

West Elementary School opens this fall with brand new classrooms. Pictured is one of the regular-size class being readied for students who arrive at 8:15 a.m. Monday morning.

New West School ready to go

Students, parents and teachers are excited about the newly renovated buildings at West Elementary School.

Teachers have been unpacking and getting ready for fall all during the summer, said Principal Sherrill Toney.

"This has been the most fun I've had in 20 years, working on the room," said kindergarten teacher Hilda Leonard.

The pale yellow walls look bright, sunny and happy.

Toney said the main building is designed with 12 full-size classrooms and two intermediate classrooms for Resource and Chapter 1.

Fifty percent of the student body can fit into the cafeteria at one time. Lunch will be self-serve or buffet style for the first time at West. The cafeteria also has a stage area for small performances.

Toney said that letting children off and picking them up after school has been made simpler and safer. Parents will drive down Goforth Street and drive through the back entrance of West to turn left or right onto Watterson Street.

The gates to the driveway will be locked during the day from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., he said.

Each classroom has 954 square feet. The kindergarten rooms are even larger.

Each room has a storage and work room for the teachers. And phones may be installed in the future.

In the center of the building is the office area and health room. The media center and library are old shelving from West, and features a conference room for teachers and parents.

The second building will house music, art, speech, Spanish, academically gifted, a counselor and before and after school care. It includes four classrooms and six office spaces and a gym.

"We've got it all covered," said Toney.

New twist in scheduling benefits frosh

Kings Mountain High School principal Jackie Lavender will introduce a new twist in scheduling ninth-graders this fall.

"We've been looking for better ways to do a better job," she said of her plan to schedule ninth-graders to have five class changes in a day instead of the usual six changes.

Lavender said that during the 1991-92 school year, 39 ninth-graders dropped out of school. And many of the 327 ninth-graders who finished the year had difficulty making the transition from Middle School to High School.

To make it easier for the freshmen, they will have a schedule that includes two back-to-back periods of English or two of PE I/Health each semester.

"Six class changes each day make it more difficult for students and teachers to establish personal relationships, and each student has six classes for which to prepare every day," said Lavender. "Extending class periods into blocks of time longer than 55 minutes increases the length of teacher-student contact and reduces the number of class changes."

Also, the 110-minute block gives teachers flexibility in using varied instructional methods and allows the student to concentrate on one less subject each semester. Plus, teachers will be able to schedule field trips in the blocks.

At the end of each semester, the student will take an end-of-course test and receive one unit of graduation credit.

This is a small start, said Lavender. If the program is successful, it may be expanded to include other grades, she said.

School Board advance September 27-29

School board members call their upcoming retreat appropriately "Advance."

"We'll be doing some long-term planning and receiving updates on current programs by school officials," said Chairman Ronnie Hawkins, who said the board will meet in Boone for the fourth annual retreat on September 27-29.

"A retreat gives us more time to discuss in-depth some of the things we're interested in seeing happen in the system because we're limited at regular board meetings," he said.

Both Supt. Dr. Bob McRae and Associate Supt. Dr. Larry Allen said that uppermost in the minds of the board will be the dilemma of what to do about old Central School, which now stands vacant since West School students moved to their new campus. Allen says the board will take a look at the planning space, what decisions need to be made immediately about mechanical, electrical and plumbing needs of the building, and whether to start upgrading it for the administrative office staff to move in. This fall the system will auction the old Park Grace School property, declared surplus property and made available for auction by the county board of commissioners.

Testing Coordinator Jean Thrift is expected to make a presentation on testing which has changed this school year with the elimination of the California Achievement Test. A state-directed test has been designed to measure the standard

course of study that teachers are given to teach. Parents will be getting the state report that doesn't compare their children's grades to those from across the nation but from across North Carolina.

The board is also expected to discuss at-length participation in a three-year Performance-Based Accountability Program, a school improvement plan.

This plan calls for development of a central office differentiated pay plan with affected staff offered the opportunity to vote. Last year

the system voted for across-the-board distribution. This year the pay plan will be submitted to affected staff 30 days after opening of school. Sixty days after teachers report, a secret ballot vote will be taken by all affected employees. By November, the approved plan is to be submitted to the state.

The item will be on the agenda for the September 14 meeting at which new faculty members will be honored at a reception at 6:30 p.m. prior to the 7 p.m. regular meeting.

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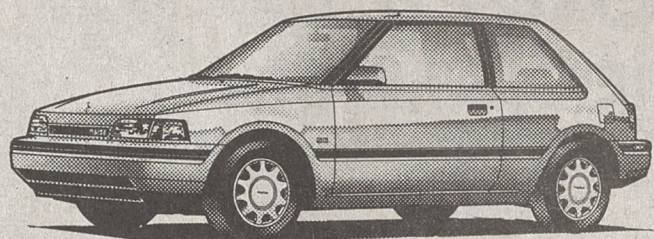
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