

As schools promote themes, it's fair to remind that:

Teachers count most

– “Researchers in Dallas found ... the difference in average reading scores between students consecutively assigned to three highly effective teachers and similar students assigned to three ineffective teachers was more than 35 percentile points. In mathematics, the difference on test scores was a full 50 percentile points.”

– “Eye of the Storm: Promising Practices for Improving Instruction,”
Council for Basic Education, October 2001

– “There is a false sense of confidence among principals.... They assume that if a child is put with a poor teacher that putting them with a good teacher the next year will make up the difference. In light of these data, this is a false hope. Two years of good teachers and they have not made it back to the top yet. Three years of good teachers and they have only a 1 in 8 chance of equaling the top.”

– Follow-up Dallas, Texas research to that cited in “Eye of the Storm”: “Policy Implications of Long-Term Teacher Effects on Student Achievement,” a paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, April 1998

U.S. releases data on teacher education programs. Page 4

Making school the center of a community

Search on for ways to link parents more closely to their children's education

From Huntersville to Bruns Avenue to Hawk Ridge, parents are thinking through their ties to their local public school. Every school being reshaped by the new student assignment plan for next fall needs to be forging new links with the community it serves.

In many cases, these links are well-developed and have long been nurtured by well-educated, actively engaged parents with time and money to invest in their children's schools.

The challenges ahead lie more directly for schools facing high family turnover, few educational and economic resources at home and, in some cases, a gaping cultural divide between staff and parents that's often made more difficult by parents' bitter memories of problems at school when they were growing up.

Many schools successfully reach out to their parents. But some struggle. And dozens of schools this fall face a total upheaval in their student and parent populations.

One program that has been successful in cementing strong ties is the Alliance Schools Initiative, now based in Austin, Texas.

In 2000, the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore honored the Alliance effort. Here are excerpts of how they described the program, then in more than 100

Continued on Page 2

Elbow-to-elbow at the Showcase

Saturday's CMS Showcase of Schools drew thousands of parents and children, and hundreds of staff to the Merchandise Mart event inaugurating the system's 2002 student assignment plan. Below, some notes and comments from Educate! readers:

A cavernous space divided by sheets of red, purple, green, and yellow. Lots of noise. A good many smiles. Kids enjoying the freebies that range from hard candy to pencils to magnets. A lot of intense conversations between parents and booth volunteers. Parents taking notes. A few super salespeople who catch your eye as

you stroll along and invite you to their booths. A variety of nonhuman eyecatchers at different booths, but with a preponderance of VCRs and that old educational standby: posters. Hordes of people – predominantly white, but lots of blacks, as well as Asians and Latinos. Pretty overwhelmingly middle class. Spanish-speaking staff placed strategically in the aisles. A quieter area at one end of the hall where you can sit down with CMS staffers, some with computers, and choose your school on the spot. If you don't want to do it face to face, there's a bank of phones too. But at midmorning

Continued on Page 3

To new readers of *Educate!*

a free community journal
on public education in
Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Welcome to this week's edition. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen interested in the welfare of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. To be removed from our mailing list, send a "Remove" message to SwannFello@aol.com

Educate! is published by The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204. Voice: 704-342-4330 Fax: 704-342-4550. E-mail: SwannFello@aol.com Lucy Bush, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president. Published since September 2000. Six-week average circulation through last issue: 2,460.

The name: The Swann Fellowship was named for Darius and Vera Swann, who on behalf of their son James became the lead plaintiffs in *Swann vs. Mecklenburg* in the 1960s. Darius Swann was the first African American Presbyterian missionary ever assigned outside of Africa. His experiences in India led him to appreciate the value of an integrated society for human development.

The vision: As people of faith, our vision is that all children in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system will have excellent educational opportunities which are both equitable and integrated.

The background: Formed in 1997 out of several Charlotte religious congregations, the Fellowship focuses on being a witness to the value of diversity, and educating the public on public school issues as they relate to this and allied subjects. The Swann Fellowship is a nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code 56-2106776. Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 1-888-830-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the state.

