New year is here!

The 2018-2019 school year began for all schools on August 27, with the first day of classes at 13 schools. E.M. Rollins Elementary and Early College High began classes three to four weeks prior to the other schools. It was a busy and smooth first day with classes assembling at Vance County Middle School, top photo, STEM Early High students working with their teachers in classrooms, above left, and Superintendent Anthony Jackson riding to school on the bus with new kindergartener Azariah Walker at Zeb Vance Elementary, above right.
Early College High School begins 2018-2019 school year

New Principal Travis Taylor of Vance County Early College High School and his staff welcomed approximately 200 students for classes to begin the 2018-2019 school year on August 6.

Staff members and students are looking forward to another year of high academic achievements. The school is already an “A” school based on data from the state for the 2016-2017 school year. Accountability results for the 2017-2018 school year are not yet available. In June, the national magazine *U.S. News & World Report* recognized Early College High as a Bronze Medal school based on the high academic achievements of students in the school.

Last school year, among the 38 graduates at the school, 31 finished with at least one college associate’s degree in addition to their high school diploma. Eight of the graduates earned both an associate of arts and associate of science degree. Another 23 graduates received one associate’s degree.

In the five-year Early College program, students can earn two years of college course work at no cost to them.

Taylor and his staff also hosted a very successful Open House event for all students and their parents on August 2. The vast majority of the school’s students attended to receive valuable information about the year and pick up their laptop computers.

Students and teachers at Early College High School work in their classrooms on the first day of the new school year on August 6. They will be working to continue their academic success in 2018-2019.
Debbie Hite, former principal of Early College High School, second from right, accepts the “School of the Year” award for 2017-2018 from Assistant Superintendent Trixie Brooks, at top left, during the VCS Convocation. Staff members of Aycock Elementary School enter McGregor Hall from a school bus as members of the Vance County High School Marching Band play for them, at top right.

VCS Convocation features infectious energy

The McGregor Hall Performing Arts Center in downtown Henderson was filled with an energy that spread throughout the audience for the duration of the annual Vance County Schools Convocation for all of the district’s approximately 1,000 employees on August 20.

Employees rode school buses to the venue from their respective schools and office locations. Each group wore matching t-shirts or other “costumes” that included graduation gowns as they entered McGregor Hall. They were greeted with music played by members of the Vance County High School Vipers Band and cheers from the Vipers cheerleading squad. The lively, pep rally atmosphere for the event was a great way to start the new school year for employees.

Superintendent Anthony Jackson led several speakers at the convocation in praising staff members for their accomplishments for the 2017-2018 school year and called on them to work together to make 2018-2019 “The Year of Breakthrough.”

Jackson and school system officials also had welcomed 112 new employees to the district at a breakfast held in their honor on August 14 at Clarke Elementary School.

Superintendent Anthony Jackson is shown at left as he addresses new employees for Vance County Schools, local officials and support staff members on August 14.
Students, parents take advantage of Open House

Open House sessions for the 2018-2019 school year were held at 13 schools on August 23, with all schools seeing a big turnout of families seeking information about the new year.

Students and their parents at elementary, middle and high schools took advantage of the Open House events to get a wide range of information to help them be successful in the upcoming year.

All of the elementary schools, with the exception of E.M. Rollins, held Open House on August 23. They all reported lots of visiting students and parents as they came to meet school administrators, teachers, get class schedules and supply lists and tour the facilities.

There was a lot of activity at the new Vance County Middle School and Vance County High School. In addition to school administrators and staff, the high school had local businesses and public service agencies represented to share information. There was even a Food Truck Rodeo held outside in front of the school for those who wanted delicious food.

Bus transportation, discipline plans and academic expectations also were shared at all schools.

In the top photo, Brandelyn Breinig, left, talks with a student about the sports medicine class she will teach at Vance County High School. In the middle photo, Principal Heddie Somerville, center, talks with staff members at Vance County Middle School. In the bottom photo, parents complete paperwork in a classroom at L.B. Yancey Elementary School.

