Rachel Bradshaw, music teacher at Carver and New Hope elementary schools laughs as she completes her walk down the red carpet during the “Draft Day” for the third cohort of the We Inspire initiative. Superintendent Anthony Jackson is shown standing at the podium as he called out the name of each cohort member to come forward and sign the initiative’s pledge for participation.

**We Inspire!**

There were 45 local educators who began their participation as the third cohort in the district’s We Inspire initiative with their “Draft Day” on October 1.

As with the first two groups, each participant was called up to the front by Superintendent Anthony Jackson for their walk down a red carpet, so that they could sign the We Inspire pledge committing their efforts to the blended learning initiative.

They will now go through several training sessions, led by representatives from the Friday Institute at N.C. State University. The trainings will last throughout the school year and beyond. In many of the sessions they will be joined by members of the first two cohorts.

The We Inspire initiative is funded through a $200,000 grant from the Golden Leaf Foundation. Members of the cohorts are trained as leaders in their respective schools. They in turn work with their colleagues to share proven, effective strategies to use technology to enhance classroom instruction.
Students, parents provide valuable feedback in sessions

Superintendent Anthony Jackson began his interactive meetings for the 2018-2019 school year with representatives on the Student Advisory Council and the Parent Advisory Council during sessions held at the Administrative Services Center on October 22.

Students from STEM Early High School, Vance County Middle School, AdVance Academy, Early College High School and Vance County High School are members of the Student Advisory Council. They were selected to represent their schools by the school administrative teams, with input from teachers and counselors. Parent Advisory Council members also were selected by the school administrative teams from among parent leaders at their respective schools.

The Student Advisory Council meeting was held during the morning and featured Jackson talking with the students about expectations for the new school year, but most importantly seeking their input on a wide range of topics. The students shared with him their views on what they feel are the most important issues for their success in school and what qualities and skills a high school graduate should have.

The Parent Advisory Council evening session involved Jackson sharing information with the parents about local schools’ achievements last year and aspirations for this year. Like the students, the parents shared their views on academics, extra activities for students, parent involvement, qualities of a high school graduate and even school delays or closings due to bad weather.
Kelly Hinchcliffe, a reporter for WRAL-TV in Raleigh, came to Vance County on October 25 for interviews and information for a special report focusing on teacher recruitment. She interviewed Superintendent Anthony Jackson, shown at left, and also interviewed teachers and students at Vance County Middle School. A particular focus for the television report was how our school system has been creative in recruiting teachers through the use of international faculty and other resources, including Teach for America. The special report is expected to air sometime in January.

Storms cause school closings, calendar changes

Two tropical storms that were the remnants of powerful hurricanes passed through Vance County in less than a month’s time causing local schools to close for four days.

The closings resulted in the most student instructional time missed so early in a school year in recent memory.

With both of the storms, Vance County fared much better than a majority of the state. The first storm as a result of Hurricane Florence brought torrential rains and caused Vance County Schools to close on September 13 and 14. Hurricane Florence was relentless on southeastern North Carolina with high winds and flooding causing major damage and forcing some school districts to miss as much as six weeks of school. The state forgave two or more days missed for student instructional time to school systems across the state.

The remnants of Hurricane Michael traveled through our area on October 11 and 12 forcing the closure of school both days for students. Unexpected high winds brought down trees and caused major power outages. These student days will be made up on October 31 and November 9.
New Book Lounge opens at Pinkston

Principal Jacqueline Batchelor-Crosson touts the new Book Lounge at Pinkston Street Elementary School as an inviting atmosphere for her school’s students to enjoy reading.

The new lounge was on display during the afternoon of October 19, as students, staff members, school system officials and community members attended the facility’s open house and ribbon-cutting.

Each class of students was led through the lounge, located in the school’s media center, accompanied by their teachers.

