

# CAT Scores Not Good News In Brunswick

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Were this year's third graders at Waccamaw Elementary School really better at reading and language skills than their counterparts the year before, or did teachers do a better job?

Were Shallotte Middle School sixth graders significantly poorer in science than 1990-91 sixth graders? Have Brunswick County students learned less than the average North Carolina student in basic skills?

This is part of the picture to be inferred from test scores just released from California Achievement Tests (CAT) given this spring in third, sixth and eighth grades. Brunswick County school results indicate slight improvement over the previous year, but some backsliding in eighth grade scores.

Tests were given in Bolivia, Southport, and Waccamaw Elementary, Lincoln and Union Primary, and Leland, Shallotte, and South Brunswick Middle schools.

The most contradictory set of figures came from Waccamaw Elementary, the only school that included all three grades tested. Third and sixth graders made the greatest gains over the previous year of any other county schools, while its eighth graders fell the farthest in scores.

Among third graders, those at Union and Lincoln Primary followed close behind Waccamaw in achieving higher scores than the preceding classes. Only Southport Primary lost ground. Leland Middle School scores were consistently the worst in sixth and eighth grade tests, falling behind the previous year in

## Brunswick County CAT Scores

1990/91 Third Grade				1991/92 Third Grade			
	CAT	Science	Social Studies		CAT	Science	Social Studies
State	64	57	59	State	66	63	62
County	52.1	44	44	County	59	50	51
Bolivia	69	57	59	Bolivia	81	54	58
Lincoln	51	40	41	Lincoln	56	46	48
Southport	52	44	51	Southport	48	46	48
Union	57	44	44	Union	60	50	55
Waccamaw	29	35	38	Waccamaw	46	41	44

1990/91 Sixth Grade				1991/92 Sixth Grade			
	CAT	Science	Social Studies		CAT	Science	Social Studies
State	58	55	53	State	60	56	54
County	55	46.8	44.8	County	55	49	48
Leland	46	41	43	Leland	47	37	39
Shallotte	53	55	52	Shallotte	56	45	45
South	49	48	46	South	56	52	51
Waccamaw	45	45	46	Waccamaw	66	56	51

1990/91 Eighth Grade				1991/92 Eighth Grade			
	CAT	Science	Social Studies		CAT	Science	Social Studies
State	56	57	53	State	57	61	55
County	52.1	52.1	47.8	County	52	57	48
Leland	52	50	60	Leland	42	44	44
Shallotte	54	53	53	Shallotte	53	52	51
South	60	60	56	South	58	68	48
Waccamaw	63	75	73	Waccamaw	53	57	59

CAT, SCIENCE and social studies scores in percentiles are shown above, for the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years. State averages are provided for comparison.

everything except sixth grade CAT scores, where a one percentile gain was made.

Scores for reading, language and math, collectively called the CAT score, and separate scores for science and social studies, are expressed in percentiles. A score of 50,

for example, means a student has done better than 50 percent of his/her peers. State and county averages are given for comparison with individual schools.

Bright spots were in South Brunswick Middle, Bolivia Elementary and Waccamaw Elementary, the on-

ly schools where the state average was met or surpassed.

Bolivia third graders exceeded the state CAT average of 66 by 15 percentile; Waccamaw sixth graders topped the state CAT average of 60 by six percentile and met the state science score of 56, while its eighth

graders exceeded the state social studies average of 55 by four percentile; and South Brunswick Middle eighth graders exceeded state averages in both CAT (by one percentile) and science (by seven percentile).

The CAT is a national test designed to measure how well students perform in basic skills against state and national norms. Assistant Superintendent Mose Lewis said Brunswick County's scores would be better if there were more uniformity among schools and classrooms as to how the test is approached. "Bolivia Elementary, for instance, is a skills-oriented school, and that is what is evaluated by the CAT."

Lewis compared their impressive CAT results with those of Southport, whose teachers, he said, have incorporated the whole language approach in instruction, de-emphasizing the CAT test as a result. Southport Elementary had third grade scores of 48 on the CAT, and only 46 and 48 in science and social studies, compared with state averages of 63 and 62, respectively.

