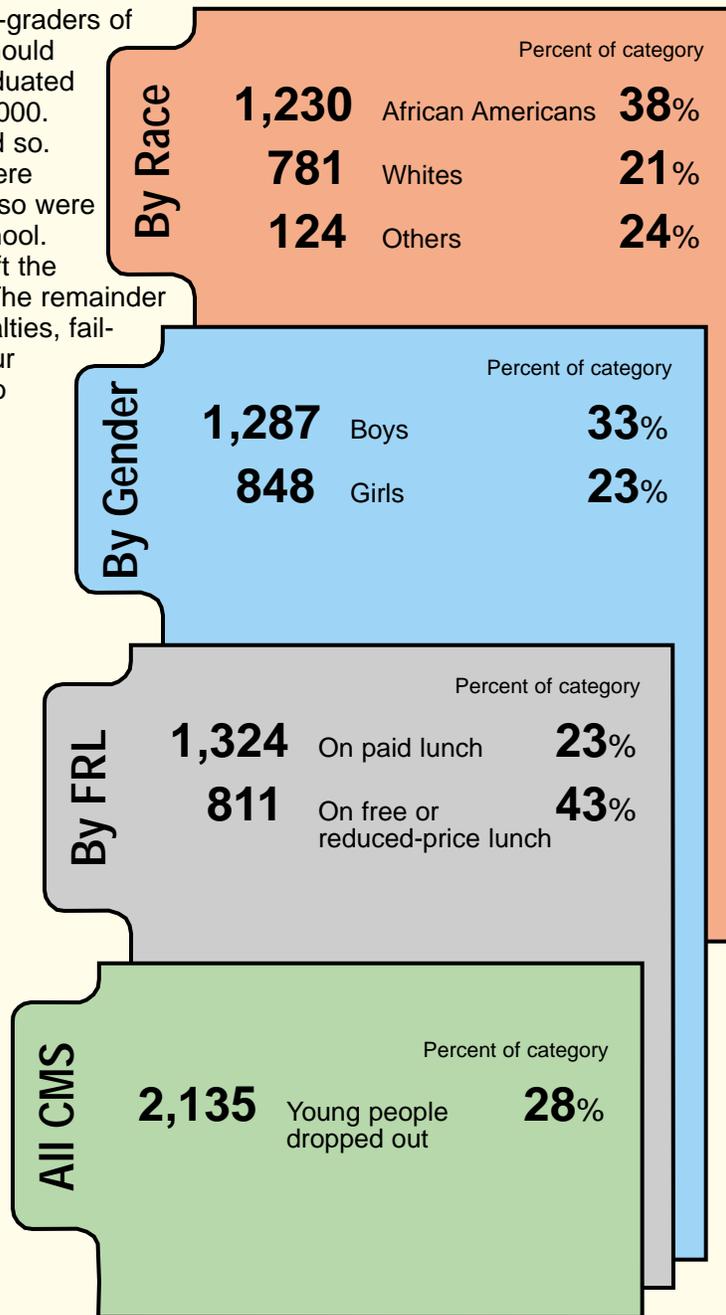


The ninth-graders of '96-'97 should have graduated in June 2000. 54.4% did so. Others were retained, so were still in school. Others left the system. The remainder are casualties, failures of our schools to prevent

DROPPED OUTS



Percentage data from CMS. Numbers subject to rounding errors.

No time to help at school?

Survey shows voters value better schools, but are daunted by enormity of problems

If you didn't volunteer last week at a school, you are not alone.

CMS is not the only school system finding it very difficult to supplement its paid staff with volunteer labor.

A national poll released last week found that virtually all Americans believe

every child should get a good education. With nearly equal vigor, they say they're not cut out to do the job themselves.

The Public Education Network and

Education Week asked 1,175 voters to say how much time they have to volunteer at schools. The results are in the box above.

At a Washington press conference Monday, pollster Celinda Lake said:

"People see schools not as something you can solve with volun-

"How much time do you really have per week to be involved in education issues?"

- 17% None
- 20% Less than hour
- 31% 1 to 3 hours
- 14% 4-6 hours
- 5% 7-10 hours
- 7% 10-plus hours

PEN poll

Thursday session on books, testing

Parents are invited Thursday at 7 p.m. to a school session on "testing, textbooks and dollars." The two-hour session in the Board Room at the Education Center will cover the system's adoption of new reading textbooks, the schools' proposed budget, and changes on this spring's end-of-grade and end-of-course tests.