School as the center of a community

Continued from Page 1

schools in seven states:

"At Alliance schools, the payoff occurs when parents become full partners who are as interested in innovative educational theories as the educational experts themselves.... And, the confidence parents gain as they help direct their children's education tends to spill over into every aspect of the family's life....

"The Alliance's secret isn't mysterious. It lies less in parent involvement than in parent engagement....

"Last year, from its base in Austin, the Alliance was active in 118 schools in Texas that enrolled 80,000 students – 95 percent of whom are Latino and African American, and 83 percent of whom are from economically disadvantaged families who have little income, little formal education, and little hope that schools will be responsive to their needs.

"Through door-to-door organizing, house meetings, block meetings, and parish and school meetings, Alliance leaders work to make schools the center of the communities and, in so doing, put the families and their communities at the center of change in the schools. Its goal is not just to change the system of education, but to change the culture of schools and the entire neighborhood.

"Community organizers form

the backbone of the Alliance efforts. Acting as gentle but persistent agitators, organizers are hired and trained to discover the mutual interests of everyone who has a stake in the school....

"With regular conversations and training sessions, Alliance organizers teach parents that accountability does not mean blaming educators and administrators, but means taking responsibility for negotiating solutions with them. Through these efforts, Alliance schools have helped families find a way to help one another to restructure the school-community relationship.

"Alliance schools have adopted new curriculums, spurred teachers to greater creativity, and involved parents in teacher training."

And yes, the Alliance schools report higher test scores.

The keys, the Casey Foundation wrote, are that "principals see themselves as leaders of an educational team, and teachers feel free to employ creative ideas in the classroom. It is a process that turns families and members of the community into educational reform leaders. And, most of all, it results in a school where the collaboration involving families is real and the benefit for each student is evident."

The Charlotte chapter of HELP, Helping Empower Local People, is looking at how the Alliance approach might be used here, first in a pilot program. For more information, contact HELP at 2348 Keller Ave., Charlotte, 28216 or 704-395-2831.

Sound off! for quality education

Your words in support of a quality, equitable, integrated education can help make the case for community support of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Pick up your pen! Or get your mouse in motion! Here's information on how to submit your letters to area media.

The Charlotte Post: By e-mail: thepost@clt.mindspring.com; by fax: 704-342-2160; by mail: Editor, The Charlotte Post, 1531 Camden Road, Charlotte, NC 28203-4783.

Showcase draws thousands Saturday

Continued from Page 1

the phone bank was empty. A good sign.

It happened! What a major event! Has there ever been anything quite like it here? Putting on the Southern Christmas Show must be nothing compared to this.

Snapshots were being taken. Parents with staff at the booth. Staff with kids at the booth. These looked like bonds being reinforced – amid the din of bonds being formed.

What do you do if you're a school with a disappearing magnet and an older school building? Is the person who's been principal of the magnet going to be back next year? One of the two teachers at the booth will be returning (she was there long before the magnet), but the other may not. The student population will be completely different. How do you sell this? It's my home school, but I'm looking at magnets instead.

What will happen at a school that may be only half full next fall? A staffer at the booth says she doesn't know, they haven't been told. About one thing or another, everyone seems to be in the dark.

What attracts attention to a particular school's booth? I'm strolling along down the corridors of choice zones amidst lots of VCRs and other great technology and suddenly a vase of fresh flowers catches my eye. Then I see it's the booth for the one of the Montessori magnets. Aaaah. Maybe there's something to choice after all.

A fifth-grader watches the images pop on a display screen in a middle school booth. She's very noncommittal about how things

are going this year at elementary school. She's smiling at what she sees on the screen.

What a random way to choose a school! You can't help but hope that parents who are attracted to a school at its booth will go to those schools' open houses, will visit the schools' classrooms, will see the principals in action at the schools. Otherwise, you might as well stick a pin in the map.

Pretty much everyone agrees that this home school/choice plan approach will resegment this CMS system that was once a national example of school integration. Several of the school booths previewed that, not only through the staff members and volunteers on hand, but also

through the photos and videos of students. At several southeast Charlotte elementary school booths, the faces were all white; at other, westside elementaries, the faces were all black. These kids won't meet each other until they get to middle or even high school. Will they be able to be friends then? Will there be more schools like these southeast Charlotte or westside schools in the future? Let's hope not.

