

the high LIFE

“ I believe these innocent whales are being killed illegally, and the operation is a waste of money for the Japanese government. Unfortunately, the Japanese plan to return to the Southern ocean for additional whaling. ”



Luke Sumerford
page 3

News

Lockdown practices will resume more frequently as principal reassures parents, students, and teachers that safety is a top priority. page 2

Opinion

Juniors taking Honors English with Mrs. Purgason share their editorials written as part of their course curriculum. page 5

Features

Teen magazines are not working hard enough to encourage body positivity for their young female readers, thus self-esteem issues are on the rise. page 9

Sports

Despite closing of the school pool, swimmers and divers continue to perform at optimal level, defeating their opponents at an All-County Meet. page 10

Index

News	1-2
Opinion	3-5
Spread	6-7
Features	8-9
Sports	10-12

Grant money awarded to GCS will benefit middle schools with latest technology

BY JASMINE AKINS
Reporter

Announced on Tuesday Dec. 11, Guilford County Schools was one of sixteen winners of the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top District competition. Their proposal ranked fourth of all applications and received the second highest financial award. The County won \$30 million in grant money, and two other districts won \$40 million. Because this grant is the largest in GCS history, local middle schools will be going digital since the grant will cover the cost of tablets for every student, as well as training and support to students, their families, teachers, and even principals. Such will occur within the next two years.

GCS's PACE (Personalized Achievement Curriculum and Environment) Schools Project is creating and stimulating student-led learning in the district's 24 middle schools, reaching almost 17,000 students and just about 1400 faculty members.

PACE coordinators will work at the middle schools to lead this foundation's change in teaching and learning. Tablets will be equipped with personalized learning maps that track each student's mastery of concepts, allowing more time to master concepts without pressure to rush. Those students who are ready for more complicated tablets can choose from enrichment and AL (Accelerated Learner) activities that interest them.

Many people may wonder why Guilford County's middle schools are reaping the benefits of this grant. According to pnewswire.com, district data indicates that the rate of academic growth decreases in middle school, thus the grant will allow the district to focus a comprehensive strategy in middle school grade levels, while also building on reforms already put in place at elementary and high school levels.

Guilford County is the third-largest school district in North Carolina with the highest graduation rate among North

Carolina's largest five districts at 84.5 percent in 2012. Over one-third of GCS schools have earned North Carolina's top designations, which are based upon student performance and other measures. According to the state accountability measures, the number of GCS schools earning the top honor of School of Excellence from the state, has increased from one in 2007-08 to 19 in 2011-12.

After the holidays, GCS will receive an additional \$5.2 million in optional grant funding, also from the U.S. Department of Education, bringing the total Race to the Top-District grant award to \$35,222,003. Though the present focus is on middle schools in Guilford County, the district's vision is to personalize and digitalize learning for all students, staff and parents. The additional dollars received will cover the purchasing of ten tablet devices for each middle school for check out and use by parents to assist their children with homework and even advance their own learning. They

also will purchase online and broadcast content so all of GCS can access learning outside of school.

Optional grants include \$1,995,065 for Guilford Parent Academy, \$1,570,646 for GCS Virtual Public Middle School, and \$1,656,307 for the African-American Male Achievement Initiative. The African American Male Initiative will help professional learning communities that focus on raising the academic achievement of targeted students. The goal is to form teams within the six elementary schools to address other classroom barriers that limit educator effectiveness and student learning. The Virtual Middle school will initially serve sixth and seventh grades, and after one year, it will expand to eighth grade. Student recruitment will focus efforts on students who would be the first to attend college in their families, while providing an additional school choice for the families.

Lockdown practice eases concerns among teachers, students, parents

BY JACOB WOODS
Photographer/Reporter

Following the atrocity occurring at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut on Friday, December 14, when 20 elementary school students and six adults lost their lives to a disturbed, 20-year-old Adam Lanza, the media, educators, parents, and students across the nation communicated on the controversial issues of gun control and violence. Questions arose regarding what could have prevented such a tragic incident, what school procedures were in place, and what they would have done in a similar situation.

Other incidents involving random shootings occurred in Aurora, Colorado, where James Holmes entered a movie theatre featuring "The Dark Knight Rises" and killed 12 people and wounded more than 50. Portland, Oregon

was also the location of a terrible tragedy on Tuesday, December 11, when 22-year-old Jacob Tyler Roberts started shooting at movie viewers. An armed civilian confronted Roberts, who later shot himself.

For all of the previously mentioned reasons, lockdown procedures are a requirement in schools. Such involve specific announcements to teachers and staff to lock doors, close and cover windows, and completely secure their classrooms. Students and teachers should not use cell phones because their voices may carry outside their locations and draw attention to the perpetrator. Teachers are not to open their doors for any reason unless one of the members of the administrative team approaches knocks and identifies himself or herself to the teacher inside and asks for the door to be opened. For rooms that cannot be secured, a plan is in place for

the adults and students to relocate to the nearest secured room. Once a room is secured, teachers place two green cards: one their door windows and one on an exterior window. For those classrooms without door windows, teachers place green cards under their doors for visibility. Only the principal can terminate a lockdown procedure, either in person or over the intercom system. Faculty and staff members attend training in order to react in their students' best interest; safety is the key.

Members of the National Rifle Association (NRA) believe this country does not need stronger gun control. General citizens have reason to own semi-automatic rifles or shotguns as a means of protection. "Guns don't kill people; people kill people" is a common mantra from Republicans and NRA members alike. Some NRA members

believe that teachers and staff should be trained and armed. However, many educators believe that such a plan is ridiculous; all it would take is one stolen gun before more violence would occur.

One major concern at school involves safety for students and teachers in New Science since most of the classrooms lack doors and walls, making those in the area more vulnerable to casualties than other classroom buildings.

As students practice lockdowns, they must remember to stay out of sight, remain silent, and keep calm. While calling home or parents' workplaces may seem like a reasonable reaction, using a cell phone could be detrimental since talking or incoming calls causes noise, which alerts the perpetrator where people are hiding.