

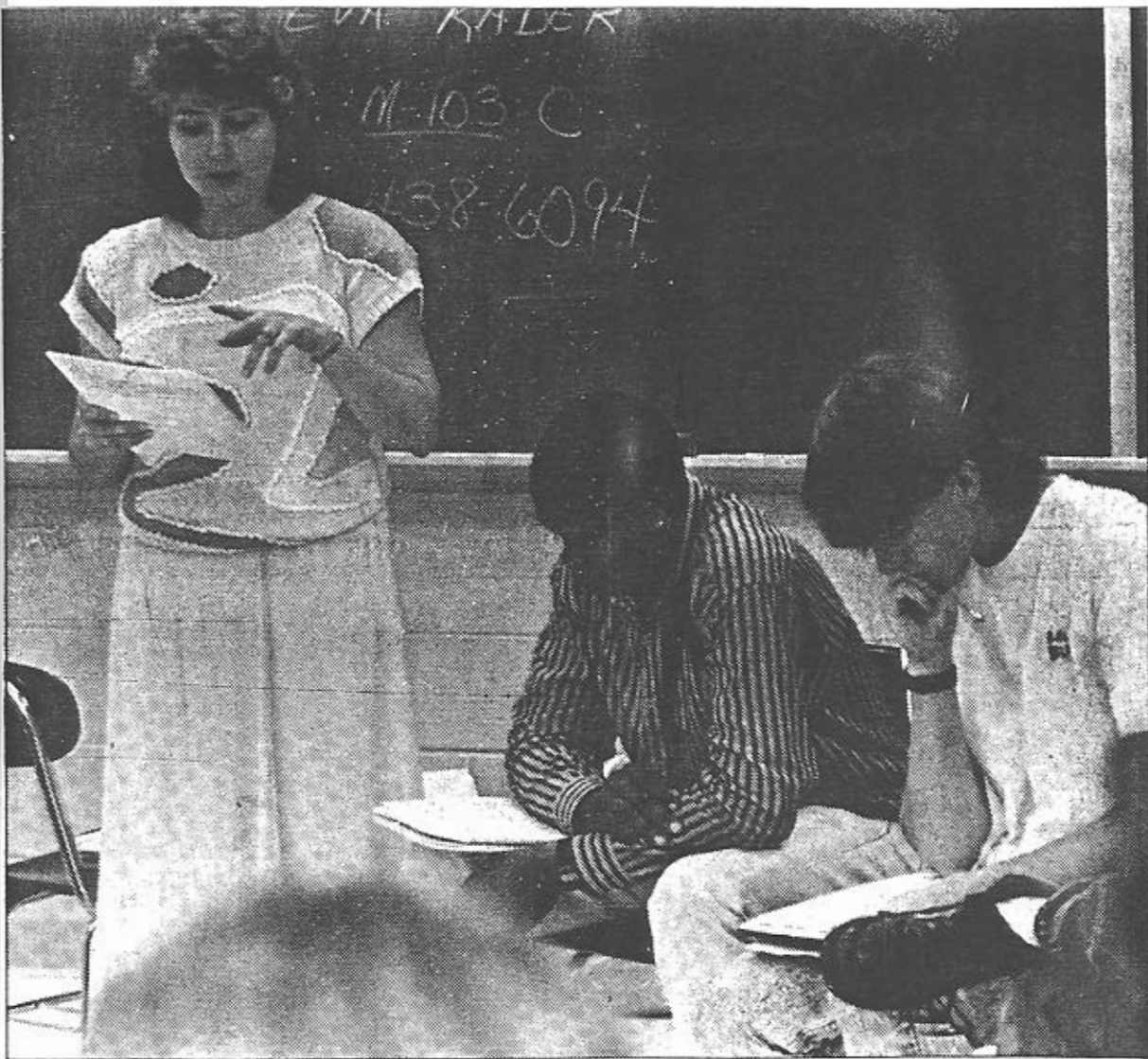


Photo by Mark Hannan

Drama and English instructor Eva Rader in new classroom space.

Phifer building now open

By LETA PARKS
News Herald Staff Writer

A dream came true for school officials at Western Piedmont Community College Wednesday as students attended classes for the first time in the new Phifer Learning Resources Center.

The \$4 million facility contains classrooms, faculty offices, a new library, a drama studio, rooms for audio-visual equipment and seminar rooms.

A special section of the library will house the furniture and books from the library of the late Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr.

Student Paula Shuping said Wednesday she liked the new building because, "The classrooms are larger; it's not as cramped in there and the hallways are bigger."

The student said she noticed overcrowding problems last year, saying her statistics class had 50 people in it.

As she stood outside her classroom waiting for a teacher to complete the first day's lesson, Shuping said benches near the classrooms would be a good idea so students could sit down as they waited for their classes to start.

Ken Clark, the school's vice president for administrative services, said in a telephone interview this

morning he thought the benches would be a good idea. "We're trying to cover all those bases," he said.

Bruce Wilson, who was also a student last year, said he noticed a "slight problem" of overcrowding last year. "We got moved around once in awhile," he said.

Sitting in his first class in the new facility, Wilson said, "I like this building a lot better; there's more classes."

"This big blue wall will keep me awake," he added as he pointed out the painted wall at the front of the room.

Amy Braswell also said she liked the colors in the new building. "It's a lot more cheery; the colors are brighter," she said.

The new drama studio and more windows were other features Braswell said she liked about the building, adding, "I wish all the buildings were like this."

As Janet Lawson stood in the hall near Braswell, she said, "The classrooms seem to be bigger and the sound is different — it's a lot quieter inside the classrooms."

Her classmate, Jerry Burgin, said he had noticed overcrowding problems last year. "We had a lot of overcrowding in English and math," he said.

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As for the adventure of going to class for the first day in the new building, Burgin said, "It's fun trying to find your classrooms and dodging construction workers."

Although the building has been completed ahead of schedule, only the classrooms are open at this point, and some last-minute details are still being completed.

Students got some help finding classes on their first day from Louise White, coordinator of the WPCC writing programs.

As she stood in the hall directing traffic and showing students to their classes, White said furniture for the faculty offices was being ordered this week, and will hopefully be in the offices by October.

The library and other facilities in the new building will probably be ready for use by the latter part of October, said Clark this morning.

Meanwhile, teachers are working in their old offices, said Eva Rader, who teaches English and drama.

Rader described the new, larger offices the faculty

will soon have, saying, "I think they're just fabulous. The whole building is just fabulous."

Before the new facility was built, scheduling was a problem as teachers and college officials looked for places where classes could meet, Rader said. "It had just been really tight," she said. "This (building) certainly gives us the opportunity to spread out a little more."

The new facility will also make the college more accessible for off-campus groups, Rader said.

The drama teacher excitedly described the new drama studio, saying, "It's going to give us the chance to work with new equipment." Students can also learn to work in a different setting than the small stage formerly used for productions.

As students work with more equipment and a bigger setting, "They'll be better prepared," she said.

Another former problem for the drama department was trying to schedule rehearsals on what was previously the only stage the college had. "We're expecting not to have so many scheduling problems now," said Rader.