

History of Rockbridge Elementary School

Rockbridge Elementary School was opened in August 1972 as an educational facility for the Stone Mountain area, and celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

The early 1970s was a time of explosive growth and development in northeast DeKalb county, and the Board of Education recognized the need for a neighborhood school in the area of Hairston and Rockbridge Roads. Construction of the school began in 1971 and the facility opened in August 1972 with an initial enrollment that filled the school to capacity. Four trailers were added the following year to accommodate a growing student enrollment. Sixteen classrooms were added to the building in 1976.

Rockbridge's principals, Dr. Frank Rumble, Dr. James Pearce, and Mr. Hal Beaver, have provided the leadership needed to classify Rockbridge Elementary as an outstanding school over its 25 years of service to the community.

The school presently has an enrollment of over 800 students, pre-Kindergarten through 6th grade. Its staff consists of a dedicated group of teacher and para-professionals offering longevity, mentoring and extra-curricular activities, along with required curriculum instruction and testing.

The P.T.A. has long been very active and still provides an extensive parent volunteer program.

Rockbridge was recognized as a Georgia Public School of Excellence in 1984, and again in 1986. Although the faculty has not competed in this program over the past few years, it has continued to excel in teaching and in promotion of student activities. This year, Rockbridge received the Georgia School Bell Award for outstanding extra-curricular programs.

The future goal of Rockbridge Elementary School is to continue to offer the best instruction and education possible, with the child in mind.

Rockbridge Named 'School Of Excellence'

By SHERRON MARTINEZ

Rockbridge Elementary School in Stone Mountain has been named a School of Excellence in Georgia, representing the fourth congressional district.

State Superintendent of Schools Charles McDaniel, on the recommendation of an out-of-state panel of educators, recognized 29 schools (ten elementary, ten middle, nine high schools) state-wide for their achievements.

Rockbridge Elementary is the only DeKalb County school so honored.

Principal Dr. James G. Pearce, Jr. said, "We are not perfect, but I can't think of a better place to start from than the School of Excellence position."

The staff at Rockbridge, he said, puts forth a "110 percent effort."

"So many times, I go to them and offer a suggestion and they're already working on it," he said.

"We've been together a long time," he continued, adding that teacher turnover at Rockbridge is very low, averaging fewer than two new teachers per year.

DR. PEARCE himself has been principal nine of the 12 years Rockbridge has been open, and was principal of Fernbank Elementary for two years, and of Margaret Harris Elementary for five years prior to that.

Now, he says, "I don't want to go to any other school in the system." He can often be seen in the thick of things during school activities. On "field day" each spring when

(See ROCKBRIDGE, Page 15D)

Rockbridge

(Continued From Page 1A)

the 760 Rockbridge students are scrambling for either the "red" or the "blue" team, competing in sack races and the like, their principal is right with them.

But he doesn't take sides. Instead, he wears a "custom" tee-shirt made by cutting up the middle of a solid red one and a solid blue one and sewing the red half to the blue half.

"That sure is a funny shirt," a student told him.

"What's so funny about it?" answered Dr. Pearce. "I've got another one just like it at home."

Besides doing his part for field day, Dr. Pearce also volunteers to teach either "Dance and Drill Steps," "Aircraft Construction," or "Music Theory" in the school's extensive middle years Exploratory Program.

Said Phyllis Ferraro, who coordinates the middle years curriculum, "The kids just love to get in his courses."

THE 104 SCHOOLS nominated for the award were evaluated on their administrative leadership, teacher effectiveness, academic goals and achievements, school curriculum, dis-

cipline and community involvement and support.

Jan Warren, instructional lead teacher at Rockbridge, pointed out the high academic achievement of students there.

For example, seventh graders who took the California Achievement Test (CAT) in January had a mean score of 10.0 (tenth grade) in reading.

Last year, school-wide, more than 90 percent of the students scored within a year of grade level or above, in both math and reading.

Ms. Warren also noted the many parents involved in various programs at Rockbridge.

At present she said, there are approximately 100 parents serving as tutors, classroom aides, library aides, office aides to check on absent students, teachers in the Exploratory Program, volunteers in the "Apple Corps" computer awareness courses.

In addition, the parents through the PTA sponsor many events annually such as pizza night, the book fair, talent night.

"The parents give hours and hours to the school," she said.

In fact, since September, more than 7,500 parent volunteer hours have been logged.

Parent support lifts Rockbridge to top

By Donna Williams Lewis

Staff Writer

Rockbridge Elementary School sits in a quiet little neighborhood near the city of Pine Lake.

With its neat row of yellow, red, and blue bicycles at the front door, the school outwardly seems an unlikely candidate for making waves.

But Rockbridge Elementary will be recognized April 11 as one of Georgia's 29 "Schools of Excellence" for 1983-84. The school represents the elementary category for the 4th Congressional District.

"We're getting the kind of parent support that my parents gave the school. It's 100 percent positive," said Principal James Pearce. "It's paying off for the school, the students and the teachers in that they have less disruptive instructional time. There's more time on task."

The recipe for Rockbridge's success includes a high level of parent support and a dedicated, professional staff, Pearce said.

About 90 percent of the school's parents are mem-

bers of the PTA, and more than 100 parent volunteers regularly help out at the school, said PTA Co-President LaVay Sheldon. The parents have logged more than 7,500 volunteer hours this school year while running copy machines, working in the school library, tutoring students and helping them learn to operate computers.

