

Partnering at a new level

BellSouth commits \$100,000 to support teaching at West Charlotte High

By LUCY BUSH

West Charlotte High School had reason to celebrate Friday morning. It had been chosen for a corporate partnership that takes corporate attention to North Carolina's schools to a new level.

"We are convinced that the classroom teacher can make the difference in students' lives," said Krista Tillman, president of BellSouth Corp.'s N.C. operations.

The company said it would commit \$100,000 over the next five years to an array of programs aimed at improving teachers' skills and rewarding excellence.

Schools throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg benefit from corpo-

rate partnerships large and small. The relationships produce donations of used equipment, merchandise used as rewards, and company employees to be tutors and "lunch buddies."

The BellSouth partnership will focus on teacher incentives, training and volunteers to support classroom work.

"Our commitment is more important than the dollars," Tillman said.

That commitment comes at a good time for West Charlotte, once the system's model for effec-



Tillman

tive schooling in a desegregated environment that now struggles to meet minimum state standards. It even struggled Friday night with another potential danger facing all schools – gunfire after a football game.

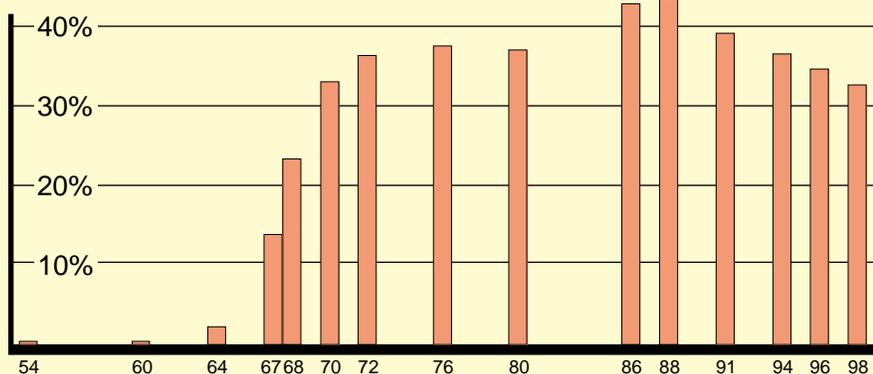
Tillman, co-chair of Gov. Mike Easley's Education First Commission, has had many positions in BellSouth since joining Southern Bell as an engineer in 1979. But about her four-year stint teaching math in school, she said, "It's the toughest job I ever had."

The components of the program, as outlined by BellSouth, include

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South's '90s retreat from segregation

Percent of black students in majority-white schools, 1954-1998



"Schools More Separate," Harvard Civil Rights Project

At a time when polls showed growing support for the educational benefits of integrated schools, the schools themselves were sliding back into segregation. Harvard researcher Gary Orfield attributes the slide during the '90s to court rulings. He says the decade's favored assignment plan, neighborhood schools, offers parents a false sense of racial stability for their schools. Story, page 5.

Ohio has its own *Leandro* case on school equity

Ohio legislators were incensed last week by an Ohio Supreme Court ruling ordering legislators to add \$1.24 billion a year to school funding. The court was trying to resolve a case that has dragged on as long as the *Leandro* lawsuit in North Carolina.

Both cases, at their heart, are pleas from rural and poor districts to replace the property tax as the chief source of funding for schools. The property tax, they say, leaves them unable to finance schools on an equal basis with richer urban areas.

In North Carolina, Superior

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To new readers of *Educate!*

a free community journal
on public education in
Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Welcome to this week's edition. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen interested in the welfare of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. To be removed from our mailing list, send a "Remove" message to SwannFello@aol.com

Educate! is published by The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204. Voice: 704-342-4330 Fax: 704-342-4550. E-mail: SwannFello@aol.com Lucy Bush, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president. Published since September 2000. Six-week average circulation through last issue: 2,286.

