

Constructing solutions

CMS seeks new money for buildings; prospects and budget impact uncertain

Coach Joe White has his team going for the long pass in a new effort to find money to house a burgeoning school population.

Seven weeks before county commissioners' election day, the CMS school board next week will ask the county for \$73.9 million to build schools in suburban areas where parents are up in arms about overcrowded schools.

"Call it what you want," says

White. "I just want their money."

The \$73.9 million would build only CMS's highest-priority construction projects. As outlined this week, the plan would build about 4,200 seats in a district with an 18,000-seat backlog. The district has more than 700 mobile classrooms handling overflow. In its opening week this month, CMS absorbed 4,400 more students.

Part of the request sent to the

board by its facilities committee is that the county agree to sell \$135 million in bonds annually to finance construction. This is a higher cap than some commissioners would like, lower than some suburban advocates sought.

If the \$135 million cap is approved and the \$73.9 million in new money is approved, there would probably not be a bond referendum in 2005.

That has implications for parents in the urban core as well in established suburban neighborhoods. Some such parents have their children in new or recently renovated buildings, thanks to earlier efforts to upgrade aging school spaces.

But unfunded renovation and repair work remains both downtown and on the county's edge.

The current 10-year capital needs plan lists \$573 million in repairs, additions and equipment replacements at 70 schools. Communities rich and poor, white and minority, from Bruns Avenue, Hidden Valley and Devonshire to Park Road, Olde Providence and Cornelius are waiting. Without a 2005 bond issue, their wait may become longer.

The overall \$1.4 billion capital plan is being scaled back this fall in light of rising costs.

The \$73.9 million request now on the table seeks certificates of participation, a financing mechanism not requiring voter approval. It was just such a mechanism that White and commissioners chairman Tom Cox appeared to have agreed to use last spring to raise \$25 million for new schools. The deal collapsed when it became public.

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SAT scores

CMS districtwide results rose four points on the SAT this spring, and came within a point of the N.C. average. But the state, at 1006, lags the nation's 1026 average, and CMS school-by-school scores (below) show huge variations in performance. More information is on Page 3. The College Board this week also reported Advanced Placement exam results (Page 2) and diploma statistics for the five CMS International Baccalaureate programs (Page 5).

School	Number tested	Pct. tested	Math	Verbal	Total
Myers Park	422	77.4	559	555	1114
Providence	478	90.2	550	546	1096
Northwest	105	71.4	518	561	1079
North Meck	316	77.3	533	538	1071
South Meck	355	80.9	530	527	1057
East Meck	302	74.0	508	516	1024
Butler	252	69.6	512	501	1013
CMS	4,046	69.5	503	502	1005
Hopewell	274	70.1	492	501	993
Harding	202	78.0	496	479	975
Independence	319	64.6	484	475	959
Vance	334	65.9	481	476	957
Olympic	139	58.9	463	455	918
E.E. Waddell	78	48.8	439	434	873
Midwood	7	11.7	433	433	866
West Meck	127	47.6	429	426	855
Garinger	153	58.4	421	429	850
West Charlotte	183	64.4	393	400	793

Source: CMS

New construction

Continued from Page 1

The new plan's target schools are four elementaries: Flat Branch south south of I-485; Winget Park near Lake Wylie; Westmoreland Road in Cornelius and Highland Creek; and 500-seat high school additions at Butler and Hopewell. The new classrooms would open between August 2006 and August 2007.

The \$73.9 million would be in addition to \$89.5 million approved in April to build two new high schools and upgrade to full size a middle school project in Davidson.

The request this week did not specify how the debt service on the certificates of participation would be paid.

This past year, Republican commissioners have talked about putting all annual county school money in a single pot, and setting the size of the pot as a fixed percentage of county revenues.

Traditionally, the county has paid interest on school bonds and other debt out of a separate account.

The strategy would leave the school board to juggle operating expenses like teacher salaries against debt payments.

In the last three years during which CMS absorbed 11,000 new students, the county refused to increase its contributions to the schools' operating budget.

It was unclear whether the county would respond to the schools' request before Election Day.

Growth vs. renovation

The prospect of new money going exclusively to handle growth raises the possibility of the collapse of a shaky compromise from the 1990s to balance growth and renovation.