Almost 80 percent of Rockbridge teachers hold advanced degrees, and the school's lead teacher is writing a dissertation for her doctorate, Pearce said. With the help of the PTA, Pearce has provided many educational courses for teachers at the school, Sheldon said.

The school's success also is evident in the test scores of Rockbridge students. Almost 97 percent of this year's students scored at or above their grade levels in math, and 93 percent of them scored at or above their grade levels in reading, said lead teacher Jan Warren.

"The school is trying to live up to its motto — 'With the child in mind,'" Pearce said. "In some schools this big you find three or four cliques (of teachers). I've been there and I've seen it. This school has never divided itself in any fashion."

"This is an extremely dedicated staff," Ms. Warren agreed. "Most of my day is spent with teachers who have concerns about a student. We work together to develop alternative strategies."

An education management team composed of special education specialists, representatives from each grade level and Ms. Warren as chairwoman meets every two weeks to discuss students' special needs.

Although there is great emphasis on learning, students still find Rockbridge a fun place to go to school.

Art projects like stained glass panels, murals and clay plaques line school ceilings and walls. They are the gifts of departing seventh grade classes.

The school's older students participate in a modified middle school program. They take exploratory classes which they select based on their interests.

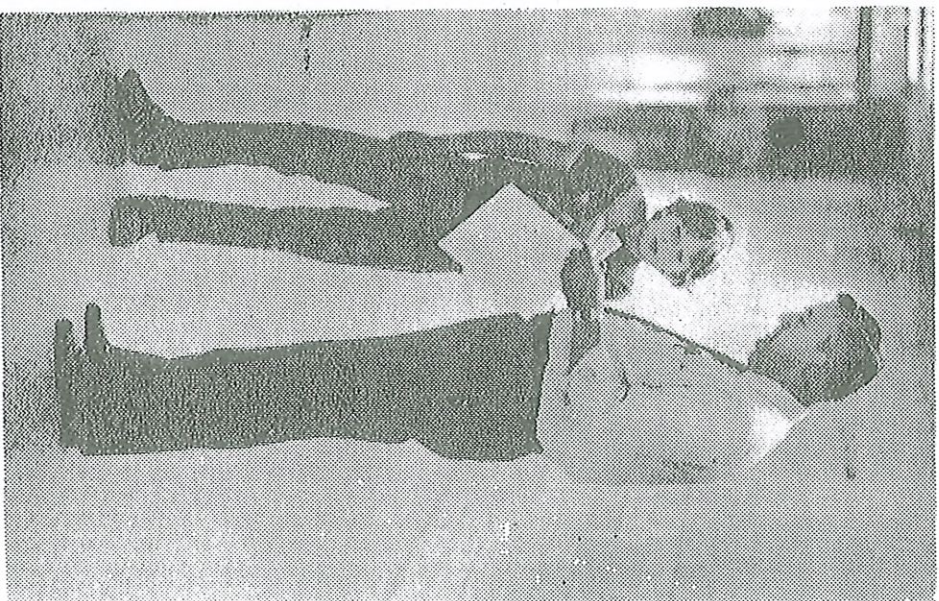
Pearce, a former band director, is teaching marching skills to one group of students. Other Rockbridge staff and community volunteers have conducted courses in microwave cooking, computers, music theory, electricity, camping skills, dance and snow skiing.

Fifth-grader Heather McCloy said she wasn't surprised that Rockbridge was selected as a state school of excellence.

"I wasn't surprised because the school really de-



James Pearce



Principal Pearce talks with student Jon Braaflhart

serves it," the articulate redhead said. "It's amazing how the secretary and the teachers have put up with us because I've seen some kids give them a hard time. I think they deserve (the honor) more than we do."

Dek. News Sun 59
6/20/90



Panning For Gold At Rockbridge

Volunteer David Bell instructs Rockbridge Elementary School students Colin McGann, left, and Billy Woodward in the proper technique in panning for gold. This event was part of the week-long Heritage Fair held at Rockbridge. There was square dancing, and music, as well as a storyteller, potter, blacksmith, ferrier, spinner, and weaver. Students were able to pan for gold, pitch a horse shoe, or watch a re-enactment of a battle from the War Between the States. Coordinating the events was the PTA Cultural Arts Committee headed by Lisa Dempsey and Doris Day.



Students Kick Off Fitness Program 5/27/92

DeKalb News/Sun
Students at Rockbridge Elementary School in Stone Mountain kicked off the school's competitive physical fitness program with a martial arts demonstration. Leading the exhibition is student expert Eli Mitchell, at the front. In the rear, left to right, are: fourth grader Jennifer Lee; second grader Richard Lee; and seventh grader Scott McCloy. The program

was designed to display the philosophy, self-confidence and self-discipline of the physical fitness routine. Upcoming athletic events in April will be led by the school's physical education instructor, Caryn Gartner. "Field Daze," a series of competitive events within each grade level, is scheduled for May.

File: Rockbridge Ele.

ROCKBRIDGE ELEMENTARY



March 9, 1983

*The Details
Neighbor News.
Tucker*
**PRIDE Program
Informs Youth
On Drugs**

Rockbridge Elementary School students, teachers and PTA PRIDE committee sponsored a program on the dangers of drugs. The event lasted a week and included speakers, films and group sessions on the effects of drugs and alcohol. Pictured are Tondi Lewellyn (L) and Sam King, both of Stone Mountain listening to Henderson High School OPTION group members Joey Mitchell (L) and Monica Sheppard. (Staff Photo By Paul Eiland)

*File - Schools
Elementary*