LOTS of hardworking CMS staff! Not just schoolhouse staff, but administrative staff too. You can bet these people aren't making overtime. Thanks to all!

Superintendent Eric Smith is making the rounds: "I guess I'll

Continued on Page 4

Family Choice Calendar

- 8** Family Application Centers open to answer questions and provide assistance. Bilingual staff. 9 a.m. to noon, media centers at Garinger High (back entrance), Hopewell High, Waddell High and West Charlotte High.
- 15** Family Application Centers open to answer questions and provide assistance. Bilingual staff. 9 a.m. to noon, media centers at Garinger High (back entrance), Hopewell High, Waddell High and West Charlotte High.

January

- 5** Family Application Centers open to answer questions and provide assistance. Bilingual staff. 9 a.m. to noon, media centers at Garinger High (back entrance), Hopewell High, Waddell High and West Charlotte High.
- 18** Deadline for applications.

4 Ways to Apply

- 1** Apply online at www.cms.k12.nc.us.
- 2** Apply through the automated phone line at 704-444-8157.
- 3** Visit one of the Family Application Centers Dec. 8, 15, Jan. 5.
- 4** Return application to your child's current school.

U.S. releases data from states on teacher preparation

The week brought the annual release of Title II data on the quality of teacher preparation programs. A new twist this year: It's all online at www.title2.org.

The data deals mostly with state requirements for teacher programs; licensing issues; and how teacher standards are being realigned to match testing standards for students. The standards vary widely among the states.

Below is data from a variety of states on the number of teachers in classrooms who have not completed licensing procedures. The reasons for noncompletion can range from failure to pass mandated tests, to participation in lateral-entry programs. North



Carolina, for example, reported a 48% increase in the last three years of lateral-entry teachers – in general, people in mid-career who have chosen to be in the state's classrooms. The category also includes SB 1124 alternative entry licenses given to people filling critical-need positions. If rehired for a second year, SB 1124 licensees convert to clear license without further educational requirements.

North Carolina is a net importer of new teachers. For 1999-2000, 52% of those receiving initial certification were trained out of state.

Showcase draws thousands Saturday

Continued from Page 3

have lost my voice by the end of the day. You can't just stop at one school and not stop at the others. Isn't this great though!"

Resegregation begins now. Everybody's real nice, but how long with the nice ones stay? When today's shiny new schools and fancy computers are out of date, will everybody be voting for new bond issues?

The 4-year-old could not be coaxed into going over to hug the mascot in plush. But that's OK: The child was beaming from ear to ear just at the possibility. That's education. And perhaps inside that mascot head, on the face of a teacher or parent, there lurked yet another smile.

Tracking the teacher shortage

A sampling of states' percentages of teachers in classrooms on waivers or without a regular initial certificate or license, as reported to federal authorities in October.

	Calif.	N.C.	Texas	N.Y.	Ga.	Va.	S.C.	Miss.	Conn.
State totals	16.0	15.7	11.5	9.8	9.6	6.8	5.4	5.4	0.1
High-poverty districts	22.7	18.0	12.7	17.0	5.1	NA	5.4	8.8	0.1
All other districts	13.0	15.4	11.2	3.8	4.6	NA	5.4	4.8	0.1
Elementary	15.4	10.0	9.5	5.4	2.2	5.4	1.8	1.6	0.0
Arts – all levels	7.5	11.2	11.0	11.8	3.0	6.9	6.7	4.2	0.2
ESL – all levels	2.7	42.7	14.7	5.5	10.6	14.1	13.1	NA	NA
Special ed. – all levels	36.3	13.0	12.8	8.3	13.1	17.9	12.7	16.4	0.1
Career/technical	0.0	15.6	12.4	16.1	6.8	8.8	11.2	NA	0.0
Language arts	11.4	7.2	11.2	9.8	4.5	7.1	2.8	2.0	0.0
Foreign languages	18.3	19.5	17.0	12.8	13.7	10.6	19.2	10.3	0.3
Mathematics	16.5	11.3	12.9	9.3	4.1	8.2	6.3	2.8	0.0
Science	23.1	14.4	14.5	11.3	6.9	10.3	9.4	2.7	0.1
Social studies	13.6	8.0	11.7	6.9	1.9	6.7	3.5	1.8	0.1

Source: U.S. Department of Education. Full reports on each state are posted at www.title2.org

School board puts more of the choice policies into place

As the school board finished work last week on the policies behind the new student assignment plan, conversation focused on school capacity limits and transportation.

