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Educate! the weekly newsletter of
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Friday's Fellowship ad in The Charlotte Post:

Global Village 101: When schools cross class and culture lines, it's our children's first lesson in the wide world that's beyond their own front door.

SENDING A MESSAGE VIA REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Supt. Eric Smith appealed to real estate agents Thursday to tell their clients of the school system's successes. He pointed to above-average SAT scores, rising numbers of students in advanced classes, National Merit winners.

Smith knows that agents help shape newcomers' attitudes about the community and its schools. Real estate listings traditionally carry school assignments, and agents have often been, for better or worse, a prospective homeowner's first counselor on what schools were "best." The community's traditional attention to the needs of schools in areas of high-priced housing made it easy, and profitable, for agents to counsel purchase of homes served by the "best" schools.

If the courts allow Smith to implement his vision of "family choice" assignments, the agents' task becomes immensely more difficult. Prospective newcomers would possibly enroll in a nearby school, but could exercise a dozen or more other choices if they are told about them. Agents will need the schools' help understanding those options.

Agents -- and all who meet prospective newcomers -- have other messages to carry to newcomers. At a time when schools seem destined to reflect their nearby communities, one of those messages is clear: If you want your children to be prepared for the multicultural world that awaits them, consider buying in a neighborhood that reflects the world. It is schools in those

neighborhoods that are likely to be in the best position to live the lessons of diversity and tolerance.

Meanwhile, Smith and groups like the Fellowship have another challenge: Shaping, and delivering, the message that low- and middle-income newcomers hear about schools near the housing where THEY can afford to live. These parents may face school choices nearby that offer fewer success stories. Messages that the community has embraced equity ring hollow here; indeed, all words can ring hollow. Only actions ring true. Actions like assuring a fair share of experienced teachers at all schools. Actions like stocking current resources in media centers. Actions like delivering the pledged low class sizes in all schools where they are needed.

OPEN HOUSES, AND MORE

Below is the schedule of open houses and other events for this week and next. Each week through January we'll do the same. The schedule is an opportunity, not just for you to visit your own children's school, but to go to one you've never been to. It could even highlight a community duty: The more you learn about the schools, the better they will become, benefiting all children in that place and the larger community. Your visits will also be a morale boost to staff!

THIS WEEK:

Nov. 20 Monday

8:30 a.m. Hornets Nest Elementary magnet coffee, tour
 9 a.m. Lansdowne Elementary tour
 9 a.m. Nathaniel Alexander Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Villa Heights Academic Center open house
 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Clear Creek open house
 7 p.m. Lansdowne Elementary tour

Nov. 21 Tuesday

9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
 9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. Lincoln Heights Elementary coffee and school tour
 1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours

NEXT WEEK (send additions, corrections to SwannFello@aol.com)

Nov. 27 Monday

9:30 a.m. Irwin Avenue Elementary open house and coffee
 9:30 a.m. Alexander Middle coffee with principal

Nov. 28 Tuesday

8 a.m. Harding University High tour, open house
 8:30 a.m. Rama Road Elementary classroom observation
 8:30 a.m. Piedmont Open Middle open house
 9 a.m. David Cox Road Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Olde Providence Elementary open house and tour
 9 a.m. Greenway Park Elementary open house and tour
 9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
 9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. Billingsville/Highland Elementary open house. Reserve a space:

343-5525

9:30 a.m. Lincoln Heights Elementary coffee and school tour
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 9:30 a.m. Myers Park Traditional Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. Reid Park Elementary open house
 9:30 a.m. Thomasboro Elementary coffee and tour
 Noon, Collinswood Elementary - Spanish Immersion open house
 Noon Dilworth Elementary open house
 1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours
 4 p.m. Davidson IB Middle open house
 5:30 p.m. Crown Point Elementary choice plan information and Q&A
 6:30 p.m. North Meck High open house, information session
 6:30 p.m. Ranson Middle open house
 7 p.m. Butler High open house
 7 p.m. Cotswold Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Dilworth Elementary open house
 7 p.m. Huntingtowne Farms Elementary information session

Nov. 29 Wednesday

8:30 a.m. Rama Road Elementary classroom observation
 8:45 a.m. Bruns Avenue Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Huntingtowne Farms Elementary information session
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 10 a.m. Barringer Elementary open house

Nov. 30 Thursday

8, 9, 10 a.m. Blythe Elementary school tour
 8 a.m. Greenway Park Elementary family choice presentation
 8 a.m. Huntersville Elementary open house
 8:30 a.m. Piedmont Open Middle open house
 8:45 a.m. Bruns Avenue Elementary open house
 9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
 9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 9 a.m. Beverly Woods Elementary tour
 10 a.m. Devonshire Elementary open house
 11 a.m.: Albemarle Road Elementary open house
 1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours
 5:30 p.m. Huntersville Elementary open house
 7 p.m. Myers Park High open house

Dec. 1 Friday

9:30 a.m. Amay James/Park Road Montessori open houses
 1:30 p.m. Oakdale Elementary coffee with the principal

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
 For last-minute updates see www.cms.12.nc.us

QUOTE UNQUOTE: READING TO PRESCHOOLERS

"Over a third of children in the U.S. enter school unprepared to learn. Why are so many chil-

dren deficient in the skills that are critical to school readiness? Children's experiences with books play an important role. Many children enter school with thousands of hours of experience with books. Their homes contain hundreds of picture books. They see their parents and brothers and sisters reading for pleasure. Other children enter school with fewer than 25 hours of shared book reading. There are few if any children's books in their homes. Their parents and siblings aren't readers.

"Picture book reading provides children with many of the skills that are necessary for school readiness: vocabulary, sound structure, the meaning of print, the structure of stories and language, sustained attention, the pleasure of learning, and on and on. It is important to read frequently with preschoolers. Children who are read to three times per week or more do much better in later development than children who are read to less than three times per week. It is also important to begin reading to children at an early age. By nine months of age, infants can appreciate books that are interesting to touch or that make sounds."

--Grover J. Whitehurst, director of Stony Brook Reading and Language Project, SUNY, quoted in fall 2000 21Community News, Yale University.

 Send us e-mail addresses for people you think would like to receive this publication. Your comments and contributions are also welcome. To write about your school's activities, just do it -- then send it to us.

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 as an integral part of children's education, 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. A copy of the license to solicit charitable contributions may be obtained from the N.C. Department of Human Resources, Solicitation Licensing Branch. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.