As mentioned in last week's *Educate!*, that consensus, born out of citizen committees, sought to please both suburban parents who needed new buildings, and center-city parents whose children were assigned to the dis-

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Advanced Placement results for CMS

BY SCHOOL

	'02	'03	'04
Provid. % 3-5	67%	72%	69%
Students	601	594	631
Exams	1,391	1,405	1416
Northwest	39%	54%	59%
	136	144	134
	241	282	247
Myers Park	59%	54%	57%
	511	554	573
	1,187	1,205	1094
East	39%	41%	49%
	383	383	324
	915	884	767
Indepen.	35%	35%	49%
	319	302	294
	684	599	536
South	45%	46%	49%
	407	441	441
	960	1033	1007
Butler	50%	48%	45%
	247	338	440
	458	647	999
Hopewell	23%	33%	45%
	126	343	408
	241	693	850
CMS	41%	42%	42%
	4,534	4,966	5,275
	10,174	10,951	11,474
North	34%	32%	35%
	362	342	458
	917	789	1,025
Vance	39%	41%	31%
	337	356	362
	800	809	39
Harding	38%	40%	30%
	303	313	307
	728	868	796
West Meck	17%	21%	18%
	141	157	156
	287	331	336
Olympic	19%	17%	17%
	186	195	241
	383	439	587
E.E. Waddell	19%	15%	17%
	37	96	75
	79	148	117
Berry			14%
			73
			121
Garinger	7%	8%	12%
	223	195	174
	434	417	401
Midwood	8%	18%	10%
	21	15	9
	25	17	10
West Charlotte	16%	5%	4%
	194	198	175
	492	394	356

Notes: Percentages are for the portion of exams for which students earned a score of 3, 4 or 5. Scores of 4 or 5 generally carry college credit. Berry had no scores until 2004.

Source: CMS

BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

	'02	'03	'04
White % 3-5	46%	48%	49%
Students	3,071	3,319	3,463
Exams	7,240	7,555	7,803
Male	44%	45%	45%
	1,958	2,155	2,260
	4,469	4,768	4,823
Hispanic	42%	41%	44%
	135	175	188
	265	349	380
ALL	41%	42%	42%
	4,534	4,966	5,275
	10,174	10,951	11,474
Asian	37%	42%	42%
	312	335	353
	766	891	909
Female	39%	39%	40%
	2,576	2,811	3,015
	5,705	6,183	6,651
Other	37%	36%	34%
	194	221	223
	391	435	441
Black	19%	17%	16%
	822	916	1,048
	1,512	1,721	1,941

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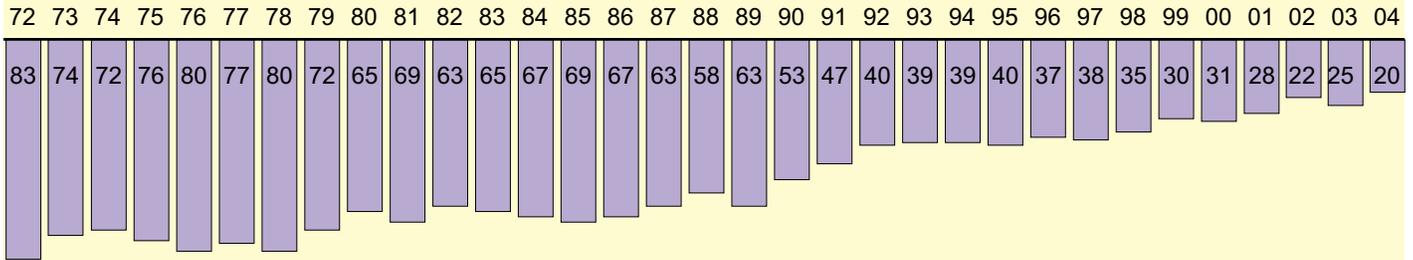
People: Leonard R. (Deacon) Jones, president; Lucy Bush Carter, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director and *Educate!* editor; Beth Kinny, outreach director. Assisting with this edition: Stephanie Southworth.