On transportation, the rules were altered to give the superintendent some leeway to provide transportation if possible for children who move out of their choice zone during the year but wish to remain at their old school.

Board Notes

On capacity, the board explored issues critical to two different groups of parents.

One issue relates to schools serving low-income neighborhoods, where the board has promised to operate smaller classrooms. The policy now specifies that schoolhouse capacity should take into consideration the needs to keep classes small both for low-income and low-performing children, and for those in exceptional children's programs.

The second issue relates to sought-after slots at overcrowded schools, mostly on the county's perimeter.

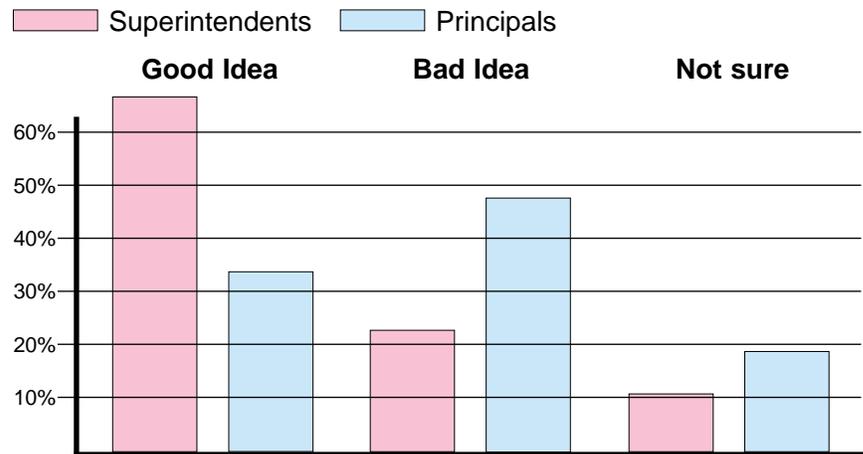
Supt. Eric Smith asked the board to wait to act until after Jan. 18, when parent choice forms for next year are due, saying he wants "as much choice and parental input as possible ... to let people get what they choose."

But board member Wilhelmenia Rembert extracted a pledge that "at some point there will be limits" on how many children will be assigned to a school, even if it means some children who sought their "home" school will be shifted elsewhere. "There definitely are limits," Smith acknowledged. Rembert implied that staff at some potentially oversubscribed schools believe they are unable to provide a good learning environ-

Accountability for test scores

The polling analysis firm Public Agenda, co-founded by Daniel Yankelovich, recently published its findings on superintendent and principal attitudes about school leadership. A question from the survey:

"Generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to hold principals accountable for student standardized test scores at the building level?"



Source: "Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership," November 2001 by Public Agenda, www.publicagenda.org

ment because of the crush of children.

According to CMS documents, if all Hawk Ridge parents in the attendance area choose the school by Jan. 18, the school will be at 175% of capacity.

The board also clarified for the public that the plan's economic diversity priority would work in both directions. Parents on subsidized lunch have a priority in the choice lottery for schools at which their child's presence would boost a low school percentage for low-income children, without tipping the school above 50%. Now, parents not on subsidized lunch have the same priority in the lottery to attend schools with high percentages of low-income children.

There was an arcane discussion of "wait pools" and "wait lists," an issue of vast importance to parents who don't get into their first choice school during the March lottery and under current policy won't really know what the odds are of getting in before the

end of next fall's first quarter. But we'll save that for another day.