The name: The Swann Fellowship was named for Darius and Vera Swann, who on behalf of their son James became the lead plaintiffs in *Swann vs. Mecklenburg* in the 1960s. Darius Swann was the first African American Presbyterian missionary ever assigned outside of Africa. His experiences in India led him to appreciate the value of an integrated society for human development.

The vision: As people of faith, our vision is that all children in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system will have excellent educational opportunities which are both equitable and integrated.

The background: Formed in 1997 out of several Charlotte religious congregations, the Fellowship focuses on being a witness to the value of diversity, and educating the public on public school issues as they relate to this and allied subjects. The Swann Fellowship is a nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code 56-2106776. 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.

From Readers

Qualified promotions carried PEP, not IEP

Just a note of clarification to some info I read in the Sept. 2 Educate!: IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) for are students who are qualified as "exceptional children," meaning they have a disability which significantly impacts their educational process.

The document Dr. Smith referred to is a PEP (Personalized Education Plan), which state law requires for any student who scores a Level 1 or Level 2 on the EOG test for either reading or math.

The purpose of my clarification note is so that parents of

Exceptional Children, who may have read your latest edition, do not "panic" and begin contacting staff in CMS central office. As you may be aware, last year was the first year in our state's history of EOG testing that all exceptional children were required to take some form of the EOG tests. Hence, EC parents may have raised an eyebrow when they read the last newsletter.

Thank you for the continued enlightenment that your timely newsletter continues to provide for me!

Cel St.Pierre

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

Creative Loafing: By e-mail: charlotte@creativeloafing.com; by fax: 704-522-8088; by mail: P.O. Box 241988 Charlotte, NC 28224-1988.

La Noticia: 6101 Idlewild Road Suite 328, Charlotte, NC 28212.

Educate!: By e-mail: SwannFello@aol.com; by fax: 704-342-4550; by mail: 1510 E. 7th St. Charlotte, NC 28204-2410.

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.

Ohio has its own *Leandro* lawsuit

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Court Judge Howard E. Manning Jr. has already ordered the state to fund pre-kindergarten programs statewide. An early ruling in the case ordered the state to figure out how to assure that every school system delivered a basic education to all students. After footdragging by state officials, the judge decreed last spring that he will decide himself.

As in Ohio, the case revolves around providing quality education in low-wealth areas of the state.

About 500 Ohio districts brought the case that led to last week's 4-3 ruling, one that split

Republicans in the court's majority from Democrats on the court. The ruling found existing funding methods constitutional – so long as certain changes were made. And the key change, of course, has to do with money.

The legislature had already created a formula by which it determined that each district needed \$4,814 per student. If property taxes don't produce that much, state funding would make up the difference.

The court ruled that the legislature had eliminated high-cost urban systems from the workings of the formula. With those systems restored, it ruled, the real figure was \$5,467. It called on the legislature to appropriate the difference – \$1.24 billion this year. Legislators last week were talking about defying the court.

In the North Carolina case,

legal observers say Judge Manning has taken another tack. Last spring's ruling, for example, compared poor Hoke County and richer Mecklenburg (*Educate!*, April 8). Despite Mecklenburg's higher spending, at-risk children seemed to do no better in Mecklenburg than in Hoke, he said. The ruling suggested the possibility the court will order reallocation of resources, rather than new ones. It would then be up to the legislature to decide if, after reallocation, additional resources are needed as North Carolina tries to achieve its constitution's mandate for a free, quality public education for all the state's children.

Manning noted that the barriers to learning that many at-risk children face are "not the fault of the public schools and yet, the public schools have no choice but to shoulder the burdens of these at-risk children and are expected to provide them with the equal opportunity to obtain a sound basic education.

"This is so because, in the eyes of the law, these at-risk children are citizens of North Carolina, and, as citizens, they have the same constitutional rights as those children whose parents are married, have decent educations, earn a decent living and provide their children with a learning-rich environment from the day they come home from the maternity ward."

