



THE LINK

SELFLESS ATTITUDE.....Mike Stevens

If you've ever heard Superintendent Alan Seibert talk about Salem's school children, you already know that you don't hear his words - you feel them. For months, Salem's impassioned leader has been fighting for funding to protect Salem's children and its valuable teachers. Throughout this arduous process, that has often appeared at the state-level to be all about dollars and very little sense, Seibert has maintained that Salem will weather the storm better than

most, if not all, because of its people. Seibert knows that it's not the bricks and mortar or the fancy smart boards that make the school a success, but rather it's the committed individuals who enter the doors of those buildings each day who put the Salem School Division on another level.

During the first two months of this year, Seibert personally entered those same doors to engage these talented

educators in some tough talk about the financial hardships that were about to hit the division and, in particular, their respective classrooms.



Dr. Seibert's visit with West Salem Elementary School's employees.

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SALEM CITY SCHOOLS

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Special points of interest:

- ☺ Mike Stevens shares his reflections on the meetings with faculties and staffs these past few weeks regarding the budget issues that the School Division is facing.
- ☺ Teachers of the Year
- ☺ Employee News
- ☺ Coordinator's Corner

CHRISTOPHER WILKES, SALEM'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

We are so excited to announce the Teachers of the Year!!! Congratulations to the following teachers of the year for their schools. They are as follows:

**Salem High School
Lewis Armistead**

**Andrew Lewis Middle
Christopher Wilkes**

**East Salem Elementary
Debbie Stanley**

**G. W. Carver Elementary
Sheri Smith**

**South Salem Elementary
Jenny Kidd**

**West Salem Elementary
Vickie Trumbower**

Congratulations goes to the Division's Teacher of the Year, **Christopher Wilkes.**

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SELFLESS ATTITUDE

The after-school budget talks with teachers and staff members at each of Salem's 6 schools not only gave Seibert a chance to define the seriousness of the situation, but the talks also gave teachers a chance to voice their opinions and offer some cost-cutting ideas of their own.

I attended two of these sessions this winter and several of these events last year when the first round of state cuts sliced through the Commonwealth's classrooms. What I took away from each stop was our Superintendent's incredible passion for teaching and learning and our teachers' unbelievable compassion for one another.

That all too familiar "I'm going to get what's mine - the heck with yours" mentality didn't exist anywhere as selfishness took a backseat to selflessness. The hearts of these educators were exposed, in plain view, and not surprisingly, they were as big and giving as ever. Veteran teachers and relative newcomers were sitting side-by-side in the library and finding it easy to relate to the current plight. Those who had been with the school division since its inception in 1983 were now mentally turning back the clock and imagining just how devastating it would be to, in effect, have one's teaching career derailed before it even got started.

At the end of the face-to-face meetings, Seibert instructed those in attendance on how to take an online survey that would help the Central Office staff prioritize any looming reductions in personnel, salary and benefits. The survey offered 7 budget reduction options and the staff members were asked to rank the items from 1 to 7 with 1 being the "most tolerable" option and 7 being the "least preferred" option.

Now, I was never a math whiz, but when you're talking about cutting your state revenue by more than 10% and salaries and benefits make up nearly 85% of that same budget - it's easy to see that none of the 7 choices on the survey was palatable.

This stuff is tough to stomach in every locality across the state, but just because something tastes bad doesn't mean you have to spit it out. At a recent school board meeting in Bedford Co., salary reductions were suggested as a way to combat the state reductions yet save jobs, but several teachers indicated they would not be in favor of such action because "they couldn't *afford it.*"

Maybe so, but Salem's teachers understand that they can't afford *NOT* to take one if they want to

preserve the effectiveness of our schools and protect as many jobs as possible. The survey results indicated that after retirements and attrition teachers would be way more willing to pay additional money toward their health insurance premium and/or take a 1% salary reduction than they would to see fellow employees laid off.

A reduction in force was seen as the last option by those surveyed with 100% ranking layoffs, in any form, at the bottom of the survey.

"Their selflessness and willingness to do whatever it takes not to sacrifice our students reveals the true caliber and character of the people who have answered the call to serve Salem's children," says Seibert

The survey results, which catalogued the opinions of 349 employees, can be broken down and displayed in a number of statistical fields, but for Seibert the results were something much more than numbers.