Further information is at www.cms.k12.nc.us

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Public has no 'time' to help out at school

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teerism. They definitely think that there ought to be more community, a more systemic, a more politically public way to be involved in fixing the schools. They don't think you can just give an afternoon to fix a school."

A CMS family survey in December 1999 suggested that 90 percent of elementary parents had attended at least one school conference that fall. Good strong numbers. But the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation looked at the data and noted that only 31% of high school parents "bothered to turn in the form and a majority of those said they had not attended a single conference."

A meeting leading up to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee's current community forums on education listed five elements of a quality education. One of the five was "maximum parental involvement" and "parent support for teachers."

Is volunteer activity going to turn around CMS education? Are we already at the limits of "maximum parental involvement"?

Little wonder that voters are not jumping to wade into the schools' problems.

In a box on this page are the issues about which 60% or more of those polled nationally said they were "very concerned." Three deal with lower student performance, one with teacher preparation. What impact could an individual citizen feel like she or he could have on any one of these key issues?

"Less than 5% of all parents understand how school funding, organization and politics interact to create learning opportunities," says school board chairman Arthur Griffin. "Most people will volunteer for one-time projects, but rarely have the time for full

engagement and action that is necessary for change.

"I guess you could say they are overwhelmed because they don't have the necessary time to understand and get engaged."

PEN, a trade group for local education foundations, is focused on encouraging citizen participation through voting. It found that "those who are most concerned about education issues are among the least likely to vote."

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education has noted that only 30% of registered voters have children in public schools. That leaves elected officials without a strong mandate. In the 1997 school board election, for example, winning district candidates Jim Puckett, Vilma Leake, Louise Woods and Lindalyn Kakadelis won with the votes of only 10% of registered voters eligible to vote for them. George Dunlap had 9%, and Molly Griffin had 18%. In the 1999 at-large school board election, Wilhelmenia Rembert won with 10% of registered voters' support, Arthur Griffin with 12% and John Lassiter with 13%.

Given the time Americans are willing to spend, PEN suggests focusing on these "traditional civic responsibilities:"

- Make your own child a success.
- Pay taxes.
- Get informed.
- Press elected officials to fix the schools.

All that, and maybe even a little more, can be done in the time most Americans say they DO have to help the schools.

The PEN findings and its report are silent on any legal or moral obligation to promote in schools the diversity that will prepare all children to act in the diverse world they live in. And poll results were clearly different by race on one issue: While, overall, those polled thought teacher quality was most important to improving schools, African Americans gave a higher value than other groups to equitable allocation of all resources among schools.

'Very concerned'

60% or more of those surveyed, when read these issues, said they were "very concerned" about them:

"About 25% of high school seniors today score below the average 8th grader on national reading tests."

"Over a quarter of new teachers have not met the requirements for licensing."

"Nearly half of urban students perform below the basic level on national reading tests."

"Most high school seniors score near the bottom in math and science compared to other industrialized nations."

PEN poll

PEN believes lack of information is "a major impediment to public responsibility." So it argues that its member foundations should support voter education. Education Week profiled the Charlotte-Mecklenburg foundation's 1995 voter education efforts that included forums for voters, questionnaires to candidates, and reports back to the public on the candidates' answers. PEN says the foundation acted after a poll found that more than 75 of those polled in Charlotte-Mecklenburg could not name a single member of the school board.

There are reasons for hope in the national survey:

Nearly all respondents believe every child should be getting a quality education, and that if that's not happening, it is practical to make it happen.

Americans are five times more likely to see public schools as their community's most important institutions than any other, including churches, hospitals and libraries.

They think education is a more important national issue than Social Security, health care, the economy, taxes, the state of moral

Continued on Page 3

Who's trusted to provide information

The following percentages of those polled said they trusted a great deal or a lot the following sources of information "about how you can help local public schools":

Teachers	59%
Parents	57%
The PTA	56%
Principals	51%
Superintendents	47%
School board	46%
Community groups	44%
Neighbors	41%
Students	41%
Local newspapers	32%
Business leaders	26%
Elected officials	25%

About the poll

The national poll was conducted for Public Education Network and Education Week by Lake Snell Perry and Associates. It was based on 1,175 telephone interviews conducted Jan. 8-15. The margin of error was 3.5 percentage points. The poll, along with focus groups, are cited in "Action for All: The Public's Responsibility for Public Education." A PDF version of the 51-page report may be downloaded at: www.publiceducation.org/news/041601.htm

Public has no 'time' to help out at school

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values, crime and loss of jobs overseas.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg voters are clearly committed to giving every child a decent school building. Last fall's bond issue for upgrading school buildings was approved with a 71% vote.

Now if only 71% would, as Griffin put it, "understand how school funding, organization and politics interact to create learning opportunities."

This is a far more complex business. Organization and politics help account for why schools in minority neighborhoods have gone downhill. They explain, in part, why learning outcomes are not consistent across the county.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg needs more people to understand these things. And it needs more people to speak up, and vote, for candidates committed to the moral duty to push toward equal educational outcomes for all children.

Time was when the courts could be counted on to hold a community to such a duty. Not now.

On page 6 of this issue is a report on a ruling by a Midwest appeals court calling an end to desegregation efforts in Rockford, Illinois.

School outcomes are still markedly different by race in Rockford, but those outcomes are now, the court ruled, shaped not by school discrimination but by

Calendar

May

- 5** District Six meeting, 9 a.m., Matthews Presbyterian Hospital community room.
- 8** School board meeting, Board Room, 6 p.m.
- 10** Curriculum committee, Board Room, 9:30 a.m.
- 15** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services
- 15** Personnel/Policy Committee, 3 p.m., Board conference room.
- 15** School board meeting, Board Room, 6 p.m.

"poverty, parents' education and employment, family size, parental attitudes and behavior, prenatal, neonatal and child health care, peer-group pressure and ethnic culture."

"The board has no legal duty to remove those vestiges of societal discrimination for which it is not responsible," the court wrote. "Insofar as the factors that we have mentioned, rather than unlawful conduct by the Rockford school board in years past, are responsible for lags in educational achievement by minority students, the board has no duty that a federal court can enforce to help those students catch up. It may have a moral duty; it has no federal constitutional duty."

Educate! a newsletter of The Swann Fellowship

1510 E. 7th St. Charlotte NC 28204
704-342-4330 SwannFello@aol.com Locally produced content © The Swann Fellowship. Lucy Bush, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president. Published since September 2000. 6-week avg. circ. through last issue: 2,213.

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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.

Board resolution marks path to future

The writer, who represents District 1 on the Board of Education, addressed this letter to Araminta S. Johnston, author of an Educate! article on the school board's April 3 approval of a resolution on pupil assignment.

I am disappointed by the inaccuracies in your April 8 article entitled "New Choice -- New Inequities." Unlike your article that followed my interview with you and others from the Fellowship, it does not appear in the current article that you allowed the facts to interfere with your desire to state your position in opposition to the resolution.

First, and most fundamentally, you didn't report the voting correctly. George [Dunlap]'s resolution was supported by George, Wilhelmenia [Rembert] and Louise [Woods], opposed by John [Lassiter], Arthur [Griffin], Molly [Griffin], Lindalyn [Kakadelis] and me, and Vilma [Leake] abstained. My resolution was supported by Vilma, John, Louise, Molly and Lindalyn and opposed by Arthur, George and Wilhelmenia.

Arthur explained that his opposition to both resolutions was philosophical and that he consid-

Letters

ered my resolution to be as well-constructed a compromise as could be constructed.

As George explained, he supported the vast majority of my resolution, with limited reservations about the transportation issue under the limited transfer possibility in the Fall of 2001.

As Wilhelmenia explained, she supported the vast majority of my resolution, with limited reservations about the effect on staff and teachers of the implementation of the limited transfer possibility in the Fall of 2001.

Second, you repeatedly allege that the resolution was crafted and passed as a result of "bowing to pressure from the Charlotte business community and neighborhood schoolers" and "pressure from the Chamber of Commerce and threats by affluent, primarily white parents to take their children out of the public school system." You cite no evidence to support your allegations. As you know, I have long supported the public schools and opposed resegregation for "neighborhood schools" that would return to the separate, dual and unequal system of the days before Swann.

As you know, I began work on this resolution within 2 weeks after being appointed to the Board because of my view that we can and should take the initiative to institutionalize the gains of the last 30 years in a school system that provides all of our children with access to an equally excellent education in every school building.

The resolution is not the result of pressure or threats; the resolution is the result of seizing an opportunity to lead the community to provide equal opportunity that honors the past by securing the future.

