



**HICKORY**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Hickory Public Schools

# Week in Review

January 6, 2017

*"A snapshot of HPS good news"*

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"I was thinking horses have fur so maybe it's just like cat fur  
and then 'long' because it measures things and I got it right."  
— HPS Spelling Bee champion Kathleen Gillogly on her correct spelling of "furlong"

## NO FEAR HERE



Fifth-grader Kathleen Gillogly from Jenkins Elementary School reacts to winning the Hickory Public Schools Spelling Bee. The winning word was "adios."

## Gillogly wins HPS Spelling Bee

BY JOHN BAILEY  
jbailey@hickoryrecord.com

**HICKORY**  
When Kathleen Gillogly heard the word "adios," she knew what it meant...and how to spell it.

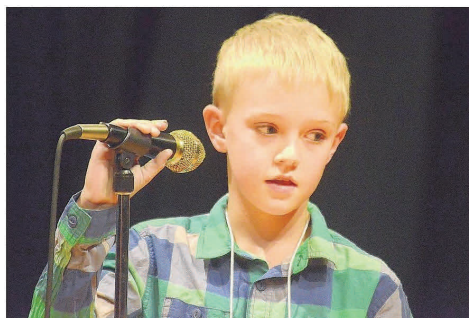
She would wrap up Wednesday as the 2017 Hickory Public Schools Spelling Bee champion.

The fifth-grader from Jenkins Elementary battled her way past 20 other students in the district to be the last one standing after five rounds of spelling during the competition at Northview Middle School. Kathleen also qualified for the regional spelling bee in February sponsored by The Charlotte Observer.

This was just Kathleen's second spelling bee, and while she had a couple of nervous moments early in Wednesday's event, she had no fear when the last word was announced.

"I didn't believe that it was actually 'adios,'" she said. "I didn't think it was actually going to be that easy."

She admitted that there was a lot of hard work behind getting ready



Viewmont Elementary School student Coleman Gray takes a moment to think about a word during the Hickory Public School Spelling Bee finals.

for the Jenkins and district competitions, and there also were some tough words whose spelling she had to think her way through at both events. She almost thought the word "furlong" would be her last one during the district championship.

"I'd never heard that word before... I was just confused. I didn't think I was going to get this far," she said. "I was thinking horses have fur so maybe it's just like cat fur and then

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## Bee

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'long' because it measures things and I got it right."

Jordan McCall from Southwest Elementary finished one word behind Kathleen. He finally missed the word "fathom."

The participants in the district spelling bee represented the winners in their grade levels at all five HPS elementary and two middle schools. By round 3 at Northview, there were only seven students still battling for words.

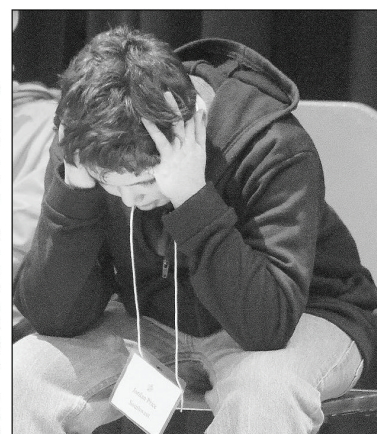
Assistant Superintendent Denise Patterson sees the spelling bee as more than just learning how to spell.

"At the same time, you're learning new meanings to words and you're able to use those words in your vocabulary," Patterson said. "Students are taking the ACT and SAT, and certainly knowing these high-level words can only add to their vocabulary in their writing skills and in their communication skills."

Kathleen's parents, Mara and Charlie Gillogly, were equally excited to see their daughter advance to the next level in the spelling bee.

"She absolutely loves books and she's reading all the time," Mara Gillogly said.

For her preparation, Kathleen said she has a series of word lists she is constantly running through along with having mini spelling bees with her mom.



Southwest Elementary spelling bee contestant Jordan Price holds his head after misspelling a word.

"Honestly, I thought all the kids doing this worked hard. As just a parent when they got one wrong, you feel for the other kids too," Charlie Gillogly said.

Jenkins Elementary Principal Ryan McCreary thought Kathleen did a good job of working through some of the tougher words she drew, and felt it was a team effort and school win overall.

"All of our teachers work with the kids so much. She just did a wonderful job of representing our school, as did the other kids for theirs as well," he said. "It's just great to see our kids flourish and do well, and to be able to take what they've learned and apply it to settings like this. It's just awesome."

Alice Rullman, a retired literacy specialist from Catawba County Schools, was the spelling bee pronouncer at the Northview competition. The judges were: Jennifer Hughes, teacher at Grandview Middle; Carole Dennis, children's librarian at the Hickory Public Library; and Laurel Morris, director of the Gaston County Public Library.

After The Charlotte Observer competition, the next level is the annual Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., in May.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is a tradition that began in 1925, according to spellingbee.com. More than 11 million students participate in the Scripps National Spelling Bee each year.



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HPS student winners following the district's annual Spelling Bee competition, 2017.

# LITERARY FOCUS

6A • WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2017

FROM THE

## Focus

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Hickory Public Schools Superintendent Robbie Adell addresses parents of Longview Elementary School about his plan for the Longview and Southwest Elementary consolidation.

## Superintendent presents consolidation plan to public

BY JOHN BAILEY  
jbailey@hickoryrecord.com

HICKORY — Hickory Public Schools Superintendent Robbie Adell got a chance to share his proposed consolidation plan between Southwest and Longview Elementary schools with the public during a special town hall meeting Tuesday.

The reason for the change is to help improve reading scores. For Southwest, the state's reading accountability grade for the previous school year was a D while Longview's was a C.

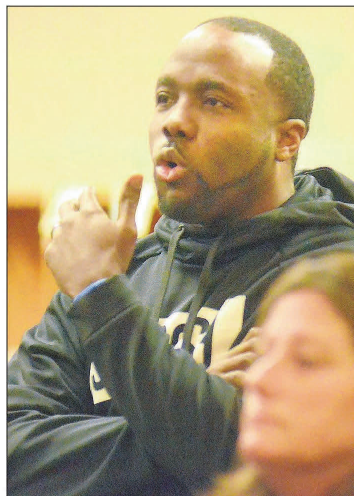
"These young people are not going to make it ... if they don't know how to read," Adell told the crowd at Longview on Tuesday. "We cannot afford to keep moving kids from one grade level to the next without the proper reading skills."

"These young people are not going to make it ... if they don't know how to read. We cannot afford to keep moving kids from one grade level to the next without the proper reading skills. We're setting them up for failure."

Hickory Public Schools Superintendent Robbie Adell

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HPS is considering converting Southwest Elementary to a primary school serving only students in kindergarten through second grade from the two schools. Southwest would be



Longview Elementary parent Nathaniel Holmes asks questions of Robbie Adell, Hickory Public Schools Superintendent, about his plan for the consolidation of Longview and Southwest Elementary Schools.

changed to Southwest Primary with a literacy focus.

Longview Elementary School would then serve only students in third through fifth grade, with a concentrated focus on leadership and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) program learning, according to the release.

Adell sees this change as a way to improve the chances of success for students at both schools.

"I truly believe if we focus totally on literacy in every aspect, provide the teachers with the knowledge through professional development, we can make a difference in these kids' lives," Adell said.

"Less than half of the kids coming out of third grade in these schools are reading on grade level."

Third grade students receive extra attention in North Carolina because of the state's Read to Achieve legislative initiative, a part of the Excellent Public Schools Act, according to [nccpublicschools.org](http://nccpublicschools.org).

Under this state law, third grade students who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade will receive special help, including summer reading camp and other interventions to make sure that they can read well enough to be able to do fourth grade work.

According to Hickory Public Schools Read to Achieve end-of-year (2015-16) results for first grade, the percentage of students in the school system overall demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level was 48.4 percent.

The percentage of first grade students not demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level was 51.6 percent.

In second grade, the number demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level was 59.8 percent while the percentage of those not demonstrating comprehension at grade level was 40.2 percent.

Nathaniel Holmes, a parent of a Longview kindergartener and fifth-grader appreciated the boards and the district leadership's decision to try something different, but he wasn't sure about sending his daughter to Southwest.

