

Back to task

Voters have long been clear about what they value most ... and it's not downtown buildings

The week's 57%-43% thrumping at the polls of a nonbinding referendum on basketball and cultural projects downtown might have turned out differently if voters had known they could have this dessert – and their entrée too.

As the Education Foundation's March poll showed, voters have an overwhelming interest in schools. The poll didn't ask them, "Given a choice between an arena and paying for textbooks, what would you choose?" But the results at the right leave little doubt what the answer would be.

And voters confronting the city's advisory bond referendum were at the same time seeing their county

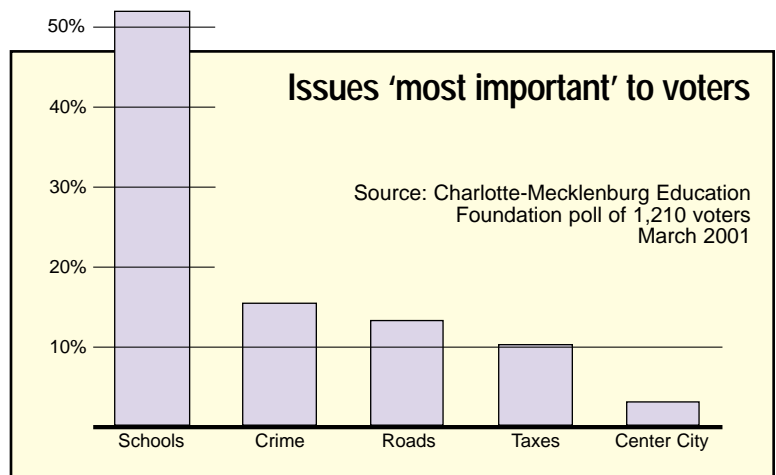
leadership question whether they would do more for the schools than keep the lights on and create enough seats for incoming students. The county manager's budget being discussed in the days leading up to the referendum would have left unfunded:

- Purchase of new textbooks at all grade levels to give kids the phonics-based skills that will lead to reading achievement;
- Expansion of Bright Beginnings, a preschool program that shows promise of permanent-

ly boosting at-risk kids' academic performance;

- Overhaul of teacher mentoring, to counsel and encourage teachers in their first years so they don't quit in frustration;
- Another installment in reaching equity of resources in all classrooms for all children;
- Teacher incentives to work at low-performing schools where experienced teachers are most needed;

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Toward consensus on equity Chamber portrays issue as a key business objective

Reprinted with permission from the May/June edition of *Ventures Charlotte* magazine, a bimonthly publication of the *Charlotte Chamber*.

By LEE McCracken

Whether echoing from a corporate office on Tryon, a retail store in the South End or a manufacturing plant on Westinghouse Boulevard, the talk is education. At a PTA meeting in Dilworth, an AME Zion church supper and a suburban bus stop, the talk is education.

But the key players in Charlotte public education say the challenge facing the city right now demands that the talk stop and that constructive community action start, with one goal in sight – an

equitable education for all children is the goal.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools defines equity as "the condition in which each student is able to realize his or her full potential for academic achievement . . ." and that it requires "an on-going process to allocate resources to each school so that each student has access to rigorous academic challenges and an environment that promotes high expectations."

To continue to move forward with this objective, despite court rulings, business leaders and school board members say it will take cohesiveness and confidence.

CMS Superintendent Dr. Eric Smith says that will come with a good product and a high level of trust. "I think the

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Inside

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Relax, kids: School's out, but you may not forget those exams for as long as you live. **8**

False choice

While awaiting word from Appeals Court on student assignment, community has time to ponder how it wants its leaders to proceed

Where should the children go to school? Time was when the answer was simple, codified in laws enacted by white people: White children went to white schools and black children went to black schools. If your assigned school wasn't in your neighborhood, tough. If you had to walk or ride past three other schools to get to your assigned school, well, something far more important than transportation costs or a child's time was at stake.

This is not ancient history. Thousands of Charlotte-Mecklenburg adults went to school this way.