"Leandro requires that the constitutional right to the equal opportunity be met before any other dollars are spent on opportunities outside of the sound basic education."

BellSouth partners with West Charlotte

Continued from Page 1

volunteer hours, but go well beyond the traditional model for corporate partnerships:

- Teacher recruits who stay five years and provide "exemplary" service will receive \$5,000.

- Any teacher completing the demanding national teacher certification process will receive \$2,500.

- All teachers will have access to BellSouth's management leadership programs.

- BellSouth will funnel into the school volunteer time provided both by active and retired company employees.

- Success of the program will be tracked through focus groups and meetings with teachers and the principal.

BellSouth announced a similar program Friday at South Robeson High, in Robeson County southeast of Charlotte.

Such large corporate partnerships have been rare. It's been

seven years since IBM Chairman Louis Gerstner praised CMS Supt. John Murphy as "one of the best CEOs of education in the country" and pledged \$500,000 in computer hardware and software to each of the four schools to be built adjoining IBM's research park near UNCC.

BellSouth's model for investing in public schools may be more transferrable. The financial commitment would be manageable by more companies, it is focused on teaching, and it offers more avenues for corporate engagement in a school's daily life.

The challenge for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's corporate community is to see how it can build on BellSouth's model. Thursday's "America's Promise" kick-off at the Convention Center may provide some energy and direction.

At Friday's event at West Charlotte, Tillman gathered up a number of elected leaders, school officials, teachers and students to receive an enlarged version of BellSouth's \$100,000 check.

But when the ceremonies ended, Tillman left the check in the hands of student body president Darius Graham.

More on *Leandro*:

For a retransmission of *Educate!*'s April 8, 2001 issue, which carried an extensive report on the North Carolina school equity case, please send a message with your request to:

SwannFello@aol.com

Assignment 2002

Middle school assignments outlined

As expected, the assignments for middle school children for 2002 do not play out the extremes evident in elementary assignments approved by the school board July 31.

That's because the building blocks of the assignment plan are elementary schools serving nearby, and relatively segregated, neighborhoods. As reviewed in Educate! on Aug. 26, the elementary schools are projected to vary from 1% poor to 97% poor.

The range in middle schools is only from 2% to 79%.

Here's a summary of how the middle schools are projected to look, based on the attendance areas shown at top right.