"Obviously what they've been doing is not getting the desired results, but I don't think this is the answer. I don't think the answer is splitting the kids up and putting all of them there," Holmes said after the meeting.

"Nothing they talked about here gave me confidence that location will be improved. They have not shown they can so I don't feel good about taking my daughter and putting her in first grade in a situation that is low performing."

He liked some of the other changes that would come with the consolidation like a dual-language class at Southwest, but he just didn't see it being a good enough trade-off.

Hickory Public Schools board member Sallie Johnson said she saw the change as a big concept.

"What we want is the students knowing how to read by third grade," she said. "It's going to cause people to have to change a little bit. Nobody likes

change ... but we have a goal and that is we get these children reading in second grade so when they get to (Longview) it's better and at middle school it's better and at high school it's better."

Fellow board member Bryan Graham also appreciated the chance to hear from parents at the town hall meeting.

"I thought it was an excellent give and take with the crowd...I thought the questions were probing. I thought they were well thought out, obviously with their kids in mind," Graham said.

He likes the idea himself of turning Southwest Elementary into a "literacy lab" with the entire focus of the school is improving literacy.

"The idea of doing that is going to bring all the kids up...so many studies show if you're not at grade level by third grade, you're never going to be," he said. "You're constantly going to be trying to catch up."

Graham added the idea of switching schools was a key issue for many of the parents who attended the meeting, even pointing out one parent who brought up the issue of trying to get two kids to two different schools in the morning.

"I also talked to a parent who has an autistic child, who has gone through a number of teachers and would be moving the child from Southwest to Longview and was concerned about it," Graham said.

There will be a second town hall meeting for parents to hear the plan and voice their concerns at Southwest on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.



# Communication key to HHS improvement plan



Hickory High School Principal Katherine Cater talks about her plans for the school as she stands in the mall area of the school.

BY JOHN BAILEY  
jbailey@hickoryrecord.com

HICKORY — Hickory High principal Katherine Cater has been on the job since July 1.

In September, she faced the challenge of the school not meeting growth status after the North Carolina School Report Cards came out for the previous 2015-16 academic year.

With her first semester at the school behind her, she and her staff are ready to move forward with a new improvement plan.

According to the state's report card for Hickory High, the percent of proficient students based on end-

of-course assessments — those who reached an achievement level between 3 and 5 (sufficient command to superior command) — for English 2 was 54 percent vs. the state's 58.8.

Hickory High's Math 1 proficient percentage was 46.1 vs. the state's 60.5, and the school's biology proficient percentage was 49.6 vs. the state's 55.6.

At the top of Cater's improvement to-do list is encouraging parents to be more involved in their kids' education and making sure teachers are doing everything they can to communicate with parents.

During a Parent Teacher Association

open house in the fall she saw good numbers in the audience but didn't think it represented the entire student population.

"That's one of the reasons our school improvement plan is working on developing parent communication, parent involvement," Cater said. "I think it's really common they are involved at the elementary school level and then it tends to wane, that's a natural thing, but it doesn't need to be."

"After that, (parents) can begin the work of understanding their role and

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## Plan

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how they can help their student's learning, meeting the teachers in a positive way before they actually have an issue or concern."

### Going past the superficial

In a neatoday.org article from 2014, Anne T. Henderson, a senior consultant at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, also voiced the need to see more parents engaged.

The priority should be to push the federal government to ask better questions and collect data about school strategies that really engage families, not just ask superficial questions about commonplace practices like helping with homework or attending a back-to-school night, she said in the article.

"There is a large body of reliable research that shows well-designed family engagement practices are associated with higher grades, higher test scores, better attendance, more motivation, and the move to post-secondary education," Henderson said.

"The last thing parents should do is get off the stage."

### Students believing in themselves

This need also points to another key communication challenge to any school improvement plan, getting students to believe they can do better.

"Now there are some students who walk through the doors as a ninth-grader, confident and ready to go," Cater said. "There are other students who maybe haven't yet bought into that idea that they're going to graduate from high school and pursue something beyond that."

She admitted these students are harder to reach than others.