North Carolina's 30-year push to reach national average SAT score

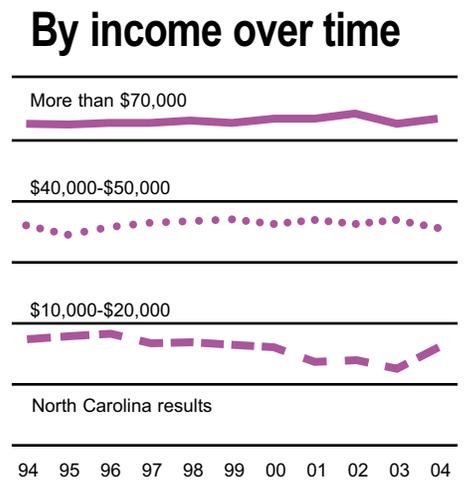
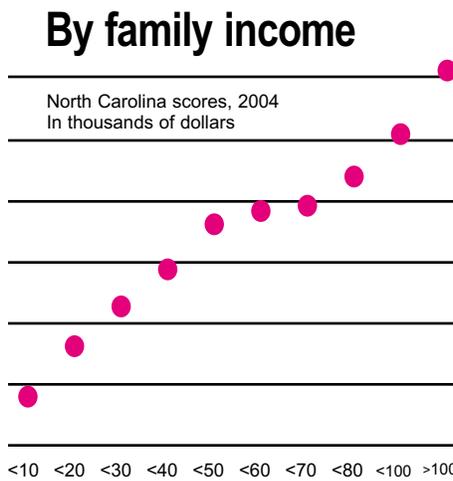
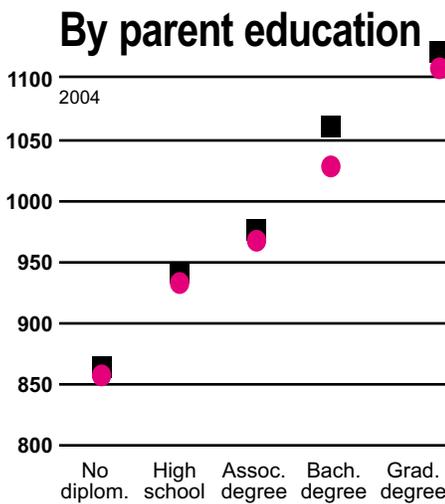
Chart shows how North Carolina's average SAT score compared with the U.S. average from 1972 to 2004. An 83-point gap has been slowly narrowed, and in

2004 stands at 20 points. Note the ups and downs along the way, and periods of apparent stagnation.

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction



■ U.S. ● N.C.



School-by-school data on CMS seniors

Verbal chg. 03-04	School	2002					2003					2004				
		Tested:		M	V	Tot	Tested:		M	V	Tot	Tested:		M	V	Tot
No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.				No.	Pct.								
29	Garinger	167	55.1	418	424	842	116	47.2	402	400	802	153	58.4	421	429	850
21	Hopewell	*					255	78.7	488	480	968	274	70.1	492	501	993
21	North Meck	417	74.5	523	512	1035	240	74.3	522	517	1039	316	77.3	533	538	1071
15	Northwest	95	64.2	466	524	990	100	66.2	519	546	1065	105	71.4	518	561	1079
15	Olympic	173	58.8	443	436	879	115	53.2	450	440	890	139	58.9	463	455	918
13	Butler	254	78.2	493	480	973	253	71.5	492	488	980	252	69.6	512	501	1013
12	South Meck	393	83.1	500	497	997	339	81.1	512	515	1027	355	80.9	530	527	1057
9	Myers Park	400	78.6	560	553	1113	409	81.2	551	546	1097	422	77.4	559	555	1114
6	Providence	437	86.7	554	539	1093	474	93.7	558	540	1098	478	90.2	550	546	1096
4	Waddell	*					103	47.2	424	430	854	78	48.8	439	434	873
1	East Meck	321	75.9	516	509	1025	314	70.6	527	515	1042	302	74	508	516	1024
-1	West Char.	227	69	423	412	835	182	69.7	392	401	793	183	64.4	393	400	793
-4	Vance	335	81.1	491	483	974	379	73.9	496	480	976	334	65.9	481	476	957
-8	West Meck	121	58.5	457	444	901	109	42.6	439	434	873	127	47.6	429	426	855
-11	Independence	274	62.4	504	496	1000	350	61.8	495	486	981	319	64.6	484	475	959
-24	Midwood	26	50	397	403	800	13	26	400	457	857	7	11.7	433	433	866
-34	Harding	245	80.6	504	480	984	226	87.3	535	513	1048	202	78	496	479	975
1	US Total	(1)	46	516	504	1020	(2)	48	519	507	1026	(3)	48	518	508	1026
4	NC Total	46,180	67	505	493	998	48,893	68	506	495	1001	50,042	70	507	499	1006
5	CMS	3893	72.7	502	494	996	3979	70	504	497	1001	4046	69.5	503	502	1005

Notes: (1) 1,327,831; (2) 1,406,324; (3) 1,419,007.
New schools Hopewell and Waddell did not have scores until 2003.

