

Brunswick charter school continues growing, gaining academic honors

By Paul R. Jefferson
Staff Writer

Growing pains are welcome worries these days at the Roger Bacon Academy — Charter Day School. So much so that students have broken into song.

The school's explosive growth, coupled with top state honors for academic achievement, had students celebrating at Feb. 15 ceremonies marking the dedication of new middle school classrooms and a multi-purpose facility on the campus of the 6-year-old charter school.

School Headmaster Mark Cramer and Beth Quinn, the school trustee board chairwoman, addressed students and 150 others attending the ceremonies on the school campus, located off U.S. 74-76 at the N.C. 87 junction in the Maco community in northern Brunswick County.

Highlighting the event was the awarding of a state banner recognizing the school as one of the top 25 elementary schools out of the 1,865 schools statewide. The public school academy was the only charter school to earn the state's highest scholastic rank as an Honor School of Excellence, according to Jack Moyer, the director of the Office of Charter Schools for the State of North Carolina.

More than 91 percent of the charter school's 620 students scored at or above grade level on reading and mathematics tests, and the school met adequate yearly progress established by No Child Left Behind federal mandates.



Beth Quinn, trustee board chairwoman of Roger Bacon Academy, addresses students and 150 others attending ceremonies Feb. 15 for the dedication of new middle school classrooms and a multipurpose facility.

The founder of the 6-year-old school, Baker Mitchell, encouraged the middle school students and urged them to continue to take advantage of any and every educational opportunity they have.

The new campus buildings, built entirely with private funding, enable the school to continue to grow, said Maggie O'Leary, the school's development director. The school started in 2000 with a 53-student enrollment that has now grown eleven-fold, with students hailing from five surrounding counties.

Roger Bacon Academy was the only charter school to earn the state's highest scholastic rank as an Honor School of Excellence

"We try to grow a grade every

year," O'Leary said, "so now we'll have an eighth-grade class next year and new facilities for the middle school," which contains the academy's fourth through sixth grades.

O'Leary said the school's popularity continues on the upswing, with a waiting list for enrollment. She said a majority of people attending the dedication also awaited announcement of names of students selected by lottery to attend the tuition-free public school. The enrollment lottery is conducted annually.

"We had 150 people come... hoping their child's name would be picked out. We had two sixth-grade openings and 27 people trying to get in," she said.