



## Backpack budgets on the rise

### School supply lists top \$65; doesn't tax money pay for this stuff?

BY CHRISTOPHER MCKAGEN  
Morning News  
cmckagen@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — South Carolina's tax-free weekend starts today, an economy-boosting special event that is ostensibly designed to coincide with the need to re-stock the old bookbag before the school year begins. In theory parents and students will pour into the stores, wiping the shelves clean of pencils, glue sticks, notebooks and more.

Many parents will be armed with supply lists, distributed by schools so that kids — and apparently schools, too — will be prepared.

Supply lists for Florence School District 1 elementary schools vary considerably. The Morning News took a sampling of them to the store and rang up ballpark purchase prices. Trying to shop judiciously — no Five Star brand here — still found it cost as much as \$70 to check off all the items on some lists.

That, plus the fact that some of the lists included items like dry erase markers, copy paper and up to 96 pencils per student, suggests a question that may be on some parents' mind: Isn't the school district, along with their hard-earned tax dollars, supposed to be paying for some of this?

Pam Garris, a mother shopping Thursday at the South Irby Street Walmart for three children

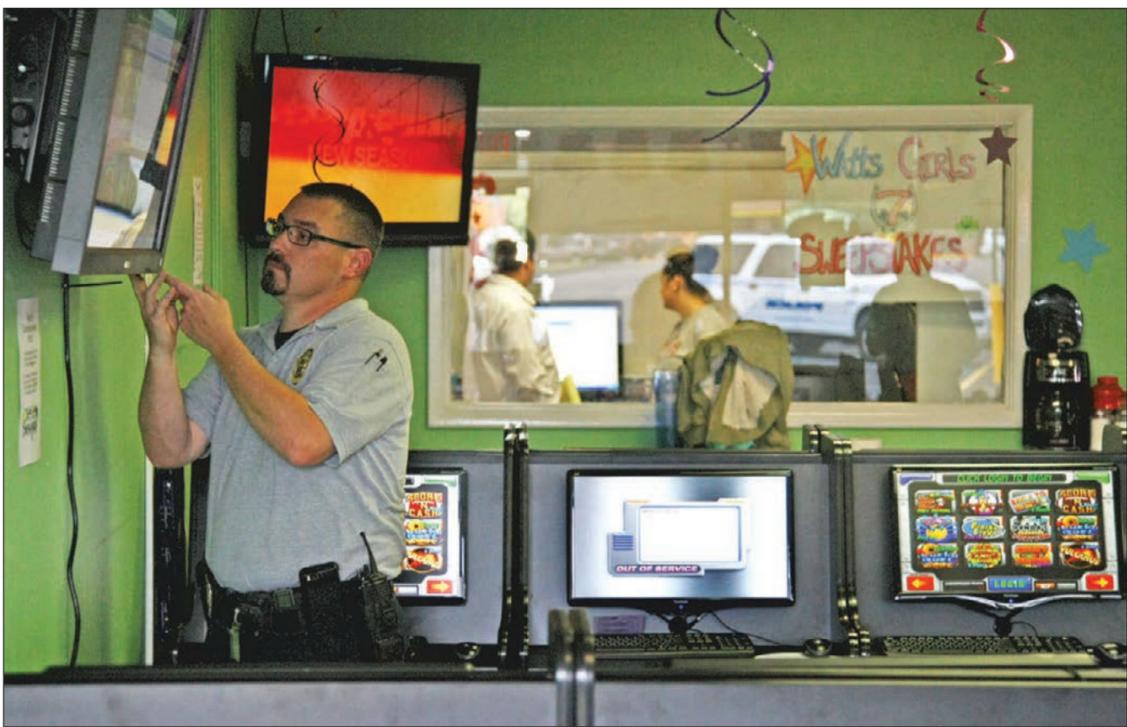
See **BUDGET**, Page 10A



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS MCKAGEN/MORNING NEWS

School supply lists for Florence School District 1 elementary schools could cost parents approximately \$20 to \$70 or more, depending on the school. The district's schools will also spend money on supplies this year, more than \$1.37 million.