Older students were on hand to welcome all of the visitors and school administrators showed everyone the special features in the lounge. It includes lots of comfortable chairs and bean bags, colorful tables and chairs and laptop computers for students to download reading materials. There is even a school store for supplies inside the lounge’s leaf-covered hut that will be manned by school staff each day.

Students and staff members enjoyed visiting the new Book Lounge in the media center at Pinkston Street Elementary School during the open house held on October 19. In the above photos, teachers and students are shown touring the new lounge, which provides lots of laptop computers, comfortable seating and even a virtual fireplace. Soft, soothing music also plays as students enjoy their reading time. At left, Principal Jacqueline Batchelor-Crosson gets a high five from one of her kindergarten students who said he loves the new Book Lounge.
Teacher Executive Institute participants have some fun with role playing and teamwork at Camp Oak Hill.

**TEI begins for 2018-2019**

The 16 local educators participating in the Vance County Teacher Executive Institute (TEI) for 2018-2019 had their first all-day session at Camp Oak Hill in Granville County on October 23. The session focused on having the educators from 15 different schools challenge themselves individually and work as teams to solve problems presented to them. The day’s activities began with an energetic and interactive workshop in the morning followed by their participation in exercises on the camp’s low ropes course in the afternoon.

Taylor Evans of New Hope Elementary, is excited she made it to the next platform during a team building exercise.

At left, the TEI class members discuss the results of an exercise on the low ropes course at Camp Oak Hill with facilitator Mary Austin, standing in left foreground, and above they have some fun with their costumes and helping each other during their morning workshop activities.
Early College gets an A+

A new banner celebrating the outstanding performance of students and staff at Early College High School welcomes visitors to the school. Early College earned a School Performance Grade of “A+” for 2017-2018 and was recognized as a Bronze Medal school by U.S. News & World Report, as one of the top high schools in North Carolina and nationally.

Hispanic heritage

Aycock Elementary School hosted its annual Hispanic Heritage activities and celebration during mid-October.

Students and parents dressed in colorful costumes and danced to Hispanic music on the stage in the school’s multipurpose room during a program attended by the entire student body and staff on October 22. Teachers and students also shared information about the Hispanic culture and the many countries that are part of the culture.
Board recognizes outstanding VCS efforts

The outstanding efforts of Vance County Schools associates received deserved recognition from members of the Vance County Board of Education at their regular monthly meeting held on October 8.

Board members recognized the outstanding work of custodial staff members in our schools, as well as the outstanding leadership of nine current principals in our schools. They also honored the district’s 2018-2019 Teacher of the Year Angela Cusaac, Principal of the Year Dr. Carnetta Thomas, Assistant Principal of the Year Lemondre Watson, and Beginning Teacher of the Year Donna Stratmon, all shown from left in the photo at bottom right.

Custodians honored, shown in the top photo, were from New Hope Elementary, which led all schools in the most recent school state inspections; AdVance Academy, which led all secondary schools; and L.B. Yancey, Pinkston Street, Aycock, Zeb Vance and E.O. Young, Jr. elementary schools for their outstanding inspection ratings.

Local principals honored for their schools’ outstanding academic performances last school year included Dr. Carnetta Thomas, Heddie Somerville, Debbie Hite, David Westbrook, Dr. Jennifer Carraway, Dr. Harold Thompson, Jr., and Dr. Michael Putney, shown from left in the middle photo. Kristian Herring and Stephanie Alston also were recognized, but could not attend the board’s meeting.
**Training time**

School Nutrition staff members participated in fire extinguisher training after school on October 25 at the Fire and Public Safety Academy at Vance County High School. Francis Brown, instructor at the academy, led the training for the staff. Each staff member had an opportunity to show their skills in using the fire extinguisher.

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**School groups see play**

Students and teachers from several of our schools attended two performances of the popular musical “Beauty and the Beast” at McGregor Hall in Henderson on October 25. The cast of the show is shown at left during one of the opening scenes of the play. The production was being performed for local audiences through the Henderson Rec Players.

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*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.