

VIERA CHARTER SCHOOL



PANTHERS

April 2020

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

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Principal's Message

Dear Panther Parents,

There is no doubt that we are experiencing a most unprecedented time in our Nation's history. As we cope with this very serious pandemic, know that the Professional Learning Community at Viera Charter School will continue to be there for your children. Through it all, we have chosen to believe we will get through this, and we will be stronger because we are well positioned going in.

My sincere thank you goes out to our teachers, who are exceeding anyone's wildest dreams for performance during this time of mandatory home-based education. They are first and foremost helping to meet the emotional and social needs of our students. While our students may be shielded from much of the stress we adults must face, children do feel the stress from social isolation and uncertainty.

As you read through our newsletter, you will see the many ways we are adapting to the delivery of learning in your homes. It is our goal to take pressure off parents, and not add to it. We know that some students may not meet this year's normal standards for growth. Our focus is on keeping the students engaged in the love of learning. Assessment and review can come later when we return to school.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Julie Cady



Dr. Cady is able to "pop in" and visit every virtual classroom at VCS, and share best practices with all faculty. Creativity and fun are top goals, page 5.

Viera Charter takes learning to the next level

BY KAILA

ZURAWIECKI

VIERA VOICE

MAY 1, 2020

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VCS hit the news BIG TIME in March and April as stories appeared in SpaceCoastDaily.com and Viera Voice, hitting the number one spot on the VieraVoice.com top 10 list of stories. We were ready to learn, and have been able to host daily live interactive classes, which is not done at traditional public schools, apart from the rare Zoom meeting. For more information on the writer, see page 4.

Children at Viera Charter School started back to school the day after spring break Tuesday, March 24, greeted by their teacher's face on a computer screen, and the smiles of their fellow classmates.

Students at traditional Brevard Public Schools started nearly a week later on Monday, March 30.

"I just want to say thank you to Charter School Associates, VCS administration and the teachers for working so hard to get our children learning again," parent Elizabeth Logan said. "I know most of (them) gave up time over spring break to take calls and strategize. Having these classes live (and recorded for those who can't attend during the live times) is so important for our kiddos. To be able to actually see and hear their teachers and classmates during this chaotic time is invaluable. I could cry just thinking about it. Thank you for bringing a tiny sense of normalcy for them."

The private, nonprofit Viera Charter School is locally owned and governed by a board of local community members, and contracts for management oversight and services with Charter School Associates (CSA). CSA provided online training March 23 for faculty in their homes on the use of Microsoft Teams, which allows a teacher to address all his or her students via the computer screen in real time. Students who attend the live meeting can be called on, which allows their face to be seen and voice to be heard by all other classmates.



"I'm so proud of our teachers, and also very pleased with our students who have caught on quickly to this new technology this week," VCS principal Dr. Julie Cady said. The school's educational technology manager, Saxon Boucher, remains at school addressing any technology obstacle teachers or parents might have, and distributing laptops so that all students will have a station of their own for the duration of time they must learn from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many parents echoed Logan's comments.

Stacey Scott complimented her daughter Ellie's third-grade teacher Jason Cardillo for making sure students understood the new platform.

"I'm sure this may have its challenges for teachers, but I feel they are doing an amazing job," Scott said. "They are keeping the kids engaged and making them feel like they are still part of their class."

Sixth-grader Vanessa Jenkin said, "We have plenty of assignments and very interactive online classes to keep our mind going during this time." Teachers have definitely risen to the challenge.

"Virtual learning has been an exciting adventure," said Rose Dedrick, a fifth-grade teacher at Viera Charter School. "What has been challenging for me has been deciding how to teach and present new material to my students. I do a lot of hands-on and collaborative lessons in my classroom. Since I cannot teach this way online, I have had to adjust my methods. I miss being in the classroom with my students, so I am trying to incorporate a 'morning meeting' routine into each of my live video lessons. I feel like this is important because one of the big reasons we go to school is for the social and collaborative aspects of working with our peers and teachers." *Kaila Zurawiecki is a student writer at Viera Charter School.*

Dress Down Day Continues With At-Home Wardrobe Fun

While March 13 was the last dress down day in physical school, the fun activity continued during at home during virtual studies. It could be said that every day was PJ day, so Dr. Cady named two days in mid-April as the official PJ Dress Down Day. Many classes hosted their own dress up parties, like the '50s Dress Down Day to celebrate Mrs. Hoffman's birthday (see page 5) and costume parties for younger grades. Whatever it takes to engage students during this uncertain time!

