

the Panther's Den

Special points of interest:

- VAISD received a "Recognized" rating from the TEA.
- VA Elementary School received the highest rating, "Exemplary", from the TEA.
- VAHS, VAMS, and VAIS all received "Recognized" ratings from the TEA.

VAISD Parents Have Access to Emergency Information

Van Alstyne ISD announced the participation of the school district in a new emergency notification service, FlashAlert.net, that allows parents to receive e-mails and text messages if the school has to close. The services website said, "The FlashAlert.net website gives you access to emergency messages, such as breaking news or snow closure information, and news releases from participating organizations."

The system was developed in the northwest and is used by many school districts in Washington, Oregon, and Colorado. Originally developed as a way for schools to notify multiple media outlets

with a single contact, it allows parents to receive the same notification as television and radio stations at the same time. "This service allows us to notify a large number of people and organizations if we need to close schools due to weather or some other emergency," said VAISD Superintendent Dr. Alan Seay. It has all ready been successfully used by a couple of area schools. The service is provided free of charge for the first year through the Region 10 Education Service Center.

Directions for signing up for this service are available on the district's website at www.vanalstyneisd.org.

VAISD receives high marks from TEA

Each year the Texas Education Agency uses student performance data to create a rating for each district and campus in the state. All four VAISD campuses as well as the district received excellent grades from the TEA in the 2006—2007 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). The grades are calculated using primarily student performance data.

Our elementary school achieved the highest rating of Exemplary, while the other three campuses received the second highest mark of Recognized. The combined rating for the district was a Recognized rating.

To achieve a rating of Exemplary, 90% of the students had to pass the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills). The rating of Recognized required a passing rate of 75%. TAKS tests are given in grades 3—11 in Reading and Math, in grades 4 and 7 in Writing, in grades 8, 10 and 11 in Science and Social Studies.

The state requires school districts to publish the AEIS data in the form of a School Report Card. The school distributes the Campus Report Card in January. Persons wishing to see the complete AEIS report may request one at any campus or district office.



Construction on the new Van Alstyne ISD Multi Purpose Stadium is underway. The stadium, approved as a part of a \$13.5 million bond package last May, will include 2000 seat home grandstands, an 8 lane all weather track, and a turf field. The contract date for completion is October 31, 2008. However, our contractor, C. R. Reynolds of Sherman, is hoping to finish ahead of schedule. In order to have any hope to do that they need good weather during the process.



Spotlight on the Elementary School

Look at the great things that have been happening here at Van Alstyne Elementary School! This year, we started off the year in full academic swing. Having been recognized by TEA as being an Exemplary School, we hit the ground running. We intend to maintain that recognition. The UIL academic competition was a perfect example of that success with our 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade students scoring so well! We did GREAT!

In the meantime, 4th grade sponsored their annual Grandparents' Day. Fall Festival was a successful event. In November, 4th grade hosted a huge Thanksgiving feast and invited parents, grandparents, and other family members to attend. We had PTA programs featuring kindergarten, 3rd and 4th grades. At Christmas, we had a coin drive to help with Christmas angels. The school collected holiday cards for service-men overseas. K12 planet was introduced and imple-



VA 3rd graders dress up as part of the

by Principal Terry Billups

mented at the start of the 3rd six weeks and has been embraced by our parents. Throughout the school year, we have stressed "citizenship" in our character building program and weekly, we selected students who have been recognized for their demonstrations of great citizenship.

Thanks to our wonderful and supportive PTA, we have great success with McDonald's Nights. Money raised by the PTA has helped teachers continue their education. In other areas, the PTA has raised money to help pay for field trips, erected a beautiful Sun Shade on the playground, honored teachers' wish-lists and much more.

All in all, this has been a wonderful year so far... with the excellent teachers and aides we have at VAE, along with our fantastic and supportive parents and the wonderful students... we have an awesome team! Now, we are looking forward to TAKS!