Dr. Seibert talking with faculty and staff at G. W. Carver Elementary

"What I took away from each stop was our Superintendent's incredible passion for teaching and learning and our teacher's unbelievable compassion for one another."

Teacher of the Year- Chris Wilkes

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You will have excuse this year's Teacher of the Year in Salem for "tooting his own horn" because that's how he makes his living.

Andrew Lewis Middle School's highly skilled and ultra-popular band director, Chris Wilkes, has been named the 2010 Teacher of the Year for the entire City of Salem School Division.

"It's unbelievable to receive this honor," says Wilkes. "With so many great teachers in Salem, I never thought anything like this would ever happen to me."

Wilkes began teaching at ALMS in 2001 after stints at Staunton River Middle and High School. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from James Madison University and his Masters in Administration from the University of Virginia, but his love of music was instilled in him by his own high school band director—his father—Carlton Wilkes.

"My Dad was a band director of 37 years and just retired from Franklin

County High School," says Wilkes. "He gave me my passion for music, and I have really grown to develop a passion for teaching and understanding that it's all about the children who make up the band."

In addition to his assignment as the ALMS band director, Chris also supervises the Jazz Band, Indoor Drum-Line and the Basketball Pep Band, plus he serves as the assistant band director at Salem High School.

"I love coming to work everyday here at ALMS," says Wilkes. "Our band is so big that my main goal, especially on field trips, is just to finish with the same number of kids I start with."

Since he took over the Wolverines 9 years ago, the music program has grown from 163 students to nearly 250, and the band isn't just getting bigger, it's continuing a tradition of excellence. Under Wilkes' leadership, the band has produced 20 all-district



Christopher Wilkes, Salem's Teacher of the Year

band members and, as a whole, it has consistently received superior and excellent ratings at band festivals and competitions.

"I have a big load of students, 70 just in first period alone, but is an awesome experience to work them each and every day," says Wilkes.

In addition to his "normal" classroom load, Wilkes arrives

early and stays late to support his students' interests in the Jazz Band and Drum Line. During his tenure at ALMS, he also has supported his co-workers and welcomed new personnel in the profession by supervising interns and mentoring new teachers. This past year, Wilkes was one of three administrative interns who supervised Summer School in Salem, and in the spring he also serves as the Salem High School girl's varsity tennis coach.

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"It is inspiring and instructive to reflect on the feedback given by our employees. It is inspiring that our school division is staffed by people with hearts so big that, even though there were no increases in pay this school year, that they are willing to earn less while doing more because still more vacant positions will go unfilled next year.

"It is instructive because our employees recognize that the biggest difference-maker in the life of a child is the presence of skilled, caring, and committed people. For this reason, the best way to help safeguard Salem's children from these unprecedented reductions to help save as many jobs as possible so that people who change lives are still here to do just that," he says. "Other organizations have adopted

vision statements similar "Children First" but the good people who serve in Salem Schools have stepped up as the state has backed down to put their money where their hearts have always been."

And that passion is something each of us can feel in our teachers and our classrooms.

Mike Stevens
Communications Director

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"The Andrew Lewis Middle School administration believes that Mr., Wilkes' contribution to the ALMS Band program have positively impacted the culture of the entire school," says Principal Jerry Campbell. "Chris is a positive role model for students and staff and he is always willing to help and tackle challenges in a positive and professional manner."

Wilkes has been recognized by his peers as the Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors representative for District 6 and he is frequently called upon to be a clinician or conductor for area bands. His trumpet playing prowess has also put him front and center in the horn section for Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member, Percy Sledge.

"It's good to be on the performance side of things sometimes and when

he got inducted into the Hall of Fame, our band, *Sunset Drive*, got to play with him on *Good Morning America*," says Wilkes.

Wilkes was chosen from a list of nominees representing each of Salem's 6 schools. All 6 teachers will be honored by the School Board during a special reception on March 23rd.