After a civil rights revolution, legal changes, growth and an infusion of wealth, this community is in a different place. But it's still easy to settle for the comfortable ways of racial and economic isolation.

What if the Appeals Court, which is reviewing CMS's record

of overcoming its segregated past, rules that it's done enough, that it can assign children as it wishes?

What if, in addition, the court agrees with the school board and some other courts that educating children for today's diverse world means that diversity in the classroom has educational value?

Back in the '70s this community accepted the legal mandate to end segregation. A court imposing the decision made it a whole lot easier for Charlotte-Mecklenburg to accept.

Today, a court may not impose so much as cajole. Yet the court's tone cannot dull the clarity of the twin missions: Assure that segregation stays in the past. Assure that all children get a quality education that prepares them by experience for a diverse world.

Only two student assignment concepts seem to have currency. And if the community develops only two, it will be a false choice.

One false choice is neighborhood schools. The paramount value of such a plan is not education, but minimizing travel distances.

Another false choice is cross-town busing. The paramount value of such a plan is not education, but maximizing diversity.

Supt. John Murphy's solution in the early '90s was magnets – better-equipped schools for children whose parents would voluntarily agree to diversity. The inequities that this two-tiered system created are still being dealt with.

There IS a better way, but the details will only fall into place after acceptance of today's twin missions: Assure that segregation stays in the past. Assure that all children get a quality education that prepares them by experience for a diverse world.

Amid the wait for advice from the Appeals Court, there is time for the community to ponder how it will instruct its leaders.

Voters defeat advisory referendum on arena

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– Completion of the business side computer upgrade that will finally give school leaders access to good information about student achievement, budgets and effective programs.

There's no doubt that a variety of issues were raised during the arena referendum, and the "No" vote can be laid to a number of issues. Among them: concern about tax rates; the mayor's veto of a living-wage resolution approved by the city council; delay of a referendum on meeting housing needs; the bundling of issues;

the flavor of the city's negotiations with owners of the Hornets.

But if the schools' budget had been secure, one less issue would have been on the table.

Instead, the week ended with not just defeat of useful and valuable civic projects, but two spectacular local fights over governing this community.

First, county commissioners were talking about financing more of the schools' needs, but doing it by earmarking the new funds to be spent only on their favorite projects. The move appeared good politics – it's been open season on the school board for some months – but is exceedingly bad public policy. Do we really need TWO school boards setting dueling priority agendas?

Second, within hours of the polls closing, the county commissioners were acting to impose THEIR agenda on downtown, voting to buy the land the city wanted for the arena so the county could put a park on the site.

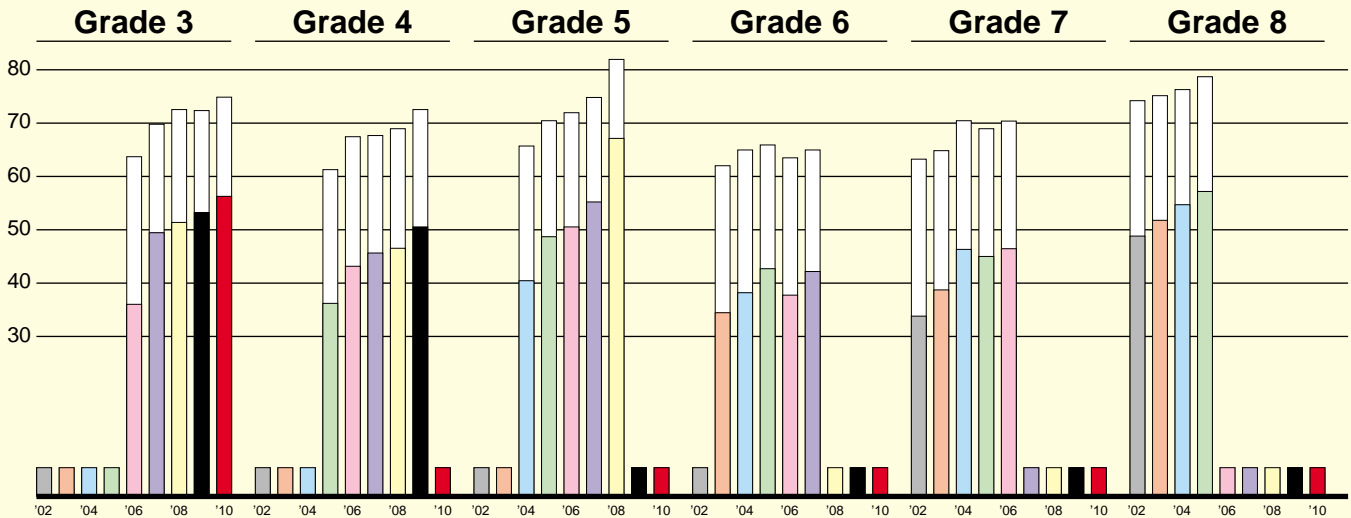
The city's arena site may be the best place for a park. But that's not the point exactly.

