likes that he'll learn about the history behind the texts they'll read and translate for class. "I anticipate that it will be more challenging," he said. "Of all the languages to take at this school, I think Latin is by far the most interesting to me."

AP courses and exams are administered by the College Board, Rehberg explained, and these are one of the various means Georgia students can take advantage of college-level learning opportunities. Students who receive a 3, 4, or 5 on AP exams may receive college credit.

"Any AP course is important because it challenges our students," Riggs said. "They are probably the most rigorous courses available to high school students. AP is the highest standard."



TCCHS AP Environmental Science student Jane Guo waters rye grass for a project the class is doing to study primary productivity.