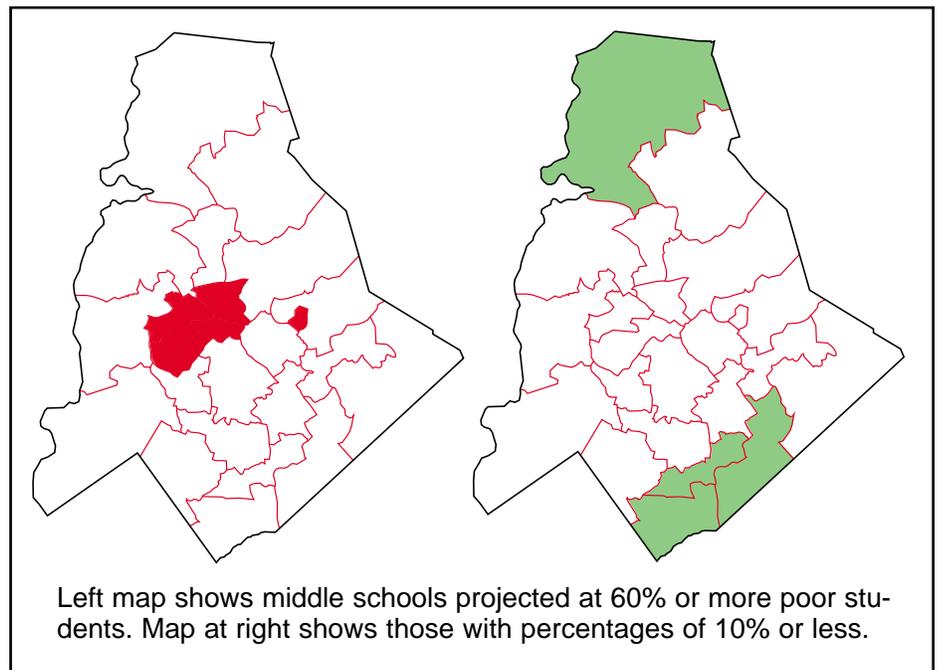
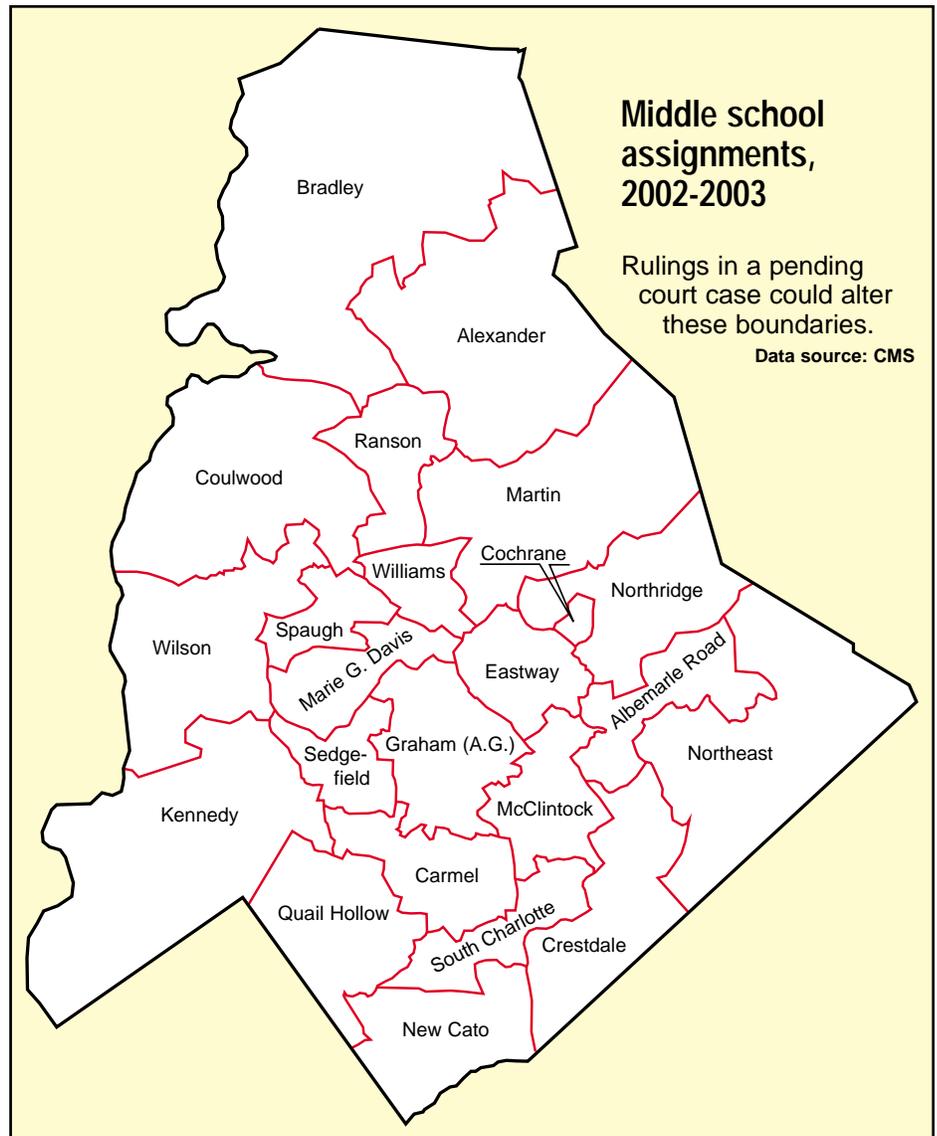
Size: Spaugh is the smallest, at 682 students, while Martin, at 1,581, will be bigger than two CMS high schools.

