

Would you teach for these wages ...or these raises?

Here are the salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree, and the percentage raises they can expect if they continue to teach. Salary figure includes local supplement.

Years on job	Total salary	Raise from prev. year
0	\$28,062.50	
1	28,534.00	1.7%
2	29,016.60	1.7%
3	30,722.80	5.9%
4	32,343.80	5.3%
5	33,817.50	4.6%
6	35,246.30	4.2%
7	36,382.50	3.2%
8	36,911.30	1.5%
9	37,451.30	1.5%
10	38,002.50	1.5%
11	38,725.10	1.9%
12	39,278.80	1.4%
13	39,843.80	1.4%
14	40,431.40	1.5%
15	41,030.30	1.5%
16	41,640.50	1.5%
17	42,262.00	1.5%
18	43,274.40	2.4%
19	43,924.20	1.5%
20	44,585.40	1.5%
21	45,269.40	1.5%
22	45,964.80	1.5%
23	46,683.00	1.6%
24	47,401.20	1.5%
25	48,553.00	2.4%
26	49,300.50	1.5%
27	50,071.00	1.6%
28	50,864.50	1.6%
29	51,669.50	1.6%
30+	51,669.50	0

Data from CMS

On to 6th grade?

Fifth-graders this spring must be on grade level in reading, math to pass

With two months left to go before test day, the pressure is on fifth-graders to learn their reading and math skills. They are the guinea pigs in a statewide effort to end social promotion and assure that all children learn.

As the pressure mounts, parents and school board members are raising questions about how Charlotte-Mecklenburg will handle its new mandate to retain in grade fifth-graders whose end-of-grade tests show below-grade work.

CMS school board members closely questioned Superintendent Eric Smith and his staff at budget hearings on Tuesday, but didn't always get their questions answered.

Board member George Dunlap pressed the superintendent to talk about how the school system plans to deal with fifth-graders who fail one or more end-of-grade tests this spring. (For details of the state accountability standards, see page 3.)

As the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation noted in a report earlier this year, retaining that number of fifth-graders "could swell elementary enrollment by the equivalent of roughly three 800-seat schools...."

Although CMS has been working intensively this year with fifth-graders deemed at risk, including testing them regularly, Smith wasn't spilling any beans Tuesday about how many of those students the school system now expects will score below grade level on this year's tests.

The trail-blazers

As third-graders two years ago, 28% or 2,360 of the 8,400 members of the Class of 2008 were not on grade level: 12% of whites, 45% of African Americans, 48% of those on free- or reduced-price lunch.

As fourth-graders last year, test results convinced school officials that more than 2,000 still might be in jeopardy this spring of being retained under new state promotion rules.

Another ingredient in the mix is that fifth-grade students typically score better on fifth-grade EOG tests than the same students score on fourth-grade tests.

For example, scores on fourth-grade reading tests last year showed 69 per cent of CMS students at or above grade level, according to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation President Tom Bradbury. Fifth-grade tests showed 75 per cent of students at grade level or above.

At Tuesday's meeting Dunlap pressed the superintendent about what the school system will do with "kids who don't pass the EOG, go to summer school and don't make it, and end up in the fifth grade again."

Along with the new passing requirement comes another requirement that those fifth-graders who aren't at grade level at the end of the year attend sum-

CRC issues call for public forums on education

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, perhaps looking to cultivate consensus on education issues where possible, is organizing a series of community discussions to focus on "academic excellence and equity" in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's public schools.

CRC Chairman Don Steger's call for groups to participate between now and June acknowledges that local debate has tended to be "framed as a conflict of positions, with some parents calling for a system of neighborhood schools, while others are calling for the continuation of busing to provide diversity within the school system.

"Although the positions seem incompatible, the Community Relations Committee believes that the interests, needs, desires, concerns and fears that make up these positions are the starting place for collaboration and negotiation. Behind these opposed positions, there will be many shared and compatible interests."

There is no evidence, however, that the "shared and compatible interests" discerned through this process will acknowledge the community's unmet commitments, legal and moral, to desegregate its schools and prevent them from returning to their former "separate and unequal" status.

The group anticipates a June report to the school board, city and county governments and the public.

