

The Learning Curve

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Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

Remembering 9-11

Bibb County Public Schools remembers the victims and honors the nation's heroes here and abroad

"It's a day we will never forget and will forever cherish in our hearts," Army Recruiter Sergeant Dexter Curry told the students at Barden Elementary. "I want to encourage you all to remain strong."

"This is our 9-11 observance to teach our children how to preserve our heritage, honor our fallen heroes, and pay tribute to those serving now, here and abroad," said Heritage Elementary Assistant Principal Samantha Thompson as she looked out over her more than 800 students gathered in front of the school.

Several schools around the county were spending part of their day holding special ceremonies to remember the tragic events of 9-11 in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. From military presentations to honoring local heroes to honored guests to singing patriotic songs, students gathered on front lawns to thank all those who work to defend freedom abroad and defend their community locally.

Through each ceremony, students were told that by remembering and reflecting on the past, they were honoring it and learning from it. "We need to be reminded that tragic events always happen in history," said Southwest High Principal Dr. Gail Fowler. "It is so critical that as we teach children we look back at the critical events which shaped our lives."

"We want the children to always remember that being a citizen of the United States is not only an honor but an obligation," said Heritage Principal Kaye Hlavaty. For elementary school students, she pointed out, it's especially important to teach them because many of them are too young to remember that fateful day.

"Students need to be conscious of history and realize they're a part of living history," added Barden Principal David Dillard.

"We have much to be thankful for," Mayor C. Jack Ellis told the assembled Southwest students, but they still needed to work hard in life. 9-11 changed America, he pointed out, with many people realizing how small the world really was these days. "Whatever you do, do it to the best of your abilities. You are no longer competing with

students at Southwest or the other high schools; you are competing with students from around the world."

Members of Southwest's JROTC raised the American Flag to half-mast to honor the victims of 9-11 as well as the late Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist. Mayor Ellis and Dr. Fowler then laid a wreath at the base of the flagpole in their memory.

Students at the schools were also treated to musical performances of a variety of songs. Southwest listened to both their band and nationally ranked chorus; Barden's third graders sang a piece; and every Heritage student joined Hlavaty as she sang patriotic songs like *America the Beautiful* and *You're a Grande Ol' Flag*.

To honor the military serving now and throughout history, each school made sure to have some form present at their ceremony. The Mercer University ROTC Colorguard presented the flags at Heritage. The Southwest ROTC came out in uniform at their school in support, and their Colorguard presented the flags at Barden.

"We wanted them to see some of our leadership," says Master Sergeant Dorothy Russo.

"Barden is a feeder school for Southwest, so these kids will be seeing us in a few years," added Lieutenant Colonel Raiford Rainey. "It's a way for us to give back to the community."

To honor their local heroes, Barden and Heritage invited the firefighters stationed near the schools to the ceremonies. At Heritage, Fire Station #106 was greeted with thunderous applause, and then they sounded the horn of their truck in remembrance of fallen firefighters.

"We always honor and salute them for their service to the community and the school," Dillard said of Fire Station #12. They were presented with a banner to hang in the station as well as baskets of goodies. "We thank you for what you do, and you certainly are a part of this ceremony," he told them.



(above) Firefighters from station #12 display the Barden students' banner.



(right) Southwest High ROTC raise the flag to half mast.

Hamilton Elementary, in a yearly tradition, made lunch for the firefighters of Station #6 on Pio Nono Avenue as well as presented them with thank-you cards to be hung in the station. "Hamilton School is committed to providing our students with varied opportunities for the development of good character through community service," said Guidance Counselor Sheryl Pinnix. "We are proud of both staff and students for their caring nature and generous spirit."

"Thank you for this celebration and remembering what happened," Jason West of Station #12 told the students.

"It's a great day to be outside and even greater day to be an American," said Curry.

To the applause of students, Hlavaty told them and the assembled guests: "We stand proud as Americans."

Rutland Middle teacher leads delegation of Georgia's National Board Certified teachers to Capitol Hill

"Working to promote accomplished teaching and what it means for raising student achievement is an exciting opportunity," says Rutland Middle School teacher Connie Wildman. "As teacher leaders, we have an important role to play in shaping the future of our schools and creating the work environments that support excellence in teaching and learning."

This past summer, Wildman was selected by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) to serve as State Team Leader for Georgia's delegation of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) who participated in NBPTS Hill Day 2005. The event was part of the NBPTS annual conference held in Alexandria, VA in which certified teachers from across the nation go through a variety of activities to not only enhance their teaching standards, but to promote the program to the public and the government.

"It was the best conference I've been to; very supportive of National Board

Teachers," says Wildman.

The National Board Certified Teacher process was developed by the NBPTS to help a teacher develop professionally through their successful completion of a set of high and rigorous standards. Any teacher with a baccalaureate degree and three years teaching experience may participate. The NBPTS assesses them on teaching portfolios, student work samples, videos of them teaching, and written tests to determine their knowledge of the subject and ways to teach it to their students. There are currently more than 40,000



(l-r) Connie Wildman from Bibb County, Sally Butler from Rockdale County, District 13-US Rep. David Scott, Sohmer Collins from Butts County, Cheryl Caldwell and Carol Taylor from Carroll County

certified teachers nationwide and almost 1,800 in Georgia.

According to Wildman, it can take anywhere from two to three years to fully complete the certification. "There's a lot involved. It's a really rigorous process."

As Team Leader, she was in charge of organizing Hill Day for the

Georgia delegation, making appointments and sessions where they could meet with the Representatives and Senators who speak for them at the local, state, and national levels. The teachers met with them to discuss the critical impact the process has on the

teaching profession and improved student learning; on a more personal note, each of the Georgia teachers brought a one-page summary on how it has affected them in the classroom.

"Georgia got to see every one of their Representatives and Senators," Wildman says.

Hill Day was only one of four days the teachers got to spend at the conference. The first day they were there, they were taken to the Smithsonian to learn about the many programs and opportunities offered to teachers to further both their education and their students' education. The remaining days were spent attending seminars, workshops, and lectures training them on the latest in teaching techniques. They also were taught ways to encourage other teachers in their area to work toward their Certification.

"It was quite a learning experience," says Wildman. "I really enjoyed it. Everything I went to was high-caliber, very useful, and well presented."