Spotlight on the Intermediate School

by Principal Mike Welch

While we are very proud of our student's academic and extracurricular successes, including the students who have competed and been very successful in the UIL Academic competition, I would like to focus this article on the hearts and leadership of the students in Van Alstyne ISD especially the Intermediate school. Prior to Christmas, the 219 students and staff members at VAIS raised \$1100.00 in funds

through a friendly competitive event. The student council spearheaded a coin drive and asked staff members to agree to the terms. Many staff members agreed to the terms to dress as hillbillies for one day if they were the winner or the loser. Through this event, 16 local students were afforded a "nicer" Christmas due to the loving and generous hearts of their peers. The Student Council along with their sponsors, Traci Daniel

and Elizabeth Smith, showed the most awesome of leadership styles-Servant Leadership!" We are very proud of the students of Van Alstyne Independent School District and this story represents the reason the community of Van Alstyne is a very special place.

Spotlight on VAMS

By Principal Rick DeMasters

Van Alstyne Middle School continues to cultivate future leaders, striving for excellence in all school endeavors, and maintaining virtue for every student, every day. The Texas Education Agency has rated Van Alstyne Middle School as a *Recognized* campus with *Gold Performance Acknowledgments* in Attendance, Reading/ELA, Writing, Mathematics, and Social Studies. Van Alstyne Middle School is focused on many academic successes such as UIL literary as well as extra-curricular accomplishments. Establishing *Excellence* as our goal for this school year has continued to be our main focus.

Our commitment to excellence challenges each of us to play a part in developing critical attributes in our students while continuing to define Van Alstyne Middle School's exciting

future. Some examples of Van Alstyne Middle School's continuing strengths include participation in student council projects, UIL Academic competition, implementation of intervention programs, Fall Band concerts, Student Recognition programs, and many successes in both boys and girl's athletic programs. As part of our plan for student success this year Van Alstyne Middle School has implemented an enrichment period in which all students may receive intervention/remediation if necessary as well as enrichment activities that challenge students to use high-order thinking skills. Our goal through this process is to foster exemplary student performance and to increase our percentage of students who acquire Commended Performance standards. Parent communication and involvement continue to be encouraged for

the support of student success.

Van Alstyne Middle School is also committed to providing an educational environment that is measured through student leadership, thoughtful service, authentic learning, reflective practice, substantive partnerships, leadership teams, and professional development. We have had a great first semester and are looking forward to an exceptional second half of the year. If you should have any questions about the mission and goals of Van Alstyne Middle School or your child's academic/extra-curricular endeavors, please contact Mr. DeMasters at 903) 482-8804.

Make it a GREAT year . . . or not! THE CHOICE IS YOURS!!!

High School Spotlight

by Principal Corbi Dillard

As we prepare to wrap up the first semester and charge into the spring semester we continue to work together as a team, focusing on academic success for every high school student. Panther teachers and staff consistently demonstrate themselves as amazing educators, spending many hours of hard work and preparation on curriculum and individual lessons that provide varied strategies which allows for the best learning opportunities for each student's academic success

Students, your academic responsibilities and organizational skills will constantly be

challenged in the spring, due to the consistent rigor of academic classes and time requirements in extra curricular activities. Create a high level of expectation for yourself in which you strive to achieve. Stay focused on your actions an attitude, attend school everyday and come in for tutoring on a regular basis.

Parents, I encourage you to consistently support and stay involved in the academic and extra curricular activities of your child. Your encouragement and help is extremely effective in developing skills for their contin-

ued success.

The spring semester is a constant blur of testing, projects, club and sports activities.

I encourage you to visit the website and update your family calendar. As the educational leader of the high school, promoting and developing a healthy climate in which each class is empowered and respected both academically and athletically is my primary goal. It will take all of us working together to accomplish this goal.



VAISD Students are involved in a variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities!