"It's not fair to say Brunswick County schools are doing poorly," Lewis said. "It might just be one school, so it's important to look at the breakdown of scores in each classroom." He believed evaluation of test scores helps teachers zero in on their strengths and weaknesses.

Lincoln Principal Joseph Butler said Monday that he had not carefully studied the scores and that his teachers do not try to teach to the tests. "They're aware of the kind of thing expected," he said, "but we go

by the standard course of study and the local curriculum."

Butler said he had never believed the CAT scores should be the sole determining factor in deciding how well students are doing. "All kinds of things can happen to a child on the test day," he pointed out.

The end-of-grade testing that will replace CAT tests, beginning next year, will be a better reflection of learning, according to Butler. "It will test thinking and problem solving more than just basic skills," he explained, "and it's better if you know how to communicate and where to go for facts than just to memorize a lot of facts. We should test what has been taught, and I'm not sure the CAT has done that."

Zelphia Grissett, Union principal, agreed. "The new testing will force teachers to integrate and enrich what children learn," she said.

She agreed, too, with Lewis that Brunswick County schools vary in their approach. "Ours is more holistic," she said. "I can attribute our progress on CAT scores to the hard work of our teachers. Their attitude is that they'll do whatever it takes, but their emphasis is on integrating skills."

Grissett said the CAT tests don't reflect all that is taught or all that children know, and pointed out that exceptional children are tested along with mainstream children, so their scores are averaged in.

"But we want our school to do well on any state assessment," she said with a smile, "because we're very conscious of the criticism of public schools."

## Supply School Volunteer Wants 100 More Helpers

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

If you've ever complained about the school system or kids who can't read; if you think you owe something to your community; if you have a few minutes of spare time every week, read on: Jean Gillette wants you.

She's a lot subtler than the U.S. Army recruiting poster, in which Uncle Sam glares and points directly at YOU; however, this charming mother of two, who has been generous with her own time, hopes about 100 Brunswick County residents will do the same when Supply Elementary School opens its doors.

A volunteer worker at Union Primary for the past three years, Ms. Gillette recently met Carolyn Williams, principal of the new Supply school, and offered her services as coordinator of volunteers there. Mrs. Williams' own two girls will be among those moving to Supply, and she has lists of parents and others

who might transfer their allegiance as she is doing.

"The first thing we need to do is physically move into the school and set it up," Gillette said. "That will require a lot of help, especially from men. I'll begin contacting people in late July."

She expects to recruit a co-coordinator, which was her role at Union, to help run the new volunteer program, and will send out flyers in two different directions. "We'll send home a flyer with all the children, about the needs we have for volunteers," she said. "And another kind of flyer will go out into the community to reach retired people and others who don't have children in school."

Gillette outlined the volunteer tasks performed at Union, the same ones that will be needed in the new school. "Volunteers listen to children read and give them one-on-one attention that the teacher doesn't al-

ways have time for," she said. "They help first graders with their ABC's and counting, too. Also, people with special skills, like artistic talent, can do things like prepare bulletin boards and other art work that relieves teachers."

She said the county's literacy council trains about 15 of its volunteers specifically to work in the schools, so they will be part of her program. "They're having a training workshop in July to coordinate their efforts with ours," Gillette reported.

Many county residents who are not necessarily parents have special skills to share with the children or can talk about their careers at the annual Career Day at school, Gillette said.

"And for those people who have small children at home and can't get a babysitter," she noted, "we'll be organizing a Mom's Morning Out to give volunteers a place to leave their children while they work at school."

Gillette, who plans to spend a couple of mornings a week at school, and countless hours on the telephone at home, has already gone into action for Supply Elementary School.

"I've ordered a state flag for the school from Rep. (David) Redwine," she said, "and I'm going to ask Congressman (Charlie) Rose to get us a U.S. flag that has flown over the capitol."

She said Principal Williams will have a special "moving-in" day on a Saturday in July, when the whole community will be invited to come to the school to move furniture, arrange classrooms and do all the work associated with setting up housekeeping anywhere.

Meanwhile, Gillette is eagerly calling on people and hopes to take calls from equally eager volunteers. Those who would like to be a part of this new Supply community of workers can call her at 842-9177.



