Superintendent Anthony Jackson is shown at left as he addresses an audience of more than 200 people at the “State of Our Schools” information session held on October 24, at Clarke Elementary School. He gave a very informative presentation about services and programs in our schools. He also led presentations at two other “State of Our Schools” events.

‘State of Our Schools’ offers valuable information

Vance County Schools again this school year hosted three information events entitled, “State of Our Schools,” to provide the local community with valuable information about the performance of our public schools in the 2016-2017 school year and expectations for the current school year.

Dr. Anthony Jackson, superintendent, led all three sessions with lots of data about our schools and the services and programs they provide for our students.

The first session was held on October 17, at the Henderson Country Club. The luncheon event was attended by local elected officials, business and community leaders, church leaders, real estate representatives and educators. The other two sessions were held on October 24, at Clarke Elementary School, and October 25, at New Hope Elementary School. All of the events were well attended.

The events in the schools also featured information tables from all 17 schools were available at the “State of Our Schools” events.

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Collaboration ongoing in ‘We Inspire’ trainings

Vance County Schools’ educators continue to collaborate during more blended learning workshops held in early October as part of the school system’s “We Inspire” initiative.

The initiative began last school year with the first cohort of educators focused on being blended learning leaders in their respective schools. A second cohort has joined them this year.

Both groups participated in workshops on October 2 and 3 in the district’s Administrative Services Center. The first-year cohort collaborated in a session on October 2, with the second cohort going through group activities on the following day. The workshops were led by Lisa Hervey and Jaclyn Stevens, both blended learning experts with the Friday Institute on the campus of N.C. State University in Raleigh.

Hervey and Stevens facilitated the energetic sessions that provided a lot of hands-on work for the local educators. Teachers, school media specialists and curriculum specialists worked together to experiment with blended learning opportunities online throughout the sessions. They sat in groups at tables in the Administrative Service Center’s newly equipped curriculum training room, so that they could have open discussions and work with one another on strategies.

More training sessions, led by Friday Institute staff members, are planned throughout this school year with both cohorts. They are to share what they learn with their colleagues in their schools to bring effective blended learning into local classrooms each day.
Fifth graders from our elementary schools enjoyed petting the live snakes, above left, and talking with experts about agriculture and protecting our environment, above right, during their participation in the “Environmental Field Days” activities at Kerr Lake on October 25 and 26.

Our environment is focus at Kerr Lake sessions

Fifth-grade students and their teachers from our elementary schools again attended the annual “Environmental Field Days” activities at Kerr Lake, October 25 and 26.

The school groups traveled to Satterwhite Point on Kerr Lake north of Henderson to learn about a wide range of environmental issues including soil erosion, forestry and local vegetation, local wildlife, agriculture, preventing pollution and the importance of Kerr Lake to our area.

The groups rotated through six different information sessions led by representatives of the Soil and Water Conservation District, N.C. Park Rangers, N.C. Wildlife officers, agents from the Vance County Cooperative Extension Service and N.C. Forestry experts.

“Environmental Field Days” are sponsored each year by the county’s Soil and Water Conservation District. The two-day event is funded through a grant.

Students always enjoy petting the live snakes brought by wildlife officers and the demonstrations featuring taxidermy replicas of beavers, foxes, raccoons and other animals.
Project-based learning focus of workshops

Teachers in local middle and high schools are participating in project-based learning workshops along with teams from schools in Franklin, Granville and Warren counties.

Teams from the four school districts met on October 10, in our Administrative Services Center for their third workshop. They are shown during the workshop at right.

The Vance County Schools’ team includes Audrey Brown, Dr. Laikhe Green, Ben Arrington, Penny Collins, Orlando Terry, Pam Huff and Lynn Conlee.

The October session was led by Leslie Eaves, shown standing in right background, and focused on scaffolding in project-based learning. The workshops are designed to help teachers develop authentic activities for student engagement, critical thinking and problem solving.

Littlejohn to be recognized at Rosetta Stone conference

Robin Littlejohn, a teacher assistant at Pinkston Street Elementary School, has been identified as a Rosetta Stone “Rockstar” and has been instrumental in assisting with plans for the Rosetta Stone K-12 User Conference, November 15-16 in Nashville, Tenn.

Rosetta Stone is a nationally known computer software application used to assist educators to teach students, who speak a wide range of languages, how to write and speak English. The software is used in our local schools.

Littlejohn will be recognized during the conference for her efforts and talents. She and other local educators will learn even more about Rosetta Stone at the conference and be able to bring the newfound information to their local schools to share with colleagues and help their students.
Dabney Elementary gets Walmart grant

The Walmart Community Foundation announced in early October that it had awarded Dabney Elementary School a $700 grant.

