

Wadesboro Primary Teachers Bring New Ideas Home from Ron Clark Academy

A select group of Wadesboro Primary School teachers spent three days in Atlanta, Georgia, this summer participating in professional development at the nationally recognized Ron Clark Academy. The experience gave the WPS educators an opportunity to step outside their own classrooms and explore innovative approaches to teaching, student engagement and school culture. They returned to Wadesboro with new ideas and strategies they can share with colleagues and put to work with students during the 2026-2027 school year.

The Ron Clark Academy is a nonprofit middle school in Atlanta that also serves as a demonstration school and professional development destination for educators. Teachers from across the country visit the academy to observe its highly energetic approach to instruction and learn techniques designed to capture students' attention, encourage participation and create enthusiasm for learning.

For Wadesboro Primary, those ideas have particular possibilities. Primary school teachers are working with children during some of the most important years of their

educational development, when students are building fundamental skills and beginning to develop attitudes about school and learning that can follow them for years.

Engaging lessons can help young students become active participants in the classroom rather than simply observers. New approaches to instruction can also provide teachers with additional ways to reach children with different interests, abilities and learning styles.

The benefits of the trip can extend beyond the educators who traveled to Atlanta. As participating teachers share strategies, resources and ideas with their Wadesboro Primary colleagues, what they learned during the three-day experience has the potential to reach classrooms and students throughout the school.

The professional development opportunity was made possible through the support of Huntington Bank and the Braswell Trust. Wadesboro Primary expressed its appreciation to both organizations for investing in its educators, noting that an investment in teachers ultimately becomes an investment in the success of the children they teach.

Wadesboro Primary Hosts Read to Achieve Summer Camp

For a group of Anson County students, summer vacation included some extra time with books as Wadesboro Primary School hosted the school district's Read to Achieve Camp.

Second- and third-grade students participating in the summer program received an additional 72 hours of targeted reading instruction designed to strengthen literacy skills and help prepare them for the 2026-2027 school year.

Read to Achieve is part of North Carolina's statewide effort to ensure students develop strong reading skills during the early elementary grades. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is considered particularly important because students increasingly move from "learning to read" toward "reading to learn" as they advance through school. Strong literacy skills become essential not only in language arts, but also for understanding lessons and written material in subjects ranging from science and social studies to mathematics.

The summer camp provides additional instructional time outside the regular school year, allowing educators to concentrate on specific reading skills and provide students with extra practice and support. For participating children, those 72 additional hours represent valuable time to strengthen skills, build confidence and continue learning during the summer months.

Although the focus was on literacy, Wadesboro Primary also worked to make the summer program an enjoyable experience for its young readers. Students spent the camp learning and growing together while building skills they will carry back to their classrooms in August.

When the instructional hours were complete, Ms. Blackwell and Mrs. Tallent had one more surprise waiting for the campers.

To celebrate the students' successful completion of the program, each child received a bag of special snacks along with a brand-new "reading buddy" to take home. The cuddly companions gave students someone to share a book with and provided a fun reminder to keep reading after camp ended.

With 72 additional hours of instruction behind them - and a new reading buddy beside them - the young readers wrapped up their summer camp experience better prepared to begin another year of learning when they return to school in August.



Beginning Teachers Kick Off Their Journey with Anson County Schools

Before Anson County students return to their classrooms for the 2026-2027 school year, some of the district's newest teachers have been doing a little learning of their own.

Anson County Schools recently welcomed its newest educators during the 2026 Beginning Teacher Retreat, a four-day orientation appropriately titled "How to THRIVE Your First 30 Days." The program was designed to give beginning teachers the practical tools, resources, connections and support they need as they prepare to take charge of their classrooms.

Superintendent Dr. Brian Ratliff welcomed the new educators and introduced them to the district's mission, vision and commitment to student learning. He emphasized the importance of building meaningful relationships with students and encouraged the teachers to embrace their purpose as educators by demonstrating strong character, accepting personal responsibility and recognizing the lasting difference a teacher can make in a child's life.

Over the course of four days, the new teachers received an introduction to many of the responsibilities that come with running a classroom - some readily apparent to students and parents and many that take place behind the scenes.

Sessions covered classroom structures, lesson planning and technology, along with parent communication and classroom setup. Teachers also learned about emergency protocols, Exceptional Children services and trauma-informed practices, helping prepare them to respond to the wide variety of needs and situations they may encounter during a school year.

