



APPLE Bits

Employee Newsletter

GASTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

GASTON COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Fall 2011

Classroom is the right place for Lenora Crabtree

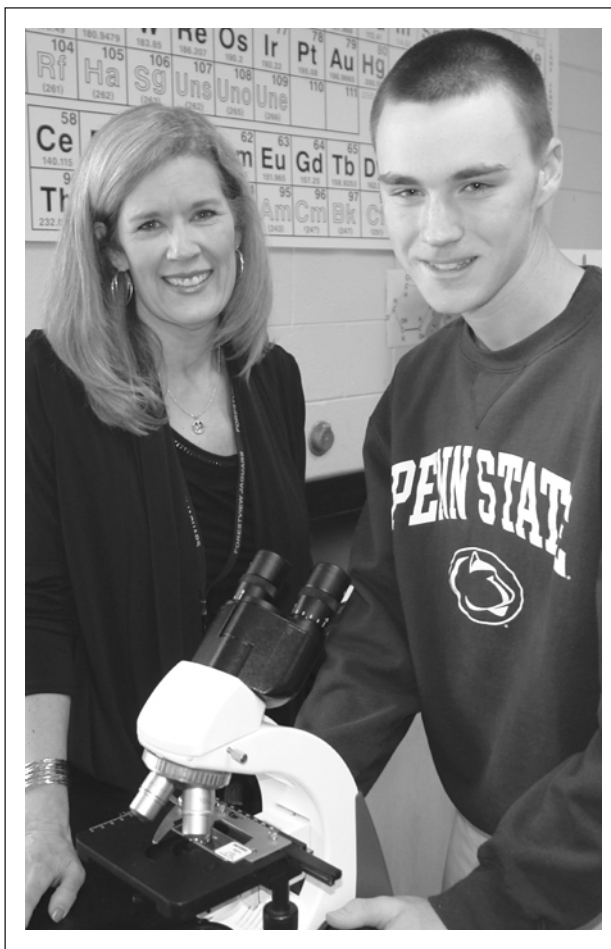
Most people know that Lenora Crabtree is the Gaston County Teacher of the Year. However, some may not realize that she chose family over medical school and spent time “testing the waters” as a substitute teacher before jumping into the profession.

Crabtree’s career began years before she accepted a science teacher position at Forestview in 2004. She home-schooled her children when they were young and worked as a reading tutor at W.A. Bess Elementary. Tim DuBois, who was principal at the time, knew Crabtree had the potential to be an excellent teacher and encouraged her to pursue a full-time job.

“Once I started teaching high school biology and chemistry, I found that I love helping students understand science concepts,” said Crabtree, who worked at Gaston Christian for seven years before joining GCS.

Crabtree earned a degree in molecular biology from Vanderbilt University and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

“I withdrew from medical school at Vanderbilt after my oldest son was born. I stayed at home for 10 years with my children and began teaching when my youngest child entered the first grade,” explained Crabtree.



Gaston County Teacher of the Year Lenora Crabtree works with Forestview High School student Taylor Adams on a science project.

Her husband Scott works as an environmental engineer for John Deere. The couple has three sons – Taylor, a student at Duke University Law School; Seth, a junior at UNC-Chapel Hill; and Sam, a junior at Appalachian State. The Crabtrees also have a six-year-old goddaughter, Malaya.

“Scott and I love to visit our boys, attend ball games at their schools and eat out,” says Crabtree, who enjoys traveling and spending time outdoors.

Students say Crabtree is “challenging, caring and fun” – three characteristics that she hopes are obvious when someone visits her classroom.

“I do as much hands-on learning as possible – that is what makes teaching science fun,” says Crabtree. “I believe that one of the primary ways to show students that we care is to maintain rigor and prepare them for adulthood.”

Crabtree adds, “I hope to challenge my students to think differently about the world around them. My goal each year is to help them make good decisions and be informed critical thinkers as they leave high school and continue their education or enter the work force.”