"Those who don't care need people to help them see they can do it, whatever

they set their mind too," Cater said.

Cater would also like to implement counseling sessions during the SMART (Students Maximizing Achievement with Resources and Time) lunches.

"What we're trying to do is offer group sessions for students to address things like if they suffer from anxiety, how to deal with it, anger management, stress reduction," she said.

### Better feedback

Technology is offering another communication tool helping both teachers and students make improvements, especially in the area of writing skills.

In the past, teachers would assign a paper. The student would write the paper then waited for it to be graded and returned. The entire process wouldn't offer much in feedback but notes in the margin after the completion of an assignment.

Now, digital technology and online educational programs like Canvas — an internet cloud-based system — allows teachers and students to interact on projects in real time.

"Now we're seeing a more dynamic and fluid process where it's online...the teachers are then annotating, offering feedback and then the student has an opportunity to see that, make those adjustments and have another go at it," Cater said.

"The responsibility is still on the student. I'm not suggesting that the teacher is spoon feeding the changes that need to be made, but a gifted teacher is going to do it in a right way, to challenge them."

Cater admitted it's a pattern that isn't being used across the school, but she wants to see it become a norm in every classroom.

For more information about Hickory High or its PTA, visit [hickoryhigh.hickoryschools.net/](http://hickoryhigh.hickoryschools.net/).

For more information about the state's report cards, visit [dpi.state.nc.us/src/](http://dpi.state.nc.us/src/).

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**LOCAL/LEISURE**

## Hickory High celebrates IB graduates

BY JOHN BAILEY  
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HICKORY — While the 2016 graduation was back in June, Hickory Public Schools took the time to recognize some of last year's top grads Tuesday.

It was a special ceremony at Hickory High for the 2016 International Baccalaureate graduates. The results for IB student examinations in May are not issued until July.

Hickory High IB coordinator Christopher Rice wanted to create a way to celebrate their achievements in a public way, so he decided to invite as many as were able to be part of Tuesday's event — something he wants to hold every December.

There were 49 IB graduates in the Class of 2016.

Rice also invited graduates from past years to talk about how their IB experience benefited them in college.

"I credit IB for getting me to where I am right now, like getting into college," Ben Pleasant, a 2015 graduate, said. "For me, some of the things that played the biggest role weren't quite as obvious... IB taught me all problems have a lot of different perspectives that we need to be taking into account."

Founded in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland, the International Baccalaureate® (IB) is a nonprofit educational foundation offering four highly respected programs of international education that develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills needed to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world, according to [ibo.org](http://ibo.org).

It's college prep at an accelerated pace for high school students. Schools must be authorized, by the IB organization, to offer any of the programs and is for students aged 3-19.

After a year of training, Hickory Public Schools started its own IB diploma curriculum in 2006. Since 2007, 430 students have taken the courses to earn IB certificates or the IB diploma.

Students in IB programs take a class in each of the six core courses: English, foreign language, history, science, math and arts. They also take a philosophy class called Theory of Knowledge to tie the experience all together.

"That class asks how do we know



JOHN BAILEY/RECORD

Tiffany Grace was an International Baccalaureate graduate in the Hickory High class of 2011 and shared the benefits of the program during the special recognition ceremony for the 2016 graduates.

what we know and how do we know it in each of the disciplines," Christopher Rice said.

Tiffany Gray graduated from Hickory High in 2011 and when she started her IB journey, she wasn't sure if it was right for her.

"It's been one of the best things for me," Gray said. "IB for me taught me how to write papers. When I came in, I had no idea what I was doing...everything ran together, no paragraphs."

Her IB English classes gave her the tools she needed to face a writing assignment without fear.

"Now, writing a paper is a piece of cake for and that helped me so much in college when I went to (Lenoir-Rhyne University)," she said. "IB just taught me you have to work hard. You have to be open-minded and when you put the work in you will get the results."

Pleasant, who attends Vanderbilt, also talked about how IB helped him understand the importance of stepping out of his comfort zone.

"It doesn't matter where you are, it's

really easy to get stuck in a bubble of thinking and a bubble of ideas and have that be the one thing that guides your view of the world," he said.