The fireworks left some folk looking to the day when city and county governing bodies are fully merged, and the school board has its own taxing authority. (Related story, page 9.) That would make each body cleanly accountable to the voters for the public agendas in their sphere.

Tuesday's vote is a reminder that voters are quite willing to exercise that oversight.

Report from Planet EOG

End-of-grade tests show gains at all grade levels, for most classes



Whether looking at test scores by grade (above) or by graduating class (below), CMS results show that results are going in the right way -- up.

In the charts here, the tall white bar is the percentage of all students in that category who were reading on grade level. The shorter bar in color is the percentage of students on free- or reduced-price lunch reading at or above grade level.

The lag in achievement among poor students is vexing and persistent, but there are some signs of improvement. Find, for example, the grade 5 results above for the Class of '08 -- this year's fifth-graders. They not only scored better as a whole, but low-income students scored a big increase over

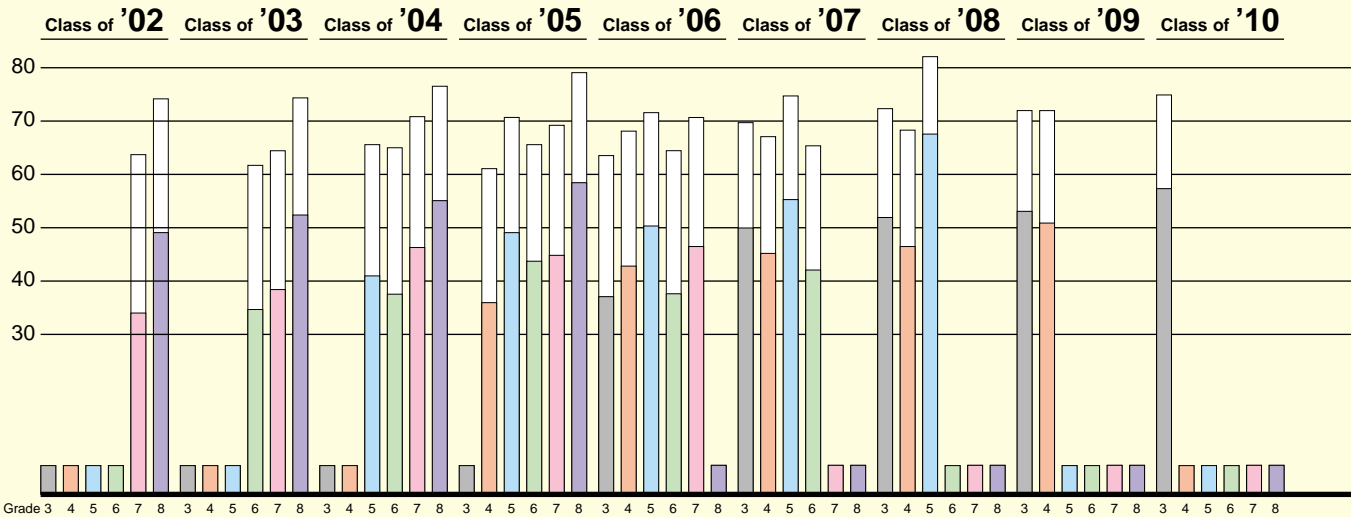
previous fifth-grade low-income students. For context, note below the Class of '08: Last year as fourth-graders, they didn't have a great year.