A “committed Jaguar fan,” Crabtree is an assistant girls’ basketball coach and also works with several school clubs. She enjoys teaching at Forestview where she says the employees, students and parents “work together to form a school community where everyone is valued and encouraged to succeed.”

Crabtree remembers her first year in the classroom and how listening to helpful advice from veteran teachers made the job easier. She advises new teachers to learn from colleagues, ask questions and “borrow” ideas.

Superintendent McGlohon's Message



L. Reeves McGlohon
Gaston County Schools
Superintendent

I want to thank our employees, parents and students for making the opening of school one of the best I've witnessed during my tenure as superintendent. The buses rolled, the bells rang and the school doors opened as GCS

welcomed approximately 32,000 students.

Although we face state funding issues and have fewer employees and classroom resources because of challenging economic times, I am filled with a renewed sense of optimism as we begin the year. We have new programs in place to enhance academic achievement, student and employee safety and school operations.

GCS implemented standard grading practices and guidelines for grades 3-12 to ensure that all students are given sufficient opportunities to show evidence of their skills or mastery of a subject or course. In the past, GCS, like other school districts in the state, had no countywide grading practices that outlined how much a quiz, homework or a major test would count.

School cafeterias are offering healthier choices by serving more fresh fruits and vegetables. Lunch prices went up five cents to comply with federal requirements – this is our first price increase in four years. Also, a new state initiative provides for students who qualify for reduced meal prices to receive a free breakfast.

The district installed new digital cameras on all school buses to ensure student and driver safety. The high-tech cameras record very clear images and audio of everything that happens on the bus. A new bus stop plan for elementary schools will save the district \$200,000 a year. Having fewer stops reduces bus trip time by 15 percent.

This is an exciting time for Gaston County Schools. I wish for each of you great success in meeting every challenge. Working together, we will have a productive school year filled with many memorable moments.

Schools focus on great new year of teaching and learning

The first-day jitters are over and heading back to school seems like a distant memory. Now, employees, students, parents and volunteers across Gaston County are focused on a great new year of teaching and learning.

In classrooms from Dallas to Cherryville, Stanley to Belmont, Bessemer City to Mount Holly and all points in between, school staffs are working hard to ensure academic success.

"We had a great opening of school. It was wonderful to see teachers and students working in the classrooms as if they picked up right where they left off in June," said Superintendent L. Reeves McGlohon. "Everyone seemed eager to get the new year underway."

Schools conducted first-day activities to kick off the new year and acquaint students with procedures and expectations.

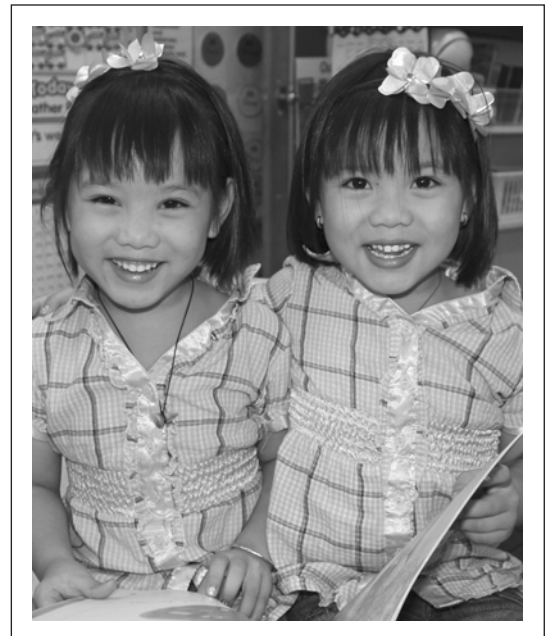
A class of seventh grade students at Bessemer City Middle used a SMART Board to learn about class rules, received locker assignments and discussed daily schedules.

Catawba Heights Elementary principal Phyllis Whitworth took time to introduce an exciting program that promotes teamwork.

Forestview seniors had "loads of school spirit" and were ready "to begin the final phase of high school," said principal Audrey Devine.

