

NEW SUPPLY ELEMENTARY TO HIGHLIGHT BUSY YEAR

Schools Seek 'Collaborative' Effort In '92

BY SUSAN USHER

Superintendent P.R. Hankins sees the Brunswick County Schools following "an ongoing road that leads upwards" in its pursuit of academic excellence and student performance during 1992.

He expects the opening of a new showcase elementary school at Supply this fall to fuel that upward spiral.

"That's our ongoing goal," he said at a meeting of school system leaders with representatives of the local press. "We do have some intermediate goals for getting there."

Added Donna Baxter, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Education, "We're not going to be second best."

What can county residents expect in public education this year?

A greater emphasis on academic excellence and student commitment; a continuing emphasis on increasing student and teacher attendance, decreasing the student drop-out rate and building student self-esteem through the use of programs such as Quest and DARE.

More emphasis will be placed on developing a "collaborative mode" finding ways to involve parents and the community at large in the schools and on keeping in tune with their concerns about education.

Hankins and Ms. Baxter foresee working to improve morale by combating "burn out" through staff development, central office support and expanded involvement of teachers in decision-making through activities such as the Superintendent's Council and site-based management under Senate Bill 2 and the system's three-year commitment to developing more effective schools.

"We're got to do more. We've got to get these kids prepared," said Ms. Baxter, who recently began her second year as board chairman.

"But without these parents—we're not going to make these changes happen without them," she continued.

Staff members say they're already

seeing more parental interest in—and turnout for—school functions, from a Chapter 1 parents' meeting to DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) graduations.

"We're seeing a better turnout every time the doors are open," said Nelson Best, director/coordinator for athletics, health and physical education and drivers education.

Staff and board will be looking at ways to improve existing programs and performance and will look at finding better ways to work together.

"I want to see more openness, more teamwork and cooperation between the board and administrative staff," said Ms. Baxter. "I don't want just us (the board) saying what sounds good."

Central office personnel will spend more time in the field during 1992, helping teachers, principals and staff reach goals they've set for their schools and classrooms.

"We're moving out of the central office and into the schools," said Lewis.

Hankins elaborated. "We're saying, 'This is your ballgame. It's your play. How can we help you?'" he said, of decisions ranging from whether to mainstream handicapped students into regular classrooms to encouraging academic improvement.

Baxter expects board and staff to be evaluating the "whole language" approach to reading and language education. "We should be seeing some progress. After three years we should have an idea if this whole language approach is working. If not, we will look at something else."

Student Services Director Judith Babcock's new interdisciplinary team approach to serving students is one example of the central office staff's efforts to serve the schools. Students with support needs now get the services of a team that includes a nurse, psychologist, social worker, counselor, drop-out prevention specialist—or other specialists as appropriate.

Liz Locus, the new management information systems specialist, will be implementing a state-mandated computerized system for bus routing called TIMS, as well as reorganizing and refitting computer resources in

the schools to make the most of the equipment owned by the schools. She's also encouraging entry in a statewide competition that could result in new technology for the winning school.

Edna Gause, director of media and technology, says automating of school media centers for circulation and cataloging will continue. Also, she is helping rewrite the state media skills curriculum to better mesh with the content areas of the new state curriculum.

Students will see some additions and some deletions from high school curricula next year.

Starting this fall, said Coordinator Nelson Best, driver's education will no longer be taught by the schools or during school hours, but will be bid out to private contractors.

In social studies, James McAdams said the schools in be adding, in 1992-93, a third state-required high school course with a world focus—either world history, world cultures or world geography.

Also in 1992-93, entering freshmen will be the first group of North Carolina high school students required to pass Algebra I before they graduate.

In conjunction with Brunswick Community College, the public schools are involved in two efforts to ease the transition from high school to college, while affording students with more options for learning.

Qualified students are being encouraged to enroll in college-credit courses and the vocational division is laying the groundwork for "Tech Prep."

Tech Prep is a program developed to guide students into a course of study that will prepare them to enter an associate of applied science degree program at a community college without having to first take remedial courses.

"It's something that we think a lot of students will be excited about," said Hankins.

"School Of The 90s"

While staff will be planning a new central office to be built at the Brunswick County Government Center, opening of Supply Elementary School this fall will spark the most excitement during 1992, as well as serving as a vehicle for change systemwide.

Hankins and his staff are in the process of choosing a principal for

the school, so that planning for its opening can begin right away. They're looking for a school leader willing to engage staff "in some risk-taking, to try some new approaches and polish up the old."