According to the CRC proposal, "The job of the Mecklenburg County school system is to educate, to the very highest level possible, all our children.... All involved should forge ahead on the premise that the school system is about the best education possible for all the children in Mecklenburg County."

The CRC's community discussions will be occurring concurrently with, but with no clear connection to, a more rancorous debate. In the annual spring budget debate, the school board gets to define the words "best education" and county commissioners get to define the word "possible."

Supt. Eric Smith's proposed budget, released March 13 (Educate!, March 18), aims for the "academic excellence and equity" for which the CRC project seeks to build public support. Yet the price tag – \$52 million more in local funds annually – has already received a chilly reception from commissioners.

The CRC plan certainly seeks to tap most of the "opposed positions" on education. The group calls for participation by the following groups: Charlotte Chamber, Education Foundation, Citizens for Effective Government, COMPASS, HELP, the Kushite Institute, NAACP, the National Conference, Sarah Stevenson's Tuesday Morning Breakfast Group, Swann Fellowship and others interested

in participating.

The forums, in May and June, should involve students, parents and leaders of business, faith, civic and government groups, the CRC says.

"In the past," says Steger, "Charlotte-Mecklenburg has avoided divisive confrontations over educational issues because of community dialogue, respect for all points of view, and a commitment to the education of all children.

"We believe that we can all work together to continue this legacy."

Readers interested in participating should contact the CRC staff at 704-336-2195 or 704-336-2426.

Inner change

Mecklenburg Ministries offers to facilitate sessions at churches or other community groups exploring "issues of race, power and prejudice." Weeknight programs run three hours once a week for four weeks. Weekend workshops begin Friday evening and continue Saturday. For more information, contact Shantel Ingram, program director, at 704-347-2404 or shantel.ingram@meckmin.org

Educate! a newsletter of The Swann Fellowship

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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 non-profit 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.

Primer on N.C. end-of-grade tests

Who: This spring's fifth-graders must be on grade level in reading and math to be promoted.

What: Each end-of-grade test takes approximately two hours, and is multiple-choice. The tests are graded in Roman numerals. Level III is on grade level, Level IV above grade level. Levels I and II are below grade level.

When: The end-of-grade tests will be given during the last three weeks of school, roughly between May 16 and June 5.

Why Level III? "This level of performance shows that students are well prepared for success in the sixth grade. Teachers in North Carolina have worked with the state testing experts to set the achievement levels, based on what a typical student needs to know," says the Department of Public Instruction.

What if Level II? State officials have told local systems to be ready with help. "This means [students] could participate in

special after-school or Saturday classes, alternative types of instruction, smaller classes, summer school or other activities to help improve their learning."

Within CMS, it appears that summer school will be mandatory for fifth-graders not at Level III. During the summer there will be more opportunities to retake the test.

Who decides retention? This is the first foray into statewide standards for promotion. But the guidelines specify that the final decision to promote still rests with the principal. For children who do not test well, the state rules provide for a review process involving teachers and a principal from another school to review evidence that the child's work is in fact on grade level. The parent has the right to participate in the review, and to offer information. The review panel's recommendation goes to the principal.

Is anyone exempt? English as a Second Language children are not required to pass the tests to be promoted during their first two years in the ESL program. Also, exceptional children whose Individual Education Plans state that they are exempt will be promoted without passing the tests.

History: The standards were approved in April 1999 after six years of study and public comment. N.C. Board of Education Chairman Phil Kirk said at the time, "Far from being a barrier for student progress, these standards are a way to be sure that all students receive appropriate and timely help, if necessary, to bring them to grade level. Students and their families should expect no less."

What's next: Next year, similar standards kick in for third-graders and eighth-graders. And for the Class of 2003 (this year's 10th-graders), all must pass an exit exam. They will take it for the first time next spring.

Fifth-graders face new retention policy

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mer school and be given more opportunities to pass the test during the summer.

"What if an elementary school is anticipating 125 fifth-graders and it ends up with 150?" Dunlap asked. "Is that in the budget?"

Although Smith told Dunlap that that possibility wasn't a budgetary concern because "the total number of students won't change," exactly what the school system does with those students who fail at the end of the year would seem to have budgetary implications.

According to Smith, however, one important question related to those fifth-graders hasn't been

resolved: will they be retained at their elementary school as Dunlap suggested or will they be placed in special classes at either their assigned middle school or some other?

