

Residents rate C'ville education good

By Sue Mason
staff writer

The computer has spoken, so to speak. Seventy-five percent of Clarenceville residents who responded to a recent districtwide survey said the district is doing good to excellent work in educating youngsters.

While response to the survey — 410 residents filled out the 22-part questionnaire — is far less than the 1,500 who responded three years ago, Superintendent Michael Shibley is encouraged by the results.

"When you look at the Gallup Poll, 42 percent of those surveyed rated their school districts an A or a B for

overall quality. We have 75 percent," Shibley said. "That's pretty decisive and encouraging."

THE SURVEY was sent out in September and the final tabulations have been presented to the school board.

The board plans on to hold several work/study meetings to analyze the results, which will be used to develop short- and long-term plans for the district, Shibley said.

"School officials sometimes can become insulated from residents, so there's really a need to get to people and bring them into the process," he said.

"It's important administratively

to provide a vehicle for residents to respond. This is a good tool to use and to give us an idea of what people think."

When asked to rate the district's special education program, 80 percent overall said it was good to excellent. Its gifted program earned above average marks from 80 percent of those responding, while the adult/community education program got high marks from 77 percent.

THE SURVEY also showed that of those responding, only 11 percent take advantage of ACE classes, meaning there's a high potential to get more people involved in the program, Shibley said.

An important benchmark in the survey was residents' estimations on how well the district has communicated with them.

Overall, the district earned good to excellent marks from 79 percent. Those marks were given by only 77 percent of parents of school-aged children.

"This was very important to me

because I wanted to know how well we've communicated with the people," Shibley said. "The whole district has tried to make an effort to communicate with residents and I think the grades we got reflects our work with the schoolwide newsletter and state of the school district report."

THE SCHOOL staff rated a 75 percent overall on their attitude toward instruction, a bit more than the 68 percent from parents. When it came to their accessibility and responsiveness, 79 percent overall and 90 percent of the parents found staff were available when needed.

As for stressing basic skills, a number one priority for Shibley since he joined the school district in 1984, 79 percent overall and 85 percent of the parents found that to be the case.

But the favorable opinion dropped off to 64 percent overall and 77 percent among parents when it came to satisfaction with the district's current elementary-junior high grade level promotion and retention program.

AMONG THOSE dissatisfied with the program, the reasons ranged from improving the quality of the tests used to determine student mastery of basic skills, letting parents know in advance what the problems are and more conformity in application of the program.

When it came to preparing students for the world of work, the school district made major inroads over the 1984 responses. At that time only 33 percent said students were prepared.

But the new survey showed that 61 percent believe students are better prepared for life after school, including 59 percent of the parents who responded.

THE DISTRICT came up with 23 suggestions as to areas of instruction residents feel need improvement. The areas named most often were English, science, mathematics, computers and college preparatory classes.

When asked if the high school graduation requirements were adequate, 69 percent overall said yes. The figure was 70 percent among parents. Those who answered no wanted to see more requirements for computer education, mathematics and English and higher competency test scores.

Students are considered competent if they score 70 percent or better on the tests, Shibley said.

Reading to change

Members of a study committee in Farmington schools are continuing revisions to the district's reading curriculum, according to information from the district.

The effort follows a two-week workshop last summer, when 22 Farmington teachers met to review district reading goals. From this has come a recommendation for a new Basal Reading Series for grades kindergarten through six.

The committee has met weekly to discuss textbooks and other materials for such a program, according to Carolyn Mahalak of the reading services department.

The committee is expected to sample two series in early 1988, and make a recommendation for the new program which is scheduled to begin in September 1988.



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