The new school is expected to be "a school of the 90s," that will take students into the 21st century, one that reflects the latest technology and provides the tools and atmosphere for invitational learning. It is expected to accommodate more than one teaching/learning strategy and serve as a pacesetter, a "beacon" for other schools.

"I see a school facility that exudes learning," said Hankins.

"Everywhere you look I see walls, furniture designed that cause you to take note, that hey, I'd like to be at this place because this is a place of learning."

"We're looking for a person who can make this happen," he continued. "Someone who shares this

vision." As for how other schools and employees in the system react to the new site and its staff, "We want them to be jealous," said Hankins. "We think that will have a positive effect on those not chosen be part of that team."

"We hope it will encourage them to light a fire under their leaders."

With the opening of Supply Elementary School, the county will move to a true "middle school" system of organization. Its opening will draw students from Union Primary, Shallotte Middle, Southport Elementary and even from Bolivia Elementary schools. That will alleviate overcrowding and possibly allow removal of some mobile classrooms from those campuses.

"We hope it will give those other schools an opportunity to be what they want to be," said Ms. Baxter.

Between curriculum and policy development, facilities planning and implementing changes already in the making, staff has its work cut out, indicated Hankins.

"Our agenda is full," he said. "We're going to have to do a real good juggling act."



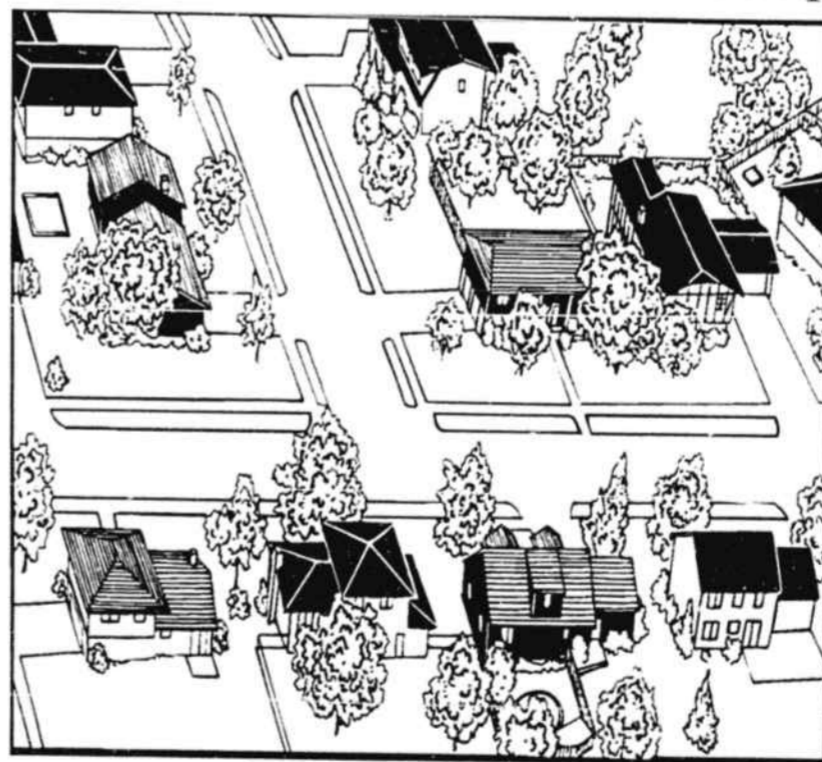
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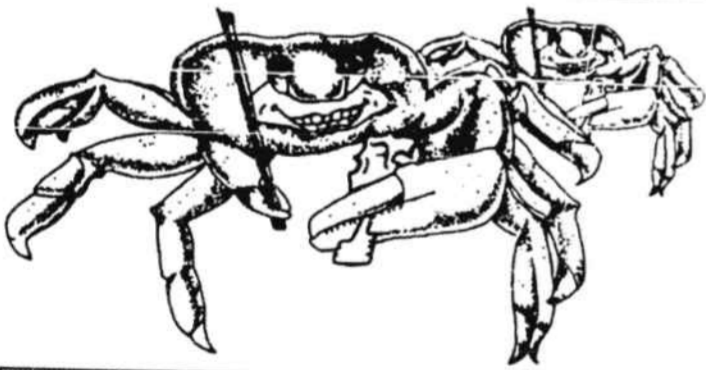


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