Ashley B. Clowers, Analyst

There's a new girl in town. Well, sort of. It's not just the name that's changed. It's also her title and job description. In September 2012, Ashley Barker Clowers was hired as the Analyst for IT, accepting the position formerly held by Carole Roberts until her retirement in August 2012.

A 2001 graduate of Dan River High, Ashley has always had a presence in the Information Technology Department. For several summers, she served as a network assistant while completing her Associate of Science degree from Danville Community College in Information Technology with a concentration on Network Specialist.

A County native, Ashley is the mother to nine-year old, Adriana. She is the step-mother to Jacob, also nine years old. She and her husband, Bobby, share their home not only with their children, but their four-legged children: Two cats, Jorja and Josie, as well as a cute little pup named Scrappy.

Ashley is very active with the children of Kentuck Baptist Church and serves as a Sunday School teacher. She is an amateur photographer and enjoys both photographing and watching her daughter play soccer and her step-son play baseball. There's not a whole lot of spare time in the Clowers household, but when Ashley does find a minute for herself, she enjoys reading Karen Kingsbury books.

When it comes to IT, there's very little Ashley Clowers hasn't done for this department. To that end, we're proud to now have her providing daily support to office staff in the schools with special emphasis on PowerSchool and AlertNow.

The Early Birds:

Meet the IT Staff

THE ITRT CORNER

Instructional Technology Resource Teachers and Their School Assignments

Cathy Scolpini, Lead ITRT: Network Operations Center

Elizabeth Bailess	Gretna Elementary Hurt Elementary Mt. Airy Elementary Union Hall Elementary	**Susan Franklin-Smith**	Gretna Middle Gretna High Chatham High
Teresa Cannady	Kentuck Elementary Southside Elementary Stony Mill Elementary	**Burt Sparks**	Dan River Middle Dan River High Tunstall High
Kay Jones	Brosville Elementary Chatham Elementary Twin Springs Elementary	**Brenna Takata**	Chatham Middle Tunstall Middle PCTC/RAS

Technology-Enhanced SOL Practice Items

The ITRTs are creating technology-enhanced items (TEI) for the four core academic areas.

Using SMART Notebook's Lesson Activity Toolkit and released test items, they design activities that allow teacher to expose students to the types of questions that will appear on SOL tests.

Activities will be uploaded to the Moodle curriculum repository (See page 3) for use by teachers. TEIs for use with other types of whiteboard software in use in our division will be created to the extent the software's features permit.

Happy Holidays from the Information Technology Department!

Early On…

Welcome to Tech Times!

The Information Technology Department is pleased to bring you our inaugural issue of Tech Times.

It is our hope to keep administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students up to date on what's happening with technology in our schools.

Our newsletter will be brought to you each semester with the latest information available to us.

Jeffrey B. Early, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent for Operations

Contact:
Jeff.Early@pcs.k12.va.us

Understanding iPrism…
What's Blocked. What's Not. And Why.

One day you can get to great sites. The next day you can't. Rest assured there's no gremlin in the system wreaking havoc on your favorite web sites. Before we begin explaining how blocking works, let us give you a quick overview of how we have Internet access in the first place: (1) Internet access is partially made possible in the schools by E-Rate funds. (2) E-Rate requires that all Internet access be filtered. (3) PCS uses iPrism for filtering. Still confused? Let's take it step by step.

What is E-Rate?

E-Rate funding comes from the Schools and Libraries of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission. E-Rate is critical to our success as it provides reduced fees for telecommunications and Internet access. Without E-Rate, we could not afford to provide the level of Internet Access in the schools that we have.

Tell Me About the Filtering System

The PCS filtering system is a service purchased called iPrism. There are two categories that will always be blocked: Pornography and gambling. Additionally, PCS is able to block sites which have been determined to be not in keeping with its educational goals and standards. It is also able to unblock those sites which should not have been

Why testing shouldn't include your patience.

The last thing you need on test day are computers that don't work. All that study, preparation and practice are wasted if your students don't have working machines. Now is the best time to check all of the computers you plan to use, to make sure they work properly. If you discover some that need repair, there's a brand new work order system. This one allows for more interaction between the technician and the staff. *Be sure to add your email into the details section, so you'll receive email notification confirming that the work order has been entered. (See page 2 for illustration.)* You'll also receive updates to let you know the status of the repair. Our department knows that teachers and staff have enough on their plates without worrying about if their computers are going to work when they need them to work. We depend on you to tell us what needs to be fixed, so we can do it as quickly as possible.

Working for you…

With Google now only supporting the latest two versions of Internet Explorer (IE9 and IE10 currently) the main focus over the next few weeks is to upgrade teacher and administrative computers to Windows 7 and IE9.
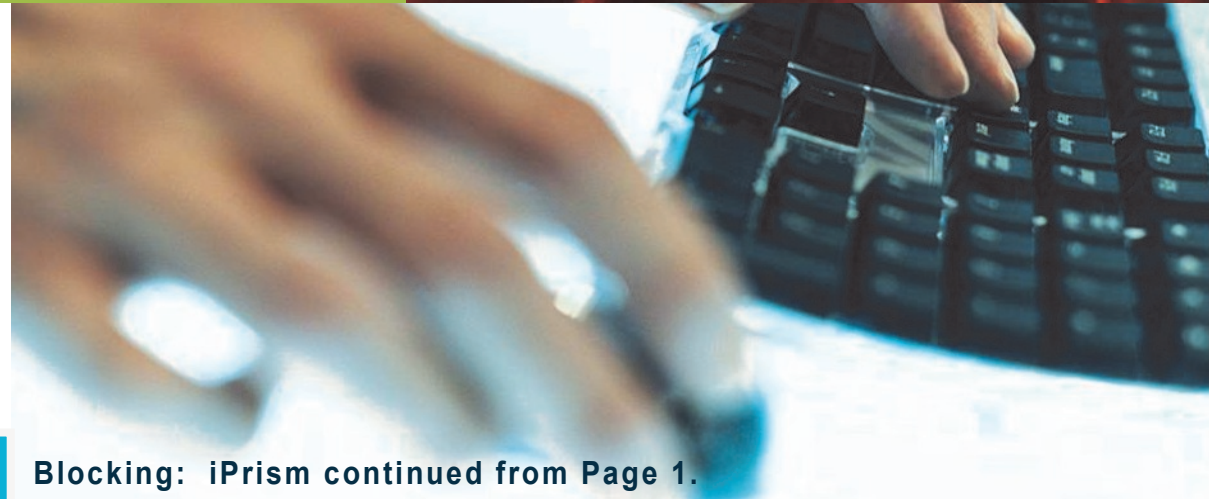
Here for you…

