

2016 State of Roanoke County Public Schools



Mike Wray, Chairman Roanoke County School Board Thursday, November 3, 2016 Green Ridge Recreation Center

Thank you Mr. Hudzik.

I'm Mike Wray, Chairman of the Roanoke County School Board, representing the Cave Spring District. I'd like to thank the Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Supervisors for the opportunity to speak to you this morning to showcase the achievements and excellence of our school system and to talk about where we are headed in the future.

First, I'd like to introduce the members of the Roanoke County School Board:

- Vice Chairman Tim Greenway representing the Vinton District
- Don Butzer representing the Catawba District
- Jason Moretz representing the Windsor Hills District

- Jerry Canada, representing the Hollins District, couldn't be with us this morning.

I also would like to introduce several members of our school administration who are with us this morning:

- Dr. Greg Killough - Superintendent
- Penny Hodge – Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations
- Dr. Rebecca Eastwood – Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Instruction

In the 2015-2016 school year, our students have excelled both inside and outside the classroom.

We are extremely proud that **ALL** our schools are fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education. This is an accomplishment that becomes more challenging every year due to changing state and federal standards and requirements.

We're especially proud to announce that Green Valley Elementary was named a **Blue Ribbon School** this year, one of only 329 Blue Ribbon Schools in the nation. The Blue Ribbon School Award is the highest honor a school can earn and we're very proud of the students, parents and staff at Green Valley. Ashley McCallum, principal of Green Valley is here with us this morning – Ashley, please stand and let's give her a round of applause.

Glenvar Middle School and William Byrd Middle School were named **Schools to Watch** earlier this year. These two schools join Hidden Valley and Northside Middle Schools to earn this prestigious distinction.

Mount Pleasant Elementary School has again been named a **Distinguished Title I School** by the Virginia Department of Education.

The Class of 2016 had more than 94 percent of our seniors graduate on time. This is one of the highest on-time graduation rates in the region. In fact, our on-time graduation rate has remained near or above 90 percent for many years.

In the 2015-2016 school year, more than **one-thousand** students earned college credit while still in high school by taking dual enrollment courses through Virginia Western Community College. With dual enrollment, a student can take an advanced class in high school and earn college credit at the same time. We want to thank Virginia Western and President Bobby Sandal for their partnership in providing opportunities for our students to get started on their higher education.

The Class of 2016 earned nearly **\$14 million dollars** in scholarships to help pay for future education. Also, our graduates earned more than **one-thousand** career and technical education industry certifications, such as workplace readiness, WISE financial literacy, CompTIA, ASE Student Certification and more. These certifications will help our students secure good paying jobs and careers.

Our board recognized the discrepancies in compensation of our teachers. We directed staff to work with Evergreen Solutions and develop a compensation study which allowed us to implement a new salary structure for our teachers. This increased teacher pay, making our salaries more competitive in the region.

We finished a major renovation and expansion at Glenvar High School and we are in the process of renovating the locker rooms at William Byrd High School. Our next major project is the much needed improvement at Cave Spring High School, a 48-year-old facility built in 1968.

We're currently working on a facility study to help us determine the future needs at our current facilities. We also completed this year a detailed long-range demographic study to help us predict enrollment over the next ten years and beyond. This will help us develop a new capital improvement plan in partnership with Roanoke County government.

We've expanded our laptop program to include 7th and 8th grades. This provides every student in grades 7-12 with the technological resources to learn and be successful as well as develop key skills needed after high school. Our technology program has been a tremendous success for more than a decade and we are becoming a model for other school systems across the nation. In 2013 and again in 2015, we were named the top digital school system in the nation in our enrollment category by the National School Boards Association.

We're continuing our focus to expand our curriculum in career and technical education, or CTE, by creating new partnerships to bring more CTE opportunities to our students through internships and new courses. New this year, we're teaching cybersecurity thanks to a partnership with Radford University. Also, we're teaching **level 1 EMT** courses thanks to a partnership with the Roanoke County Fire and Rescue Department, Jefferson College of Health Sciences and Virginia Western Community College.

It takes a very special person to become a teacher. We're partnering with Virginia Western Community College and Radford University to develop a teacher preparation program that will help train our next generation of teachers.

We're partnering with the YMCA's Y Splash program to help teach 2nd grade students basic swim lessons and water safety. This year we're expanding this program so that even more students can learn these life-saving skills.

Each summer, we're partnering with school systems in Roanoke City, Salem City, Craig County and Botetourt County for our **Load the Bus** school supply drive – and 2016 was the largest drive ever to collect supplies to help students start the school year with the tools they need to be successful. In Roanoke County alone, we collected more than **\$19,700** worth of school supplies.

We are shifting the focus of education from traditional, passive learning to active, project-based, hands-on learning experiences where students learn to discover knowledge instead of simply being given information.

See for yourself...

(VIDEO)

While these accomplishments and programs are outstanding and truly something to celebrate, there's so much more coming in the future.

Here is where **you** come in. We want to make connections with you.

As I've mentioned, we're already partnering with several organizations represented here this morning, but we want to do more. We want to partner with your organization. We want to reach out and see how we can help you meet your workforce development goals.

How can we work together to help train the next generation of doctors, engineers, carpenters, plumbers, technicians, mechanics, machinists, chefs and so many more? We know you need a trained workforce. Through our CTE programs, we're here to help provide that training and we want to partner with you.

Today, the Burton Center for Arts and Technology is bursting at the seams – nearly every available slot has been filled and we're looking for ways to accommodate even more students in the coming years. We are working with other area school systems and Virginia Western Community College to try to determine how together we can provide even more career and technical education opportunities for students all across the Roanoke Valley. We're hoping you can help us.

We live in the Roanoke Valley – not just Roanoke County. We are competing in a regional environment and we need to operate as a region. While we may be an independent school system, that doesn't mean we are on an island. We have to work together.

We need you to help us achieve our goals -- but we also need to help you achieve your goals to prepare your future employees.

We are very fortunate in Roanoke County to have such a strong working relationship between the school system and the county government. As Chairman Peters will discuss in a few moments, we are working together to make connections all across the Roanoke Valley.

We are connecting students to opportunities.

We are helping to connect opportunities to jobs

We are partnering with our community and Roanoke County to connect jobs to economic development.

Thank you for supporting our school system! As you can see many great things are happening in our schools and we're excited for what will happen in the future.

And now it is my distinct pleasure to introduce my friend, Jason Peters, Chairman of the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors.