

## Scores sorted by parent's education reveal new test gap

CMS trails the state average in the percentage of students at or above grade level in Algebra I, and the achievement gap widens as education levels of the children's parents rise.

And unlike other achievement gaps, this one could have nothing to do with race or socioeconomics.

Results for Algebra I end-of-

course tests sorted by the educational attainment of the parents of each student show that CMS scores trail the state average in all five primary categories of parental education: no high school degree, high school degree, community college, four-year college and graduate school. Charts of the results begin on page 5.

Many test-score gaps widen among at-risk groups, but the CMS gap in Algebra I widens with the children of its most educated parents: Only 63% of CMS's 1,139 Algebra I students with a parent who's been to graduate school scored at or above grade level last year, 25 percentage

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Dust flies at Elizabeth Elementary off Park Drive as demolition workers finish clearing a one-story annex last week, part of an \$11.3 million renovation of the 1925 building and construction of new space. The school is meeting at old Druid Hills until the scheduled August 2003 reopening.

## N.C.'s Leandro appeal could aid at-risk kids

Gov. Mike Easley last week decided to seek legal certainty in a lawsuit that could remake how N.C. schoolchildren are taught.

By asking the N.C. Supreme Court to review April's Superior Court ruling in the long-running Leandro case, Easley said he hoped to give educators a definitive road map on how to meet the educational needs of all children.

The review may take a year, but lawyers involved in the case did not interpret Easley's move as a delaying tactic. Instead, they saw it as a way to assure statewide implementation of reforms designed to get every child on grade level in a state that leaves many thousands of its at-risk children functionally illiterate.

With the state facing huge budget cuts, there was little prospect of additional money for education in the short run. Some observers expect that resolution of the legal issues will dovetail with an improving economy next year, and then, as one said, "the moment of truth will have arrived."

Lawyers were also relieved that

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## Been superintendent for how long?

The public's notion that schools can't keep superintendents for very long may have less basis in fact than in, well, fiction.

In "Myth of the Revolving-Door Superintendency" published by the American Association of School Administrators, the authors assert that superintendents not only stay longer than believed, but that the myth of quick turnover has eroded confidence among the public "that

superintendents can provide a sustained force for educational change."

The myth of the mini-superintendency may have its genesis in a study from the Council of Great City Schools. AASA says council member districts were asked how long their current superintendents had served. The answer, for 48 superintendents, was 2.33 years. The finding received wide

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## From Readers

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### N.C. demonstrations to demand changes in high-stakes testing

*The writer is fair testing project coordinator for Raleigh-based Common Sense Foundation.*

Parents, teachers and community activists from across the state will demand changes to the high-stakes testing program. The Week of Action is sponsored by the Common Sense Foundation's Fair Testing Project. Make your voice heard: May 13 in Rocky Mount; May 14 in Morehead City and in Charlotte at 5 p.m. at the Education Center; May 16 in Wilson and Winston-Salem; May 17 in Chapel Hill; May 20 in Raleigh and May 21 in Durham.

Daniella Cook

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### **Educate!** a journal on public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

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.

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## Gauvreau goes public with details of closed-session personnel talks

School board member Larry Gauvreau revealed to the Charlotte Observer late last week details of a Wednesday night school board executive session, including the substance of contract discussions involving the schools' two senior executives.

Gauvreau's action could complicate any future search for top school leadership, because it may lead potential applicants not to apply if they fear having their interest in any position become public knowledge.

On Saturday, the Observer reported that Gauvreau said:

– The board rejected an offer from Supt. Eric Smith to resign effective June 30 if he were paid through Dec. 31. Smith is negotiating with the Anne Arundel County, Maryland school board, but by Wednesday had not signed a contract. Smith's suggestion

would have allowed the board to move ahead on replacing Smith, while giving Smith six months of income for a new job search should contract talks with Anne Arundel break down.

– The board authorized their chairman, Arthur Griffin, to ask Deputy Supt. Jim Pughsley if he would be interested in a two-year contract as superintendent should Smith leave. Pughsley is a candidate for the superintendency in Charlottesville, Va.