The SOL testing windows opens December 3. PCS technicians will be busy assisting where needed during testing.

Planning for you...

In the replacement cycle, high schools are due next for computer upgrades.

An installation schedule will be developed following SOL testing.

Google

Got a question? Ask Google. Searching for someone? Start at Google. Our mail, our inquiries all begin with Google. But, Google is much, much more. Try Google Drive. The best kept secret in town.

What's all this Gobbledygook about Google.

It's just a search engine, right?

Saying Google is just a search engine is like saying a Ferrari is just a car. We know Google is great for providing answers to our searches, but what you may not realize is that Google has a drive feature of its own. Google Drive, former-ly known as Google Docs, is available to you through your PCS mail. This drive is a place where you can store documents and even share them with your colleagues. You can decide what to make private, who can change it and who can't.

Imagine no longer having to walk around with a jump stick on a string around your neck. As long as you can access your email, you can get to your documents. Any time. Any where. Google even has a free app that allows you to quickly see your documents on the screen of your mobile device. See your ITRT for a test drive of this amazing storage service available to you.

Click on My Detail

PCS Staff Self Registration

PCS Staffname:
Forename:
Surname:
Department:
Site: **department and site/school**
Telephone:
Email: **fill in your e-mail address**
Fax:

Note: To change your password, please use the My Password option in your menu.

Work Order E-mail Info Needed

Blocking: iPrism continued from Page 1.

blocked by iPrism. PCS does not know which sites iPrism has blocked nor does iPrism know which sites PCS may have unblocked. iPrism does reveal actual web site addresses to its customers.

Why Are Good Sites Blocked?

With so many new sites being published daily, It is impossible to review every site online. For that reason, iPrism blocks sites that have not been reviewed. Simply stated, the company is erring on the side of caution. When upgrades come out for the "content filter," iPrism updates its categories. Some sites that were in an allowed list may have been reviewed again for content and subsequently moved to a category that is not allowed by PCS. That is why sites used last week may not be allowed this week. Should you have a problem accessing a site or feel a site should be blocked, that is not, please let us know by sending an email with the complete web site address to sites@pcs.k12.va.us. Please allow 3 to 5 days for your request to be reviewed

Why Does iPrism Change PCS listings?

Every time iPrism updates its own list, it may re-categorize sites we have released. That means the ones PCS has unblocked become "re-blocked" by iPrism if they have yet to visit it.

What Can I Do as a Classroom Teacher?

Software and machines can only do so much. Truthfully, there's no better filter than a prepared teacher with a good lesson plan. Test your web sites before you use them with your class, so you can override them as needed or request they be unblocked. .
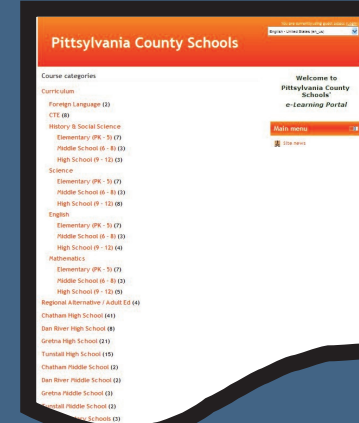
How Do I Unblock or Override?

Unless it is one of the categories that is always blocked, a classroom teacher using his/her login on a teacher workstation, should be able to override a site and request it be reviewed for unblock. Check with your ITRT if you're not sure how to do this.

Muddling Through Moodle? You're Not Alone!

At first glance, it's almost hard to believe that a service with such an unusual name should even be taken seriously.

Truth is, Moodle is an amazing repository for the sharing of Pittsylvania County curriculum materials.

Want to share your materials? Contact your Lead Teacher for access. Just want to poke around and see what's there? You're welcome to visit the site as a guest. For more infor-mation about this free site and resource, please contact your ITRT or Lead Teacher.

LinkIt!

Bubba who?

No, that's bubble sheets! Teach-ers across Pittsylvania County are using LinkIt! to create bubble sheets to give division bench mark assessments. Bubble sheets are then simply scanned and automatically scored. LinkIt! also enables teachers to give these assessments online as well as create their own assessments. What makes LinkIt! so powerful is its ability to "link" specific SOLs to individual questions. Then, once the assessments have been scored, comprehensive reports are available allowing the divi-sion, individual schools, and teachers to analyze assessment data. These data can be used to easily target student progress to increase student performance in every subject at every grade.

LinkIt! is a new product to Pittsyl-vania County Schools and minor road bumps are inevitable. How-ever, the dedication of Instruc-tional Department paired with the ingenuity and hard work of the Information Technology Depart-ment are making LinkIt! a reality. The need for greater student performance in an ever demand-ing world is never far from any teacher's or principal's thoughts. Hopefully, LinkIt! can be the tool to link great classroom instruction with the targeted student achievement needed to meet these demands.