In materials prepared for the board's designation of October's Bus Driver of the Month, recipient LaShawn Hope, who has ferried pre-kindergartners since 1999, was quoted as saying about the work, "I enjoy it because I am exposed to children ... who are looking for someone to listen to them. I hope I can be a positive role model by being a good bus driver and listener."

The new graduation requirements alter a stumbling block for some students with full schedules. Staff had identified, and parent Norm Gundel recently highlighted, a problem with turning a requirement for some sort of communications project into a full credit course. The new requirement allows the staff to make the project part of any existing course. Historically, it's been part of 12th grade English, but may now gravitate lower in the high school experience.

Briefs

Truants: Chicago Public Schools has an overall 95% attendance rate. But some schools have rates as low as 50%, the Chicago Tribune reported. The school board last week ordered that parents or guardians of kids out for more than 18 days without an excuse face hearings with counselors. Refusals to attend may lead to referral to the state's attorney's office for prosecution under the state mandatory attendance law.

www.chicagotribune.com

Lower expectations: Last week, the Virginia Board of Education lowered the passing scores on 8 of its 32 Standards of Learning tests: fifth grade, eighth grade, middle or high school World History II and high school U.S. History. A spokesman told the Richmond Times-Dispatch that the last four years of scores had fallen short of expectations.

www.timesdispatch.com

Higher dropouts: Ontario's two-year-old tougher high school curriculum is increasing the number of students failing or leaving school, The Toronto Star reported. The percentage of 9th-graders not earning the required 8 credits has risen to 24%, up from 15%. Among general-level students taking "applied" courses, it's risen to 44% from 30%. The education ministry is talking about extending high school to a fifth year so more students can graduate.

www.thestar.com

Grading each other: U.S. Supreme Court justices appeared to have little patience last week with plaintiffs who charge that a 1970s law should forbid Oklahoma teachers from having students grade each other's quizzes, on the grounds that such disclosure of a student's grade violates the privacy of the grade

Doing Science

Average U.S. science scores by how often students work with others, by grade level:

	4th	8th
Never	143	141
Monthly	147	149
Weekly	154	156
Daily	159	150

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2000 Science Assessment

book and a school's "education record." The New York Times reported that Justice Breyer recalled that a third-grade teacher he admired announced to the class that "she would put a negative check mark on his report card – a useful disciplinary technique, he said, that today might violate a broadly interpreted Buckley amendment."

www.nytimes.com

Better proof: The Arizona Board of Education last week rejiggered its formulas for determining a low-performing school, the Republic reported. A three-year rolling average in test results will be used for elementaries, while high schools will be evaluated on the average of the two most recent graduating class-

es. Schools judged low-performing under the new standard are subject to takeover by an outside organization such as a better-performing school district, a nonprofit, a college or a private business.

www.arizonarepublic.com

Latino services: United Methodist Urban Services Inc. is the lead agency for the Massachusetts Education Initiative for Latino Students (MEILS). The federally funded operation seeks to create local education agendas in the state's 15 cities with high concentrations of Latinos, "to ensure high-level educational achievements for Latino students, from preschoolers to lifelong learners."

www.gbqm-umc.org/urbanservices

Cutting back: California always seems to be on the cutting edge. And in the post-Sept. 11 economy, cutting is everywhere. The New York Times found: California cuts in afterschool literacy programs for non-English speakers; New York eliminations of Saturday sessions for underperforming kids; Virginia delays in textbook purchases and in teacher salary increases; and Tennessee rescheduling of building repairs. Calif. Supt Delaine Eastin was quoted as saying, "It's the poor schools that are being so badly hit. They were starved for a quarter-century. They were just starting to come back."

www.nytimes.com

Calendar

- 4** Marian Wright Edelman to receive 2001 Citizen of the Carolinas award at Charlotte Chamber annual meeting, 7 p.m., Convention Center.
- 11** Installation of new school board members, 5 p.m., Board Room. Board meeting, 6 p.m. Board Room.
- 13** Curriculum Committee, 9:30 a.m., Board Conference Room.
- 18** Policy Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 19** Last day of school for the year. Resumption date: Jan. 2, 2002