

#86A-1E July 19, 1993 - Fred Bartholomew Brings New Vision to Old Foundation

Mr. Bartholomew is often touted for his ability to put together a strong and effective staff. He practices psychology on them, teases them, and motivates them to meet the needs of every pupil while enriching themselves and continuing their own educations. Although he is essentially conservative and moderate in nearly everything, he does not like for his administrative peers to outdo him in any way. His competitive spirit, honed undoubtedly on the ballfields years ago, proves to be contagious. He also advocates constant preparation and adaptability among his faculty and staff. "Nothing is static. Education is like life. It is in a constant state of flux," he insists.

Teachers at PHS describe Mr. B as skilled in motivation, in human relations, and in arbitration. Through diplomacy he often defuses problems before they can escalate into embarrassing confrontations. He weighs situations carefully and practices creative discipline. Even the student body regards him as firm, but fair. His style is that of a warrior against negativism!

An avid golfer, Mr. Bartholomew runs for exercise and tries to watch his weight. In student-faculty basketball games, he is one of the first adults to hit the floor. Everyone on the local school campus will tell you that Mr. B *can* quit smoking cigarettes and get serious again about this health. They have seen him give them up so many times! His family enjoys trips to their Topsail Island beachhouse, where Fred suns, golfs, spends time with his offspring, and finally catches up with his reading. *Future Edge* by Joel Barker is a recent title inside the profession and just for the fun of it, Mr. B says he laughed all the way through Lewis Grizzard's *Chili Dogs Always Bark at Night*.

An innovator, Principal Bartholomew won the fight to experiment with a highly positive strategy to address problems in academics, attendance, discipline, and the performance of homework. He dubbed it Project STEP (Scheduled Techniques for Educational Performance). A reward system, it allows students who qualify through improved effort and grades to miss their sixth and seventh period classes every Friday afternoon, while other students remain at school for tutoring, one-on-one practices, help with missed work, and enrichment opportunities. During the 1992-93 school year, he added a fifth area of participation called independent study, designed for those students who only need additional work in a single subject area and who may have a genuine struggle to find time to do their homework. Last year attendance (although already high) improved 38% over the previous year, the number of students attaining honor roll rose by 6.9%, overall improvement of grade point averages for all students was at 2.841, total percentage of students failing one or more subjects decreased by 15.7%, and in-school or out-of-school disciplinary cases plunged to an overall decrease of 104 from 167 to 63 compared to the 1990-91 academic year. "If for no other reason discipline makes this a successful program," he states.

In order to promote and reward scholarship, Princeton High School has created its own Academic Banquet, modeled after sports banquets, in the spring of each year. One of the first of its kind, this honors banquet offers an applique letter to those who make honor roll three out of four grading periods and a lamp of knowledge applique for the same performance during ensuing years. Locally, numbers are up and commencement marshals will likely include an unprecedented list.

When pressed for his opinions on the greatest influences affecting public education, Mr. Bartholomew gave the same response he recently offered on WUNC's "Personalities in Education" forum: integration, consolidation, and the breakdown of the family unit. "Schools are too large," he observed. "Anything above 700-750 can not be managed effectively," he added. "Perhaps a return to the old concept of neighborhood schools is not such a bad idea." He continued to say that more money needs to be spent on smaller schools to update facilities and to hire more teachers in specialized fields.

Remembering how segregation used to be during his own youth, Mr. B remarked that now every child has more nearly the same or an equal opportunity to be educated. "Integration was a good thing; schooling is much fairer for all children now," he admitted.

"With both parents working outside the home and not having anybody to check on young children and teenagers after school, anything can and often does happen to children today," Mr. B continued. "Around here, some 40% of our homes are single-parent homes. Too many kids come to school unfed and unprepared for academic classes as well as strenuous playtime activities."

Still singled out among remaining union schools in the state, Princeton High attracts not only the watchful eyes of other educators around the county and state, but it also has been the focus of attention for its curriculum, innovations, and progressive spirit by WTVD, Channel 11, and Raleigh's Channel 5 television stations. "Good Morning, Heart of Carolina" has been broadcast twice from the Princeton campus, and WRAL has visited to collect footage on the progress of Project STEP.