The school’s grant funding was secured through an application with the Walmart Distribution Center #6091, located on Vanco Mill Road.

Dr. Michael Putney, principal of Dabney Elementary School, and his staff were thrilled to accept the grant funds.

The school has worked to update its media center and the funds have been used to purchase new library books for Dabney students.

The Walmart corporation provides a wide range of grant funding to support community efforts, including educational initiatives. In notifying school officials about the grant allocation, Walmart representatives encouraged Dr. Putney and his entire school family to celebrate their award. The Walmart Community Foundation strives to give back to their facilities’ surrounding communities and to support organizations that improve areas where their customers and associates live and work.

PEERS at Carver really ‘Makes a Difference’

The PEERS Club at Carver Elementary School is making a difference in its community by providing bags filled with basic items to needy families in the local area.

Led by Teresa Hicks, counselor and PEERS advisor at the school, students, parents, staff and community supporters filled over 600 one-gallon plastic bags with toiletries, washcloths, school supplies, games, toys, scarves, gloves, hats, snacks and nonperishable food items for donation to families.

The school hosted its second “Make a Difference Day” event on October 28, to gather donated items for the bags. The day also featured a yard sale and silent auction to raise funds to purchase additional items for donation.

The “Make a Difference Day” event was held in the morning for almost four hours. PEERS stands for Parents, Educating, Empowering, Role models to Serve others. The PEERS Club meets weekly at the school. With the support of Hicks, other school staff members and some parents, the students are learning how to help those less fortunate in their community.

“It’s all about letting our students know they should give back to our community,” Hicks says.

Last year, the day resulted in over 500 bags filled with donations.
Teacher Executive Institute begins for educators

The 16 Vance County Schools teachers participating in the 2017-2018 Vance County Teacher Executive Institute (TEI) began the program on October 10, at an orientation dinner held in their honor. The program’s participants include: Jan Vaughan of Aycock; Mary Bowers of Carver; Sara Lilley of Clarke; Sharonda Bullock of Dabney; Linda Villa of New Hope; Nicola Dobbs of Pinkston Street; Cheri Baker of E.O. Young; Emily Davis of Zeb Vance; Joseph Sharrow of Southern Vance; Novlyn Sweeney of Early College; Alexia Nelson of Northern Vance; C’monee’ Wilkins of Eaton-Johnson; Glenda Dalipe of STEM Early High School; Marina Laxton of E.M. Rollins; Kevon Grant of L.B. Yancey; and Rosalia Cervantes of Henderson Middle. They attended their first all-day session on October 24.

Essential training

Teachers and support staff members attended a wide variety of training sessions during the afternoon of October 18, following the early release of students for the day. Local educators made the most of their afternoon by collaborating during workshops on educational issues involving digital learning strategies, scaffolding rigor, curriculum mapping, student focused intervention and even training on how to use new telephone equipment.
State of Our Schools

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tables for each of our schools. Principals, assistant principals, teachers and other staff members were on hand to answer questions and provide information.

In his presentations, Jackson stressed that our schools have made improvements, but there is still much work to be done. The majority of our schools in 2016-2017 earned a “C” or better School Performance Grade from the state. Early College High School was an “A+” school and Aycock and Clarke elementary schools were “B” schools for the year. The “C” schools were L.B. Yancey, Zeb Vance, Dabney, Pinkston Street and STEM Early High.

Jackson added that for this school year, district goals are that all schools will achieve a School Performance Grade of at least a “C,” all schools will meet state growth standards and the four-year cohort graduation rate will increase from 82 percent to 84 percent.

He also discussed many of the innovative programs in our school system including: the new year-round STEAM Academy at E.M. Rollins Elementary; the relocation of the STEM Early High to Southern Vance High; the relocation of AdVance Academy and the Youth Empowerment Academy to Charles Street; and continuing success at Early College High and Vance Medical Academy.

Parents, students and educators visited information booths for our schools at Clarke and New Hope.
Future opportunities

Students in our middle and high schools attended the “Manufacturing Day” celebration on October 5, in the Civic Center at Vance-Granville Community College. They visited with dozens of manufacturing representatives to learn more about their operations and career opportunities. They also received valuable information about manufacturing educational programs at the community college. Information was available for careers in electronics, heating and air-conditioning work, automotive systems, mechatronics engineering and more.

A safe walk

Zeb Vance Elementary School held its annual “Walk to School Day” event on October 4. Students, staff members and parents joined the effort to call attention to safety in walking or biking to school or at home. The event began at a church about a mile from the school. Students held large banners, at above right, and everyone marched behind with an escort from Vance County Sheriff Department and Bearpond Fire Department personnel and vehicles.