



Hickory Public Schools

Week in Review

March 10, 2017

“A snapshot of HPS good news”

TUCK AND COVER

Students drilled on tornado preparedness

BY JOHN BAILEY
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HICKORY

At 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, tuck and cover was the focus of students across the state.

Gov. Roy Cooper declared March 5-11 as Severe Weather Preparedness Week, and as part of it, schools and government buildings statewide held tornado drills Wednesday to practice their emergency plans, according to a press release from the governor's office. Test messages also were broadcast on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radios and the Emergency Alert System.

At Oakwood Elementary School in the Hickory Public Schools system, it was a chance for Principal Jennifer Griffin to see how everyone fit into the protective areas of the school with enrollment up this year at 396 students. Every school has its own issues when moving students to safe areas. Oakwood, for example, has classrooms in portables units and on the second floor.

"We prep all of our children every year. Our older children already know the procedures, what's expected, how to tuck and cover," Griffin said. "Last year we actually had a tornado nearby so we were in that position for quite some time, so our older children are experienced with this."

This is new for the kindergartners so the school makes sure they know it's just practice, but important.

"We don't give the kindergartners too many days to prep. It could make them more nervous," said teacher Jill Franjione, who has taught kindergartners at the school for 15 years.

"Right before, we prep them, and we just practice the procedure," Franjione said.

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PHOTOS BY JOHN BAILEY/HICKORY DAILY RECORD
Kindergartners at Oakwood Elementary know what to do during the school's tornado drill. It was part of Severe Weather Preparedness Week.



Oakwood Principal Jennifer Griffin (back right) observes her students and staff work their way through the school's tornado preparedness drill.



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Drill

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"We went over where they will be, and I demonstrated the position they would need to be in and practiced it for a few minutes."

Wednesday morning, the announcements talked about the importance of following emergency drills, just like athletes practice to be better in sports, to help the younger students understand why they were doing a tornado drill.

"Teachers will take that conversation a little more in-depth in the classroom and show them the position and talk to them about the behavior expectations of being quiet and listening to staff," Griffin said.

When the school had a real tornado emergency last year, the kindergarten teachers played soft

music to help keep their students calm.

"We just sat with the kids. We rubbed backs if they needed it. We let them know it was safe, of course," Franjome said.

The drills are a measuring tool for principals, as well. They can see what is working and what isn't with their school's emergency plan.

If there are any issues, school administrators can take their concerns to the county's Emergency Management Office and get advice on improvements they can make.

Griffin said that while her regular staff knows the preparedness procedures, the drills are a good opportunity for substitutes and volunteers to learn what the policies are and what they are expected to do in an emergency.

"That drives what we do. Whether it's an office procedure or an emergency weather procedure, safety is our number one priority," Griffin

said.

North Carolina is no stranger to severe weather. Catawba County was under a tornado warning just last week.

In 2016, the National Weather Service issued 61 tornado warnings for North Carolina and recorded 16 tornadoes, according to the release.

There were 121 flash-flood warnings issued last year and 121 incidents of flash flooding across the state, many of them associated with Hurricane Matthew. In addition, the NWS issued 697 severe thunderstorm warnings, and recorded 827 incidents of severe thunderstorms with damaging winds and/or large hail. Numerous severe storms, flash flooding, tornadoes and hurricanes caused severe damage and loss of life.

For more information and tips on emergency preparedness in various situations, visit readync.org or nws.noaa.gov/om/tornado.



REMINDER!

Daylight Saving Time begins
Sunday, March 12. Clocks
spring forward by one hour!

NORTHVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Survey Says



Math teacher Erin Sigmon (right) at Northview Middle School gives instructions to Sarah Quintero-Sanchez and Saleia Izzard about making fraction art work.



Survey

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right direction," Dischiali said. "We have exceeded growth, over eleven points which is phenomenal, but the kids we are missing, we are repeatedly missing."

The principal hopes this new direction will help push the school's succeeding students even further and find a way to reach those who are struggling. The school turned to surveys of staff and all 600 students, asking what an advisory program should look like and what academic needs were.

Eighth-grader Aidan Nigrelli liked the survey and the fact it allowed students to have more input with the new initiative.

"It asked us what we were struggling with and who we would trust to help us with it," Nigrelli said.

How it works

As part of the initiative, students meet in small groups – based on the needs they mentioned in the surveys – for an hour every Wednesday.

It targets three areas: Academic (remedial or enrichment), social and emotional (building relationships with students) and critical thinking (understanding positive or negative consequences socially of their actions or content base on the academic side).

"We did the research, and it told us we needed to personalize their learning," Dischiali said. "Your instructional practices need to be engaging and team building and you need to target their critical thinking."

The survey showed there was need for growth in social skills as well.

"They're not collaborative," Dischiali said. "Those are life skills they need, and they always prefer to work alone and don't know how to interact."

"They need to learn how to truly be effective listeners and there are a couple of activities we've done with them on perspective and opinion and hopefully how you engage in conversations to facilitate collaborative work and learning."

The school's counselor Miriam Starnes said she's noticed the students have been doing better at



Students listen to orchestra teacher Richard Wohlman (right) as he explains how bridges retain their strength.

ROBERT C. REED / HICKORY DAILY RECORD

we also get an opportunity to see a different side of them," seventh-grade teacher Caroline Jennings said.

"Yes we're working on skills and we're working on mastery but we're also working on working on it in a different way. The first couple of weeks we had team building activities to figure out what they want out of it and their personalities so we could better gauge our activities."

All nine schools in the Hickory Public Schools (HPS) system is moving forward with an initiative for their particular school and the needs of their children in their school's environment, HPS Director of Communications Beverly Snowden said.

The initiative has also reignited the passion for education among teachers at Northview.

Northview media coordinator Lindee Parsons enjoys the extra time and attention she's able to give her students every Wednesday.

"I have a top reading group so they're really wanting to produce and engage so it's great for me to see them consistently and build relationships with them on a regular basis," Parsons said.

"It's matching up the strengths of a school's staff with the needs of their students."

"We have so many talented people on staff that if you loosened the reins on the accountability piece they could connect and soar with kids in different ways and that's what I was trying to capture," Dischiali said.

Northview Middle School seventh-grader Addie Barrier works on her egg drop protection device during the skills improvement class.



Students add their voices to improvement plan

BY JOHN BAILEY
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HICKORY — This is the year of the student at Northview Middle School.

A new initiative, called WIN (What I Need), has put the focus on giving students more of a voice in their own education and allows teachers to spend more time with the ones who need

their help.

It's an approach to bridge gaps of creativity, encouragement, engagement and growth for students in the classroom and in life, Northview Middle Principal Stephanie Dischiali said.

"There's a lot of room for growth in terms of proficiency here but we're definitely heading in the

right direction," Dischiali said. "We have exceeded growth, over eleven points which is phenomenal, but the kids we are missing, we are repeatedly missing."

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LEFT: Seventh-grader Karrington White uses toothpicks and glue to make bridge supports during buildings class at Northview Middle School. ABOVE: Northview Middle School sixth-graders Avain Lee and Zoie Bailey use fraction cards to improve their math skills.