Smith promised board members that whatever that decision about housing the students is, "the cost issue should be relatively constant."

Other board members also questioned the superintendent about the impact of the new state requirement.

Vilma Leake asked whether exceptions would be made for children who fail. While those children who are classified as "exceptional" or those for whom English is a second language are not required to pass the tests, Smith indicated that other exceptions will be practically nonexistent.

In reply to John Lassiter's question about whether the system's philosophy would be to concentrate or to disperse failing fifth-graders, Smith replied, "Our preferred mode is to make sure that these children aren't permanently retained. We want them to catch up to their peers."

Where the children are assigned will depend, Smith said, "on where we can accommodate them."

He noted, however, that a student who fails reading but passes math should be in a situation to do sixth-grade math next year.

Look for more information soon about how children at different levels will be housed. Here are some possible scenarios:

– A child with one or even two Level II grades remaining after summer school might be retained,

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Concern grows over 'fair testing'

Last year at this time in North Carolina, 99,372 of this year's fifth-graders were failing one or more end-of-grade tests. There were 30,507 students behind, one in three taking the tests. About 15,000 of them were African Americans, half of those taking the test. There were 12,686 whites, one in five taking the test. One in two Native Americans, one in four Asians, one in two Latinos were behind.

These numbers have drawn the interest of a number of groups, which have labeled the entire accountability program as "high-stakes testing." The groups think too much is riding on one test, or that more account should be taken of children who do not "test" well.

It appears impossible right now to separate out how many of these children have trouble taking tests, and how many simply haven't learned the work.

The Common Sense Foundation is also publicizing two other statistics: Students who have been retained once have a 50% chance of dropping out before graduation. Students who've been retained twice have a 90% chance of dropping out before graduation.

Fifth-graders face new retention policy

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but moved to middle school and take remedial classes until passing the end-of-fifth-grade test, then join peers in regular sixth-grade classes in that subject.

– Students with any Level I grades after summer school might both be retained and held at the elementary school for another year.

Those are two examples. The state's published guidelines appear to leave it to school districts to work out these practical details. But the state is very clear that students will not be promoted until showing Level III work in both reading and math.

At this time last year, CMS knew that 2,000 or more kids could be in jeopardy of failing this spring.

How far CMS has whittled that number during the past year should be a first indicator of the effectiveness of Smith's programs, and whether the system is on track to implement its pledge to educate all children.

The purpose, after all, of the testing program, and also the state accountability standards, is nothing more than to assure that all children learn.

Parents of fifth-graders will know test results before school's out. Summer school enrollments should be clear in mid-June, and systemwide results will be published by the state in late August.

For your calendar

There will be 12 projectors, 11 warming cabinets, 10 round tables, 9 audio visual carts, 8 ice cream boxes, 7 or more oil pumps, 6 fax machines, 5 chairs, 4 cafeteria serving lines, 3 gas ranges, 2 electric drills and 1 puppet stage.

Plus 245 computers, 50 TVs, 219 student desks, 21 VCRs, a clothes dryer and lots of other stuff. It's the annual CMS surplus property auction, May 9, 9 a.m., CMS warehouse, 1132 Pro-Am Drive. By May 9 some of the goods will be picked over: Employees get first dibs.

Briefs

No comparable tests: The \$5,300 State of Wisconsin vouchers that Milwaukee parents can use to send their children to private or parochial school share this with President Bush's proposed vouchers: They do not require any student testing or other accountability to prove that children are learning. The Washington Post, profiling the Milwaukee voucher movement that has enrolled 9,600 children in 103 schools, mentions a school approved for the program that failed to open for lack of a site: "Last summer, Sensas-Utcha Institute of Holistic Learning was set to enroll 135 city children in a curriculum that said students could gain knowledge from books simply by resting their hands on them. The headmaster had a Ph.D. that state officials said he purchased over the Internet." One school that not only tests students but outperforms public schools is the Marva Collins Preparatory School, a second school run by Chicago's Marva Collins. "There's no magic here," principal Robert Rauh told the Post, "just a lot of hard work." www.washingtonpost.com