Sources: CMS, N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction

New construction

Continued from Page 2

trict's oldest and outmoded facilities. At the time, about half the unfunded projects were for new seats, the other half for renovations of existing ones. Today, with many renovation projects complete, the balance is 8-5, with \$800 million for new seats, \$500 for renovations.

Should a new bond issue be split 8-5? Two readers responded.

Wrong question

The writer is former chairman of the Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee.

Balance! A new word has been entered into the vocabulary of CMS spending on buildings. We are supposed to decide what the BALANCE should be between renovations and new. Let me be perfectly clear: There is no such thing as balance. There is need. There is want. "Balance" is a word which will be used to lead people to believe there is some mystical ratio between need and want. There is none such.

Recent years have had CMS spending hundreds of millions of tax dollars on renovations. According to one of their constantly shifting standards, school buildings built previous to 1970 should last 75 years. Today there are fewer than 10 buildings which would need renovation according to that standard. This is because we were spending money faster than we should have on these projects.

Concurrent to this overspending on renovations was, what appears in retrospect to be, a concerted effort to not build enough new seats in certain areas.

Because of these misguided programs, we have recently renovated schools not even half full of students and un-renovated schools which are overcrowded. Even so, when an effort was made to reprioritize some spending to address this problem, our school board determined all was good and made no changes.

Out of land for mobiles? Think vertical



www.homesightwa.org/devnoji.htm

Some schoolyards are so full of mobile classrooms that there is no room to add more, we are told. It is only half in jest that we present Noji Gardens by HomeSight, a Seattle nonprofit developer of affordable housing. Noji Gardens, completed in 2002, contains 75 homes. The development was the first in the Northwest, HomeSight says, to use two-story manufactured housing components.

We need more schools in areas which have more students than seats, and less concentration on renovations until renovations are needed. We have specific needs and should do away with the false wants foisted upon us by the CMS leadership which has time and again demonstrated its lack of honor.

Instead of having this misleading discussion on buildings we need a school board and CMS administration that focuses on education. They might, for instance, concentrate on finding remedies to the continuing problem of the educational differential between races. Those currently in charge and their ilk have accomplished nothing to remedy this problem in the past 15 years even after spending \$1.4 billion on renovations and new buildings.

New and renovated buildings have little if any effect on education. So all the spending and talk would seem to mislead us, yet now they want us to think of balance.

Misdirection, what is thy name? CMS.

Think not of buildings and

Balance. Think instead of education for all students.

Lewis Guignard

Renovation still ahead

The writer represents District 6 on the CMS school board.

In spite of the commitment to balance growth and renovation about 50-50, the 2002 bond provided construction funds for only one new "growth" school (actually it was just half a school – Bailey Road) and design funds for four others (two elementaries, two high schools), for a total of \$20 million to \$25 million, or just 10%-12% of the 2002 bond issue.

About \$25 million of that package was for major maintenance (roofs, Harding's stadium renovation, fire alarms, etc.). The other projects were renovations, some with additions to bring capacity up to the target capacity of 800-seat elementaries, 1,200-seat middle schools, etc. These planned additions were at older schools scattered all over the county.

At that time, the common wisdom on the Board of Education, the Board of County

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New construction

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Commissioners and the community was that CMS should save architect costs by reusing plans, and should bring all schools up to standard sizes.

But it just doesn't make sense educationally, fiscally or from a city planning perspective to replicate big sprawling suburban schools in walkable inner-city neighborhoods with more challenged populations. Research and experience support the preference for smaller learning environments.

The 2002 bond proposal appeared more nearly balanced because those additions were all considered growth. We now know that many of these were not located where demand would dictate, and some would result in schools that were not optimally sized for the populations served. This led to the decision this summer to reduce the size at Marie G. Davis and Randolph, and review other projects.

Remember what was happening in 2002. The "choice" assignment plan was new, and some of the

impacts were not known.

Remember too that the 2002 bond request was reduced substantially due to the declining economy. Four growth schools were reduced to "design only." At that time it was anticipated that a 2003 bond would fund construction at the designed schools plus funding additional renovations. There was no 2003 bond.