Disaster Strikes Original VAISD School Building

Van Alstyne ISD trustees will soon face a difficult decision after the collapse of the roof at the original VAISD school building located at 203 S. College. The building, built in 1909, was one of the original Van Alstyne school buildings and for many people IS the Van Alstyne School.

The historical marker on this site reads, "In 1889 an association composed of merchants and landowners from the Van Alstyne area saw the need for quality education and established Columbia College. The school served all grades through college level, emphasizing vocational training as well as the arts and sciences....As the area grew, Van

Alstyne residents recognized the need for a community high school. Columbia College became part of the Van Alstyne Public School System in 1906. The college building continued to serve the schools until 1915 when it was destroyed by fire."

Before the summer rains completely destroyed the roof, the building has been empty. Asbestos in the heating system made it impossible for it to be inhabited by either students or employees. The district used it primarily as a storage building for the last several years. The unseasonal summer rainfall caused the roof to collapse in July 2007.

After an investigation by three different engineering firms, the district's insurance carrier concluded the building to be substandard and agreed to pay for its demolition. The Board of Trustees will decide on whether to accept the insurance company's offer at their February board meeting. Specifications for the salvage of some of the building materials is scheduled when the demolition occurs. District planners are gathering input on ways to memorialize the structure and its importance to VAISD. Honoring the history of this special place is important to VAISD. More information will follow in the Van Alstyne Leader.

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VAISD to Sponsor a Different Kind of Prom

Van Alstyne ISD has a history of sponsoring an annual Prom, in fact, we have one scheduled for this spring for our Junior and Senior high school students. In addition we are planning a different kind of prom—a Seniors Prom.

On February 23, 2008, the school district is inviting all residents age 55 or older to attend the first annual VAISD Seniors Prom at the Van Alstyne Middle School cafeteria. The event will include a catered meal served by VAISD students, music by the VAHS Jazz Band, and an opportunity to dance the night away to jazz classics.

For many empty nesters, involvement in public education comes only at the polls and when it is time to pay taxes. Too often the public school is seen as an inaccessible place for the senior citizens of the community. The Seniors Prom will provide a connection between the senior population and the school district.

The district hopes to accomplish three things with the event. First, the school

wants to provide a first class event for our community's entire senior citizen population. We believe it is a part of our mission to be a resource for the community. Second, we desire to provide an educational experience for our students. VAISD students will be an integral part of the Seniors Prom, from decorating to providing musical entertainment. Third, the district will provide a venue for our senior citizens to be on our school campuses. The parents of school children are often on campus for a variety of events, however, many of our older citizens have little reason to be in the facilities.

The district is excited about the Seniors Prom and continues to finalize plans for this year's inaugural event. If you know someone who wants to attend or would like to be involved please contact Lawana Merriman at the District offices at 903-482-8802. Additional information will be in the Van Alstyne Leader.

Texas Monthly Recognizes Van Alstyne High School ... Again!

For the second year in a row Van Alstyne High School was recognized by Texas Monthly magazine as one of the best schools in Texas. Texas Monthly partnered with the Austin-based National Center for Educational Accountability (formerly Just for the Kids), a research arm of the University of Texas, to identify the best elementary, middle, and high schools in the state.

The magazine states, "By analyzing how students fare in measurable curricular areas—reading, writing, math, science, and social studies—and taking the demographic makeup of the student body into account, NCEA's crack team is able to proclaim worthy schools 'higher performing'. Suffice it to say that if your school is on the list, you and it have a lot to be proud of."

The NCEA uses a very rigorous standard for any school, but particularly a high school. Only 8% of the state's high schools were recognized by Texas Monthly. It is quite an honor for our high school to be recognized for two years in a row.

The National Center for Educational Accountability identifies consistently higher-performing schools in many states across the country. The schools identified by NCEA are those that exhibit outstanding performance across multiple grades and years.

More information can be found at Texas Monthly's website <http://www.texasmonthly.com/>.



We are on the web www.vanalstyneisd.org