The bars are short where test data is not available (i.e., at bottom right, the Class of '10, this year's third-graders, haven't yet taken 8th-grade reading tests!)

This spring's statewide scoring difficulties with the math test are a reminder that test results over time must be taken with a grain of salt. That said, the picture created here is one of improving results.

If you have questions about the results, message SwannFello@aol.com and we'll try to find answers.

– Data from CMS



Chamber article looks at the road to equity

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only way a school system can gain confidence with families is through personal interaction. It's more than just the headlines in the newspaper – it's our promises followed through, our agreements kept."

He recalled schools marketing themselves in anticipation of the choice plan last year. "Those with us are confident of our service and are eager to get others to be a part of it. That's the kind of competitive edge we need to get the market share back."

A plan to move forward

Economically speaking, our children and our city depend on that competitive edge, too.

Ernie Dehnert, chair of the CMS Partners for School Reform initiative of the Advantage Carolina plan, says quality public education drives the ability to produce an educated workforce and to recruit businesses to the region. "I don't think there's anything more beneficial to a community than creating a first-class public school system that serves the needs of all children, without regard to race or socioeconomic status." But, he adds, "it doesn't come cheap."

The bottom line is student achievement, says Smith, which means providing whatever it takes over 13 years or more (e.g., preschool) to effect "a good level of performance across all groups."

The Chamber has urged the Board of Education to establish a strategic plan for unitary status and equity that the community could unite behind, according to Dehnert. "We've asked Dr. Smith and the school board to give us a plan that we, as a business community, can get our hands around and then support to the community at large."

Johnson C. Smith and UNC Charlotte jointly signed a letter

How to contact county commissioners

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offering to mediate a settlement on the equity issue as well. To date, [board Chairperson Arthur] Griffin has not accepted either offer.

Griffin contends the move to make CMS unitary is a legal obligation of which the board is fully aware. "We have to eliminate all the vestiges of a dual system.... Now that we know what the law is saying, it doesn't matter whether the Chamber sends us a letter or Johnson C. Smith."

He stressed the board has been on track since it adopted the Equity and Student Success Plan in March 1999, and that Smith was very clear in reporting it would take five years to implement. "One small element of that plan (pupil assignment) got caught up in the judicial system. .

. . The remainder we're trying to execute as originally planned."

For the past four years, CMS has been striving to make sure all children have the essential resources to be successful. "We've been working at an incredible pace . . . so that the courts don't catch us unprepared," says Smith. He notes those efforts have included bond referendums and budget increases, as well as a fight for major changes in state legislation.

The bond referendum passed last fall will bring 19 schools up to standard and new schools will be built, including a middle school in the center city. With plans in place to rectify inequity from a bricks and mortar standpoint, the next step is the classroom.

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Chamber article looks at the road to equity

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CMS also heralds successes on this front:

- In its fourth year, Bright Beginnings is serving 2,200 4-year-olds in 16 community-based sites. In kindergarten and first grade, these children are scoring equal to, if not above, their classmates in literacy and math.

- The student achievement gap between white and African American students is narrowing; 46 percent of African American students are reading on or above grade level (up 18 percentage points from 1995-96) and 48 percent are completing geometry prior to the 11th grade (up 9.6 percentage points). The number of African American students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses increased from 77 students in 1991-92 to 974 students in 1999-00.

- Last year, more than 200 high school seniors took exams to earn the country's first Advanced Placement diplomas. Nearly 150 students earned such a diploma.

According to School board Vice Chairperson John Lassiter, the Board of Education has been on task making all schools equitable since the early '90s.

"Almost all new programming has had a focus on equity - reducing class size, incentives for teachers, an emphasis on pre-school and expanding AVID for students who don't choose college," says Lassiter, chair of the Finance, Capital and Facilities Committee. "Virtually every new dollar that came into the operating side has been focused on these issues."

