

# PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR

Halifax County  
Public Schools

HALIFAX COUNTY

## At HCHS, hope for a better space to teach, and fewer headaches

By TOM McLAUGHLIN  
News & Record Staff

First Sgt. Gregory Scott leads the most popular Career and Technical Education department at Halifax County High School - JROTC. The program is in such high demand that 42 student cadets have signed up for his fourth block class this semester.

Popularity can be a good problem to have, except in those times when it isn't.

The JROTC program places great emphasis on physical conditioning: "Mental capacity, agility, physical fitness, being out there on the hill" — where the running takes place — "helps them be successful," Scott says of his young charges.

The discipline inherent to his program can be a tonic for young minds; while most of his students don't actually go on to the military, many do come away from JROTC with an appreciation for the values of hard work, facing challenges head-on, and exceeding expectations — including their own. Scott sums up his program's value: "Baseline salvation."

But there are moments when the military ethos of command-and-control, the eagerness to hit the hill and see who can sprint up the fastest, can fall apart.

Chances are, it'll happen in the hallway.

"They've got five minutes to change from their regular clothing to something they can run in," said Scott whenever cadets are commanded to go outside for endurance running. His classroom space at the high school offers one standard-size bathroom for changing into workout clothes. "Trying to fit 20-plus people in one restroom doesn't work ... We've got to rush 'em to make them hurry up, because we've got 42 students who've got to go out and run."

To get around the problem, students can search up and down the building for available bathroom space, but sometimes, they'll take a shortcut — and change clothes in the hallway if they can find a space secluded enough.

"If I had everything right there in the classrooms, it would help control the safety of the student and [respect] their personal values," said Scott, tactfully, of the situation.

While the JROTC restroom traffic jam may be an extreme example of how the late 1970s-era Halifax County High School building fails the education of students on a daily basis, it's not hard to elicit accounts from teachers of all the things they could do better in their work, given better surroundings.

"There are people in the community who say that you can educate anyone anywhere. You can certainly say that," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Lineburg. "But there's not a single part of our high school that doesn't present a challenge to doing that."

Dr. Debra Woltz, the high school's CTE coordinator, especially laments the interplay between outdated and barely functional systems, and the constant imperative of keeping up to date with learning innovations. She offers an example: welding equipment.

"We were going to add some welders to our welding shop, but we couldn't get the ones we wanted because we didn't have the electricity coming into the building to operate them," said Woltz. "The systems are so outdated that we can't get the most up-to-date technology in the building. If we're going to train students for a

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