

# Brunswick Writing Scores Vary By Site, Grade, Writing Mode

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County fourth- and eighth-grade students came close to scoring at the state norm for composition on end-of-grade writing tests, while local sixth-graders performed lower than the state average.

County eighth grade students fell below the state average in all skill areas (spelling, usage, etc.), while county fourth and sixth grade students posted scores that averaged just short of the state norm.

This was the first year fourth graders participated in the North Carolina Writing Assessment, which was administered in February to students in the three grades.

Fourth graders were asked to write a personal narrative essay. Sixth graders were tested on descriptive writing, a type of explanatory writing. Eighth-graders completed a point-of-view composition, a type of explanatory writing in which the writer focuses on a topic, takes a position and provides rea-

sons to support that position, following a logical progression.

Students' work was scored twice by trained readers. First it was rated on a four-point scale on composition elements such as development of the main idea, use of supporting details, organization and coherence. Those results became part of a "focused holistic score," with a 2.5 or better a good score and the benchmark for comparison.

Using a three-point scale, the essays were also rated on sentence formation, word usage, spelling and mechanics such as punctuation and capitalization. This analytic score reflected the number of errors made by a student. For example, with 11 or more spelling errors he would get a 1, while five or fewer errors would merit a 3.

Gloria Talley, public information officer and staff development coordinator said she watches their progress as students advance from fourth through eighth grades, look-

ing for trends (across the system or on a smaller scale) that could indicate strengths or weaknesses in how a skill is taught. Then steps can be taken to make sure students show adequate progress in acquiring these essential writing skills.

For example, Jean Parker, coordinator of testing and accountability services, said fourth-grade scores will be shared not only with fourth-grade teachers but with third-grade teachers as well. School improvement teams will also have access to test score data as they plan for the coming year.

The overall goal of the testing program is to see progression in analytic and interpretive writing ability from fourth grade to sixth grade to eighth grade and ultimately to 10th grade, when students in English II must be able to write using all four modes of writing.

**Eighth Grade**  
Countywide 56.6 percent of eighth-graders tested earned a holistic score of 2.5 or better, compared to 54.2 percent across the region, and 57.9 percent state wide.

Shallotte Middle had the lowest percentage of eighth-graders scoring at or above state norm, 44.2 percent. Percentages for other schools were Waccamaw Elementary, 57 percent; Leland Middle, 61.2 percent; and South Brunswick Middle, 66 percent, the highest percentage of any school.

However, in the competencies scoring, a greater percentage of Shallotte Middle students earned 2's and 3's in three of the four areas than was the norm statewide. Waccamaw's percentages were the lowest in the county.

**Sixth Grade**  
In Brunswick County, 27.4 percent of the sixth graders tested had holistic scores of 2.5 or better, while the regional percentage was 37.4 and the statewide, 41.3.

A whopping 63 percent of Waccamaw School sixth graders scored 2.5 or better, with Shallotte Middle's 27.8 the next highest percentage.

In the skill areas, results were mixed countywide. However, a larger percentage scores 2's and 3's at Shallotte Middle than statewide in three of four areas.

**Fourth Grade**  
Fourth graders across the county generally compared well in performance with their peers across South-eastern North Carolina and the state.

In Brunswick County 21.5 percent of the fourth-graders tested achieved a 2.5 or better score, com-

pared to 24 percent statewide and 21.6 percent across the eight south-eastern counties of Region II.

At Supply Elementary 28 percent scored at or above 2.5, and at Union Elementary, 26.8 percent scored at or above the 5 benchmark. Percentiles were lowest at Bolivia Elementary, 11, and Waccamaw, 17.8.

In the skill areas, Brunswick County students exceeded the state averages on usage and mechanics, but dropped below on spelling and sentence usage.

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

### Local Service Men And Women Receive Recognition

#### Attending School

Marine Sgt. Wayne D. Crear recently reported for duty at Marine Corps Engineer School at Camp Lejeune.

Crear's wife, Rebecca, is the daughter of Melvin and Christine Andrews of Winnabow.

A 1986 graduate of Pemberton (N.J.) High School, Crear joined the Marines in August 1986.

#### Stationed In Cuba

Marine Sgt. Johnny E. Reeves, son of Barbara L. Smith of Route 6, Shallotte, recently reported for duty at Marine Barracks, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The 1981 graduate of Merritt Island (Fla.) High School joined the Marine Corps in September 1981.

#### Completes Basic

Navy Seaman Recruit Ernest A. Benton of Leland recently completed basic training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill.

During the cycle, recruits are taught general military subjects designed to prepare them for further academic and on-the-job training in one of the Navy's 85 occupational fields.

Studies include seamanship, close-order drill, naval history and first aid.

Benton is a 1992 graduate of North Brunswick High School.

#### Gallagher Decorated

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class William O. Gallagher recently received the Navy Achievement Medal.

Gallagher's wife Debra is the daughter of Billy L. and Dorothy L. Buchanan of Leland.

Gallagher was cited for superior performance of duty while serving

at Submarine Training Facility, Naval Station, Norfolk, Va., where he is currently assigned.

He joined the Navy in January 1979.

#### Arrives In Korea

Army Sgt. Sharon P. Bryant has arrived for duty at Camp Humphreys, Pyongtaek-Gun, South Korea.

Bryant, a material control and accounting specialist, is married to Army Sgt. James A. Bryant. She is the daughter-in-law of Annie and Richard W. Bryant of Leland.

#### New Enlistee

Jeffery L. Harley of Ash has enlisted in the U.S. Army for three years.

Harley was recruited by Staff Sgt. Margaret Furman of the Wilmington Recruiting Station.

A graduate of West Brunswick

High School, Harley is married to Doris Ann Harley of Ash.

He will report for basic training at

Ft. Jackson, S.C., in July, before attending training to become a food service specialist at Ft. Lee, Va.

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