The resolution contains commitments to equity in all respects, including additional resources for children at greater risk of failure – especially where such children are concentrated more highly in some schools. The resolution contains commitments to funding equity – even if the County Commission does not fully fund the budget (a position that predated and is consistent with the admirable intent of Judge Manning's Leandro decision as noted in your review in this same issue).

The resolution contains guarantees of access for low performing students to schools with higher performance and to low socioeconomic status students to schools with higher socioeconomic status. If we can make room to guarantee that students can attend school close to home, we can make room for these guarantees as well.

We have the luxury of a large system with many schools and relative wealth in our state. The resolution even looks prospectively to prescribe the consideration of the socioeconomic diversity of nearby housing and the availability of public transit in siting new schools.

Third, it is odd that you would rely on Commissioner James' misunderstanding of the resolution to bolster your position. Yes, the new plan will use as its foundation the work done by the Superintendent, the staff and the Board in preparing the plan suspended when the panel of the Fourth Circuit largely reversed Judge Potter in the end of November.

Isn't it odd that Commissioner James would object to this effort to save money and to recover some of the costs he so vocally overinflated and lamented in December? Don't you wonder at the motives of Commissioner

Correction

An article in Educate!'s April 8 edition incorrectly reported votes by Arthur Griffin, Vilma Leake and Louise Woods on an amendment by George Dunlap to the board's resolution on student assignment.

Voting in favor of the amendment were Dunlap, Wilhelmenia Rembert and Louise Woods. Opposed were Arthur Griffin, Molly Griffin, Lindalyn Kakadelis, John Lassiter and Bob Simmons. Vilma Leake abstained.

Simmons responds on resolution

Continued from Page 4

James and his accuracy, or is his apparent support for your point of view too tempting to look at twice?

Commissioner James suspects this resolution and the described plan because it poses a real risk of unseating him from the high horse of neighborhood schools that he has ridden to power in dividing our community. Consensus, compromise and progress are his enemies. I am surprised that you seem to have mounted the saddle with him.

Perhaps both you and he share a commitment to images of the past that are threatened by movement into the future: He to an artificial image of the '50s and you to an idealized image of the '70s.

Fourth, for a group and publication that purports to have a basis in a Supreme Court decision, your understanding of the law is less than expected. You point out that the panel decision of the Fourth Circuit forced the Board to cancel the previous plan. This is true, but then you gloss over the effect of the decision of the court to hear the case en banc.

Resolution 'a good starting point'

The writer represents District 4 on the Board of Education.

While the Board's resolution isn't perfect, it is a good starting point to move us forward because it recognizes many of the struggles we face.

We need your help to find solutions to these issues:

(1) Share with us your ideas about additional ways to relieve high poverty schools without destabilizing integrated areas.

(2) Help us find solutions to stabilizing schools in integrated areas.

(3) Help us place schools to

Text of resolution

The final text of the school board's April 3 resolution on student assignment is posted on the CMS website at:

<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/inside/news/resolution.htm>

I am sure that someone has explained to you that the decision for hearing by the full court has the effect of nullifying the decision of the panel. Therefore, the applicable law today is the same law that applied when the previous plan was adopted – Judge Potter's ruling is stayed pending the decision of the Fourth Circuit.

The exact meaning of the stay is somewhat unclear, but it is completely clear that the panel decision is of no consequence other than its usefulness in predicting the positions of three of the 11 judges on rehearing. I don't intend to guess what the Fourth Circuit may do, and I don't know if anybody else on the Board was influenced by their guesses, as you attribute to John. But George is incorrect in asserting that our adoption of the resolution is in conflict with the position of the Board in the appeal.

The appeal is based on the record on appeal and is limited to

take advantage of increasingly diverse areas.

(4) Help us find ways to achieve adequate funding to educate every child well.

(5) We have schools dealing with 30% or more annual student turnover rates and 50% or more poverty. Help us work with City Council and the County Commission to prevent more low-income housing near these neighborhood schools.

Timing is critical. The next two months may well decide what kind of Charlotte we are, and what we will become.

Louise Woods

the facts adduced at trial. Those facts pertain to school operations prior to the hearing before Judge Potter in the late Winter and Spring of 1999. The last complete school year covered by those facts was 1997-1998, and the facts giving rise to the original claim by Mr. Cappachione are even earlier.