Linking up with tests: Georgia is on its way toward linking promotion to test results. The new rules would start in 2004, and children who fail would get extra help, then be allowed to take the test again. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution says the system is modeled on a Texas program. There, one in four black and Hispanic ninth-graders are retained before the key 10th-grade test year and put in test-practice classes. One in six drop out before 10th grade, so the 10th-grade test results are artificially high, and the achievement test gap is essentially unaddressed. The newspaper quoted

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Briefs

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Princeton economist Alan Krueger: "The No. 1 tool in reducing the gap is smaller class sizes.... Education reform is a lot about gap closing."

www.accessatlanta.com

Disabilities services: In a settlement to be announced this week, Arizona is expected to agree to provide services to disabled students that were legally mandated but never provided by local school districts. The Arizona Republic said officials couldn't estimate ultimate costs of the settlement, but the state's third-largest system is expecting \$100,000 in extra costs annually as it repays parents for therapy and boosts services.

www.arizonarepublic.com

Place of the arts: The San Francisco Chronicle reported that UCLA researcher James Catterall's studies showed that students who've studied the arts cut class less and have higher grades and test scores. The College Board says their SAT scores are better. Yet some educators fear that arts classes will be forced out of the curriculum to make room for test-prep classes. "Sesame Street" star Bob McGrath was in a delegation that met recently with Education Secretary Rod Paige to press the value of the arts. "We were very pleased that the Secretary of Education said, 'I'm an old trombone player,'" McGrath told the Chronicle.

www.sfgate.com

Civics awareness: An international test that found American children lagging in math showed them above-average in civics, the Pioneer Press reported. American 14-year-olds averaged 106 on a test with an international average score in 1999 of 100 among 90,000 students from 28 democratic

countries.

www.pioneerplanet.com

Bullies: The Santee, Calif. high school that was the latest scene of a gun incident was using a \$123,000 federal grant to explore ways to end what Attorney General John Ashcroft called an "onerous culture of bullying." Salon.com reported that such efforts often founder on "what constitutes bullying and who's behind it." Salon said Santee classmates of Charles Williams said he was "no more tortured than any other student."

www.salon.com

Set aside parental guilt: A study of at-risk children shows that participants in child care were, at age 18, far less likely to have been arrested, according to the San Jose Mercury News. A nonprofit of law enforcement officers and crime victims named Fight Crime is pressing for \$2 billion in California to raise child-care worker wages and increase subsidies for low-income children. FYI, the article said infant care averages \$8,000 a year in California, and runs \$11,000 in the Bay Area.

www.mercurycenter.com

Fast ForWord: Pilot programs of this educational software find that children can make up a year's reading skills in a matter of weeks. Berkeley, Calif., Science Learning Corp. has its programs in 2,100 schools nationwide. The premise is that slow readers have trouble understanding phonemes, the sounds of spoken English that make up words. Training the brain to hear them better gives kids the skill they lack. The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that at Philadelphia's Vare Middle, "fifth-graders made gains of 3 1/2 years to five years in language skills critical to reading after training for only four to 10 weeks."

www.philly.com

Return of the K-8: USA Today

profiled schools that are returning to the K-8 format so that pre-teens can be leaders at school, not shunted into their own little hotbed of hormones and anxieties. Middle schools are "a recipe for alienation," the paper quoted Manhattan Institute fellow Kay Hymowitz as saying. "Kids need to be lured out of themselves and out of their social world."

www.usatoday.com

Meat they can eat: Dearborn, Mich. public schools next fall will serve meat that is halal, or permitted under Islamic law. The law basically requires slaughtering practices that cause the least pain. Muslims, like kosher Jews, do not eat pork and the district, which is 35% Muslim, has not served pork for eight years. School officials, in moving to adopt halal, want to cut food waste and keep children fed. The New York Times quoted one assistant principal as saying, "So much is thrown away. [Students] revert to junk food, cookies and candy. Having halal meats would be good for everyone."

www.nytimes.com

Calendar

27 School board meeting, public hearing on budget, Board Room, 6 p.m.

April

2 Student assignment oversight committee, Board Room, 7:30 a.m.

3 School board budget work session, Board Room, 6 p.m.

10 School board meeting, Board Room, 6 p.m.

12 Curriculum committee, Board Room, 6 p.m.

17 Bond oversight committee, Building Services, 7:30 a.m.

Joint lunch with commissioners, City Council, Room 267 Government Center.