Mike Stevens
Communications Director



Mr. Wilkes' directing in one of his band classes

OUR CONDOLENCES

Our sincere sympathy goes to: **Russell Holladay** (Central) for the loss of his sister; **Karen Travitz** (GWC) for the loss of her uncle; **Kimberly Martinez** (ALMS) for the loss of her father; **Suzanne Williams** (ALMS) for the loss of her father; **Scott and Kathy Atkins** (ALMS) for the loss of his mother; **Catherine Lyle** (ES) for the loss of her father; **Deborah Lewis** (WS) for the loss of her husband; **John Bolte** (SHS) for the loss of his mother

EMPLOYEE NEWS FROM THE DIVISION

Congratulations goes to **Victoria Salvat** (GWC) on the birth of her son, Micah William, born on December 28, 2009

Congratulations goes to **Amy Wolford** (GWC) on the birth of her son, Brylen Kenneth, born on February 11, 2010

Congratulations goes to **Donald Barbour** (GWC) for the birth of his daughter, Elizabeth Claire, born on February 12, 2010.

Congratulations goes to **Ashley Harmon** (GWC/WS) for the birth of her daughter, Audrey Elizabeth, born on November 7, 2009

Congratulations goes to **Stacy Vaught** (WS) on the birth of her daughter, Layla Grace, born on January 12, 2010

Congratulations goes to **Kelly Carter** (SS) for the birth of her daughter, Addison Claire, born on March 5, 2010.

Kyle Updike (GWC) married Jackie Jordan on March 6, 2010. They were married in Floyd, VA Also, his daughter, Hannah, is a junior at Roanoke College majoring in English and Spanish. Hannah and another student from the college are in the running for a honor's scholarship based on a summer honors project submitted last summer. The winner will get \$2,500 scholarship to use as they like.

Sara Elizabeth Grey, daughter of **Teresa Grey** (SHS) is engaged to Benjamin Taylor Barnhill of Salem. Sara is a pediatric speech pathologist

at the Children's Hospital in Richmond. Ben is employed as a scientist at Pharmaceutical Product Development in Richmond. They both are Salem High School graduates. An October 9, 2010 wedding is planned at Tuckahoe Plantation in Richmond.

Walker Necessary, son of Kandis Necessary (SHS) received the 1st Annual Mike Smith Scholarship from the Salem Red Sox. Walker will be attending JMU in the fall.

Jennifer Entsminger, daughter of retiree **Janie Entsminger**, has been accepted into Virginia Commonwealth University's Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist Program. Unit at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

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Jennifer was awarded one of five available seats in the Roanoke program. Jennifer currently works as a registered nurse in the Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care Unit at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

Susan Bowman (SHS) has been accepted to participate in the archaeological investigation of Pompeii and Stabiae in Italy through the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at the University of Maryland June 20 through July 9th

Congratulations goes to **Regina Meredith** (SHS) in receiving the National Certified Counselor (NCC) and National Certified School Counselor (NSCS) credentials.

West Salem students and parents in its "Cardinal Kids Care" fundraising campaign, contributed \$2,406.57 for relief work in Haiti. Campaign sponsored by SCA and monies were donated to **UNICEF**.

John Millard (WS) was named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Salem Rotary Club for his years of service to young people and as an educator for the past 25 years in Salem and 40 years in public education.

Austin Mowles, son of **Julie Mowles** (ES) will graduate from Roanoke College this May with a degree in Environmental Science.

Congratulations goes to **Amy Wolford** (GWC) receiving her mas-

ters degree in Reading from the University of Virginia in December, 2009.



THE COORDINATORS' CORNER



HEALTH & PE

Sandy Hill

The First Lady has taken a stance on childhood obesity. We will watch closely as her plans unfold. The program, called "Let's Move", is gathering attention as she has aligned with several well-respected organizations for this cause. On May 17 and 18, the State will be holding a summit to directly address this issue. Our school system plans to send someone to the summit entitled "Weight of the State", which is being hosted by the *Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth* and will be led by the Governor's wife, Maureen McDonnell, acting as Honorary Conference Chair.

In addition to the State summit we will be looking closely at a webinar on April 8 entitled "Let's Get Physical: Being Active to Reverse Childhood Obesity" to gather information to address this problem. The webinar will feature researchers, advocates, and policymakers discussing solutions to problems we face in providing healthy food options and alternate Physical Education activities. We are also looking for ways to teach students about the importance of nutrition and its impact on obesity.

In closing, let me add as Spring is quickly approaching, do not miss the opportunity to get outside and enjoy

it. Students need to be encouraged daily to do the same. The influence you have on them is enormous so please don't underestimate your leadership and help us all to physically educate our students to fight against current trends that are affecting the health of our Nation.



