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County schools attained highest rate of attendance in North Carolina

By SUSAN HARRIS
Feeleance Writer

Perquimans County elementary school students had the highest attendance rate in the state last school year, Superintendent James P. Harrell announced at the board of education meeting Monday night. Harrell said that a statistician at the research department of the State Department of Public Instruction recently relayed that information to him.

The researcher was analyzing attendance data for elementary as well as secondary students. He called Harrell to find out what steps Perquimans had taken to achieve its 96.12 percent rate.

"I feel we've got a good attendance policy," Harrell told the board, attributing the excellent rate to a firm attendance policy, good documentation, and conscientious staff. He further stated that the attendance counselor spends approximately 75 percent of her time calling, visiting and sending letters to parents of absentees.

Under present policy, students with 20 unexcused absences fail for the year. According to Harrell, the policy is closely enforced.

Board members expressed a desire to know the attendance rate for the high school students.

Harrell said that although he knew it was not as high as that of elementary students, he was not informed of the secondary school's ranking. Inquiries will be made regarding the information.

In the matter of lighting at the high school athletic complex, Harrell said, "I felt I was led astray," by Howard Martin who insinuated himself as a sales representative for Musco, Inc., a national lighting company.

Harrell said that upon calling the national headquarters of Musco, Inc., in Iowa he was given the name of Mike Lempak in Greensboro as the N.C. sales representative. Harrell spoke with Lempak, on the telephone on Tuesday, March 5 and Lempak visited Harrell on Thursday, March 7.

Lempak related that Martin was once affiliated with Musco, but is no longer in its employ.

Lempak outlined steps the board should take in facilitating the lighting project. He did not recommend the 95' poles the board had previously voted to purchase. Harrell canceled the order placed with Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation awaiting further investigation.

"I was impressed with him. (He was) a very professional

person," Harrell said of Lempak. "I feel for the first time that I've got some direction" in proceeding with this undertaking.

The athletic field was measured by Lempak, who has sent the measurements to Musco factory engineers for full schematics and a proposal on the project. Lempak said his company would be willing to bid all or part of the job, and to provide specifications and materials in order that local contractors might bid on the electrical installation.

Harrell said that Musco contracted the lighting for the 1984 Olympics. Information will continue to be gathered about the lighting.

Sealed bids were opened for the fencing project at the high school and Union School. Submitting bids were Albemarle Fencing and Insulation, Segar Company and Hercules Fencing Co.

After lengthy discussion of its options, the board awarded the contract to Hercules Fencing of Norfolk, the low bidder at approximately \$16,000. The company specified on its bid that work could begin in 90 days.

Tri-county Vocational Director Ken Stalls spoke to the board regarding safety regulations in vocational classes. Stalls said that a recent law suit in Hickory involving a student injured in a vocational class who sued the teacher and the school systems had brought safety to the forefront.

Workshops held recently for vocational teachers have been well-received, Stalls said. On hand for the seminars were physicians and legal consultants. "We've been recognizing the fact that we need to do a little more in the way of safety," Stalls said.

The board adopted a safety policy which states that students under age 14 shall not operate shapers, jointers, table saws, wood lathes and radial arm saws. Students may use electric drills, band saws, scroll saws,

saber saws, portable/disc sanders and hand held electrical tools, if the teacher feels the child is capable of handling such equipment. Teachers are responsible for safety procedures and equipment.

Stalls said that money has been spent repairing and replacing safety equipment, and coding the machines with use and safety labels in accordance with OSHA regulations.

Drawings for site work and structural work for the high school renovation/construction project were received by Harrell last week. Harrell said the FmHA architects have other drawings on the project. He said that engineers are scheduled to come Thursday.

The board expressed its frustration over the delay in procedures. "We're still working as hard as we can" is what he told me this morning," Harrell said the state staff told him.

Harrell told the board that items stored in the county warehouse (formerly the J.C. Blanchard building) are being moved due to planned roofing work by the county. The board discussed auctioning those items which cannot be stored elsewhere due to space limitations.

In other business, the board: *voted to advertise for bids on the high school vocational building roofing project.

*approved an amended school calendar.

*decided to continue to offer accidental dental insurance through the Delta Dental Plan as a service to students.

*adjourned into executive session to discuss personnel matters.

Police 'surprise' dealer

By JANE B. WILLIAMS

Four alleged criminals were caught off-guard Wednesday when, during the course of a marijuana sale, Senior Patrolman Timothy Spence of the Hertford Police Department unexpectedly arrived on the scene.

Spence, in full uniform and a marked patrol car, drove into the parking lot of the Little S&R Store in Hertford and observed an apparent transaction taking place between four white males.

After a call for assistance, Spence aided by Chief Marshall Merritt of the Hertford Police Department and Chief Joe Lothian of the Winfall Police Department, apprehended the foursome; resulting in three arrests, with the fourth suspect being questioned and released after police officials determined that he had not actively participated in the sale or delivery of the substance.