When Wednesday night's executive session broke up, reporters surrounded Griffin at his car under the Education Center. They asked for details of the meeting, even requesting that he characterize the tone of the meeting.

Griffin replied that he believed it would be illegal for him to reveal details of the executive session.

## Underwrite an edition of *Educate!*

Individuals, community groups and businesses interested in supporting the publication of this community journal should inquire about our underwriting program. Let our readers know that you support quality public schools for all children, and the kind of regular communication about school issues that *Educate!* is striving to deliver.

For more information, call Steve Johnston at 704-342-4330, message him at [sjohnston@educateclt.org](mailto:sjohnston@educateclt.org), or read the "You Can Help" page at [www.educateclt.org](http://www.educateclt.org).

# Governor will appeal Leandro provisions

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Easley Thursday said he would not seek a “stay” of Judge Howard Manning’s ruling.

Manning ordered the state to make reports every 90 days on its progress in delivering a “sound basic education” to all children.

Lawyers said that, without a stay, educators could begin planning what it would take to improve the state’s schools, even while the N.C. Supreme Court decides exactly what standards it must meet.

In a letter to Attorney General Roy Cooper, Easley wrote:

“I am pleased that a trial court has now embraced education policy goals consistent with our agenda of early childhood initiatives for at-risk kids and smaller classes. However, I am concerned that the State Supreme Court has never addressed whether they are constitutionally guaranteed. In addition, the trial court’s pronouncements on teacher certification and local control may not have been anticipated by the Supreme Court’s original ruling in this case. Thus, without a definitive Supreme Court ruling now, future Leandro-based lawsuits before other trial judges (or juries) may be decided differently.”

Jack Boger, a UNC Law School professor who participated in Manning’s last hearing in the case, said that without a stay, the state could begin:

- Listing, district-by-district, the children covered by the ruling. Manning decided that test scores showing below-grade-level achievement were sufficient proof that a child had been denied a constitutional right to a sound basic education. He left it to the governor and legislator to decide what would be necessary to bring each of these children to grade level.

- Identifying the programs in

each district that have shown promise of raising achievement levels.

- Planning how to help all teachers become certified, and how to retrain them to meet the needs of at-risk children.

Easley wants the Supreme Court to decide whether Manning was correct when he ruled that a sound basic education requires that every teacher have met N.C. certification requirements; that at-risk children require smaller class sizes; and that the state must take over local school systems if necessary to get all children, including “the best and the brightest,” an education appropriate to each.

“A ‘fast track’ appeal will allow the state to get a definitive decision quickly and avoid continued

protracted litigation,” Easley wrote.

The Leandro case was filed in 1994 by five counties that argued that, because schools were financed in part by local property taxes and their counties’ tax bases were small, their children were being deprived an education equal to what wealthier counties provided. Six high-wealth counties later joined the suit, saying they bore a disproportionate load paying the higher costs of educating at-risk children. Attorneys for the state, meanwhile, argued that the constitutional mandate for a sound basic education was met even if children were below grade level.

The text of Manning’s April ruling was in the April 7 edition of *Educate!*, which may be downloaded at [www.educateclt.org](http://www.educateclt.org).

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

The courts have closed long-running school assignment litigation. Supt. Eric Smith has his eye on a job in Maryland. A new choice plan is about to be implemented. Budget cuts loom. The promise of equity is at risk.

You are cordially invited to attend any one of the following upcoming meetings to discuss our school system and its future.

### Time

Monday, May 6  
7 p.m.

Tuesday, May 7  
7 p.m.

### Convenor and location

Steve Johnston at Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 3201 Tuckaseegee Road

Julian Wright at Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church, Hope Building, 600 Seigle Ave., corner of Seigle and 10th St. in Belmont neighborhood

If your group would like to co-sponsor an event and have it publicized here, please call Steve Johnston at 704-342-4330.

### The Swann Fellowship

1510 E. 7th St. Charlotte, NC 28204-2410 704-342-4330  
Publisher of *Educate!*, a community journal  
on education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

# Superintendents stay about 5 years in job

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publicity nationally.

But the council's study was of incumbents; their tenures hadn't ended. The 2.33 years automatically understated the ultimate tenure of the 48 superintendents.

If the seed of the myth was planted by the Council of Great City Schools, it was fed by a 1994 article in Executive Educator.

That article, written by Jack McKay and Marilyn Grady, asserted that there was a "three-year cycle of dismissal, search and selection, reorganization and dismissal again" that was "the greatest single hindrance to improving the quality of our schools." But the AASA notes that the article offered no proof of such a cycle.

To attempt to resolve the issue,

AASA sought data since 1975 for 468 school districts ranging in size from about 1,000 to more than 50,000. The survey yielded information on 44% of the districts, and 1,103 superintendents.

The group's findings, published the May edition of AASA's School Administrator magazine:

- Median tenure between 1990-1994 was 6.5 years.

- Tenure has changed little since 1975-79, when it was 7.5 years.

- Tenure varies little from rural to suburban to urban districts, at least for the size districts studied.

The article, written by six authors led by Gerald Natkin, also summarized earlier research findings:

- A 1996 study of 25 large districts by Gary Yee and Larry Cuban found an average tenure of 5.76 years for superintendents who had been serving in 1990.

- A Fordham University study in 2000 of surveys from 1,688

superintendents found a tenure of 7.25 years. The tenure in the 88 largest districts was 4.71 years.

- In 2000, an AASA study by a University of Memphis prof of 2,232 superintendents estimated that tenure averaged five to six years.

- The Council of Urban Boards of Education, surveying 77 of its member school districts, found that the most recently completed superintendency was five years long.

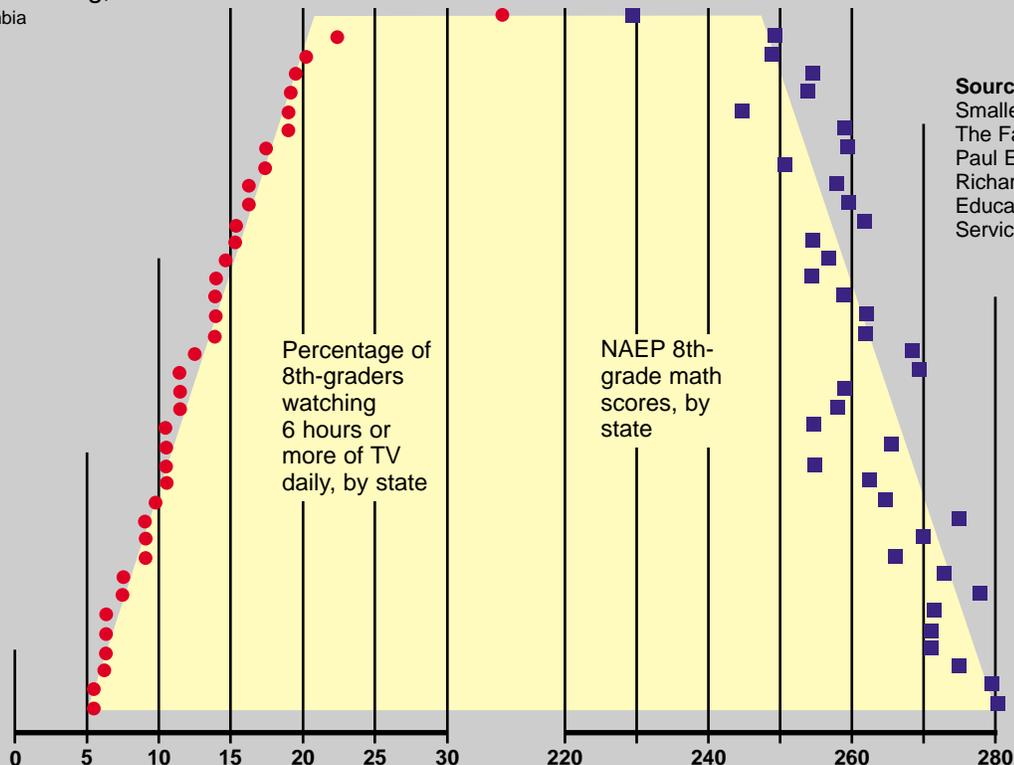
The authors of the study called on the media "to focus on undoing the damage caused by the long-standing, erroneous belief in the instability of top leadership.

"This effort is vital to making the superintendency more attractive, to assuring an adequate supply of top system leaders for the future, and to communicating to educators and the public that superintendents can provide a sustained force for educational change."

## A Perennial: Television watching and academic achievement

Chart shows 38 states' percentage in 1990 of 8th-graders watching six hours or more of TV per day, and their average score on the NAEP math test. South Carolina was not in the study. Conclusion: The more watching, the lower the math scores. No similar data from Census 2000 could be found.

District of Columbia  
Hawaii  
North Carolina  
Arkansas  
Florida  
Louisiana  
Maryland  
Delaware  
Alabama  
Georgia  
New York  
Virginia  
West Virginia  
Texas  
Kentucky  
Illinois  
Michigan  
Oklahoma  
New Jersey  
Connecticut  
Rhode Island  
Arizona  
California  
Indiana  
New Mexico  
Ohio  
Pennsylvania  
Nebraska  
Oregon  
Colorado  
Wisconsin  
Iowa  
New Hampshire  
Wyoming  
Idaho  
Minnesota  
Montana  
North Dakota



# CMS algebra scores trail state averages

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points lower than the 88% record among North Carolina's 10,123 children in that category. Among children of parents with no high school degree, the CMS results were only 12 percentage points lower than the state average. CMS trailed the state in all cate-

gories.

Algebra I has become a course required for high school graduation, and well-prepared children are taking it at an earlier age than their parents did. Pre-algebra concepts show up as early as the sixth-grade math curriculum, and many students take Algebra I as eighth-graders.

Parents will find a great deal of useful information about the schools' achievement records in the data below, but a number of

general comments may be helpful:

– These scores are for the year before CMS made a concerted effort to push eighth-graders into Algebra I so they would be on track to do higher math in high school. The scores thus may reflect the old paradigm, in which students who did not excel in math or were not pushed by parents or counselors, delayed taking algebra until high school. This pattern may explain why only a

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## Percentage of students at Level III (grade level) or above on Algebra I, 2000-2001, by level of educational attainment of their parents

(# valid tests in 5 categories)*	Graduate School		4-year College		Comm. College		HS Degree		No HS Degree	
	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs
<b>North Carolina (77,656)</b>	<b>10,123</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>23,289</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>15,831</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>22,546</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>5,867</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>CMS (7,280)</b>	<b>1,139</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>2,928</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>1,101</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>1,672</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>CMS Middle Schools</b>										
Albemarle Road (89)	6	83%	29	72%	19	79%	25	76%	10	50%
J.M. Alexander (122)	44	100%	64	100%	8	88%	6	100%		
Bradley (72)	14	86%	36	83%	13	62%	9	89%		
Carmel (141)	55	100%	78	100%	8	100%				
Cochrane (56)			24	33%	11	36%	14	21%	7	29%
Coulwood (48)	5	100%	20	100%	10	100%	13	100%		
Crestdale (245)	86	100%	143	99%	9	89%	7	86%		
Davidson IB (60)	23	100%	31	100%	6	83%				
Marie G. Davis (151)	48	98%	77	99%	18	100%	8	100%		
Eastway (21)			9	100%	5	100%	7	57%		
A. Graham (69)	44	100%	18	100%	7	100%				
Hawthorne (26)			7	86%	6	100%	13	85%		
Martin (120)	22	73%	75	79%	15	73%	8	63%		
Kennedy (67)	5	100%	30	97%	16	94%	16	88%		
McClintock (105)	28	96%	56	93%	11	91%	10	80%		
Northeast (129)	22	100%	56	96%	24	96%	27	100%		
Northridge (85)	9	89%	40	75%	19	95%	17	59%		
Piedmont (103)	27	100%	53	96%	12	92%	11	91%		
Quail Hollow (84)	20	100%	48	96%	9	89%	7	86%		
Randolph (92)	23	100%	46	93%	9	67%	14	86%		
Ranson (42)	6	100%	19	95%	6	100%	11	91%		
Sedgefield (47)	12	58%	29	72%	6	50%				
Smith (45)	7	100%	20	95%	8	100%	10	80%		
South Charlotte (298)	104	100%	171	100%	14	100%	9	100%		
Spaugh (71)			32	75%	13	54%	20	60%	6	100%
J.T. Williams (141)	51	90%	67	93%	17	94%	6	83%		
Wilson (9)			9	67%						

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Notes: \*Numbers in (parentheses) may understate the number of students tested in each parent education category because if the number of students in a category at each school or district is smaller than 5, those results are not reported.

# CMS algebra scores trail state averages

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handful of the children of parents with the least education were tested for algebra at middle schools. As one expert commented about the scores, "If a student is taking Algebra I in high school, she/he has a problem."

– Given the way the state reports scores, it is impossible from the available data to show how, for each parent education level group, CMS middle schools performed against the comparable N.C. middle school average. But it is clear from comparing the charts on page 5 and 6 that alarmingly low scores at the high schools drag down very good per-

formances at the middle school level that, taken on their own, are generally quite impressive.

– Comparisons between CMS and state results may introduce testing-policy issues that may have nothing to do with student performance in the classroom. One skeptical observer suggested that CMS could actually be testing a greater percentage of students who do not perform well than some other school districts do. CMS's "valid" scores were 99% of its total "eligible" students; the comparable statewide number was 97%.

– Parents who study the charts will soon realize that this data could offer a new way to "choose" a school – by the number of well-educated parents who have children at the school. The historical sources of data on student testing

did not break down results by levels of parent education. But a warning: Algebra I test data is not what you want to look at. Eighth-grade and ninth-grade English will better serve that purpose, because an entire class will be taking the course at the same time.

In the case of the Algebra I results, the parent education numbers for middle schools, for example, understate the number of parents with lower levels of education, because so many of their children weren't taking the course until high school.

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*Educate! welcomes comments from teachers and parents about these scores or about the teaching of algebra. Send your e-mail to [sjohnston@educateclt.org](mailto:sjohnston@educateclt.org) or call 704-342-4330.*

## Percentage of students at Level III (grade level) or above on Algebra I, 2000-2001, by level of educational attainment of their parents (continued)

(# valid tests in 5 categories)*	Graduate School		4-year College		Comm. College		HS Degree		No HS Degree	
	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs	Tested	IIIs
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<b>CMS High Schools</b>										
Butler (382)	37	38%	142	49%	68	51%	114	42%	21	29%
East Meck (268)	28	64%	116	66%	38	61%	69	43%	17	41%
Garinger (300)	28	43%	75	31%	63	19%	98	17%	36	31%
Harding (162)	14	21%	57	44%	29	28%	49	33%	13	38%
Independence (289)	19	53%	106	46%	47	47%	94	31%	23	35%
Learning Acad. (71)			22	14%	10	10%	25	4%	14	0%
Midwood (34)	6	33%	12	25%	8	63%	8	0%		
Myers Park (256)	28	68%	85	44%	44	27%	70	34%	29	24%
North Meck (507)	56	38%	181	48%	76	47%	165	33%	29	10%
Northwest (131)	36	47%	58	47%	18	33%	19	42%		
Olympic (300)	15	20%	89	24%	57	32%	113	20%	26	8%
Providence (363)	60	70%	178	66%	37	54%	65	37%	23	22%
South Meck (376)	52	75%	171	64%	55	45%	75	45%	23	26%
TAPS (28)					5	40%	15	20%	8	13%
West Charlotte (392)	24	8%	101	19%	75	24%	143	13%	49	16%
West Meck (367)	20	45%	73	56%	85	54%	148	46%	41	49%
Vance (427)	41	34%	165	30%	82	33%	113	20%	26	12%

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Notes: \*Numbers in (parentheses) may understate the number of students tested in each parent education category because if the number of students in a category at each school or district is smaller than 5, those results are not reported.