The recent COPs provided construction funds for the two new high schools (designed with 2002 bonds) and the other half of the Bailey Road middle school.

Combining this \$96 million with the \$20+ million for new schools in the 2002 bonds still leaves the balance skewed toward renovation and major maintenance: about \$120 million for new schools and \$25 million for major maintenance, leaving the balance of about \$165 million as renovation and expansion of old schools. This balance is still skewed toward renovation and additions, not growth in the high-growth areas.

High growth and overcrowding are not just suburban issues, as was pointed out in the Aug. 20 issue. CMS now has over 700 mobile classrooms, with more on the way. Even if every available seat in the county could be filled through reassignment, 12,000-15,000 kids would still be in mobiles, former art/music rooms, and squeezed onto all sorts of improvised spaces (stages, cafeterias, former storage areas).

On use of open seats: No Child Left Behind required choice for students assigned to the Title I schools that did not "make AYP" for a second year. Some of these schools do have unfilled seats (especially now that transfers were allowed); however, students could not be assigned to those seats without also providing them the choice to transfer back out. The solution to this issue is to have all schools make AYP – i.e. raise achievement for every student group.

B. Lee Kindberg

IB diplomas

School	'01	'02	'03	'04
East				
Taking exams	17	19	25	18
Got diploma	16	15	20	18
Percent	94	79	80	100
Myers Park				
Taking exams	81	86	78	55
Got diploma	75	75	74	53
Percent	93	87	95	96
North Meck				
Taking exams	24	38	30	27
Got diploma	16	36	21	23
Percent	70	95	70	85
Independence				
Taking exams	47	42	71	35
Got diploma	30	29	32	17
Percent	64	69	45	49
Harding				
Taking exams	28	26	29	26
Got diploma	21	17	22	14
Percent	75	65	76	54

Source: CMS

Reviewing who should earn diploma

North Carolina's State Board of Education this week continued a long-term discussion of whether to increase high school exit standards. Earlier proposals have focused on setting minimum scores for "some combination" of end-of-course (EOC) exams, along with some performance-based element like the current senior projects or service-based learning or work-based learning. Staff says any change ultimately would probably require legislative approval.

Should being "on grade level" on any or all five EOC tests be required to graduate? The staff pointedly prepared the most recent EOC results (2003 or 2004) to show Board of Education members that limiting diplomas to students on grade level in any combination of EOCs will prevent literally thousands of students from graduating. Using so-called "standard error of measurement" statistics would let more pass.

Group	Algebra I	Biology	English I	ELP	US Hist
Statewide pct. on grade	79.6	61.3	81.3	69.3	54.9
Females	81.6	60.3	86.0	68.2	51.2
Males	77.5	62.2	76.6	70.4	58.7
White	87.3	73.9	88.9	80.5	64.5
Black	64.7	36.6	68.5	48.2	32.6
Asian	87.2	60.9	84.3	70.9	63.6
Hispanic	72.3	45.2	63.5	53.2	45.1
Am. Indian	77.0	48.0	73.0	59.5	43.7

www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe_meetings/0409_sbagenda.html

Play this as a crisis and people will get hurt

Emergency is a word that covers house fires, terrorist attacks, floods, major medical problems and the like.

It doesn't cover the stupid stuff we do, like living beyond our means for years until we go broke, or drinking ourselves into liver failure – or not building the schools that planners know will be needed.

Commentary

No, our children don't have seats in brick-and-mortar classrooms because we didn't want to pay.

In 2002, when a bond issue was being prepared, we, through our elected officials, decided we wouldn't provide all the money the school board said it needed to build new schools and upgrade old ones. So the school board spent a small amount of money designing the new schools, figuring they could come back for construction money in a second bond issue the next year.

But the next year, in 2003, we said we wouldn't put any bond issue on the ballot at all. The board ended up shifting money to buy trailers to keep the rain off our teachers and children.

And the next year, in 2004, when we said we again wouldn't put a bond issue on the fall ballot, more money was shifted to buy more trailers.

So it's not an emergency that we have lots of children learning in trailers. It's what we were willing to pay for. It was stupid stuff.

Are we now willing to pay now? That jury's still out. But whatever we do, let's not shift money promised to one group of aggrieved families just to please another set of aggrieved families.

