



## ***VASCD: Advocates for Education***

**Daryl Chesley, President**

Welcome to the Winter Virginia ASCD newsletter. Within this edition, I trust you will find relevant and important information related to you and your profession. Virginia ASCD is very proud of our Mission: "Advancing excellence in teaching, learning, and leadership." We are all teachers, learners, and leaders.

In his recently published *Spark*, the author, Dr. John Ratey, encourages each of us to consider the importance of the mind-body connection. He provides several examples of research that suggest that the mind works much like muscles do - growing with use, withering with inactivity. He opines that an important component of our health is the need to exercise. Exercise is the best defense against everything from mood disorders to Alzheimer's. Personally, I am a firm believer in this mantra - I am an avid runner and enjoy the benefits of living an active life.

For the sake of discussion, I carry this analogy - that of remaining active - into our chosen field of education. We, the educators, are in the best position to advocate for our field. If we chose to sit idly by while outside forces dictate what constitutes good instruction, or how often students should be assessed, we have no right to complain. Silence is often viewed as consent. The converse is also true. If we chose to stay active, remain versed in current best practice, and continue to deliver top notch education to the students of Virginia, we have every right to be an engaged participant in determining the future of education in Virginia.

Please take the time to read the very important information contained in this newsletter. There are a myriad of ways for you to become involved - to exercise your mind! You can chose to attend any of our professional development offerings, thereby "sharpening your saw" in the instructional delivery arena. If

that is not possible due to your busy schedule, you could submit articles for publication in the Virginia ASCD Journal, or proposals to present at the Virginia ASCD Annual Conference. Or, perhaps you would rather participate in Virginia ASCD as an advocate for Education related legislation currently being considered by the General Assembly.

If you ever have questions, you can contact me, or any of the Regional Representatives - our contact information can be found on the Virginia ASCD website. In Dr. Ratey's words, there are so many ways for you to 'exercise your mind' as a member of Virginia ASCD. Ask yourself how you can become involved in shaping the future of education in Virginia.

## ***2013 Virginia Assembly Information***

Linda Hyslop, Executive Director

As this newsletter is being sent to you, the General Assembly session has begun its 2013 session. This year, Governor McDonnell has proposed several educational initiatives. Key elements of his All Students agenda include the following:

**TEACH FOR AMERICA ACT** - Governor McDonnell supports bringing Teach for America (TFA) to Virginia to support hard-to-staff schools. Teach for America recruits and trains the best and brightest recent college graduates from various disciplines to accept full-time teaching assignments in hard-to-staff schools. This legislation will allow for TFA to operate in Virginia and begin placing teachers in hard-to-staff schools starting in 2013-2014 academic year.

**A-F SCHOOL REPORT CARDS** - Governor McDonnell proposes to simplify the current school accountability system to an easy to understand A-F grading system. This school grading system will help parents to fully understand the performance of their child's school. The new report cards will recognize schools for challenging all students to reach high levels of achievement.

**K-12 RED TAPE REDUCTION** - This legislation strengthens the ability of school divisions to request waivers from the State Board of Education from certain state requirements. Local school divisions may be released from Board of Education-approved regulations and standards of quality requirements.

**STAFFING FLEXIBILITY FOR SCHOOL DIVISIONS** - Currently, the Standards of Quality legislation prescribes the number of librarians, school counselors and school-based clerical staff required for each school. This legislation would provide flexibility for school

divisions to assign staff to schools with particular needs and areas of focus, rather than blanket mandates.

**READING IS FUNDAMENTAL INITIATIVE** - Reading proficiency by third grade is an important predictor of high school graduation and career success. Governor McDonnell's legislation will improve reading achievement for students reading below grade level by creating additional instructional time for reading specialists to work with them. The additional time will be granted through SOL testing waivers. For a school to be eligible for the waiver, it must be accredited with warning in reading or have a reading pass rate of less than 75 percent. To receive a waiver, a school must have a full-time reading specialist to support teachers and students and be dedicated to instruction in the Science or History and Social Science Standards of Learning in kindergarten through third grade. This is a continuation of the governor's 2012 legislation that ended "social promotion" of third graders who did not pass the SOL reading standards.

**LITERACY AND ALGEBRA READINESS INITIATIVE** -Building upon Governor McDonnell's literacy initiative, he will propose legislation to embed Algebra Readiness and the Early Intervention Reading Initiative in the Standards of Quality. Algebra is a key indicator for success in advanced STEM-H disciplines. This legislation will ensure algebra intervention services to students in grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 who are at risk of failing the Algebra I end-of-course test and early intervention reading services to students in grades kindergarten through 3 who demonstrate reading deficiencies. In addition, the governor will propose budget amendments to support this agenda which include:

**FUNDING FOR READING SPECIALISTS (\$1,433,116)** - Provides the state share of funding to support one reading specialist per elementary school that scored below 75 percent on the third grade reading Standards of Learning (SOL) test.

**KINDERGARTEN READINESS (\$750,000)** - Provides general fund money for the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and adds language requiring the foundation to work with public and private partners to develop recommendations for a kindergarten readiness assessment tool and subsequent pilot project(s). The pilot assessments will be available for use, on a voluntary basis, by Smart Beginnings initiatives and local school divisions. The assessment tools will allow for a better understanding of the range of skills children have as they enter kindergarten and progress through the school year.

**EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE (\$618,040)** - Support implementation of effective school-wide discipline system in schools by providing funding to develop and conduct statewide training for public school teachers and administrators on implementation of an effective school-wide discipline system that reduces disruptive behavior in the classroom. In addition to the proposals put forth by the Governor, members of both the Senate and House of Delegates will be authoring bills intended to impact preK-12 education. Virginia ASCD stands by its commitment to advocate for sound public education policy and sufficient resources to provide a high quality education system in

Virginia. We ask all members to keep informed of what is happening in this General Assembly session and let your voice be heard. There are several resources that can assist you in keeping abreast of educational issues.

They include the following:

- The Virginia General Assembly Website has a new design. It allows you to keep current on what is going on in Richmond. It allows you to check specific bills being presented and provides you with a Directory of Senators and Delegates with their email address and phone number. Under the tab, Virginia Legislature, you can learn how to correspond with your legislator and how to track a bill. The address is <http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/>.

- AllStudents.Virginia.Gov is a website created by Governor McDonnell that directly speaks to teachers. As stated on the website, the Governor describes the ALL STUDENTS initiative as simple. It is based on a fundamental belief that ALL STUDENTS, regardless of ZIP code, deserve access to a high-quality education. The address is: <http://www.allstudents.virginia.gov/index.cfm>.

Virginia ASCD encourages you to be an advocate for your profession and for those children whose lives you touch.

## *Failure: The Secret to Success*

Phyllis Milne, Editor

Diana Laufenberg challenged 2012 VASCD conference attendees to provide opportunities for our students to investigate and analyze content as well value failures and successes. Laufenberg opines that the growth of standardized multiple choice testing helps to erode critical thinking and increase rote memorization. Creative and talented students who are not challenged to consider multiple right answers may not experience the accidental learning that is a result of failed attempts. In addition, these capable students may not develop the resilience that will support their efforts in universities and in work.

Quality Counts (Education Week, 2013) ranked Virginia's education fourth in the nation, an overall B rating. Virginia's Standards, Assessments and Accountability were ranked 'A.' However, College Readiness in Virginia was ranked 'D.' This curious ratings dichotomy supports Laufenberg's concerns that K-12 educators are teaching students to be successful on tests, but not to be prepared for higher learning.

What do our students believe? A class of Advanced Literary Arts seniors who attend York County's School of the Arts magnet program viewed Laufenberg's TED talk, Learning from Failure, and discussed the benefits and obstacles of failing at a goal or task in school and in their lives. These amazing students, who will successfully complete from seven to twenty-two weighted credits by graduation in June, hold Grade Point Averages (GPAs) from 3.5 to 4.72. Students were asked to reflect on positive and negative lessons from failure and to support their reflections with personal opinions and experiences.

Although some students revealed that they made good grades and rarely had to work hard, every student shared a lesson learned from failing at a task they valued – swimming, cheering, fifes and drums, and even personal relationships. They described reactions including disappointment, embarrassment, self-doubt, frustration, pain, and guilt. In every case, however, students recognized the growth and personal determination that resulted from analyzing mistakes, working harder, and making progress.

Students could easily identify what went wrong and how to correct errors in sports or the arts, but the students did not always receive helpful and specific feedback about poor grades on papers or tests.

Chris: "If we are unable to understand why we failed, we will be forever unaware of what needs to be changed to reach the desired goal."

Brianna: "If someone fails one test, they feel their whole grade will be compromised, which will affect their GPA, which will eventually affect their chances of furthering their education and their place in the world. Failure is scary because not everyone knows why they failed at something. If that happens, the feeling of not being good enough may stop them from trying altogether."

Allie: "We live in a society where you are taught you must be perfect. No one is perfect, but when we make mistakes we think we are complete failures at everything."

Elizabeth: "It is very important that we do not define success as getting everything right on the first try."

Amber: "The meaning of learning is now more about achieving a grade or a score rather than honing intelligence or making progress." She adds that if there were

no failures - no trial and error, “the human species would not have developed into one of the most complex systems on earth.”

Referencing the scientific process, Kelly defined failure as “a mistaken variable, a hiccup in the hypothesis.”

Zach quoted Michael Jordan “I’ve failed over and over in my life. And that is why I succeed,” and added that the cleaning spray 409 was the 409th formula tested. Zach added:, “After doing something wrong, we get a better idea of how to do it right.”

Trevor: “The only thing you can control in the face of failure is your reaction, and if you let it affect you for the rest of your life, you have failed yourself.”

There is no doubt that these brilliant and resourceful students will continue to be successful and contribute to our society in unique ways. If all of Virginia’s K-12 students could be taught to cherish the unexpected result and be guided by specific feedback to continuously explore, create, and improve, perhaps true college, career, and life readiness would result.



Diana Laufenberg will present “Strategies and Methods for Teaching and Learning in the Modern Era” on February 20, 2013 at the Lynchburg City Schools IT Building and on February 22, 2013 at the Nicholas Center, John Tyler Community Center in Chester, VA. Her TED talk, Learning from Failure, is available at: [http://www.ted.com/talks/diana\\_laufenberg\\_3\\_ways\\_to\\_teach.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/diana_laufenberg_3_ways_to_teach.html)

Education Week. (Jan. 13, 2013). Quality counts. Available at:  
[http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state\\_report\\_cards.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state_report_cards.html)

## *2012 Curriculum Leader of the Year Award*

Presented at the 2012 Annual Conference

Virginia Beach City Public Schools Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Joe Burnsworth has been selected as the recipient of the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD) Curriculum Leader of the Year award. The award was presented Nov. 29 at the 2012 VASCD Annual Conference in Williamsburg. Burnsworth was recognized for his leadership in transforming the school division's elementary language arts program to an integrated performance-based curriculum.