His time in the IB program at Hickory High gave him the ability to see all the different perspectives around any issue. It's a skill he said he's continuously used every day since.

"No one answer is necessarily right," Pleasant said.

Saba Khan from the class of 2012 and Emily Perry from the class of 2013 also shared their experiences in the IB program.

"It was touching for me to hear them... as a teacher I put a lot of myself in it and to hear them say those things is really gratifying because it really says it's worth it, giving up my own private time is making a difference," Rice said.

Hickory High Principal Katherine Cater also spoke and Hickory Public Schools board chair Reggie Hamilton gave the closing remarks, congratulating all the current and future IB graduates.



## STUDENTS SHARE HOLIDAY CHEER



### STUDENTS SHARE HOLIDAY CHEER

Christmas came early for the kindergarten classes at Southwest Elementary School on Wednesday. Hickory Public Schools board member Ittely Carson offered the services of the Zeta Amicae of Hickory sorority to bring an early holiday present to the school.

2A



PHOTO BY JOHN BAILEY/RECORD



Christmas came early for the kindergarten classes at Southwest Elementary School on Wednesday. Hickory Public Schools board member Ittely Carson offered the services of the Zeta Amicae of Hickory sorority to bring an early holiday present to the school. The students heard "The Polar Express" read to them by retired teacher Nancy Jones and were treated to hot chocolate and cookies. The students in Laura Williams and Robin Straight's classes then spread the Christmas cheer by parading through the halls handing out gifts to the children in the rest of the grades. The sorority made 312 gift packages. Zeta Amicae of Hickory is an auxiliary of Nu Alpha Zeta sorority of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.



"Our job ... is to ensure we send home (students) in the same form and fashion we receive (them) in the morning, so we take that very seriously."  
— Hickory Public Schools Superintendent Robbie Adell

# SAFE AND SOUND



ROBERT C. REED/HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Hickory School Resource Officer John Wienbrock stands at the main entrance of Grandview Middle School.

## Planning is key to Hickory Public Schools approach to protecting students from harm

Editor's note: This is the first in a three-part series about school security and safety in Catawba County.

BY JOHN BAILEY  
jbailey@hickoryrecord.com

HICKORY From the Columbine High shooting in November, security and safety are ongoing issues of concern at public institutions.

The trend for public school systems is focused on better planning and more barriers. The Hickory Daily Record recently sat down to talk to the three school

districts in Catawba County about the adjustments they've made in the last decade to make their facilities as secure as possible.

**Hickory Public Schools** Superintendent Robbie Adell said school safety should be seen as the No. 1 job of public school employees.

"It absolutely outranks any academic achievement. Our job from day to day is to ensure we send home (students) in the same form and fashion we receive (them)

in the morning, so we take that very seriously," Adell said.

### Locked doors

The first step for Hickory Public Schools — as with every other system in the state — was turning what were once open buildings into citadels. In the last decade-plus, parents and visitors have seen more locked doors, more security cameras and, as the face of security for all middle and high schools, school resource officers.

"We have it so all of our exterior doors are locked and all of the schools, pretty much, you have to be buzzed in before you're allowed to enter the

See SAFETY, Page 3A

## Safety

From Page 1A

school building," Hickory Public Schools director of student services Angela Simmons said.

Simmons admitted updating the entrances for some of the older schools in the district was a challenge. "Hickory High was a tough one. You'll notice outside Hickory High, the breezeway that goes from the main building to the gym area there are fences, gates to enclose that area," Simmons said. "We worked with Adam Huckabee, our director of facilities, and they worked with an architect to see how to do some of these new doorways and lock things up better at the high school."

"It used to be, you could go in a couple different doors and like in most schools you'd have access to everything, but they've now added double doors that remain locked, so now when you go into Hickory High, the only door you can enter is into the office, and all the exterior doors are locked."

For newer schools, security issues are addressed on the front end of designing a new building. Longview Elementary off Highway 70 is the newest school in the system and is a good example of this.

"Their intercom system is built into their door locks so if a certain code is called, all of the doors automatically lock for the exterior and it automatically calls security systems," Simmons said, adding the system has looked for ways to create more deterrents to an intruder.