JEAN GILLETTE has three good reasons to volunteer her efforts for the new Supply School. One of them, pictured with her, is Marie, 5, who will start in Supply's kindergarten this fall. The others are Marie's brother George, 7, and her sister, Morgan, 8.

## College Freshmen Progress Compared Among Counties

Students living in North Carolina who enrolled in a University of North Carolina (UNC) institution in the fall of 1990 have been tracked by the UNC system since then. For the first time, reports on their progress were recently sent to county school systems and individual school principals.

Data on students from Brunswick, Columbus, Pender and New Hanover counties shows that more high school graduates go on to a state university from Brunswick than the other two rural counties. Seventy-four local freshmen entered state institutions in 1990, compared with 65

from Columbus County and 59 from Pender County. New Hanover County sent 369 to state schools.

The majority (30) of Brunswick County graduates enrolled in either East Carolina University (ECU) or the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW), while those from Columbus County are attracted equally by ECU, Pembroke State University (PSU), North Carolina Central University (NCCU), North Carolina State University (NCSU), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical (NCA&T).

UNCW gets the majority of graduates from both New Hanover and Pender counties.

This compares with the following statewide averages: 19,188 high school graduates attend a state institution, an equal number choosing NCSU and UNC-CH as the most popular schools, with ECU in third place.

While 82.7 percent of these students statewide return for a second year of higher education, 82.4 per-

cent from Brunswick County do so. An impressive 92.3 percent of Columbus County freshmen return for a second year, 81.4 percent from Pender County, and 81.8 percent from New Hanover.

The statewide percentage of Tar Heel freshmen making better than a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) is 72.7. There are 66.2 percent from Brunswick County with this GPA, 80 percent from Columbus, 49.2 percent from Pender, and 63.1 percent from New Hanover.

Those making better than 3.0 GPA number 25.1 percent statewide and 17.6 percent from Brunswick County. Columbus County had 26.2 percent with a GPA greater than 3.0, while Pender had 10.2 percent and New Hanover 18.2 percent.

Some explanations are required to

interpret this data accurately. Freshmen, for example, at NCA&T, NCSU and UNCC usually take more and higher level courses in mathematics than freshmen at the other UNC institutions. Since math grades tend to be lower than those in other subjects, the GPA of these freshmen may be lower than at other institutions.

Statistics from the three Brunswick County high schools, regarding freshmen entering state institutions in 1990 are as follows:

North	South	West
24	Attending	21
	29	
	Returning 2nd Yr.	
83.3%	75.9%	90.5%
	2.0 GPA	
75%	51.7%	66.7%
	3.0 GPA	
20.8%	17.2%	42.9%



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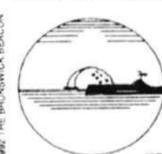
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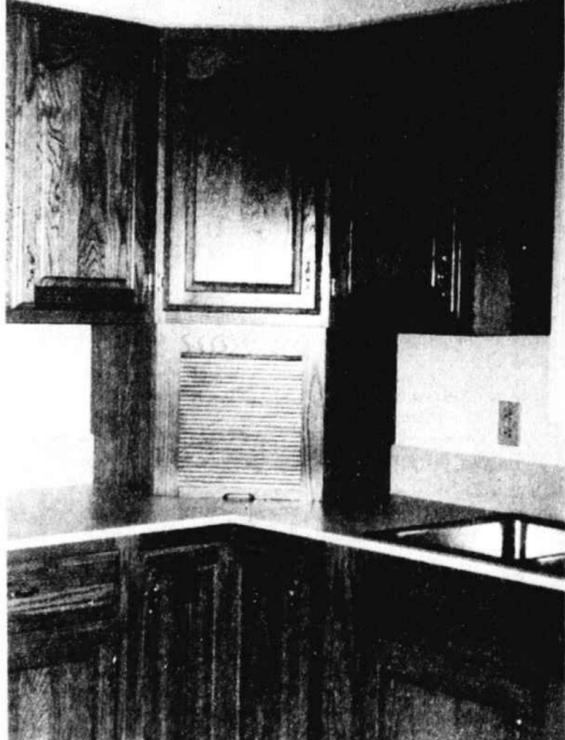
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