May 5 and 7 are for Crazy Hat Day, and May 14 and 15 are Crazy Hair Day. The number of dress down days doubled because middle school now meets virtually on A and B days.



Student of the Month for April: Sportsmanship/Cooperation



Macy Dovale was chosen unanimously by her seventh-grade teachers as Student of the Month for April for the character qualities of Cooperation/Sportsmanship .

“Macy exemplifies cooperation and sportsmanship on and off the field,” said Mrs. Goizueta, lead teacher for seventh grade. “She is a cheerleader for VCS. She stepped into a leadership role as a seventh grader and has done an amazing job. Even as a sixth grader, she showed the promise of being one of the go-to leaders! In class, she is kind to everyone and does all of her work to the best of her ability. She was an easy choice for Student of the Month!”

For Macy, it was a delight to be acknowledged by her teachers and coaches, and she has advice to others like her, especially in light of the current challenges to the educational experience.

“I am very excited to see that I am working well and I am grateful my teachers and peers see that too,” Macy said. Advising others like her, “I would say, just stay true to yourself and always do what you are asked to do. Stay true to doing what you love!”

Macy keeps up her physical education routine by riding her bike and many more outdoor and indoor activities.

Virtually Teaching Tough Topics? No Problem

Mr. Frahm teaches middle school Algebra, so some students may find the topic a tad dry to begin with. Add the fact that Brevard School District officials report Math as the most difficult topic to teach virtually since the pandemic closed schools, and the fact that students and parents are singing his praises is even more remarkable.

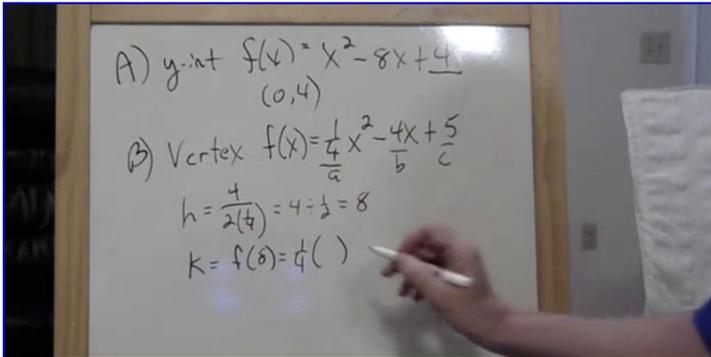
"I just peeked in on my daughter and her Math class with Mr. Frahm, and he is going a remarkable job with virtual instruction," parent Bonnie Rowe said. "He is speaking directly and clearly to the students, using a Bingo exercise to keep all engaged, checking for any questions, and varying voice tones to keep engagement."



Mr. Frahm put the praise back on his students.

"My students have been very good at using the live presentation. They do not interrupt me and we converse as we would in class. I ask a question of individuals who have checked in and they respond. I've posted tests and quizzes on both Pearson Realize and in the Files tab so students who are having on-line problems can still do the work."

To echo Mrs. Rowe, "Kudos to you Mr. Frahm!"



Mr. Frahm uses a white board to display problem solving on video.

Dream It, Do It! Writing Club Members are Published Journalists

Veteran members of the *Dream It, Do It!* Writing Club are filling a vital role in the promotion of Viera Charter School while they collect published samples of their creative work. Fifth-grader Kaila Zurawiecki is the latest to write an article for *Viera Voice* newspaper, chronicling the successes of VCS's move to virtual instruction in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (reprint page 2). "I love writing, and it's exciting to know others are reading my words all over Viera and Suntree, and all over the world because my mom won't stop sharing it," said Kaila, a second-year member who has also written a number of plays and movie screenplays.

Harrison Buck and Elia Burrs are published photo journalists, helping to tell the stories of VCS's top placing volleyball team and a middle school German teacher who earned a European scholarship. Edwin Martin wrote the story on the latter.

Dream It, Do It! faculty advisor Mrs. Gaffey is the writing coach for the project. "There is nothing that breaks down fear and builds confidence like getting published," she said.