Smith maintains the choice plan is still "the most viable option" for the community, and many agree.

But Griffin argues equity must be in place before such a plan will be fair to all families.

A tight business model

A new management and reporting system is enabling CMS to better define its strategies and track its progress. "Our effort to bring equity isn't left to chance," says Smith. "We have a very tight business model in place with the help of the business sector."

The Balanced Scorecard, a report card of the Equity and Student Success Plan, contains measures for equity within the framework of facilities, academic achievement, teacher-student ratio, curricula, textbooks/supplies, technology, media resources, co-curricular activities, staff recruitment and teacher retention, and parent/community involvement.

Lassiter calls it "outstanding," adding, "I think it's the kind of vehicle we have needed to get a better handle on individual schoolhouse progress."

But Griffin says it's "baby steps." CMS needs to get beyond percentages and drill down to the classroom level - he wants more specific identification of the shortfalls from desks to rhythm sticks.

"We need to complete the inventory, find out where we are in

every classroom and start putting the money where our mouth is," he says. "It's complete when we know what we have and don't have, and we know how and when we're going to get it fixed in every single classroom, because we're talking about every single child."

Smith emphasizes the new system strictly monitors implementation and establishes accountability. "Coming into the next school year, central office personnel salaries will be dependent on how well we are getting the job done. We will not pay, and ultimately won't continue employment, if people can't move this agenda forward."

When it comes to the operating budget, Dehnert is hopeful the Chamber can help. But he cautions, "We have to have confidence in who's spending the money and how it's being spent."

He describes the current budget proposal process as "designed for conflict" and "nonproductive," and says the business community has a much greater sense of immediacy in getting it fixed. "The hope is that a citizens advisory committee will create a dialog between the

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Sound off! for quality education

Your words in support of a quality, equitable, integrated education can help make the case for community support of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Pick up your pen! Or get your mouse in motion! Here's information on how to submit your letters to area media.

The Charlotte Post: By e-mail: thepost@clt.mindspring.com; by fax: 704-342-2160; by mail: Editor, The Charlotte Post, 1531 Camden Road, Charlotte, NC 28203-4783.

The Charlotte Observer: By e-mail: opinion@charlotteobserver.com; by fax: 704-358-5022; by mail: The Observer Forum, The Charlotte Observer, P.O. Box 30308, Charlotte, NC 28230-0308.

The Charlotte World: By e-mail: warren.smith@thecharlotteworld.com; by fax: 704-503-6691; by mail: 8701 Mallard Creek Road, Charlotte, NC 28262-9705.

The Leader: By e-mail: editor@leadernews.com; by fax: 704-347-0358; by mail: 800 E. Trade St., Charlotte, NC 28202-3014

Chamber article looks at the road to equity

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County Commission and the school board... a compatible team effort and a degree of trust.”

Smith supports the idea. “We’ve moved Building Services into a progressive business operation, one that is being supported by the bond oversight committee. In time, we hope to do the same with Business Services and have a group that works with us as we retool and educate others about our budgeting process.”

Need for ‘What’s Working’

Funding may be allocated to bring instruction and resources up to par, but Margaret Carnes says, “We’ve got to know what works and how to deliver it systemwide, because there’s not a classroom minute to waste.” She chairs the Curriculum and Equity Committee of CMS Partners for School Reform, which is comprised of parents, educators and business leaders.

The scope of the group’s research spans from preschool to high school, as well as the years that follow.

Through What’s Working conferences, Carnes says the committee has uncovered “deficiencies in the instructional program” and is looking at what’s been proven to work for language arts and math across the country.

“Research has shown that 75 percent of first-graders who are not reading independently on grade level by the end of the year never catch up to their peers,” says Carnes. “There is a real urgency here.... If we don’t catch them at this point and prevent failure, then anything we try to do as they go up through the grades is greatly diminished – and three times more expensive.”

Carnes stresses “programmatic equity,” citing great disparity from elementary schools to high school campuses. In addition, data from

state universities and colleges reveals high school graduates are not fully prepared for college-level courses, she says.