LANGUAGE ARTS

John Bolte

South Salem Elementary School's Abbey Bryant, a fifth grader, won a ten round thriller in this year's division spelling bee. The championship word was "conundrum." The bee was the culmination of the dedicated efforts of classroom teachers and administrators.

Thanks to everyone who helped organize and proctor this year's writing predictors for the sixth, seventh and tenth graders. We will score these papers in August, consider this your invitation to participate. We have a core group of teachers from all grade levels that have made this an efficient and

enjoyable experience. If you have not scored predictors in a while, please join us. More information is available on the language arts resource page.

The Academy of American Poets offers thirty ways to celebrate National Poetry Month this April. For a teacher's guide to this year's poetry read-a-thon, visit their website at www.poets.org. This site includes a variety of materials to help bring poetry into your classroom.

The revised Standards of Learning for Language Arts have been approved and are now available in a

strike-through document on the G: drive that highlights the changes. If you are interested in participating in curriculum revision workshops, please let me know.

Students at Andrew Lewis Middle School and Salem High School have participated in studying this year's Big Read selection, Ernest Gaines' A Lesson Before Dying. The novel is being studied in many local schools and communities and a variety of community events are occurring through the month of March.



MATHEMATICS

Beth Swain

How does the school year go by so fast? By the time you read this, I hope all the snow is behind us and sunny skies lie ahead. This winter was a little much for me!

Thanks to all the elementary folks who attended the workshops on the grade level changes in the 2009 SOLs. I hope that you find the information beneficial in the next year. I have placed all my Power-Point presentations on the G: drive for you to use as a resource.

As a reminder, next school year (2010 to 2011) will be our transition year with the SOLs. Kindergarten through Second grade will begin teaching the new SOLs. Third grade through Algebra II will teach the 2009 SOLs and any material that is new to the grade level or class from the 2009 SOLs. The field questions in the spring of 2011 will use content from the 2009 SOLs. The following school year (2011 to 2012) everyone

will be teaching using the 2009 SOLs.

The curriculum framework for each grade or class has been released from the state. I have placed a copy of each on the G: drive at G:\Common\MathResources\2009 math SOL. This document is equally important, if not more important, as the list of SOLs because it contains instructional strategies for each SOL. I would encourage each of you to examine the frameworks that apply to your teaching assignment.

One more useful document is the crosswalk between the 2001 and 2009 SOLs. The state asked the VCTM to put this together. I feel they did a very nice job making this document user friendly. It is also located on the G: drive using the address above.

As we look to SOL testing, remember to give your students lots of practice with the materials they

can use on the tests—graph paper, calculators, etc. If you are testing online, be sure the students have practiced using the tools available.

Don't forget to check out the resources available on the G: drive (G:\Common\MathResources) and on the Coordinator's Corner website (<http://www.salem.k12.va.us/staff/bswain/coordinatorwebsite/MathIndex.html>). There is a wealth of information to help you prepare from the Paul Brown workshops; she has given us lots of insight toward the SOL tests and how to better prepare our students. You can find information she shared with us at G:\Common\PaulaBrown2009.

I know you have prepared your students well and they will have great success! As always, contact me for any of your mathematical needs. I will be happy to assist you in any way I can.

Have a great spring!

SCIENCE

Margie Secor

Please be sure to check the Science Resources website periodically, as I update it whenever I get new professional development opportunities to pass along to you. In addition, I have added a calendar for each month with "this day in science," or little reminders, or quotes from famous scientists that you might find of interest.

One professional development opportunity that I will bring to your attention involves the Science Museum of Western Virginia. They are asking for teaching volunteers or assistants to help with their summer camps.

You can earn recertification points for doing this. If you are interested, please let me know as soon as possible, and I will forward your name and contact information on to the education director at the museum.

Also, several field trips are being offered through the Virginia Museum of National History. Please be sure to check out the link to the flyer on the Science Resources website for all the details. If you cannot access this information, please let me know via email, and I will send you a copy of the flyer. The trips sound very interesting,

with lots of fossil possibilities and reasonable prices.

As we approach the next phase in our Science Pacing Guide update, please make notes of any improvements or changes you would suggest for the 3rd and 4th six weeks grading periods. Terry LaRocco and I will be contacting you regarding our March meeting date, time, and location. Hopefully we will not need to reschedule.

I sure hope Spring gets here soon!!!