Robinson Elementary children enjoyed a visit from an astronaut who helped to launch the school's *SPACE – Students Pursue Achievement, Compassion and Excellence* theme.

York Chester principal Michael Grimmer, Carr Elementary principal Susan Hutton and Bessemer City Central principal Mary Byers-Hall were among the school administrators who reported seeing plenty of smiling faces as students arrived on opening day.



North Belmont Elementary kindergarten students Trinity and Chrystiana Son were all smiles on the first day of school.

Take Note –

Revisions coming to 2012-2013 school calendar

The GCS calendar committee is revising the 2012-2013 academic calendar to reflect a new law that adds five instructional days to the school year. The state legislature passed the law in July that requires students to attend school 185 days and eliminates the five protected teacher workdays. A draft of the revised calendar will be presented to the Board of Education in October.

Cafeteria receives fourth perfect rating

The Belmont Central Elementary cafeteria staff earned a perfect 102 sanitation grade during each quarterly inspection conducted by the Gaston County Health Department.

“The perfect ratings reflect a personal commitment by the cafeteria staff to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness and food safety,” stated Frank Fields, school nutrition director. “We are extremely proud of Belmont Central and all of our school cafeteria staffs for working to ensure continued excellence in sanitary practices.”

GCS cafeterias consistently earn an A sanitation grade. Last year, the district had 42 schools to achieve the elite A+ cafeteria rating.

School teams earn Scholar-Athlete honors

South Point High School had 19 sports teams to earn the prestigious Scholar-Athlete distinction from the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

To earn the Scholar-Athlete award, a varsity team must maintain a combined unweighted grade point average of 3.1 or higher.

“To have 19 Scholar-Athlete teams for the 2010-2011 school year is an incredible achievement,” said principal Gary Ford. “We are extremely proud of our students who excel in academics and in athletics. It takes discipline, hard work, commitment and perseverance to achieve the Scholar-Athlete status.”



Board of Education chairman Mark Upchurch and at-large member Annette Carter congratulate and commend GCS director of health services Susan Neeley, center, who was named the North Carolina School Nurse Administrator of the Year.

Neeley earns top state award

Susan Neeley, director of health services, is the North Carolina School Nurse Administrator of the Year.

The coveted award given by the School Nurse Association of North Carolina recognizes a public school administrator who works diligently to ensure quality nursing services and health programs for children.

Superintendent L. Reeves McGlohon stated, “Susan Neeley is a relentless advocate for child health care. She is respected by her colleagues locally and statewide as an exceptional leader in the field of school nursing and child health. We are extremely pleased and proud that the state has

chosen Ms. Neeley as the top school nurse administrator – she deserves this honor. Her professionalism and passion for child health care radiates in everything that she does.”

A nationally certified school nurse and nursing executive administrator, Neeley earned a master’s degree in nursing from UNC-Greensboro. Prior to being named GCS health services director in 2008, she served as a school nurse and health science teacher. She also worked as an emergency services nursing director and supervisor and a case manager and nursing clinician at Gaston Memorial Hospital for 15 years.

Enthusiasm builds as work on high school progresses

Engineers and construction workers are transforming land once used as a golf course into a campus that will house Gaston County’s newest school – Stuart W. Cramer High School.

Work at the site located off Wilkinson Boulevard in Cramerton began last year after a September groundbreaking ceremony. Crews moved more than 700,000 cubic yards of dirt to prepare the land for the 268,000 square-foot

building, athletic fields, access roads, parking areas and pedestrian trails. The school will house 1,200 students, which will alleviate overcrowding at East Gaston and South Point.

“It is exciting to see how much work has taken place in the past year,” stated Superintendent L. Reeves McGlohon. “When you drive by the site, it is obvious that something wonderful is happening in our community. Citizens are talking

about the progress being made – the enthusiasm is overwhelming.”

The school will open in August 2013 with ninth and tenth grade students. The Class of 2016 will be the first group of seniors to receive Stuart W. Cramer High School diplomas.