VCS Photos
Counselor Shirley Lewis met with parents and students during orientation at Vance County Middle School, as shown above. Assistant Principal Mcshell Edmonds of Vance County High School, is shown at above right as she makes a presentation to freshmen and their parents during orientation. At right, STEM Early High School students listen as a teacher goes over classroom expectations during their orientation session.

Orientation sessions

Vance County Middle School, STEM Early High School and Vance County High School held very informative orientation sessions for all students in late July and well into August. Parents also were invited to participate in the sessions.

Principal Heddie Somerville and her staff hosted orientation for sixth graders and their parents on July 31 and for seventh and eighth graders on August 9. Each day, sessions were held in the morning and evening.

STEM Early High had orientation for sixth graders on August 21 and orientation for seventh and eighth graders on August 23. Principal Kristian Herring and the school’s staff welcomed large numbers of students and parents each day.

Staff and administrators at Vance County High welcomed freshmen for orientation in the morning and evening of August 14. Principal Rey Horner and his assistant principals led the sessions, which introduced students to their new school.
Local officials discuss school safety at summit

Superintendent Anthony Jackson makes a presentation during the School Safety Summit to local law enforcement officers, city and county officials and school administrators, top left, while Assistant Superintendent Cindy Bennett stands as she leads discussions during the summit, top right.

The school system hosted a School Safety Summit on July 31, in the Administrative Services Center that was attended by school system administrators, local law enforcement officers, city and county officials and community leaders.

Superintendent Anthony Jackson and Assistant Superintendent Cindy Bennett led very productive discussions during the event.

In his presentation, Jackson focused on steps the school system has taken to ensure the safety of students, staff members and visitors in our local schools.

He mentioned the school entrance procedures established two years ago requiring school entrances to remain locked during the school day. Visitors to the schools must produce photo identification and explain why they are visiting the school before office personnel release the door lock to allow them in the building. He added that additional school resource officers will be in place for the new school year at the middle and high schools.

Plans also are in place to add more entrance barriers in the lobby areas of the schools as another way to control who comes into the buildings. Jackson also pointed out that school visitors are still required to report to the school office once they enter the building to be signed in and receive a visitor’s badge. They also sign out before leaving the school. School officials also have plans for the new year to have students go through metal detectors at entrances at the middle and high schools and random checks will be done with mobile metal detector wands with students as they depart school buses.

Bennett answered several questions from law enforcement and community officials about how the schools work with local authorities to make schools safer and to respond to emergencies.

Law enforcement and community members made several good points about how effective communication between all stakeholders is vitally important to maintain school safety.
Kianna Wills participates in medical Congress at Harvard

Kianna Wills, a student at Vance County Early College High School, served as a delegate for North Carolina at the Congress of Future Medical Leaders at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during this past summer.

Wills attended the three-day event in late June along with top academic achieving high school students from across the country who plan to pursue careers in the medical field.

She is shown in the photo following an activity at the Congress with Brendan Burchard, founder of the High Performance Academy and a best-selling author who has been recognized by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times and USA Today publications. She also met well-known physicians, Nobel Prize winners and professors from Harvard and Johns Hopkins universities.
Top Vance County Schools bus drivers were recognized at the drivers’ meeting on August 16 at Aycock Elementary School.

The top drivers were Mary Person, Keith Purnell and Dorothy Jones-Wortham. Person finished first in the Vance County Schools annual Bus Roadeo held in the spring and went on to represent the school system in the District Bus Roadeo. Purnell finished second in the local roadeo and Jones-Wortham finished in third place.

Shown in the photo at right are Person, left, and Purnell. Jones-Wortham was not available for the photo.

The Lamplighter is published monthly by the Public Information Office of Vance County Schools. School news and story ideas are welcome and may be sent to: Terri Hedrick, Public Information Officer, 492-2127, thedrick@vcs.k12.nc.us.