# tidewaternewsdotcom

# New technology brings animals to life at Southampton schools

Published 10:03am Friday, June 12, 2015

A new three-dimensional technology has been helping kindergartners throughout the Southampton County school system build reading and mathematical skills with assistance from a collection of virtual animals. The Letters Alive program uses specialized cards to garner participation from the children through games, activities and lessons with animals of all shapes and sizes.

The Letters Alive program comes with software, a camera, 26 alphabet cards illustrated with animals and a set of 94 flash cards with common pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and verbs. — SUBMITTED

The program, created by former CEO of Logical Choice Technologies Cynthia Kaye, costs $1,000 for a year-long curriculum and contains the software, a camera, 26 alphabet cards illustrated with animals and a set of 94 flash cards with common pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and verbs which will help the students develop the necessary reading skills before they enter the second grade.

Rebecca Johnson, a kindergarten teacher at Nottoway Elementary, gave a brief demonstration of the Letters Alive program to the school board at its Monday meeting:

"This program covers many of the Virginia Standards of Learning for kindergarten, including identifying upper and lowercase letters, matching consonant sounds with appropriate letters, using words to describe colors, following words from left to right and reading 15 meaningful, concrete words."

Johnson said she focuses on one letter from the alphabet each week so that the children can become familiar with it.

"The slide provides us with a fiction text and a non-fiction text for each animal," Johnson said as she read about Percy Peacock's perfect purple party. "It gets the students ready for the 'P' sound."

The non-fiction, meanwhile, said that the peacock is the national bird of India.

"I even learned something from this program," Johnson said.

The board met the peacock when the animal and word cards were joined in a sentence under the camera.

"If you watch Percy, you're in for a treat," Johnson said as she placed down the proper cards to turn him from blue to green. "Now let's try red!"

Johnson also made the peacock run by switching some of the cards. She spelled the words out while doing so.

"The peacock can. Can. C-A-N. Can," she said. "The peacock can run. Run. R-U-N. Run."

If the animal was incapable of changing colors or performing actions that the cards say it should, the animal will simply shake its head to show that it cannot do it.

"I always wondered if a peacock could swim," she said jokingly.

The program, which is already being used in more than 1,000 classrooms around the world, also allows for the children to see the animal in its natural environment.

"It's really an amazing program that is geared toward student engagement as well as retention of academic information," Johnson said. "This is just the tip of the iceberg, and is just a sliver of all of the amazing things going on at Southampton County Public Schools."