Utilization: Enrollment divided by capacity yields a utilization percentage. The middle schools will operate at from 82% of capacity at Spaugh to 110% at Albemarle Road. The new Cato school, south of I-485, will open at 88% capacity, to handle expected growth.

ESL: Among the nonmagnet middle schools, those with the largest enrollments of English as a Second Language students will be Eastway (129 or 14% of students), Sedgefield (52 or 8%) and McClintock (52 or 6%).

Poverty: As measured by percentages of children who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, the schools more than 60% poor are Marie G. Davis (82%), Spaugh (82%), J.T. Williams (79%) and Cochrane (63%).

The schools less than 10% poor are Bradley (9%), Crestdale (5%), new Cato (2%) and South Charlotte (2%).



Do school lines give false sense of stability?

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has, for now, chosen to focus its school assignments on neighborhoods, in large part to deliver what parents seem to say they most cherish: stability.

Harvard researcher Gary Orfield might say they've picked a weak horse to draw a rickety cart.

In his July monograph "Schools More Separate: Consequences of a Decade of Resegregation," Orfield demolishes many myths that have grown up around public school education.

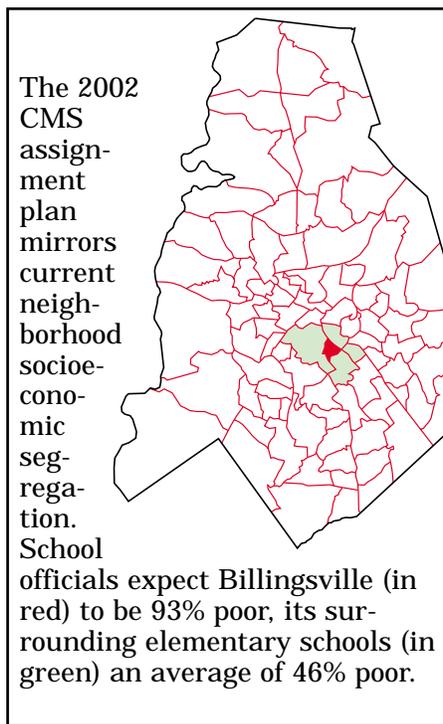
Among the myths:

– Private schools have grown.

Wrong: Their share of the student population is smaller than 50 years ago.

– People don't support integration. Blacks don't support integration. Boosting spending does more to help at-risk students than desegregation. All wrong, says Orfield.

But in the section quoted below, Orfield takes a swipe at another myth: that neighborhood schools deliver racially and economically stable environments. The data



proves otherwise, he says.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's 2002 assignment plan for elementary schools, shown above, carefully draws boundaries to honor parent sensibilities about "who is my neighbor." In some cases, as in

the one pointed out on the map, the lines catapult into the schoolhouse the racial and economic segregation prevalent in today's neighborhoods. Whether this is legal will be up to the courts. But as school officials in Wake County have found, finding an alternative is more educationally sound (story, page 6).

Orfield sums up:

"...Most of the assumptions about desegregation impacts are questionable or clearly incorrect. The public school systems have not been abandoned. The private school sector is smaller than a half century ago. There is a problem of declining white enrollments, but much of it comes from broader demographic forces and it is manifest in cities that never desegregated as well as those that abandoned desegregation efforts. Neighborhood schools with interracial student bodies are often not stable. Further decline in white enrollment may best be limited by more widespread, not more restricted, desegregation plans."

Orfield on the impact of neighborhood assignments

"Neighborhood schools were extremely unstable. Whatever integration occurred was usually on the boundaries of expanding minority communities, and the 'integrated' schools usually became virtually all-minority in a few years, as did the neighborhoods.