CHECK OUT the GCS website for construction updates and photos – www.gaston.k12.nc.us

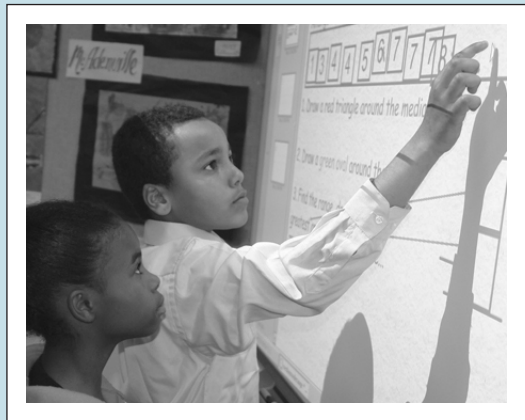
SMART Board technology installed in GCS classrooms

Students walked into GCS classrooms on opening day to find SMART Board technology ready for use. Technicians worked this summer to ensure that all schools have the state-of-the-art equipment.

The installation caps a community effort to raise \$4 million and makes the *SMART Board in Every Classroom* campaign a reality.

Local philanthropists Ron and Katherine Harper gave \$2 million and businesses, parents, school groups and civic organizations contributed the remaining funds.

“Despite the difficult economic times, the community embraced the challenge and worked to give our children the technology they need to be successful,” said Superintendent



Woodhill Elementary students Savannah Hunt and Tavarus Williams demonstrate SMART Board technology.

L. Reeves McGlohon. “SMART Boards transform the classroom environment and engage students in interactive lessons.”

SMART Boards make it easier for students and teachers to use computer software, video clips, games, digital presentations and other cutting-edge features.

“The interaction my students have with the SMART Board is absolutely wonderful,” stated Cherryville High teacher Beverly Lovelace. “The technology will make an impact on student achievement in Gaston County. It already has in my classroom.”

The SMART Board campaign began in May 2010 when the Harpers announced plans to give \$2 million to the school system. The campaign concluded in March 2011 when the David Belk Cannon Foundation donated \$200,000, which helped GCS to exceed its \$4 million fund-raising goal.

Did You Know?

■ National certification for teachers

The National Board named 40 Gaston County teachers to the elite group of 2,281 educators in North Carolina who earned National Board Certification in 2011. In Gaston County Schools, 310 teachers have met the rigorous standards to achieve the coveted national certification.

■ Record amount in scholarships

The Class of 2011 was awarded more than \$40 million in scholarships to attend the top colleges and universities in the country. The scholarship total is the highest amount ever earned by a GCS graduating class.

■ Schools show academic growth

GCS had 43 of 54 schools to make high or expected academic growth on the state ABCs accountability program. Nearly every school in Gaston County either improved proficiency or averaged a year’s academic progress in 2010-2011. The district had two Honor Schools of Excellence, one School of Excellence, 11 Schools of Distinction, 23 Schools of Progress and no low performing schools.

■ Graduation rate is highest ever

The GCS four-year graduation rate is 75.4 percent, which is the highest ever reported by the district. The graduation rate is the percent of ninth graders who entered high school in August 2007 and graduated four years later in June 2011. GCS has improved 7.3 points from 68.1 in 2006 (when the state released the first graduation rate) to 75.4 today.

■ Gains in science, reading and math

GCS students performed well on the end-of-grade state tests. Overall proficiency in elementary and middle school reading and science is higher than last year. Middle school math scores also increased while elementary math scores held steady.

Moments in GCS History

From the October 1997 issue of AppleBits

■ A task force appointed “to study model technology schools, technology jobs of the future and program needs in Gaston County” moved forward with plans to transform Highland Junior High into a world-class technology high school.

■ During a tour of the Forestview construction site, school system leaders saw how the project was “progressing nicely” with 62 percent of the work complete. The district was on schedule to open the new high school in August 1998.

“APPLE Bits” is published by the **Communications/Public Information Department** of Gaston County Schools for all school employees. News items for each issue should be submitted to Bonnie Reidy, Chief Communications Officer.

L. Reeves McGlohon, Superintendent
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