All the systems' schools are also required by legislation to have panic buttons in place to alert local law enforcement in case of an emergency.

### Training and planning

Since 1999, school systems have constantly

looked for ways to anticipate and prepare for any emergency. The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools was started in 2013 by Gov. Pat McCrory and provided school systems critical incident response plans and training plans for school faculty and staff.

It covers scenarios when school staff and students should evacuate, go into a lockdown or when to shelter-in-place. Adell added all the staff in the district talk about what it would look like when they shelter in place or when there is a full-scale lockdown.

"Then we bring people in and have round-table discussions, fire departments, police departments, emergency medical people, school people all sit down and talk about the different scenarios," Adell said.

A good one for Hickory would be what if you had a train on the tracks right up the road here that turned over and leaked hazardous stuff and had a gas container and it leaked gas in the air. What would you do and how would that impact the

### Patrolling the halls

The most visual security change in HPS is the addition of more school resource officers, in partnership with the Hickory Police Department. The system has one stationed at each middle and high school. The middle school SROs also serve the elementary schools, with the exception of Southwest which has a Longview Police Officer assigned to it.

Essentially, the system is just a phone call away from initiating a detailed plan of action, including an active shooter.

"That's all evolved really within the last 10 years," Adell said.

"When you have Sandy Hooks and really tragic things like that occur, you've got to think outside the box," Adell said.

"By and large, schools are open and similar to a church so when people come in who actually mean to do harm, it's sad that we have to resort to having all these different safety procedures to monitor traffic in our building, but it is a necessity."

Adell added it's important for parents to keep their contact information up to date.

"If we get into an emergency situation we want to be able to notify parents and get the information out to them as quickly as we can," Adell said.

Hickory Public Schools uses ParentLink and Blackboard Connect to send messages out to parents on their phones and through email.

He added parents should remember the SROs are an additional asset for parents as well. "Parents have contacted SROs and explained situations they have heard about at schools, dangerous situations that may take place," Hildebrand said.

The issue of school security changed dramatically for police after the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado. Hildebrand points out when he was in high school there weren't police officers assigned to schools.

"Training began to actually change for law enforcement at that time because how we did our job related to shooting situations then," Hildebrand said. "It had to change after that because people were shocked by what happened at Columbine and then it just seemed like a long string of situations after that."

For Hildebrand, SROs aren't meant to be just deterrents in schools.

"They have the ability to be mentors to young people no matter what

the issues are there... it doesn't necessarily have to be about criminal issues, it could be anything," he said. "Young people have the ability to speak to teachers, the ability to speak to counselors, the ability to speak to police officers in schools and that could be a good situation for them."

He added parents should remember the SROs are an additional asset for parents as well. "Parents have contacted SROs and explained situations they have heard about at schools, dangerous situations that may take place," Hildebrand said.

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# Write & Ride



Viewmont Elementary School first-grader Desi Ryan smiles as she gets on her new bike.

## Youngsters win bikes through writing contest

BY MICHAEL PRAATS  
mpaats@hickoryrecord.com

**HICKORY** Thirty children at Viewmont Elementary School were surprised Friday morning as they received new bikes for their participation in and winning of a writing contest held by the school.

Parents and other family members welcomed the children into the gym at the school for an assembly where representatives from Academy Sports and faculty gave the students their prizes. Academy Sports donated the bikes as part of the 15th annual youth bike donation, according to Patti Page, store director for Academy Sports.

"Each Academy bike donation includes approximately 30 bikes with helmets, for a total of about 4,700 bikes the company gives out annually," Page said.

The gifts allow the children to get outdoors and stay active, Page said. Academy also collaborates with other nonprofit organizations each year for the bike donations, she said.

Students in the first and second grades were eligible for the contest. Teachers gave the students the option to participate in the writing contests, said Alison Milled, a teacher at Viewmont Elementary. If the students and

## Bike

From Page 1A

their parents agreed to participate in the writing contest, the students chose from four topics on which they could write.

The topics included "Why you need a new bike," "An imaginary adventure on your new bike," or "Bike safety," according to Principal Jeff Hodakowski.

