

## SCHOOLS

# Enrollment Climbs at Wolf Trap Elementary

Following renovations, Wolftrap Elementary is prepared for record enrollment.

BY MIKE DICICCO  
THE CONNECTION

**W**olftrap Elementary School's two-year renovation was completed over the summer, and the project included the addition of an entire wing to the building, as well as new classroom technology. The additional space will not go unused, as the school's enrollment continues to climb.

Up from 600 to 625 students, enrollment is at its highest in Wolftrap's history, said Principal Anita Blain. The number of students in kindergarten leapt from 56 to 85.

Added during renovation were six general education classrooms, a multipurpose room and a band room. Even so, the school will continue to use its four trailer classrooms. The rest of the building was also renovated, with the walls repainted and floors re-carpeted. "The school got a facelift," said Blain, who is in her second year as Wolftrap's principal, following five years at Timber Lane Elementary in Falls Church.

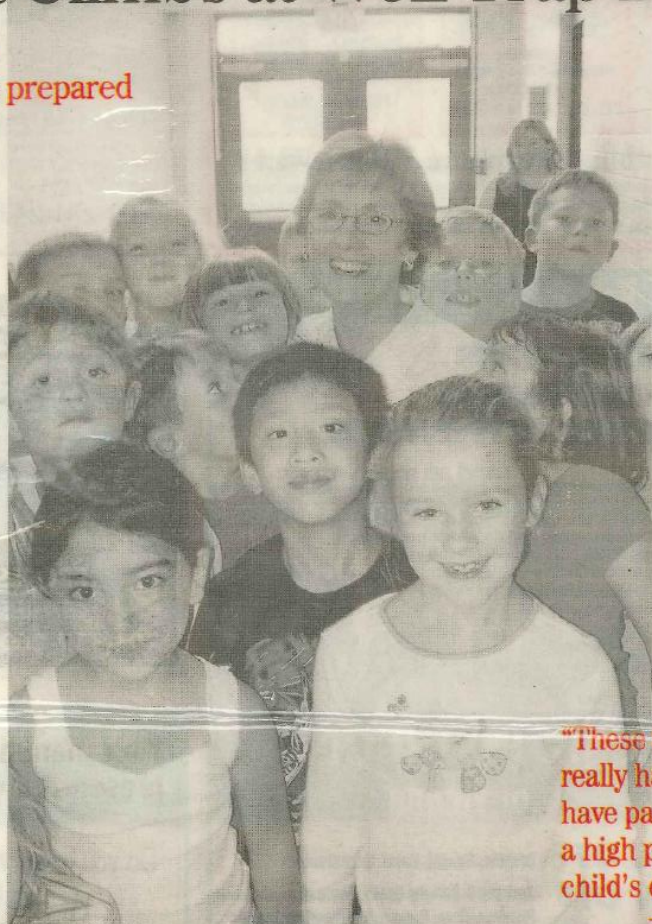
**THE ADDITIONAL TECHNOLOGY** includes four new computer labs on wheels — comprising about 90 new laptop computers — as well as the relatively new technology of interactive whiteboards, which are being piloted in six of the school's classrooms. The screen of a classroom laptop is projected onto the interactive whiteboard and can be controlled through the board by touch.

One of the classrooms trying the pilot technology is Eric Triche's fourth-grade class. Triche said the whiteboard works well to engage students in a lesson. "First of all, it just catches their attention right away," he said, adding that the board opens up opportunities for students to participate in lessons. For example, he said, in a lesson about angle measurements, students can move the rays of various angles with their fingers. They might also use the "markers" that come with the board to edit a letter the teacher wrote on the laptop. "There are a lot of fun things you can do with it," said Triche.

He also noted that the new mobile computer labs make computer lessons "a lot easier" because students can all work at once, rather than take turns on the three or four computers in each classroom.

Wolftrap also gained its first English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher this year. Previously, students learning English either toughed it out or attended Spring Hill Elementary in McLean.

**THE SCHOOL** is also continuing to phase in its Gifted and Talented (GT) center and Chinese language classes. GT classes are now offered for the third



Wolftrap Principal Anita Blain is surrounded by one of the school's second-grade classes.

PHOTOS BY MIKE DICICCO/THE CONNECTION



Fourth-grade teacher Eric Triche demonstrates his classroom's new interactive whiteboard.

through fifth grades. Chinese classes were introduced last year to the first- and second-grade classes and, this year, are also being taught in the third grade. Wolftrap is one of only two elementary schools in the county where students learn Chinese.

Bibi Kearney, the school's Chinese teacher and a native speaker of Mandarin, gives two half-hour lessons per week to each class. She integrates the class's curriculum into her lesson, teaching shapes, for example, to first-graders or teaching colors in autumn.

Marshall High School has also begun to offer Chinese, but Kearney said younger students have an advantage when learning a difficult language. "Their ears are sensitive and so alert to different sounds," she said. "They just soak it up like a sponge." Now that her first group of students has returned from summer break, Kearney said, "I was very pleased to find out, after two classes this week, how much they remember."

Blain said she was pleased with her students' performance on last year's Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. "In all areas, our scores are higher than they've ever been, all to exceed a 95 percent pass rate," she said. In some areas, she said, the school had a 100 percent pass rate.

Blain credited the high scores to parents and teachers. "These teachers work really hard, and we have parents who place a high priority on their child's education," she said, noting that Wolftrap has the benefit of many parent volunteers. "They expect a lot of their school, but they also give a great deal back to the school." She also

noted that many teachers could be found in the building by Aug. 14, a week before they were due back.

**ONE PROJECT** beginning this year at Wolftrap is a three-year plan to transform the school grounds into a "learningscape," consisting of native plants and including a butterfly garden, said Blain. As a result of the construction equipment and trailers involved in renovation, she said, "the grounds around the school have really suffered." The effort to re-beautify the property will include the PTA, Meadowlark Gardens, the Audubon Society and students.

Blain said it is still unknown how the upcoming reconstruction of Beulah Road, on which the school is located, will affect bus routes. "It's going to be creatively figuring out different ways to get to school," she said.

Wolftrap's Back-to-School Night will be on Sept. 21 at 7 p.m. Blain said parents should also mark their calendars for Friday, Oct. 20, when the school will hold its annual Pizza Bingo Night.

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