

Curry almost SACS approved

Elementary school one of only two not accredited in county

By ED HOWELL
Eagle Senior Writer

Curry Elementary School, one of the last two Walker County schools without accreditation, had a successful visit this week from a team that apparently will give a positive report to recommend the school be accredited.

The head of the school says it is a big moment for the school to successfully go through its first accreditation, although he said the growth of students in the area is a major need that will have to be addressed in the future.

"I think it lets our parents and community know we are a quality school," said Steven Rowe, principal of the K-4 school. "They're not being satisfied with it being a good school, but want it to be a better school."

Rowe said Wednesday that a team from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) visited on Monday and Tuesday, interviewing staff and students and touring the facilities before giving an oral report late Tuesday.

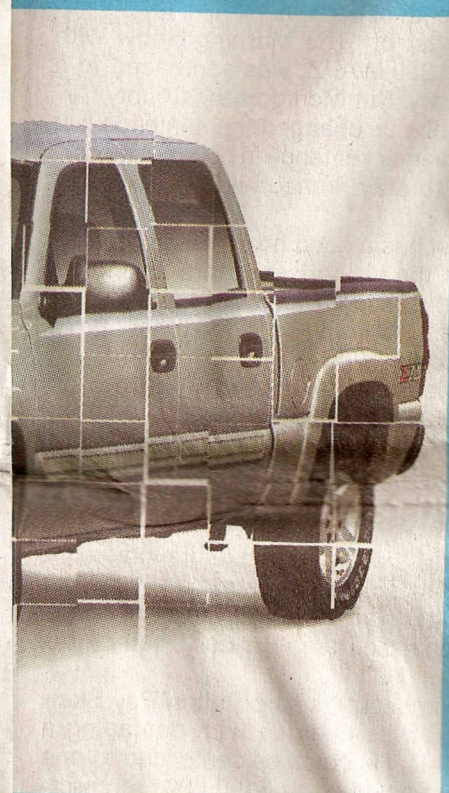
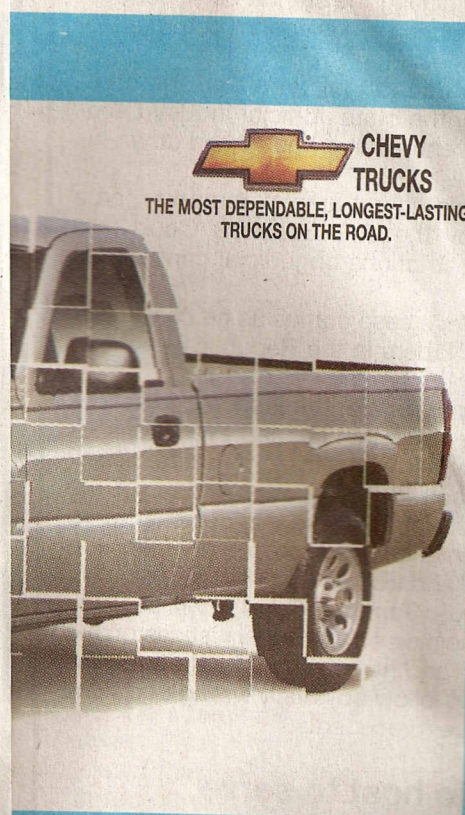
"Our team performed as well as anyone could do," Rowe said, praising the team of students, teachers, parents, support personnel and others who helped to make the report successful. "It makes you realize you can't do it alone. It takes a community to educate a child."

"They had nine areas where they wrote commendations. I thought that was a high number," he said, adding recommendations were most-

See CURRY, A7 ▶

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Rick Waldrop



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The Indian Creek Youth Camp is a faith-based camp founded in 1971 near the Pleasantfield community at the fork

entertainment activity," Courington said.

In past years, the drum line from Freed-Hardeman University and choral

here. It used to be just a Walker County thing, but we get kids now from as far away as Texas, Florida, Kentucky and Arkansas," Richardson said.

Curry

From A1

ly items the school already had identified.

The report will be drawn up and submitted to SACS's board for approval. As for a timetable for an approval, Rowe said he has known some reports to be approved quickly and others to take six or seven months.

"I would look for it during the summer," Rowe said.

The process for the designation started before Rowe came to the school three years ago.

"Most schools have the resources in place to do it in a year," Rowe said. "But we were a little deficient."

However, the Walker County Board of Education helped the school to get some of the things it needed, such as extra personnel in the form of a counselor and assistant principal, he said.

Rowe said the school had to revise its mission statement and beliefs to conform to state and federal standards, espe-

cially the No Child Left Behind Act. The school also had to look again at its institutional process. It had to re-evaluate the way it assessed students so that it didn't just use student scores but used scientifically-proven methods, such as in the Alabama Reading Initiative.

"It's a very involved process. It takes every faculty member participating, and we had that," he said.

Rowe said it takes good teachers these days to conduct classes these days. Teachers need to go beyond just having a good lesson plan, as they have to conduct lessons that meet all the different needs of individual students.

PTO members and teachers alike served on SACS-required committees to look at all aspects of the school's educational process, he said.

A SACS team arrived Monday to start the day with a meet-and-greet session. They

interviewed parents, toured the facilities and interviewed the chairmen of the committees. They interviewed representative teachers of each grade, special education, non-homeroom teachers, students and administration.

On Tuesday, the team interviewed support personnel, as well as teachers new to the school who may not have been involved in the SACS process from the start or who did not serve on committees. They also looked at documentation and gave an oral report to the school's faculty at the end of the day.

As for recommendations, Rowe said they did request the school maintain momentum in the Alabama Reading Initiative and identified different forms of teaching methods for individual students.

Other recommendations, which Rowe said may cost money, he is keeping under wraps until he can brief Superintendent of Education

Harvey Sanford.

"We know we are a growing school and we know we'll be needing some things," Rowe said, adding that many of the recommendations include needs already known to other school officials.

Growth is something that has been discussed in connection with the community's schools. Rowe said the system already has plans for adding six classrooms, a library and a lunchroom. However, he said an annex with 16 to 18 classrooms, built four or five years ago, is full.

"We've already outgrown that addition," he said. "We're already out of space. We have a space need. We're using every available inch of space we can.

"Since I arrived three years ago, we've added 120 additional kids. We're growing 40 kids a year it seems like. They're from here. They're not coming from other places," Rowe said.

Fire

From A1

and workmen compensation, which totals about \$3,500 a year, and a fuel bill.

from the Alabama Forestry Commission, which averages about \$2,000 a year and what little we make off various fund raisers.

That rating would have meant the insurance premiums in Oakman would have tripled for homeowners living in the city limits and doubled for homeowners in the rural areas of the Oak-