

# LION'S PRIDE



Faith Christian Academy - December 2009

Second grade teacher Rose Shelton leads a reading group. Faith Christian Academy stresses phonics to help children develop strong reading skills. To aid in their development, children read aloud in groups. Below, kindergartner Marissa Bray sounds out phonetic blends in class.



## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Listening to the cheers, one would think the students were getting ice cream or going on a field trip. Not exactly.

"I have a special announcement for you. Reading groups will start next week. You will be learning to read," said kindergarten teacher **Robin Thorpe**. "It's a special day."

The 12 kindergartners exploded into cheers and claps. The students had already spent the morning reviewing phonics and letter blends. The five and six year olds know the importance of studying phonics.

"So we can read the Bible," said **Breighanna Moon**. "To read my name," added **Lauren Wassack**.

Phonics is paramount to developing strong reading skills by focusing on letter sounds and how they blend together to form words.

"There is a tremendous emphasis on phonics, which will develop strong oral reading skills and then can carry over to using this tool for writing skills especially in the area of spelling words correctly in the writing process," said Thorpe.

The kindergartners enthusiastically review letter blends, vowel sounds, and put the blends together to form words.

"The benefit of using phonics in teaching reading skills, especially to little ones like kindergarten, is to help them develop strong oral reading skills that flows more fluently and quickly," said Thorpe.

Since the school's founding, phonics has played a key component in the elementary curriculum. It is embraced at Faith Christian as the cornerstone of strong reading and writing schools.

"Our reading program is heavily based upon phonics so that students develop the skill of reading independently — hearing and pronouncing the sounds as well as learning the letter combinations that make certain sounds. They learn to read by combining letters to create sound," said Administrator **Lisa Moore**.

### SMALL CLASS SIZES

At the elementary level, children benefit from the small class size and increased one-



on-one help from teachers.

"Smaller classes allow students to benefit from more individual attention," said second grade teacher **Rose Shelton**, who has taught at FCA for 20 years.

In addition, the school offers a resource teacher to provide extra tutoring to students in need. Enrichment classes also offer challenges to young minds, said Moore.

"Faith Christian Academy provides an environment that is conducive to learning at the preschool and elementary levels," the longtime administrator

said. "Our core classes, from math to reading to science, are rooted in God's Word and taught in a way that encourages learning."

Since other schools offer classes with 20 or more students, FCA embraces its small class sizes.

"We see our low student to teacher ratio as

See ACADEMICS Page 2



Above, second grader Jay Funderburk participates in a reading group. Right, ninth grader Victoria Goodman strives for success in class.



# COLLEGE READY

Faith Christian Academy senior Sarah Compton completed her freshman year of college in high school.

Compton took advantage of the FCA's resources to earn college credit through dual-enrollment courses with Central Virginia Community College and online AP courses.



"I wanted to have a head start when I went to college and make sure I was prepared to take college courses," she said.

Is she ready? "Definitely," she said without a pause.

Compton, who was recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program, has taken a wide range of college courses, including history, math, and psychology courses. She will finish her senior year with 26 college credits.

Her English scores were so high that she tested out of freshman English courses.

The courses also didn't cost her family any extra money. The school reimburses students for each college course as long as the student receives a C or better.

For a little extra course work, Compton saved her family the cost of a freshman year. In addition, she will receive a 75-percent tuition discount to Liberty University as a Faith Christian graduate.

"It made my choice as to which college I went to. It ensured me that I got a quality education at an affordable cost," she said.

Compton, who plans to study math at Liberty, encourages other students to take advantage of dual-enrollment college courses.

"It's good preparation and it just gets you ready to face any challenges that may come in college," she said.

Other seniors receiving college credit include Jill Dudley, Kaitlin Critchley, Ben Motley, Raven Worley, Amanda Hall, and Brittini Romero.

ACADEMICS From Page 1

a real benefit for learning," said Moore. "We want our students to have the best resources available."

### 'MAKES YOU THINK'

FCA offers an advanced academic curriculum, which strives to focus on critical thinking skills. One student recently told Thorpe, "This school makes you think harder."

The school offers Biblical integration in all areas of curriculum.

"The classes are taught by teachers that know the Lord as Savior, and desire to teach their students to serve the Lord from an early age and to prepare them for a future based on Christ," said first grade teacher Janet Ooten.



Second grader Katie Martin follows along in her reading group.

### STRONG ACADEMICS

Faith Christian's provides strong academics that build as a student grows. The school is also using new technology resources to engage the minds of an ever-changing generation.

Middle school students are challenged daily in all academic areas. By using interactive, digital whiteboards, teachers are able to use video clips, virtual field trips, and Powerpoint presentations to keep students focused during each class period.

### J-TERM

The school also provides an interesting twist on learning by providing a week of elective classes for all secondary students. Held the first week of January, J-Term offers academic enhancement in the way of specialized math, writing, and reading instruction.

Students can also choose from a variety of interesting subjects, including Chinese cooking, scrapbooking, missions, praise band, photography, art, puppetry, video editing, archery, and snowboarding.

Students can choose four subjects to study during the week.

Juniors and seniors participate in weeklong intern-

ships during J-Term. This gives them the opportunity to see the pros and cons of a career field that interests them.

Students have job shadowed a variety of careers, including dental hygiene, nursing, law, farming, culinary arts, teaching, veterinary medicine, engineering, psychology, and graphic design.

### TAILORED FOR EACH STUDENT

At the high school level, FCA students help shape their own class schedule.

"The academic program can be tailored to the needs of the students," said Moore.

In addition to a variety of electives, students can take AP courses online through Virtual Virginia. The school also encourages students to take dual-enrollment courses through Central Virginia Community College or Liberty University.

These courses allow students to meet their high school graduation requirements while receiving college credit. In addition, if the student makes a "C" or better in the course, the school will reimburse the family for the class' cost.

"Students who want to pursue college credits can be scheduled in such a way that they can earn and be challenged with higher-level courses," said Moore.

In an ever-changing economy, students must have the academic skills necessary to compete in college and the workplace.

### LIBERTY UNIVERSITY DISCOUNT

Students that attend 9th through 12th grades and graduate in good standing receive a 75-percent tuition discount to Liberty University.

"This makes sending a student to Faith Christian all the more important," said Moore. "Not only are they receiving a strong academic education with Christ at the center, but parents are paying for their college tuition now."

At Liberty, students can study a variety of career fields, including aviation, journalism, nursing, and education.

"The Liberty discount is a huge plus for families. It also makes FCA an amazing value," said Moore. "College tuition is only going up. This discount will make the dream of a college education a reality for many families."