The retreat even addressed an aspect of the profession that can seem a long way off to someone just beginning a teaching career - retirement benefits. Together, the sessions were intended to help new educators understand both their immediate classroom responsibilities and the larger school system they are joining.

Beginning teachers also had an opportunity to hear directly from experienced educators during a teacher panel. The chance to learn from those who have already navigated their first years in the classroom provided another source of practical advice as the new teachers prepare for students to arrive. Throughout the retreat, participants worked with instructional coaches and mentors who will serve as important resources as the year



progresses. That support can be especially valuable for a first-year teacher as the excitement of opening a classroom gives way to the day-to-day challenges of instruction, classroom management, communication and meeting the individual needs of students.

The new educators also visited the Anson County Schools Planetarium, collaborated with other teachers and spent time in their respective school buildings preparing classrooms for the beginning of the year.

Sessions during the retreat were led by Caity Eason, Jessica Wallace, Dr. Valerie O'Kelly, Kelly Martindale, Dr. John Tharp and Dr. Josh McLaurin, along with district counselors, instructional coaches, mentors and experienced classroom teachers.

By the conclusion of the four-day retreat, the district's newest educators had not only received information and resources, but had also begun developing relationships with the colleagues, mentors and administrators who will support them throughout their first year.

Anson County Schools welcomed the new teachers to the district and expressed its confidence in the positive impact they can make in classrooms across the county as they begin the work of educating, inspiring and empowering the next generation.

Agriculture Ambassadors Put CTE Skills to Work During Summer

While many students were enjoying a break from school, Anson High School's Agriculture Ambassadors spent part of their summer getting their hands dirty - and gaining valuable experience in the process.

Through the Summer Agriculture Ambassador Program, students took an active role in maintaining and improving several parts of Anson High School's agriculture program. Their work included managing the school's greenhouse and hydroponics lab, growing crops, designing an irrigation system and making significant improvements to livestock facilities and the surrounding agriculture grounds.

The greenhouse provided students with practical experience in plant production and care. Rather than learning only from a textbook, students were responsible for working with living plants and seeing firsthand how factors such as water, growing conditions and regular maintenance affect their health and development.

Students also worked in the school's hydroponics lab. Hydroponics is a method of growing plants without traditional soil, with plants receiving the water and nutrients they need through a specially managed growing system. The technology gives students exposure to an increasingly important form of agriculture that can produce crops efficiently in controlled environments.

Another project challenged the Agriculture Ambassadors to design an irrigation system. Irrigation involves much more than simply getting water to plants. An effective system must distribute water where it is needed while considering efficiency, plant requirements and the layout of the growing area. Designing the system allowed students to combine agricultural knowledge with planning, problem-solving and technical skills.

The summer work extended beyond plants and crop production. Students made substantial improvements to the livestock facilities and agriculture grounds, including rebuilding fencing and improving animal enclosures. Those projects introduced students to another practical side of agriculture - maintaining safe, functional facilities for livestock while developing construction, maintenance and problem-solving skills.

Together, the projects provided a look at the wide variety of careers that exist within modern agriculture. Today's agricultural industry encompasses plant and animal science, environmental science, agricultural technology, natural resources, equipment and infrastructure, agribusiness and many other specialized fields.

The Agriculture Ambassador Program also gave students opportunities to develop skills that extend beyond agriculture. Working together on projects required teamwork, responsibility, communication and leadership, while completing real jobs around the school gave students an opportunity to see the results of their efforts.

The students' summer work will have a lasting benefit at Anson High School as



well. Improvements to the greenhouse, hydroponics operation, livestock facilities and agriculture grounds strengthen the resources available to the school's agriculture program and future students.

The program is part of Anson County Schools' Career and Technical Education (CTE) efforts to connect classroom instruction with practical skills and career exploration. Experiences such as the Summer Agriculture Ambassador Program allow students to learn by doing while gaining a better understanding of careers they may choose to pursue after high school.

The district expressed its appreciation to CTE Director Dr. Dionnya Pratt, agriculture teachers Whitney Dunlap-Ellerbe, Harley Elks and Michael Covington, and Anson High School Principal Chris Stinson for providing students with the project-based learning experience.

For the Agriculture Ambassadors, the summer resulted in more than healthier plants, improved facilities and new fencing. It provided real-world experience that can help cultivate the skills, confidence and leadership needed by the next generation of agricultural professionals.