“Many of our graduates who have been accepted into the North Carolina university system have not been able to pass the placement tests to get into college-level math. They’ve had to spend a semester taking non-credit, parent-paid-for, remedial courses – and parents are shocked because kids have made good grades all through their K-12 years.”

One solution (and proof that inequity exists) is a math placement program developed by East Carolina University that is available and free to all high schools. “The program for 10th- and 11th-grade students gives them a trajectory of where they are in terms of the knowledge they need for college math placement tests,” Carnes explains. “When we started asking around, we found less than 10 high schools in CMS use it.”

Add to this the fact that what’s been taught and tested doesn’t match up to college placement tests. “The question is: If our children go through the college-level track and they take North Carolina end-of-grade tests, and they pass those tests, should we as parents and they as students be comfortable that they have learned the material well enough to place them into college-level course work? Right now we don’t have those kinds of assurances,” says Carnes.

The business community is concerned, too, about student preparedness. “We need to prepare our students for higher education and the workforce, rather than one or the other,” says Carnes. “The expectations of businesses are the same as colleges nowadays. In addition to more technical skills, [employees] need to read and comprehend and compute at a much higher level.” She also says many parents are unaware of what today’s global and high-tech marketplace will require of their children.

Dehnert says a lot of the problems facing teachers today are social problems, and the school system cannot fix all of them. “Students and parents need to recognize this and take some responsibility.”

He adds, “A survey of employers showed that one of the biggest concerns is not reading or math, but getting to work on time, having a decent hair cut and knowing how to greet and talk with people.”

Broader scale of support

Smith praises the business community’s involvement in the schools. “It’s the most aggressive I’ve seen in the country – and that goes from the top CEOs to the small businesses.” He applauds Bank of America, First Union and Duke Energy for politically “stepping up to the challenge” and “their willingness to take a personal risk on behalf of the public education system.” Smith emphasizes, “It shouldn’t be assumed this takes place elsewhere in the country.”

According to Griffin, however, “the same kind of tension that’s in the air right now” existed some 30 years ago. He’s concerned it will go away. “When things settle down, the power players don’t play anymore.”

He continues, “In 1992, when we expanded magnet schools, the pupil assignment at the same time went to neighborhood schools and the Chamber was all involved. . . . The interest, historically, has always dropped off when their children or their interest isn’t at stake. That tension needs to remain until every child has a classroom that is well-stocked. Every child has access to quality teaching.”

Lassiter says it’s not self-interest. Betting that most business leaders either do not have children or have children who do not attend a public school, he says, “They have an economic interest in the overall health and quality of life that makes [Charlotte] a

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desirable place to grow a business.”

He added that a quality public school system and an equally good community college system are the foundation for delivering the talent needed to support all sectors, from financial services and information systems to manufacturing and aviation and transportation. “These [businesses] cannot be satisfied by high school dropouts and undereducated immigrants.”

Lassiter believes the level of interest and involvement will heighten as CMS moves closer to reaching its goal. “If you create a synergy of things that work, it becomes a magnet for other quality development.” The attraction of a community that has accomplished high quality education from end to end – Davidson to Pineville – to a business that is looking to relocate or expand services is immeasurable, he adds.

Citing the failures of other cities, where public education is not part of the solution to high economic achievement, Lassiter says, “Industrial recruiters want to know about a community’s public schools and are looking for that solution as they decide to relocate an educated workforce. Our ability to grab the brass ring and establish a national standard... will bring a broader scale of business partnerships and public support.”

A meaningful choice

Griffin contends a choice plan isn’t about equity until each family has a meaningful choice. “I am not going to re-segregate the schools. I am not going to put kids in a setting where they’re not going to have access to high quality education.”

Pointing to the success and national recognition of Bright Beginnings, however, Lassiter says, “The irony is that they are, in essence, neighborhood preschools that are highly homogenous.”

Charlotte cannot bus students based on race forever, Griffin affirms. “But there are two things we can do. We can have great schools in communities where there is some natural diversity and we can encourage through public policy affordable housing throughout the community.”