A bag of marijuana was confiscated from Fred Albert Harris, age 57, of 603 Pennsylvania Ave., in Hertford. Harris was charged with felonious sale and delivery of a controlled substance. He was confined to Albemarle District Jail under a \$1,500.00 secured bond. A preliminary hearing was set for Tuesday.

Police confiscated a second bag of marijuana from Samuel Louis Cohen and Thomas James Clauson, who were also placed under arrest.

Cohen, age 25, of Rt. 1, Box 655, Hertford, was charged with simple possession of marijuana, a misdemeanor, and released on a \$300.00 bond.

Clauson, age 16, of 11 F Pine, Snug Harbor, faces the same charges as Cohen, and was released on a \$300.00 bond.

A trial date for Cohen and Clauson has been set for April 17.



I N F U L L BLOOM—Magnificent pink blossoms adorn the Tulip Tree that stands in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

in Hertford. The tree is just one of many familiar signs that the warmth of spring is fast approaching. (Photo by Monica Roach)

Students participate in writing skills test

Over 82,000 North Carolina tenth grade students in public schools participated in the first "test run" of writing as a proposed component of the Competency Test Program.

Administered by the State Department of Public Instruction during the fall of 1984, field tests were also given to approximately 2000 students enrolled in private academies, special schools, and community colleges.

The writing field test was one aspect of efforts underway since 1980 to investigate the possibility of adding writing measurement to the competency test requirement.

Discussion of the addition of writing to the mathematics and reading graduation competency testing is expected to be brought up at the April meeting of the State Board of Education.

State results of the first writing competency field test were released this week by State Superintendent Craig Phillips.

Writing scores which were either "pass" or "fail," varied widely among the eight test questions or prompts that were field tested, Phillips explained. "Actually, this first time, we were testing the test," the State Superintendent added.

It is impossible to compare results from one system to another or even to compare schools within the same system since different editions of the test were used throughout the state, according to William Brown, special assistant for research with the State Department of Public Instruction. Eight essay type questions for point of view writing were administered and each student answered one of these questions.

Three of the prompts which elicited the most appropriate responses were passed by approximately 80 percent of the students. Apparently, Brown explained, these topics were understood, elicited multiple reasons to support a particular point of view and were interesting enough to motivate students to respond.

Several of the topics failed the field test. These prompts apparently were not understood well by students, consequently only 60 percent were able to appropriately meet the writing criteria for these topics.

Along with the essay topics, students also field tested four

editions of a multiple choice mechanics test. The average percent correct for the four editions of this test was approximately 84 percent.

Although the competency test is usually given to 11th graders to measure math and reading skills, the writing component field test was administered in tenth grades across the state in October 1984 to provide this class with additional experience.

Both parts of the writing assessment (a multiple choice

test on mechanics and point of view writing) could become permanent parts of the competency test in 1985-86 should the State Board decide to add these components.

Scores from the writing tests of students in grades six and nine taking the Annual Testing Program's Writing Test show that students have a good command of the use of accepted English conventions, such as punctuation, capitalization, proper English usage, and the ability to

write complete sentences, but need work on expressing thoughts.

This was the second year that students in grades six and nine have been tested on their writing skills. The test was added because the members of the Annual Testing Commission believe that writing instruction is needed and that the measurement of writing will encourage instructional attention to writing.

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Drama students to stage production

Following a four-year hiatus, the Drama Club at Perquimans County High School is busy preparing for a

'come-back' performance later this month.

Charley's Aunt, a play by Brandon Thomas, will be

presented at the school auditorium on March 28th and 29th by the drama students, under the direction

of Mrs. Chris Barber.

Charley's Aunt, a farce set in the 1890's, tells the story of two Oxford students and their love for two young ladies. The students, Jack Chesney and Charley Wykeham, are portrayed by Tim Kane and David Bateman. The objects of their affections, Kitty Verdun and Amy Spettigue, are played by Michelle Spence and Sharla Tilley.

The boys plan to propose matrimony to their sweethearts, with Charley's long lost aunt in attendance as chaperone. The plot thickens when Charley's aunt wires that she will be delayed and a chum, Lord Babberly, played by Kenny Perry, dons an 'old ladies' attire. Naturally the real aunt arrives on the scene.

Other members of the cast include: Angela Spivey, Bonnie Harris, James Howell, Lori Gard and Lynnette Riddick.

A matinee performance for students will be given on March 28th, and an evening performance is scheduled for March 29th at 8:00 p.m.

The price of admission to the performance is \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for students. Tickets can be purchased in advance from any member of the cast or crew, or at the door on the evening of the performance.



THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!—Fun for the family is in store as local youth from Perquimans

County High School make their stage debut next week with "Charley's Aunt." The play,

presented by the drama club, will be presented on Friday night, March 29. (Photo by Monica Roach)