## Briefs

**Writing tips:** Maryland author Margaret Meacham told a group of middle schoolers that being read to as a second-grader helped her decide to be a writer, the Baltimore Sun reported. Part of her advice to the students: "Read what you like and don't like...." [www.sunspot.com](http://www.sunspot.com)

**Test results:** Researchers at Arizona State University at Tempe found little evidence that high-stakes tests actually improve performance on other measures, Education Week reported. Scores on the SAT, ACT and Advanced Placement did not rise after the 18 states studied imposed high school exit exams. The rise in NAEP scores in those states may be more related to reading programs initiated at the same time. [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

**Gifted, but few:** Minority enrollment in Fairfax County, Va. is 25%, but only 8% of its gifted and talented students are black, the Washington Post reported. "In a number of ways, we have let down minority kids in this county," said school board Chairman Stuart Gibson. "And this is one of them." [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

**Back to class:** Detroit schools have laid off 382 curricular leaders and staff coordinators, the Free Press reported. Officials said they hoped the teacher observers, testing coordinators and curriculum developers would apply for some of the system's 1,300 vacant teacher positions. [www.freepress.com](http://www.freepress.com)

**Looking better:** The economic downturn may be encouraging N.C. high school seniors to consider teaching, the News and Observer reported. The N.C. Teaching Fellows Program has seen applications rise 10% for 400

## Market share

For the year 2000-2001, the percentage of school districts' students actually enrolled in public schools, according to Raleigh's News and Observer. The rest are home schooled or in private, parochial or out-of-county institutions. The N&O reported that Wake planners expect only 80% in the county's public schools by 2020.

County	Pct. Enrolled	County	Pct. Enrolled
Johnston	96.3	Wake	84.7
Chatham	93.4	Durham	83.4
N.C. average	90.0	Mecklenburg	83.2
Orange	88.3		

[www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com)

scholarships offered in exchange for a four-year commitment to teaching in an N.C. public school. [www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com)

**Indoor pollution:** The EPA is pushing school districts to clean up air in school buildings, Education Week reported. Studies have linked bad indoor air to asthma, headaches, nausea, dizziness and spread of the common cold. EPA is pushing for preventive maintenance – changing of air filters, for example – as a cost-effective way to bring relief. [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

**Better tests:** Teaching to the test is bad only if the test doesn't adequately represent a state's education standards, New York Times columnist Richard Rothstein wrote. And most tests are not well aligned with the curriculum, he said, citing studies by Achieve Inc., a nonprofit. The group's review gave accolades to just one set of tests – those given Massachusetts 10th-graders. Most tests, Rothstein wrote, focus on basic skills, thus encouraging teachers to skimp on higher-order learning. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

## Calendar

### May

- 9** Curriculum Committee, 9:30 a.m., board conference room.
- 14** School board meeting, 6 p.m., board room.
- 16** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Room 414.
- 18** Jump Start For Parents, UNCC Cone Center, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m., sponsored by Winners Plus Agency. Topics include father's corner, parents speaking out, suspension, family resources, CMS EC programs and services, testing, working with your children's teacher, how to volunteer. Information:

Blanche Penn 704-890-4101.

- 20** School board breakfast with legislators, 7:30 a.m., board room.
- 21** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services. Personnel/Policy Committee, 3 p.m., board conference room
- 30** Commissioners hold public hearing on county budget, which includes money for schools.

### June

- 18** Commissioners to vote on county budget, which includes money for schools.