We have argued and we maintain that the school system was not unitary under the facts adduced at trial. We also maintain that Judge Potter made reversible errors of law which produced his rulings on unitary status, the constitutionality of the race-based magnet program lottery under the Swann order, the *sua sponte* injunction on any use of race and the award of nominal damages and attorneys' fees.

There is nothing in the resolution or the plan which contradicts any of our positions. In fact, although the resolution recognizes the undeniable progress of the system under Dr. Smith, it also recognizes that inequalities remain.

I do not deny that George may be concerned that the resolution conflicts with our position in court, but there is no factual or legal basis for George's concern. You should know that, and you should report that.

Fifth, and finally, subject to reservations he has expressed, Dr. Smith supports our resolution, and our resolution supports Dr. Smith. When I took office, I received encouragement and some excellent advice from former Board members like Susan Burgess, John Tate, George Battle, William Rikard, Ward McKeithen and Ashley Hogewood: The job of the Board is to hire the best Superintendent available and to support the Superintendent.

I worked closely with Dr. Smith throughout the process, seeking input from members, balancing issues and concerns and reviewing with him the practical, administrative reality of proposed solutions. His commitment to fulfilling the CMS vision is great, and

Continued on Page 6

Midwest Appeals Court halts desegregation plan

No more time for court-supervised reforms in system first sued in '70s; fears of 'backsliding' not enough reason to keep case open; no legal duty to redress discrimination school board didn't create

A court case out in the Midwest may have little direct impact on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg student assignment lawsuit awaiting a decision in Richmond.

But parts of the ruling are certainly a reminder of where many of the nation's judges are today.

"The Rockford public schools have been desegregated," a U.S. Court of Appeals panel ruled last week.

The Illinois city's schools have overcome vestiges of illegal segregation, Judge Richard Posner wrote for the court. If minority children's achievement is not the same as white children's, then other factors outside the school board's reach are to blame.

And the school board has no legal responsibility to overcome those factors, the court ruled.

Rockford has been involved in desegregation cases since the 1970s. The current case dates from 1989. Earlier judicial orders have required the 27,000-student district to build new schools and racially balance schoolhouses. The appeals court threw out some 1996 orders requiring racial quotas for cheerleaders, "superseniority" for minority teachers and limits on the number of minority students who could be assigned to remedial classes.

The plaintiffs, a group of African American and Latino parents called "People Who Care," had sought to extend court supervision for 15 years because, the judges noted, they "fear backsliding." A judge had agreed to six years.

"The purpose of a school desegregation decree is to eliminate the consequences of segregation," the court wrote. "When they have been eliminated the decree has done its job and should be lifted....

The Rockford public schools have been desegregated. No longer are there any schools that are 'white only' or 'minority only,' or even approximations to such schools. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured into the construction and renovation of schools and into programs designed to extirpate the traces of unlawful segregation. Although minority educational achievement lags behind that of whites, there is no evidence that the lag is any greater in Rockford than in otherwise similar districts that have no history of racial discrimination."

Further, the court noted, "the plaintiffs' failure to recognize the importance of trying to unpack the causes of disparate educational performance is illustrated by

their contention that although the Rockford schools may now be desegregated, the classrooms within those schools remain segregated and until they are desegregated the decree must remain in force. What they mean by the classrooms still being segregated is that minority students are underrepresented in advanced courses. Yet enrollment in those courses is open. No one is being kept out.... It is provincial and naive to suppose that because Rockford once engaged in de facto segregation of its public schools, the choices of its minority students regarding voluntary enrollment in advanced classes open to all are a legacy of that segregation."

The text of the Rockford case, numbered 00-3200, argued March 27 and decided April 18, can be found at the 7th Court of Appeals website, www.ca7.uscourts.gov.

Simmons responds on resolution

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his confidence in the ability of his staff is equally great.

Now, we must support their efforts by sticking to the course we have mapped into the future.

The resolution calls for a plan that is defensible regardless of what the Fourth Circuit, the Western District of North Carolina on remand or the Supreme Court on *cert* may do – absent the most prescriptive possible ruling.

We will not abandon our plan again because we have found a way that is better than the previous plan.

There is still much work to do: reviewing and maintaining consensus to approve a plan and

seeking from the County Commission full funding of our budget for equity in operations – and support for a bond referendum to finance the next phase of the promised equity construction and renovation.

