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Jeff Smith

## Reply

May 23, 2019, 1:14 PM

Mary Carver;

Rhonda Cuthbertson;

Will Hoffman

Work on the new Alternative Learning Program (ALP) building continued this week as contractors have the steel under structure of the building fully assembled on a concrete pad that was recently poured around plumbing and electrical rough-ins. Presently, the building is ready for roof and siding panels, already on site. Once the panels are in place, windows and doors will be installed and the building will be insulated. Work on the interior of the building is slated to begin over the summer as ALP Director Jeff Smith and his staff are set to begin classes in the new facility next academic year.

"Understandably, there is an incredible amount of energy and enthusiasm with our students right now as they begin to realize the full magnitude of the project and its implications for the future," Smith said. The building includes a large multi-purpose area, three classrooms, staff and student toilets, storage and a staff work area and will help the District serve a new ALP population for years to come.

On June 8 the 22-credit Program will graduate 17 students, two of whom will attend AB Tech this Fall and eight of which have been placed into jobs through the NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. While at the Program several students received their driver's licenses through a combination of online courses offered through the NC DMV and local resources. Two other students are pursuing entry level positions with the inside electrical division of MB Haynes. Two Program under graduates have enrolled in an AB Tech Certificate program offered at the Woodfin Campus over the Summer. Smith presented awards to six outstanding students during the MHS Senior Banquet and the Undergraduate Recognition Ceremony this past week. Students received awards for being student athletes, for extraordinary focus and direction, and for exemplary grades.

"Our students are phenomenal and, when taken into consideration with the new facility, we've reached a point where we're going to have to re-brand the school," Smith said. The ALP will begin next academic year as Velocity Learning Center.

"This just isn't the same environment that it was years ago." Smith indicates that the bulk of current students within the Program are there by choice and have, in fact, enrolled to take advantage of unique opportunities afforded to students. "Membership here is perfect for the high school student who is running a bit behind her cohort and is looking to catch up and set a path for Community College or to get a retirement-caliber job with a solid company like M.B. Haynes," Smith said.

As the building nears completion, Smith and other staff members continue efforts toward marketing Velocity as the new District ALP paradigm. "We look forward to watching this process unfold with some of the District's best students at hand."

Jeff Smith  
MHS Alternative School Director  
5740 US 25-70  
Marshall, NC 28753

"You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take."