



Lincoln, Belville and Leland Middle

Year-round schools miss mark

By Sarah Peterson, Staff Writer

While preliminary results released Monday show Belville Elementary School missing the mark on federal standards for the third year in a row, principal Joyce Beatty did not let the news cast a shadow over students' first day back at school.

"We had a great opening day," Beatty said. "It went smoothly. Teachers are excited, students are excited and parents seemed to be excited."

Still, the principal was honest about her reaction when she heard the results.

"There was a shock factor," she said. "Certainly I hoped we had done better. I was disappointed, but I recognized that we're going to have to do some things differently."

Belville Elementary met 15 of 21 target goals. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) calculates the proficiency of subgroups of students, based on such factors as race, income, disabilities and limited English language proficiency. If even one of those subgroups does not meet proficiency, the entire school fails.

Belville Elementary, however, was not the only school that failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB standards for the first three years of the federal act. Lincoln Elementary and Leland Middle, which like Belville are year-round schools, as well as Shallotte Middle and West Brunswick High all failed to meet AYP.

North Brunswick High met the mark last year but failed to do so this year.

While Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary and Waccamaw Elementary met AYP this year, both schools will remain in school improvement because neither met AYP the two previous years. It takes two consecutive years of meeting AYP to get out of school improvement status.

When a school fails to meet the standard two consecutive years, parents have the option of transferring their child to a school that did meet AYP. The school system is required to provide transportation. At Belville Elementary, only two students had transferred as of Monday.

No excuses

"I'm not going to make excuses because we are in this thing together," said Supt. Katie McGee. "We're more determined than ever to pull these schools out of school improvement."

While there will be countywide initiatives, there will be a focus on the three year-round schools. Lincoln Elementary met 20 of 21 target goals, and Leland Middle met 22 of 25. It was hoped the two elementary schools would meet AYP this year.

"Based on the interventions we had in place at these two elementary schools, I am disappointed," McGee said. "Even though there was a small amount of growth in performance; the strategies put in place for specific subgroups did not allow us as much progress as we had anticipated."

A new strategy this year at Belville Elementary will be direct instruction. Beatty has implemented a program that will start each morning. The goal of direct instruction, which is a research-based teaching method, is to accelerate learning by maximizing

Charter School Meets AYP

The Charter Day School in Leland met federal standards for the third consecutive year. Headmaster Mark Cramer credits the structure of the classroom with the school's success on meeting adequate yearly progress for No Child Left Behind.

Scientifically validated positive reinforcement and discipline methods, he said has led to an orderly learning environment.

"Direct Instruction curriculum maximizes academic gains," Cramer said. "High expectations for student achievement are paired with our teachers' uncompromising dedication. When properly encouraged and taught children can be trusted to behave and learn."

The charter school, also called Roger Bacon Academy, is a free public school serving students in Brunswick, New Hanover, Columbus, Bladen, and Pender counties. This year, the school has 610 students in kindergarten through seventh grade.

efficiency in the design and delivery of instruction. It requires intense and constant student interaction.

The school also will institute a positive behavior program, which has worked well at Supply Elementary.

"It's teaching children rules for the classroom, gym, cafeteria and walking down the hallways," Beatty said. "It will cut down on discipline problems that take away time in the classroom."

Not every method to help bring students to proficiency will be taking place in the school building.

"I plan to get out into the community," the principal said. "We've got to do that. We can do a lot in school, but we've got to have the community buy in."

She wants to cultivate parent involvement.

"We need to get the buy-in for parents ... checking homework, reading with their child," she said. "Some children can do it on their own, but most of them can't. They need less TV, less video games. We can't control that piece, but we can control what happens in the building."

Besides offering school choice, the schools that did not meet AYP for three consecutive years also have to revise the school plan and offer supplemental services.

After four years, schools have to implement corrective action along with the other requirements. Schools must write a plan for alternative governance after five years and implement the plan if the school fails for a sixth year in a row.

"We certainly feel the pressure," Beatty said. "We're going to give it that extra push. My prayer is that we make it."

While the principal said they did good things last year, she emphasized that they were not going to make excuses.

"We've chosen, starting with me, to look at how we've done things in the past," she said. "I was the first to assess myself, and I asked my staff to do the same." Even with the pressures of NCLB, Beatty said she loves coming to work every day.

"I love what I do — even with (NCLB)," she said. "I'm trying to keep a staff with that same momentum. I have it this year."

More actions

Sanctions for not meeting the goals only apply to schools that receive federal Title I funding. All eight of the county's elementary schools receive Title I money. While the middle and high schools can be labeled as 'Failing,' they cannot be sanctioned because they do not receive money from Title I funding.

Even so, Leland Middle principal Robert Knuschke will not settle for the school missing the mark.

"Our goal this year is to meet high growth and make AYP," he said. "Anything less than that is not acceptable."

This is not only his first year as a principal, it also is his first year at Leland Middle.

"There's a lot of room for improvement in this building," he said. "There are great teachers and kids who want to learn."

A major focus this year will be a morning literacy program. For the first 45 minutes each day, students will read. Students who are not proficient will be placed in small groups to work on basic skills and comprehension. Proficient students will be in silent reading groups and write a response log.

"The literacy program provides a starting point to where we need to work with these kids," the principal said.

Leland Middle had the most subgroups of any school in the county. The number is only expected to grow.

"It's very possible that we'll have two more subgroups in two years," Knuschke said. "We need to start preparing now for that."

Curriculum specialists placed in all middle and elementary schools this year will help prepare schools for any changes in how they are measured. The specialists have degrees in reading or curriculum supervision. Two were placed at Belville and Lincoln Elementary starting in February. In a short time they made a difference, the superintendent said.

"We're hoping that by having that in place that it will truly benefit not only the learning process but also the teaching process," McGee said.

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