He poses this challenge: Can Charlotte ask itself the hard questions?

“Do we care about all children in Mecklenburg County? If we do, shouldn’t we make sure that they all have access to high quality education? And who cares about diversity? If you live in a segregated community and you go to neighborhood schools, you’ll have segregated schools. Is that OK?”

He stressed, “If diversity is important, then we must find a way to maintain it in our public schools, in our communities. We can save Charlotte, if we care about all of Charlotte. If we want to care about just our back door, then we can do that too – the choice is ours as a community.”

Referring to the analogy he used

in court, Griffin explains, “In some parts of our community, the choice grocery store is Wayne’s. In other parts, the choice is Harris Teeter. There should be a Harris Teeter in every neighborhood as it relates to education.”

Charlotte’s moving in the right direction, according to Lassiter. “We have transformed public opinion from what was clearly discriminatory 35 years ago to being understanding and inclusive.”

Thoughts and intentions are good, but action is better. Griffin wants the community to refocus its attention on the board’s core business: student achievement. “The focus right now is on busing, and it’s going to be difficult for us to move beyond that until there’s equity in our public schools.”

Absolutely, says Dehnert. “It’s hard to get people to focus on the big picture as opposed to ‘What’s in it for me?’ Hopefully there’s something in it for everyone – and that’s the challenge.”

Charlotte will meet it and “has a great future,” says Smith. “Some might believe we’re stuck in the mud a little bit right now because of student assignment, but all the indicators show that we’re going forward. I’m pleased with the infrastructure we’re building and with our focus.”

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Comments?

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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.

Briefs

Georgia goofs: Errors in the state's mandatory high school graduation test have been of two flavors, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. Two questions were mangled in printing and were not counted in scoring. The other questions in which errors were found were "field test" questions that were on the test only to prepare for next year's. Teacher Tim Maley of North Springs High in Atlanta was not impressed. He pointed to this question:

"With what force will a .25 kg baseball hit the catcher's mit if it is thrown with an acceleration of 5 m/sec/sec? Answers: (a) .05N (b) 1.25N (c) 5.00N (d) 12.50N.

Maley told the paper: "The force the ball exerts on the catcher's mitt is independent of the acceleration with which the ball is thrown. To answer the question correctly, the students would need the distance the baseball moved, the time elapsed or the acceleration the ball experienced while in contact with the catcher's mitt. As worded, all answers are possible."

www.accessatlanta.com



Big Chinese Brother:

Guangdong Province will put Webcams in exam centers at its schools so anyone worldwide can watch students for cheating, the Straits Times reported from Beijing. Closed-circuit TVs have been a staple of Chinese monitoring of exams for years, but they didn't foil a cheating scam last July in which a classroom teacher phoned answers to someone outside, who sent answers via pagers to students taking the test.

<http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg>



Live on TV: The Houston schools have completed the first year of a live, call-in talk show that began running twice a month last September. Two-thirds of the shows were in English, a third in

Thanks, Charlotte, for 'can-do' attitude

The writer is superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Since arriving in Charlotte over four years ago, I am constantly reminded that this is a "can-do" community that truly supports education. The overwhelming attendance at the County Commissioner Budget Public Hearing on May 31 was another reminder of this community's commitment to our students and schools.

I was extremely proud of the parents, students, teachers, administrators, support staff and business and community members who attended the hearing and spoke on behalf of our students. In addition, the calls, e-mails and letters that have been sent to County Commissioners from the com-

Letters

munity have been instrumental in keeping the focus on the needs of children.