That was, we thought, the lesson the school board learned, painfully and publicly, last spring. It had set up a citizens committee to recommend shifting bond money from promised renovations and expansions to finance construction of new schools. The outrage, mostly in low-income neighborhoods, turned into a firestorm

when wealthy, powerful parents realized that THEIR children's schools would not get what they had been promised. School board members backed off most of the projected shifts.

This time, commitments to NEW projects must have behind them NEW money, both for construction and to pay interest on any debt.

If there's no new money, construction and renovation already scheduled and promised will be delayed – reopening last spring's battle.

If there's no new money, debt payments may cut into operating budgets, reducing the quality of education for poor children.

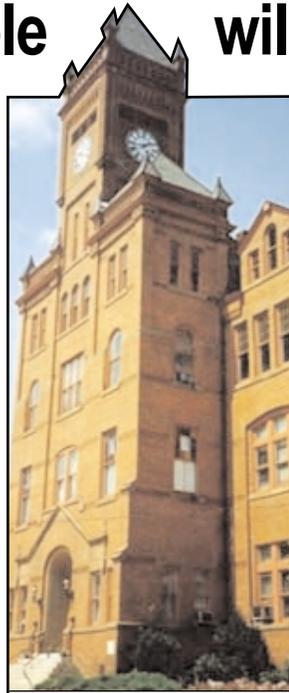
Already, the school board is way behind on what it's promised in annual operating spending to support children. Its equity programs are underfunded by \$18 million. Those programs are key to educating more children well, and improving district test results. The programs are aimed squarely at the children furthest behind and most at risk of becoming high school dropouts.

Will county commissioners provide new money? Can incumbents change their stripes – or will the November election put the county's purse strings in more school-friendly hands?

Either way, the school board should not be sitting back and just waiting on commissioners. Instead, it should be pursuing its own alternatives.

For example, what if Supt. Jim Pughsley Tuesday, in addition to supporting certificates of participation, had announced one or more of the following:

– An agreement for participation by a consortium of banks



J.C. Smith's Biddle Hall: Add a public school on campus?

with a Mecklenburg presence in stepped-up construction – on a scale comparable to the \$200 million deal the two big banks put on the table when the community wanted a professional basketball team.

– Contracts already signed for public-private lease-to-buy school construction, on public land, to school specifications, on a dozen sites, all to be open in 12 months.

– A 60% start toward a \$50 million fund at the school district's new nonprofit foundation, the interest and capital from

which would subsidize debt service on voter-approved bonds over the next 10 years.

– Announcement that every college and university operating in the county has agreed to open on its campus, within 12 months, a small magnet high school.

– Agreement with about 20 area congregations to operate small middle schools in their education buildings, staffed with regular CMS teachers. Covenant Presbyterian and Mayfield Memorial ran programs for disruptive children on this model until the late '90s. The new schools would simply be small schools, possibly ungraded, serving neighborhood students who chose them.

– A recommendation that Ranson Middle be temporarily moved in with J.T. Williams, and Ranson used as a fifth-grade center to relieve overcrowding further north.

These are just a few of the new initiatives that might have been announced this week...

If, that is, this community truly believed the schools are in an emergency.

– Steve Johnston

Briefly...

Marching orders: Miami-Dade Supt. Rudy Crew drafted the standards the school board will use to judge whether he deserves \$50,000 in performance pay, the Herald reported. The goals are tough: improving grades at low-performing schools, narrowing the racial achievement gap, slashing construction time for new schools and 19 other objectives. The school board will decide whether the objectives were met or not and how much money to award.
www.miami.com

Heat on charters: Ohio's Coalition for Public Education called for state lawmakers to stop financing new charter schools, the Plain Dealer reported. Recently released report cards show that almost half of northeast Ohio charter schools performing below grade level. The president of the Ohio charter schools association, Steve Ramsey, asserted that many children in charter schools have opted out of regular schools for various reasons and many are poor and minorities. He said the state should look at growth rather

than whether the children passed end-of-grade tests.
www.cleveland.com

What's school's role?: The Christian Science Monitor reported that educators are reassessing their role in helping children with social and emotional disabilities, particularly when children demonstrate strong academic capacities. The Monitor said some children with disabilities are being ignored because they are passing from grade to grade.
www.csmonitor.com

No progress: The race gap in test scores in Pittsburgh is the same now as it was two years ago, the Post-Gazette reported. White and black scores have improved, but white scores are continuing to surpass those of the black students. To aid learning in low-income households, the district is giving away 8,000 rehabilitated, donated computers to give families better access to students' grades, attendance, homework and teachers.
www.post-gazette.com

Class size: An Australian study conducted by the Melbourne

Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research concluded that class size is unrelated to achievement, The Australian reported. The study analyzed reading and math scores from 1,540 schools and determined that class size has no effect on academic achievement.
www.theaustralian.com

Did Ya Hear?

