

BRUNSWICK COUNTY SCHOOLS Classes step into 21st century

By Hilary Snow
Staff Writer

You won't find any chalk in Leland Middle School math teacher Rae Salargo's classroom.

Her blackboard doesn't get much use anymore.

She doesn't waste time with an overhead projector.

Salargo's classroom is far from traditional, but as the Brunswick County school district continues to expand its 21st century initiative, it is certainly becoming more typical.

Last Wednesday, area stakeholders saw the future of Brunswick County classrooms firsthand at Leland Middle School, Supply Elementary School and West Brunswick High School during North Carolina School Innovation Day.

As part of the state school board's push to equip all North Carolina high school graduates with the tools to compete in a global workforce, the Brunswick County school system began work in 2006 on future-ready classrooms.

Teachers have undergone training and schools have been furnished with LCD screens, laptops, document cameras and digital notepads.

Each of the district's 17 schools now has enough of the high-tech gear for at least ten classrooms, and the goal is to eventually outfit all teachers with the equipment.

The cost of technological improvements to the school system has been about \$1.5 million, or roughly \$3,500 per upgraded classroom.

More than a year after launching the 21st century initiative, Brunswick County Schools invited board of education members, local politicians, state legislators and other interested parties to see how Salargo, and other teachers like her, were using the new gadgets to enhance learning.

Rather than turn her back to her students to write on a chalkboard, Salargo is able to move about freely by writing on an Interwrite Pad. What she writes is projected on an LCD screen at the front of the class.

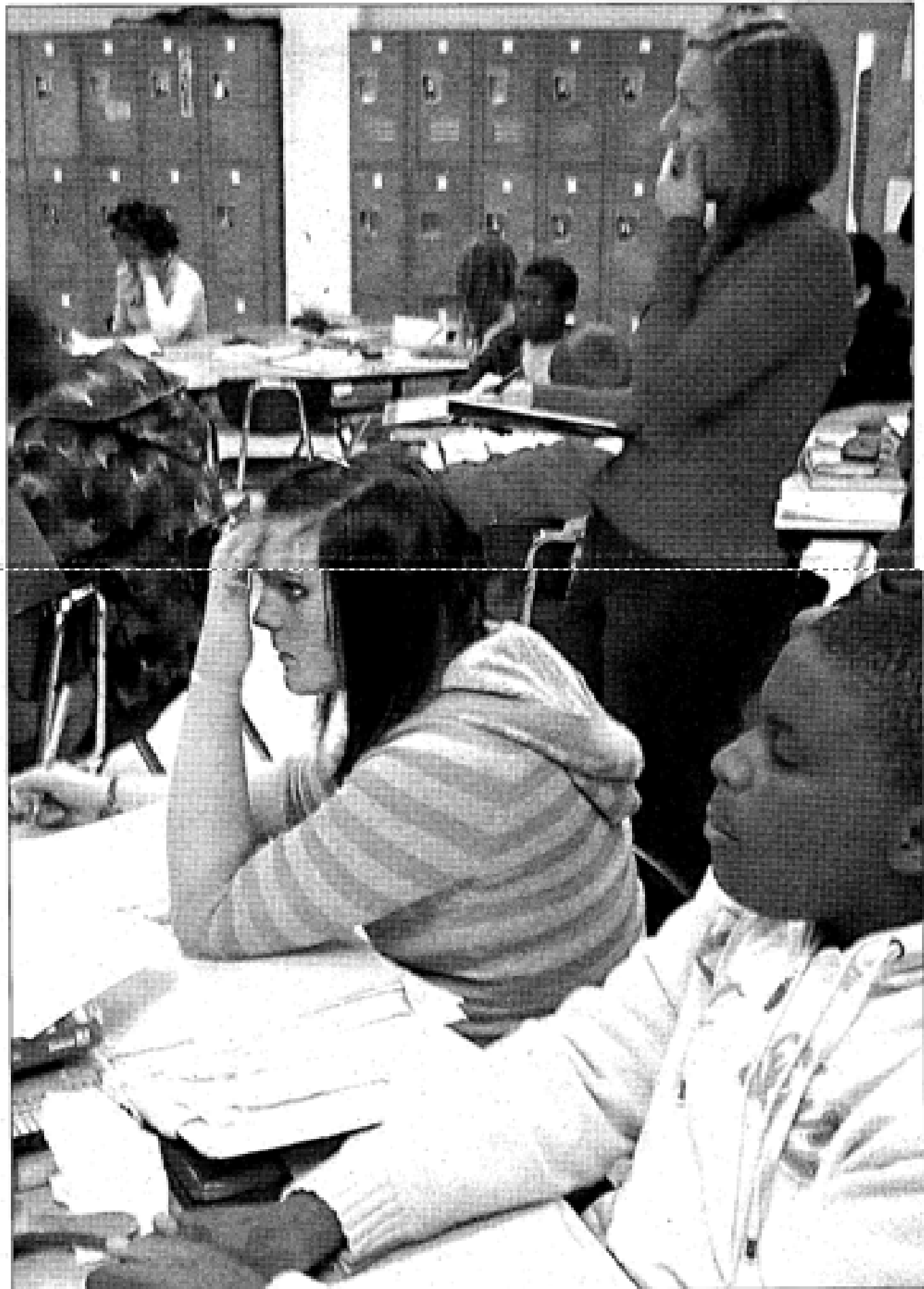
"Students are drawn to the front. It's definitely got their attention," Brunswick County school board member Scott Milligan noted.

While the district works to upgrade all county classrooms to 21st century standards, Pat Smith, an instructor with the Centers for Quality Teaching and Learning (QTL), said teachers are eagerly looking for ways to begin using technology as a teaching tool.

Smith, who is a full-time QTL instructor for Brunswick County Schools, teaches teachers how to create projects with student interest in mind. Smith has trained 287 Brunswick County teachers in the last three years.

Technology isn't the focus of her course, but Smith said it plays a big role in engaging students.

"Technology is woven into the course," she said last Wednesday in her Leland Middle School



Since getting equipment upgrades last year, Leland Middle School math teacher Rae Salargo is now able to walk around her classroom, using a digital pad that projects what she writes on an LCD screen rather than scribbling math problems on a blackboard. Area stakeholders observed Salargo's class, as well as others throughout the district, last week as part of the Brunswick County Schools' 21st Century Tour.

learning lab. "We stress that students learn by doing, not by telling."

While in Smith's class, teachers work on projects they can take back to their schools for use at all grade levels. Those projects, Smith said, inevitably involve Power Point presentations, website development, graphic design or a combination of all three.

For instance, some teachers opted to help students design and make postcards from areas around the country they were studying. Others made "trade cards," similar to baseball cards, that gave the "stats" on wildlife.

"The teachers themselves are actively engaged here every day. They learn to create products that are open-ended and can apply to any age and subject area," Smith

said. "I want the teachers to know that just because you don't have one (computer) per child doesn't

mean you can't use technology in your classroom."