I want to thank you for your involvement in this critical time for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Our schools and our students are extremely fortunate to be a part of a community that takes a vested interest in education. I hope you will continue to keep the momentum going as we try to communicate the critical funding needs in CMS. Together, we can make a difference for the more than 105,000 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Eric J. Smith

Spanish. A bit more ambitious than CMS's "Diversity Matters with Rahman Khan" on Channel 21, the Houston show is a success. One highlight: In November, a caller demanded to know why a promised afterschool program had not yet begun. The Houston Chronicle quoted show hostess Luisa Amaral-Smith as saying, "The representative from the mayor's office explained... the bureaucratic issues. The very next morning, we got a telephone call to instruct the schools to start the program. If it hadn't been for that parent's question, who knows how long it would have taken?... That parent had a significant impact."

www.chron.com



Sweet dreams: Now that everyone has survived final exams and tests, it's time for the bad news: Students, you may relive these days for the rest of your lives. Seriously. The smart psychologists merely admit they

don't know why, but lots of people have recurring dreams about taking exams for many, many years. The Sacramento Bee fond Lisa Schmelz, who described hers this way:

"I'm, back in high school... and it's finals, and there's some final I haven't taken, and it's in the two topics I'm deficient in, math and science, biology in particular.

"It's time to remember all those kingdoms, genuses, phylums, species and what-not, and I haven't got a clue. And then I'll get my test, and the test will be stapled wrong, or it will be upside down, or some of it you can read and some of it you can't.... I hand the test in, and it's always handed back to me, and I'm told to go sit back down and do it over."

Clinical psychologist Alan Siegel told the Bee that such dreams "are more like a vaccine than a poison. They're part of an internal rehearsal process that helps us not only cope, but stimulates you

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Board to make case for its budget Wednesday

The school board will make its formal pitch to county commissioners Wednesday afternoon for a fully funded school budget.

Maybe there should be an audience.

The meeting, part of the com-

missioners' ongoing series of budget workshops, will be held at 5 p.m. at the Government Center.

The two bodies are at loggerheads over spending totaling up to \$45 million.

The board asked for additional

money totaling about \$60 million. (Story, page 1.) County Manager Harry Jones suggested \$14.5 million.

Commissioners are scheduled to approve a final budget next week. The budget year begins July 1.

Briefs

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to better deal with a problem or challenge.”

www.sacbee.com



Closing the gap: Fort Wayne, Ind., school officials are closing the race gap in test results by examining far more than numbers. When surveys showed black students reporting far more negative relationships with peers and teachers than white students, the district implemented diversity training for teachers, gathered groups representative across age and racial lines to develop individual school improvement plans, and rewrote the curriculum to better reflect the contributions of people of color. The Harvard Education Letter reported that the gap in “school climate” questions has since narrowed by 60%.

www.edletter.org



Maryland counts: Two consultants studying the state's school needs reported that the state needs to increase its \$5.9 billion schools budget to between \$6.5 billion and \$8.5 billion, the Baltimore Sun reported. Most of

the money is to improve achievement at lower grades, and to equalize resources among districts. By fall, the group is to offer a final report, including recommendations on how to raise the money. Rural districts are threatening a lawsuit similar to North Carolina's Leandro suit that has the potential to revolutionize N.C. spending on a basic education for all children across the state.

www.sunspot.com



Inspire the APs: And finally, CMS assistant principals will gather June 25-26 at Vance High for their annual, um, “information and inspiration packed event.”

Keynoter on the 25th is Mike Rutherford, an expert on instruc-

tional leadership, whose topic is “Creating the Learning Centered School.”

Keynoter on the 26th is Mary Bacon, a speaker on the diverse needs of students. Her main address is titled “No Malice Required: Achieving Equity and Excellence in a Pluralistic Society” and her breakout session is entitled, “Them That Gots the Gold Makes the Rules.”

On June 25 are workshops for elementary, middle and high school assistant principals by publisher representatives from Open Court, McDougal Littell and Prentice Hall. These are the providers of the new reading books that commissioners may not agree to pay for.

Quote Unquote

“We haven’t put the money, the research, or the effort into figuring out what a quality education should be and what students could be expected to learn. As was true of the Southern civil rights movement, where sharecroppers, maids, day workers and others who were expected to be silent found their voice, meaningful school reform will require the voices of students and communities demanding the quality education that too many assume they can’t handle and don’t want.”

– Robert Moses, civil rights leader and founder of the Algebra Project, and Charles Cobb, senior writer for *allafrica.com*, as quoted in the *Harvard Education Letter*