

Editor's note: Editions of Educate! during year 2000 were distributed solely in e-mail format without pictures or graphics. For purposes of archiving and distribution, the text of these editions has been converted to PDF files. No other changes have been made.

Educate! a newsletter of

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BOND ISSUES ADDRESSES RENOVATIONS TOO

Much of the \$275.5 million bond issue for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools addresses major overhauls and new school campuses. But nearly \$23 million will go to five schools for renovation of existing space and to bring buildings up to current educational standards. The five schools are Eastover, Elizabeth, Highland and Irwin Avenue elementaries and Northwest Middle/High. Hear one grandparent's explanation of what's involved:

"My grandchildren attend Selwyn Elementary School. The needs include 1) larger classrooms to accommodate the growing population of students and 2) for a cafeteria to meet the needs of the school. At the moment lunch begins at 10:15 a.m. and goes until 12:45 p.m. The bonds will make a difference! Vote yes for the bonds in November." -- Martha B. Alexander

CHURCHES JOINING SATURDAY TUTORIAL EFFORT

A volunteer effort to close the test-score gap is expanding.

Tutorials begun this summer at eight area black churches have spread to 14 churches for Saturday sessions helping fifth-graders practice their reading skills.

Angela Kelly volunteers 25 or more hours a week to ensure the program's success. She and her volunteers will be helping the fifth-graders with reading "James and the Giant Peach," using CMS curriculum guides for vocabulary, comprehension and reading skills, along with creative approaches to excite the students to participate and carry over their learning to the school

week.

Last school year, 50 percent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's African American fourth-graders tested below grade level in reading. This year, a "gateway" year under the new promotion standards, many of those below-grade students risk retention in fifth grade unless their scores rise. Ms. Kelly envisions meetings with parents to explain those requirements and provide support for parents of children who do not meet end-of-grade requirements.

"Helping Children to Succeed" began this past summer with the goal of closing the gap in grade-level performance among African American children. Dr. Casey Kimbrough, pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Kelly of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and Dr. George Cook Jr. of Greater Mount Sinai Baptist Church founded the effort after serving on CMS's Student Assignment Oversight Committee. Curriculum was suggested by the CMS Curriculum and Instruction Department.

Eight churches agreed to sponsor the program, holding sessions two evenings a week all summer long. Children in third through fifth grades were the target group, but children in kindergarten through eighth grade showed up and were tutored as well. The churches covered the \$50 cost per child for books, snacks, etc.

Donations, not tax-deductible at this time, are welcome for Helping Children to Succeed, care of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, 3301 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, NC 28216. -- Ginny Rosenberg

FORUM ON THE "POST-SWANN ERA" IS WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 7:45 p.m.: "Off Track- Are Educational Excellence and Equity Possible in the Post-Swann Era". Program will be facilitated by Roslyn Mickelson. Temple Israel in Shalom Park, 4901 Providence Road. Issues to be discussed include the roles of testing, school desegregation and choice in achieving "educational equity and excellence" as "twin principles guiding educational policies, classroom practices and the politics of educational reform." Mickelson comments:

"The race gap in academic achievement remains one of the most intractable and perplexing problems facing educators, parents, and students. On the national level, the achievement gap has been narrowing since the 1970s, although in the last decade the rate of closing has slowed. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district has identified the closing of its own race gap in academic outcomes and academic course placements as one of its key goals. And in recent years, the district's numerous concerted efforts have begun to realize some progress."

COURT DECISION ALLOWS NARROW USE OF RACE

In a case not expected to have any direct bearing on Swann vs. Mecklenburg, the Supreme Court this past week let stand a lower-court ruling that a small elementary school run by UCLA education researchers can continue using race as a factor in admission. But the case does suggest that the court will uphold consideration of race in some contexts.

The heart of the Corinne A. Seeds University Elementary case, filed in 1995, is that the professors wanted to create a student body representative of California's diversity to study all ethnic groups' learning skills so it could recommend teaching methods. To create that environment, its

admissions take into account race and ethnicity, sex, family income, dominant language and other factors. "Use of race-ethnicity in its admissions process is narrowly tailored to achieve the necessary laboratory environment," judges wrote in last fall's ruling from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The case against the school was filed with the help of the Pacific Legal Foundation, which has been active in fighting anti-affirmative action cases throughout the West. Foundation attorney Sharon Browne told Black Issues in Higher Education last fall that the case could lead to "more classrooms set up as educational experiments."

But UCLA lawyer Dennis Perluss told the magazine that many studies suggest that "the fact of race has an impact on learning. What scholars are trying to figure out is why and how, and how do we overcome that. Starting with a 4-year-old is really the way to deal with the issue."

PUT YOUR OLD MAC EQUIPMENT TO A GOOD NEW USE

The Fellowship seeks loans or donations of any operable Macintosh computers, ZIP drives and laser printers for use in the group's work. Reply by e-mail with what you have to offer and your phone number and we'll call about pickup.

Send us e-mail addresses for people you think would like to receive this publication. Your comments and contributions are also welcome.

THE SWANN FELLOWSHIP

Lucy Bush, president

B.B. DeLaine, vice president

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. A copy of the license to solicit charitable contributions as a charitable organization or sponsor, and financial information, may be obtained from the N.C. Department of Human Resources, Solicitation Licensing Branch, by calling 919-733-4510. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.