As I told you in my interview, these are daunting tasks, and there is risk that we may fail or that the resolve of the community to pursue and fund equity may fail.

But the course set in the past, whether in the '50's or '70s, is no longer the course to the future, and we must seize the opportunity for our children to once again demonstrate for the nation how to perpetuate equity and achievement with voluntary integration in a new era.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Bob Simmons

Briefs

And in Denver: Charlotte civic leaders are in Denver this week learning about arenas and public services – and schools. And on Friday, the Denver schools named a new superintendent: Jerry Wartgow, former head of the state's community college system. The Rocky Mountain News reported that Wartgow said recently he had a "belief that what's there doesn't work for a lot of the students. And that is unacceptable and has to change." A member of a student group that preferred another candidate said Wartgow "spoke like a politician, saying stuff people wanted to hear."
www.rockymountainnews.com

Tough choices: The Boston Globe surveyed Lee County, Fla., home of massive use of choice programs. Parents at a sign-up event faced "a dizzying menu of curriculums fiercely marketed to a largely uninformed public." Parents, the Globe wrote, "feel more confused than empowered. Many lack the time to research options, or the expertise to evaluate them, and are instead swayed by a principal's greeting or a building's facade." The Globe added, "While studies of limited choice programs show that parents who choose schools are generally more satisfied than they were before choice, and while their children's test scores often rise, there is little evidence of improvement in districts or systems as a whole."
www.boston.com

Testing fallout: Even before the Bush administration focused national attention on end-of-grade tests and exit exams, there was concern that testing would cause thousands of teens to delay graduation or drop out. Implementation of the N.C. exit exam has been delayed, but end-of-grade tests tied to promotion kick in this year for fifth-graders.

Pointers on being a citizen lobbyist

The Common Sense Foundation's 7th annual media skills and advocacy training workshop will be held at the UNC School of Social Work in Chapel Hill on Saturday, May 12th from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Workshops will be held on legislative lobbying, how the media works, how to hold a press conference and citizen lobbying. Anyone wanting to learn more about how to negotiate the media and get their message heard may want to attend. Cost of the training, lunch and materials is \$25, but \$10 for students or folks with limited income. For more information, contact Daniella Cook at 919-821-9270 or daniella@common-sense.org.

Education Week quoted James McPartland, director of Johns Hopkins' Center for the Social Organization of Schools as saying, "In many of the nonselective urban high schools we work with, the average reading score of entering 9th graders is 5th grade, so they're four years behind, and that's the average." McPartland's reforms include extending the school day and school year, smaller classes, 9th-grade academics focusing on the basics, changing teaching procedures and doubling or tripling the time spent on reading and math.

All reform agendas seem to focus exclusively on how in-school time is spent — not on how out-of-school time is spent.
www.edweek.com

Top performance: On the recent Third International Math and Science study, the Napierville, Ill. school district outperformed all U.S. states and all countries except Singapore, Chinese Taipei and South Korea. Napierville's secret: Only 2 percent of its students live in poverty.
www.arizonarepublic.com

Morale's highs and lows: The N.C. Board of Education's two teacher representatives consulted Teachers of the Year on recruitment and retention. The teachers' advice: "Recruitment challenges include salary, time and adequate resources. Morale was rated as relatively high for veterans but strikingly low for initially licensed teachers. Teacher stress related to

testing issues, particularly for new teachers, was tied to school leadership and the lack of accurate information about testing and standards."

www.ncpublicschools.org

Retention cloud: San Diego Unified School District has sent out a frightening message to U.S. school systems. Plans to end all social promotion by retaining all students not on grade level have been watered down so that now only students in specific grade levels who are more than three years behind will be retained. The result: San Diego still expects to retain 10%-17% of sixth-graders this spring, and up to 17% of ninth-graders will be diverted to three-hour literacy classes and may need a fifth year to graduate.
www.uniontrib.com

The boob tube: Boston Globe columnist Derrick Jackson gathered up federal statistics and wrote that: Of 12th-graders who watch an hour or less of TV daily, 52% are proficient in reading. Of 12th-graders who watch four to five hours of TV a day, only 27% are proficient readers. "It is not absolutely certain that a nation that turns down or turns off the boob tube will suddenly become brilliant on standardized tests. It is absolutely certain if we do not turn off the tube, too many children and their parents will remain boobs, ill-equipped to rebut the state's best excuse for poor scores."
www.boston.com