

May 2008

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

I wanted to take this opportunity to update you as to the progress of our vBrick technology in the Chester School District. I am thrilled to be able to tell you that our vBrick system is up and running after a great deal of work on integrating our many systems to make this cutting edge technology available to you and your children! We are still so proud to be the only elementary school district in the state of New Jersey that has access to this technology, which uses the most up to date methods possible for streaming media, and is quite common at some of the most respected institutions throughout this country of higher education and research. For years to come, Chester will be one of the leaders in the field of technology integration and education thanks to the generosity of our Chester PTO and our parents.

We have even completed our first successful interactive virtual field trip. An eighth grade history class at Black River Middle School and their teacher, Mr. Andy Gray, received a history lesson from Ms. Anne Marie Millar of The Mariner's Museum in Newport News, Virginia. The students were able to interact and ask questions of Ms. Millar regarding the development of ironclad ships during the American Civil War. Using artifacts from the USS Monitor and CSS Virginia, Ms. Millar, their museum guide, was able to instruct them first hand about the development of these ships and about history's first ironclad to ironclad combat. Students were also introduced to the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary and were able to discover how the wreck site is being excavated and the artifacts are being recovered and conserved at The Mariner's Museum. What a thrilling way to bring history to life for the students! This is only the first of many virtual interactive field trips that we have planned for students at every grade level in the next school year.

In addition, right now, parents can log onto our vBrick system from our web page and view a number of exciting school events that have recently taken place. We will be sending out the parent password in a Honeywell Alert. I urge you to visit the site to see just a small measure of what we will be able to achieve with this sophisticated technology that will benefit our community and your children for many years to come. Currently, we are broadcasting The Mariner's Museum virtual field trip, the Ellis Island play from Bragg School, and the Herman Parish (Amelia Bedelia) assembly from Dickerson School to name a few selections. We will soon add a great many more of our spring events at all three of the schools as they occur, including BRMS graduation!

Moreover, the daily P.A. announcements at Bragg School are fast becoming daily T.V. announcements where students can watch their peers share the news of the day on-line. BRMS will be implementing this exciting approach to broadcast news soon as well.

I thank you for this opportunity to keep you informed of the exciting new developments in the district's technology applications as we move forward. This is only a small sampling of what is to come as we continually seek to bring our Chester School District to the next level of educational achievement and to help broaden your children's horizons as they continue to become the next generation of young adults who will dream of and create new technologies in the future we've never even thought of yet.

Respectfully,
Dr. Christina Van Woert
Superintendent of Schools
Chester School District