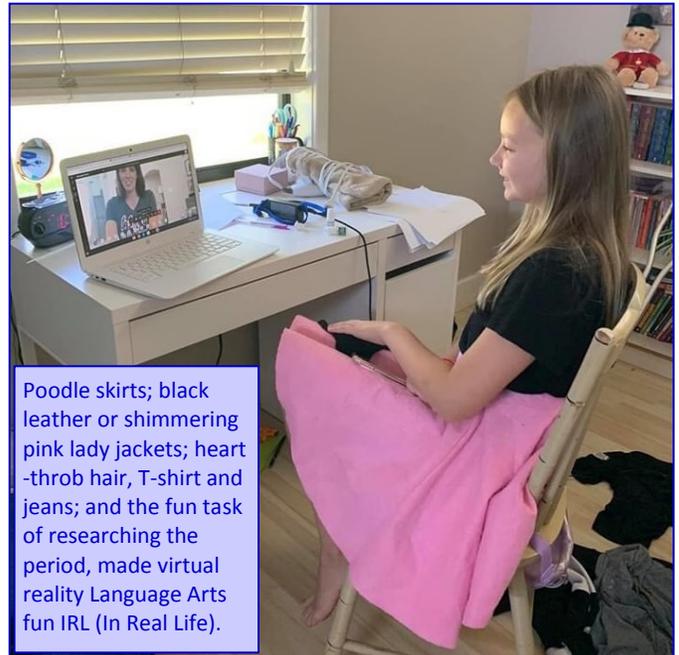
Kaila Zurawiecki, top left, Harrison Buck, Elia Burrs and others have had their works published. Mrs. Gaffey, below left, teaches character development.



Virtual Teaching's Top Goal: Make it Fun, Creative, Engaging

Mrs. Hoffman took the directive to heart. Dr. Cady has said at every faculty planning meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools, to make sure virtual lessons are delivered with fun and creativity in mind.

Mrs. Hoffman hosted a birthday party for herself and invited all her students to participate in the '50s theme. This meant her middle school Language Arts students had to research the period to come up with their costumes, some even going as far as to make their own from scratch.



Poodle skirts; black leather or shimmering pink lady jackets; heart-throb hair, T-shirt and jeans; and the fun task of researching the period, made virtual reality Language Arts fun IRL (In Real Life).

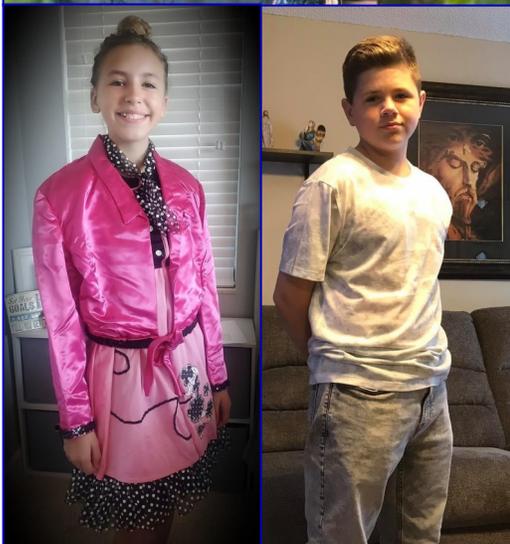


"Thanks for the '50s themed birthday party!"

wrote Mrs. Decker, Raegan's mom. "This middle schooler was excited about something school-related for the first time since all this started."

What teachers discovered once they moved to virtual instruction is that learning would have to be done differently.

"It's almost as if you have to use your energy, your voice, your face and hands, whatever you can use on the screen and with audio, to reach past the screen and pull them in," said Ms. Bell, who works one-on-one and in small groups to enrich the learning of challenged students in the Exceptional Student Education program. She added with a laugh, "If you're not exhausted at the end of the day, you may not be doing it right."



It's been all hands on deck to serve all students with and without documented challenges, because the isolation from friends and teachers and the daily routine caused by quarantine has taken a toll on children and families. The goal is to help them get online successfully and get caught up.

"This is why we place the emphasis on fun and the social experience," Dr. Cady said. "We can't be a source of added stress at this time; we have to take stress away. We don't want to give too much work, but a routine is a good thing; regular live instruction so they can see their teacher's face and share a smile with the classmates they miss so much. We are all in this together, and together we will review and get back on track."

Was There Ever Any Doubt? Viera Charter School Teachers Love Their Students

Teachers wanted to do something to let their students know how they felt about them, even though they could not see them in person and give them the hugs students crave from their

teachers on a daily basis. They organized a “photo quilt” to express their feelings. “Dear Panthers, We miss you so very much and we are so proud of you. You are loved!” Parents, students replied in kind.

