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Local students score high in annual testing

Perquimans County students showed great improvement in their scores on the yearly standardized achievement tests, according to data released by the county school system last Monday.

In the California Standard Achievement Tests, taken last April by students in first through ninth grade, students here met or exceeded the highest previous scores in 17 of the 49 grade-subject categories in which they were tested. Ninth and fifth graders here did exceptionally well, averaging above the previous high scores in all the subjects tested.

Students in the first grade scored above their previous highest score, and also above the regional average for the subjects tested. In addition, students in all grades here scored above the national average in all but a handful of subjects.

Paul Ward, in charge of testing for the county school superintendent's office, said that the scores indicated that the school system "is teaching more to the standards of the tests," adding that that didn't mean that students were just being taught how to take tests. "You can teach to the testing without teaching the tests," he noted.

The scores released by the county indicate the grade equivalent that students in that class received for the subject tested, giving the grade level and the month of that grade. For example, a score of 2.6 indicates that the average student in that class tested at the second grade level in the sixth month of that year.

Students in the ninth grade not only exceeded previous high scores, but did so by surprising margins. Ninth graders here averaged nine months, or one school year, above the previous high in the reading test, 18 months, or two school years, above the previous high in language, 11 months above the previous high grade equivalent in math, and 12 months above the previous high in the total battery of tests.

Ward noted that these same students scored well last year as eighth graders, and that this class has a low failure and dropout rate.

Ninth graders here scored 9.2 in reading, 10.4 in language, 9.6 in math, and 9.5 in the total battery. In spelling, the only subject in which no grade equivalent was released, students scored higher than 52 percent of the nation's ninth graders. The scores for reading, language and math exceeded those of the region.

Eighth graders here scored 8.5 in reading, 9.5 in spelling, 9.9 in language, 9.5 in math and 9.0 in the total battery. The grade equivalents for the total battery was the highest ever for county eighth graders, while the math score exceeded the previous high score by 10 months.

Seventh graders here scored 8.0 in reading, 9.5 in spelling, 9.0 in language, 8.0 in math, and 8.0 in the total battery of tests. The scores for language, math and total battery were higher than any previous scores for seventh graders.

Sixth graders in this county had grade equivalents of 6.8 in reading, 8.5 in spelling, 8.0 in language, 7.2 in math, and 7.1 in the total battery.

Fifth graders also did exceptionally well, receiving grade equivalents of 5.9 in reading, 8.5 in spelling, 6.4 in language, 6.2 in math and 6.1 in the total battery. The spelling score is 14 months higher than the previous high.

Fourth graders scored 4.6 in reading, 6.0 in spelling, 5.3 in language, 4.9 in math and 4.9 in the total battery.

Third graders scored 3.8 in reading, 4.5 in spelling, 4.2 in language, 3.9 in math and 3.9 in the total battery.

Second graders scored 3.2 in reading and 3.3 in math, and first graders scored 2.1 in reading and 2.6 in math, highest ever for the school system and above regional, state and national averages.



Fishing hole

A rowboat sits near the shore on Castleton Creek in Hertford.

High yields expected for county crops, though low prices may hurt profits

The wet weather of the past few weeks has been good to county farmers, who can expect one of the best corn crops in years.

But county Agricultural Extension Chairman Bill Jester cautions people not to be too optimistic about the bottom line. Prices for corn, though they may rise, are now about 50 cents less per bushel than at this time last year.

Several inches of rain during the period of pollination in early July have gotten farmers over the hump, Jester reports. A few timely inches in the next few weeks will add weight to the crop, but Jester feels safe in

saying that "without the unexpected, the corn yield should be the highest in three or four years." Farmers here should average well over 100 bushels an acre.

But the price situation is still fluctuating. At this time last year, corn was selling for about \$3.10 a bushel. Today it is running around \$2.60.

This news puts a crimp on hopes for a good year. "All in all," Jester said, "I feel yields should be measured ultimately by what the grower puts in his pocket. If you grow 120 bushels an acre at two dollars a bushel, you're no better off than if you grow 60 bushels

an acre at four dollars a bushel."

But Jester adds that there is "guarded optimism" about the price increasing. Farmers in the Midwest don't anticipate a good crop this year, and domestic consumption of corn is up. In addition, there was a poor crop in South Africa, and the possibility of grain exports to the Soviet Union.