✓ Job applicants may find a cool reception at CMS. An informal hiring freeze is on, and affects many positions, pending announcement in two weeks of how Supt. Jim Pughsley will slash spending. But the door may still be open if you're a teacher – or want to drive a bus.

✓ Will the "High School Challenge" in part be out-sourced? A number of organizations have bid for pieces of the work, said Communities in Schools head Cynthia Marshall. CIS wouldn't know "exactly what our piece will be" until just before the administration makes its recommendation Sept. 14. The Challenge is the project county commissioners might invest \$6 million in. The goal is to boost test scores substantially at several high schools. CIS already has site coordinators at eight high schools: Berry, East, Garinger, Midwood/TAPS, Olympic, Vance, West Charlotte and West Meck. Its 27-school network focuses on tutoring and mentoring, placing volunteers, bolstering health care and parental involvement, and offering college and career counseling. "We know," said Marshall, "that there are more kids who need help that we're not reaching now."

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- 2 School board's Personnel Committee, 4 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 6 Habitat for Humanity group service, 4 p.m., Plaza Presbyterian Church, 2304 The Plaza.
- 8 "What is Islam": first of four lectures by Ernest Lee Stoffel, emeritus Presbyterian pastor and emeritus professor of religion at Queens University, 7:30 p.m., Caldwell Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1609 E. 5th St., across Park Drive from Elizabeth Traditional Elementary.
- 9 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., 11th floor conference room, Government Center.
- 9 Right Moves for Youth volunteer kick-off, 6 p.m., West Service Center, 4150 Wilkinson Blvd. The mission of Right Moves For Youth (RMFY) is to provide the motivation for its club members in grades 4-12 to succeed in school, improve the quality of their life, become responsible members of society and reduce the number of Charlotte-Mecklenburg students who drop out of school. Information: Keith Way at 704-377-4425 ext 105 or email at kway@rightmovesforyouth.org.
- 10 Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 11 District 6 Parent Leaders Meeting, 9 a.m., Presbyterian Hospital Matthews community room.

Educate!

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Reformer's speech gets juices flowing nationwide

When I asked Hayes Mizell to give a speech here last week, I had no idea what he'd say.

At one point I even told him I didn't want to know.

When you're looking for ways to kick-start public education reform, sometimes it's just best to invite an outsider in and see what happens.



Steve Johnston

Mizell ended up giving a speech that has sent ripples through education circles nationwide. It was a call for openness, high standards, citizen involvement and laserlike focus on making schools work for every child.

The text was published Sunday as a special edition of *Educate!* It can be downloaded from the archive at www.educateclt.org.

We've been sharing with Mizell the reactions we've received from *Educate!* readers. And Mizell has forwarded some others he's

received. A sampling:

–
 “Not that your other pieces were ‘chopped liver,’ but this one is really, really good!...”

–
 “It hit all the right notes. It made me feel good. I forwarded it to several candidates and all current members of the... school board.”

–
 “I just recently was interviewed... for a superintendent position.... As you would expect, I shared my views openly and honestly, after doing LOTS of homework, believing that the community needed to know my positions ‘up front.’ I really believed that I could contribute immensely to this community and was prepared to do so. The feedback I received was that:

“1) I was ‘overqualified’ for the position;

“2) The community was con-

cerned about my values on ‘mainstreaming’ and wanting to ensure that ALL children reached high standards. They felt I didn't ‘fit’ with their beliefs on separating English language learners and gifted students;

“3) The community couldn't understand how someone who had worked for years helping ‘underperforming’ schools could contribute to what they perceived as their ‘outstanding’ and well-performing school district; and,

4) They wanted someone who was ‘ebullient’ and not so serious and passionate about the business of educating children.”

–
 “I would like to excerpt some of your remarks... for use in a piece I'm writing re ‘put parents in charge’.”

–
 “Great stuff. Thanks for sharing. I took the liberty of passing it... to our new superintendent...”