## SWEPT AWAY?



PHOTOS BY GAVIN JACKSON/MORNING NEWS

Sgt. Michael Brandt with the Florence Police Department inspects a flat-screen television during a raid Thursday at a sweepstakes parlor in the Hallmark Square Shopping Center. Multiple law enforcement agencies worked in coordination throughout the area.

## Authorities double down on sweepstakes

### Several Florence parlors raided, but no charges filed yet

BY TRACI BRIDGES  
Morning News  
tbridges@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — State and local law enforcement agents raided several sweepstakes parlors Thursday across Florence County as the launch of a multi-agency effort to rid South Carolina of what the attorney general has deemed illegal gambling machines.

Florence police officers confiscated about 90 machines from two different sweepstakes businesses, one on West Evans Street and one in Hallmark Square on South Irby Street.

Meanwhile, farther south on Irby, Florence County sheriff's deputies were serving search warrants on two other businesses, where they seized approximately 70 computers used to play the games, as well as other assets used in the operations.

State Law Enforcement Division agents participated in the raids, and representatives from the S.C. Attorney



Police crime scene unit members Steve Starling, Shannon Hill and Sgt. Michael Brandt cart off CPUs on Thursday from a sweepstakes parlor in the Hallmark Square Shopping Center. Multiple law enforcement agencies worked in coordination throughout the area.

General's Office were on hand, as well.

The investigation, in its beginning stages, is a multi-agency effort of the Florence Police Department, the Florence County Sheriff's Office, SLED and the A.G.'s Office, Florence Police Chief Anson Shells said.

At this point, machines are being confiscated and will be stored. Charges are a possibility in the future but none have been filed at this point in the investigation.

"We've had a lot of concerns about these places popping up all over Florence County, and we do believe

these are gambling machines," Shells said. "The Attorney General's opinion is that they are illegal. SLED is enforcing the law upon the attorney general's recommendation, and we'll follow the state's lead on this."

See **PARLORS**, Page 10A

# Many Pee Dee schools still lag

### Three districts get 'F' in new state scoring system

BY ELLEN MEDER  
Morning News  
emed@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — Average test scores in South Carolina increased in every subject tested by the elementary and middle school end-of-year test, the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS), according to state results released Thursday but most districts in the Pee Dee continue to lag state averages.

That regional difficulties were also reflected in the results of a new federal accountability grading system, in which three of the Pee Dee's 14 districts received an "F" and two earned an "A."

PASS is given to students in third through eighth grade in four subjects — English, math, science and social studies — and receive a grade of either "exemplary," "met" or "not met," where the first two grades constitute passing. Students in fifth and eighth grade also completed a writing section this year.

State Education Superintendent Mick Zais' biggest concern Thursday morning was low scores in reading comprehension, particularly in the third grade. Since 2009 when the PASS test was first implemented, the third-grade passing rates for English have hovered around 80 percent, coming in at 80.3 this year.

"In general we teach children how to read between kindergarten and third grade. Between fourth grade and 12th grade, they read to learn and reading is not taught as a formal subject," Zais said. "So if a student goes into fourth grade and hasn't learned to read yet, it's unlikely that not only will they learn their science or social studies, they'll have trouble reading their math books. I don't think we do our students a service by promoting them to fourth grade still functionally illiterate."

In the Pee Dee, most districts fell below that state average, with exception of Darlington, Florence 1 and Florence 5 (Johnsonville). Most districts were in

### More Inside

» Williamsburg schools will appeal 'F'. 10A

See **SCHOOLS**, Page 12A



Join us on Facebook

Become a fan of the Morning News!  
www.facebook/morningnews

**2012 SPECIAL PURCHASE!**

**CHEVROLET TAHOE LT**

**\$34,980**

LOW AS ...

**KING** 1700 West Evans Street FLORENCE 662-3296 kingflorencegm.com

## INDEX

Vol. 89, No. 216; Florence, S.C.

- BUSINESS, 6B
- COMICS, 5B
- CROSSWORD, 4C
- HOROSCOPE, 4B
- OBITUARIES, 9A
- OPINION, 11A
- TV, 4B

THE BEST CLASSIFIEDS IN THE PEE DEE

PAGE 1C. CALL 317-SELL



7 51161 11005 9