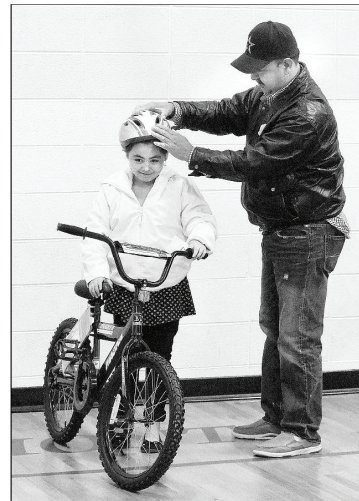
After the families welcomed the students into the gym, Hodakowski congratulated the winning students and read excerpts from the winning submissions.

There were more than 170 students who were eligible to win the bikes, Hodakowski said.

"The reason we chose a writing contest is so students could learn how to write a little bit, but also work for something," he said.

This is the first time Viewmont was chosen to receive the bikes, Hodakowski said. Academy Sports allowed the school to decide how to give the bikes away, and the writing contest was what school officials decided, he said.

As the assembly ended, the children picked up their new bikes, and parents and family took the bikes home.



Juan Salazar adjusts the bike helmet for his daughter Ashlyn as she gets a new bike for Christmas at Viewmont Elementary School.

ROBERT C. REED / HICKORY DAILY RECORD



Parents, family members and teachers clap for first- and second-graders as they enter the gym at Viewmont Elementary to receive their new bikes from Academy Sports.

See **RIDE**, Page 11A



## HCAM Culinary Academy students prepared 50 special bags with delicious cookies for the area media.

Dr. Adell and Beverly Snowden delivered the cookies just before the holiday break. Thank you to the HCAM Culinary Academy for sharing your talents!



Jenkins Elementary students Candace Saese and Diana Teliez-Chavez get ready to drive their Sphero robotic ball through an obstacle in the school's new Wonder Lab.

## Wonder

From Page 1A

do and gather their supplies," Swann said. "We have some outlets where they can do research on their own and put together activities with their kids."

Jenkins Elementary principal Ryan McCreary wants to see the new space become the hub of the school for all grades.

"We're really blessed here we have teacher leaders and Ms. Swann and Ms. Greer are good examples of that," McCreary said.

"We're also going to be incorporating opportunities for them to lead some professional development with our staff that way we can get all of our teachers coming in here and doing some neat activities with the students. I think it's going to be a game-changer for us."

As part of Computer Science Education Week sponsored by Code.org, students split their time between the Wonder Lab and the computer lab.

"The intention was to

Jenkins Elementary third graders Jackson Fox (left) and Zahir Carson get expressive as they work through a program during the Hour of Code event held as part of Computer Science Education Week in the school's computer lab.

number and when you receive it you can play your own game you just created," Kehoe said.

This is the second year Jenkins Elementary participated in the Hour of Code which created a perfect opportunity to introduce the Wonder Lab to the students as well.

"We're just trying to spark their interest and get them thinking about this as something they could do when they're older and looking into professions," Kehoe said.

## Jenkins Elementary

# School bridges tech gap with Wonder Lab

BY JOHN BAILEY  
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**HICKORY** — Students at Jenkins Elementary School have a new, "game-changing" tool to teach them about technology — the Wonder Lab.

As part of its participation in the annual Hour of Code to celebrate Computer Science Education Week, the school held the grand opening of the new facility Thursday. It will be a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) driven center.

"The space is designed to be an extension of the classroom where regular classroom teachers can come in and take the learning to a different level, using technology and creativity," Hickory Public Schools Teacher of the Year and Jenkins third grade teacher Erica Greer said.

"It was important for us to think of a space like this and start it because there's such a push these days to get kids to be 21st century learners, to get them prepared for the



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It was a race to get their Sphero robotic ball over the bridge first for Jenkins Elementary students Darrow Holder, Graham Powers, Lukas Dancy and Jackson Ennis. They were participating in the first day of the school's new Wonder Lab.

working world and problem solving."

A couple of months ago, Greer and fourth grade teacher Betsy Swann attended Googlefest held in Caldwell County — a free seminar the company runs to teach digi-

tal literacy and other tech innovations for educators. The event reinforced the importance of introducing technology to students at every grade level.