Corn is not the only crop doing well. The soybean and peanut crops have suffered somewhat from disease and weeds caused by the wet weather, and insects could still be a problem, but Jester expects a good yields in those crops also. "We're not out of the woods yet," he said, but both early

and late soybeans are coming on strong.

There is little hope, though, that prices will improve for soybeans, Jester feels. Prices now are about 30 cents a bushel lower than last year.

Cotton, though it also has suffered from the wet weather, appears to be doing well, both in yield and in price. Cotton farmers in Texas lost 20 percent of their crop to hail, and since then the price has risen sharply.

"We haven't put any grain in the bins yet," said Jester, but farmers can expect a good harvest.

Change Winfall intersection

School system works on several capital improvements

The Perquimans County Board of Education hopes the schools will look a little nicer this fall. The county school system is in the midst of completing several capital improvement projects before the children return to school in August.

Completed are plastering and painting at the King Street annex to the high school, and the lockers at Perquimans Union School.

Bathrooms and classrooms at the high school will also be touched up before school begins.

Two other projects are still on the drawing board. A plan to improve the Y-shaped intersection of SR 1220 and NC 37 in Winfall, which the board believes is hazardous to bus traffic, is stalled pending the purchase of a \$7,000 right-of-way, where now stands an abandoned gas station.

The school board passed a resolution at their meeting last Monday asking the county to buy the right-of-way, perhaps with help from the Town of Winfall. The state Department of Transportation has appropriated money to do the actual construction, but that money is only guaranteed for another couple of months, according to School Superintendent Pat Harrell.

The school system has also drawn

up plans to improve drainage at Perquimans Union School, where water stands on the playground area, and has on occasion backed up into the school building.

Tony Short of the Soil Conservation Service estimates the project — grading the land and installing drainage pipes — will cost about \$104,000, \$94,000 of which the board hopes to receive from the Resource Conservation and Development program of the SCS, which funded half of the cost of the new Missing Mill

Park in Hertford. The school board will apply for a RC&D grant.

The board has also contracted to replace floor and ceiling tiles at Perquimans Union, along with the school roof. The roof project has been a problem for the board since they contracted with Southeastern Professional Coatings of Elizabeth City last spring. Completion of the project has been inexcusably delayed, the board believes, and in fact the board will seek \$10,000 in an out-of-court settlement for water damage to the floor and ceiling which they

believe was caused by Southeastern's negligence.

In another project, the Perquimans High School Boosters Club has donated \$500 to help the school board complete the high school weightroom project, which has been delayed because with all the other projects, school maintenance employees haven't had time to finish it.

In other action, the board accepted the resignation of elementary school physical education teacher and high school girls' coach Billy Stallings.

County commissioners hold hearing

By SUSAN HARRIS

The Perquimans County board of commissioners met on Monday night for their regularly scheduled session.

Social Services Director Paul Gregory addressed the board explaining some aspects of the 4-D program. This program employs a social worker to find the fathers of children receiving AFDC (aid for dependent children) and takes that father to court to force him to support the children, therefore alleviating their names from the AFDC rolls.

Gregory explained that for the initial two-to-three-year period the program would not pay for itself, but thereafter many counties have shown a substantial profit.

The commissioners asked Gregory to do an indepth study of the program for possible inclusion in next year's budget.

Lee Tunnell, representing the Perquimans County Jaycees, told the board that the Jaycees had run some

\$833 short on their 4th of July fireworks display, and would appreciate any monetary help the board could offer.

The commissioners expressed mixed opinions on partially funding a civic organization's project, and tabled the request until county finance officer Durwood Reed was available to tell the board what funds were usable at this time.

Commissioner Charles Ward was appointed to price lawn mowers and tractors with mower attachments because it was felt that the present equipment will soon have to be replaced.

A letter from the Division of Health Services of the state of North Carolina tentatively approving the plans and specifications for Phase II of the county water system was presented to the board.

Durwood Reed submitted copies of the county's six-month finance report to the board.

Jeanne White reported that the county has received 10 applications for the position at the water department which will be opening in late summer.

The commissioners decided not to review those applications at this time, but rather to meet in executive session to discuss the personnel matter at a later date.

This week

Perquimans County has female Methodist minister. Turn to page three.

Weather

Hot and humid through Sunday. Highs in the mid 90s, lows in the low 70s



Road workers defy the heat while constructing curbs along Church Street in Hertford. The National Weather Service expects hot, humid weather to continue through the weekend.