"We hear so often that music is a common language,

math is a common language, well we're in a time when technology is a common language worldwide now," Greer said.

For the opening day of the Wonder Lab, students learned how to use Sphero robotic balls. They were purchased through a grant from the Hickory Education Foundation, Swann said. Overall, the lab has been funded through several grants and the school's Parent Teacher Association.

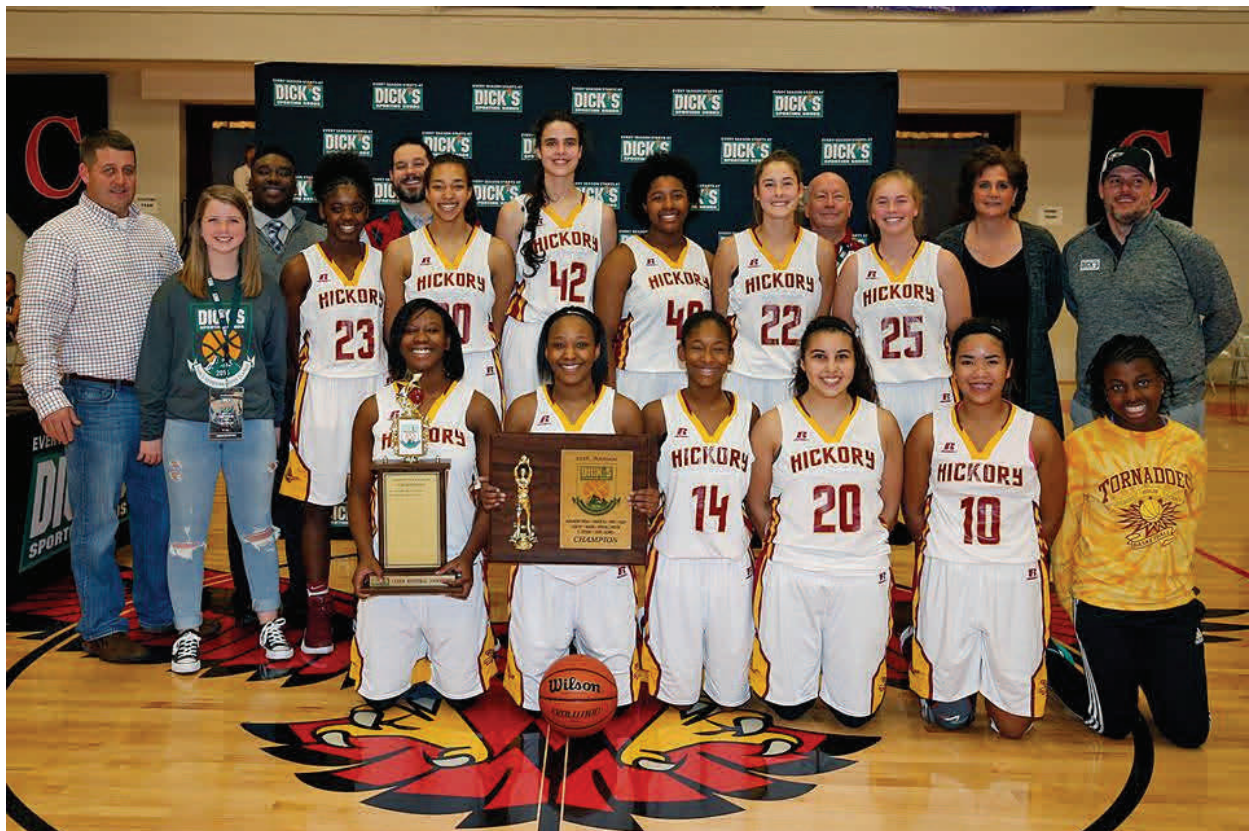
"They're driving with (the Sphero balls) today, and there are also apps where they will learn to code and program them for specific challenges," Swann said.

The Wonder Lab also will offer students the chance to learn more about modern digital communication with a production studio where they'll learn video shooting and editing.

"We have some readymade lessons teachers can come in and pick what they want to

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