"City school districts have been losing white enrollment for decades, in spite of neighborhood schools, because the neighborhoods are highly unstable along the racial boundaries. Minority families desiring to move out of poverty areas are directed to a very limited set of communities, and whites tend to leave or not to move into racially changing areas.

"These problems are typically intensified within neighborhood school systems because the minority families who move out are often young with children and are seeking good public schools. The whites that live in the receiving communities are often older, with fewer children, and more likely to use parochial and private schools.

"This means that neighborhood schools go through racial change much faster than neighborhoods; even when there is a very high level of acceptance of school integration, attitudes are far more negative about schools with a nonwhite majority.

"Even when a neighborhood is well integrated residentially, its neighborhood school may well be resegregated, thus creating a barrier to future entry of white families.

"The idea that ending desegregation plans will produce stable white enrollments is not supported by the actual enrollment trends in districts without desegregation in the last several decades. The debate over desegregation often presupposes that doing nothing produces stability, but that is incorrect."

– From "Schools More Separate: Consequences of a Decade of Resegregation," published by The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, July 2001
www.law.harvard.edu/civilrights

Briefs

Support for integration: A poll in Cincinnati found that 80% of whites and 90% of blacks said they want children attending school with children of another race, the Cincinnati Enquirer reported. Majorities of both blacks and whites supported government redistribution of money from rich districts to poor. Cincinnati Public Schools, 70% black, is surrounded by majority-white suburban school districts.

<http://enquirer.com>

Bullying: A Los Angeles Times report found many school districts talking about the ill effect of bullying – but very few examples of how a policy to prevent it should be written. Santa Monica prescribes detention, suspension or other discipline if a student bullies another “with disparaging comments, obscene gestures or violence based on gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or other characteristics.” Most of the districts knew that existing policies already covered elements of bullying, but they were forming additional policies because the subject is of such public concern.

www.latimes.com

Retention: CMS, which had feared that up to 2,000 fifth-graders might be retained for failing end-of-grade tests, ended up with less than 100 retained and about 250 passed on provisionally. But Baltimore is dealing with CMS’ worst fears. The Baltimore Sun reported that 30,000 children were invited to summer school; 25,700 showed up; and 5,200 were held back. In addition, 5,000 who didn’t attend summer school were held back.

www.sunspot.net

Tutoring: In Massachusetts, Acting Gov Jane Swift has proposed \$1,000 grants to high school seniors who need help passing

The Wake Experiment

In an article profiling assignment strategies possibly relevant to Montgomery County, Md., schools, the Washington Post profiled what North Carolina’s Wake County has installed.

The Wake system assigns students based on economics and performance, with a goal of limiting the number of poor children in any school to 40% and assuring that at least 75% of a school’s students are working on grade level. To maintain these numbers, the board installed some magnet programs and committed to redrawing school attendance boundaries as often as every three years.

The results after one year: The achievement gap among schools has narrowed by 10 to 20 points. Wake’s head of research and evaluation, Karen Banks, told the Post: “When you have a majority of kids in a school reflecting high expectations, middle-class values and a certain cultural value placed on education, that can be a very powerful force.”

www.washingtonpost.com

state exams. Critics called it a “tutors full-employment act.” The Boston Herald reported that Swift’s earlier call for 20,000 volunteer tutors stalled.

www.bostonherald.com

Uncredentialed, I: California legislators have before them a bill to force the state to list for each school the percentage of teachers without a full teacher license, along with the number of veteran teachers and new recruits. The Sacramento Bee reported that 11.5% of California teachers are uncredentialed, and that they tend to be found at high-poverty and low-performing schools. More than 100 schools had 40% or more uncredentialed teachers; the figure was 21% for the 1,337 schools in the lowest 20% of year 2000 student test scores.

www.sacbee.com

Uncredentialed, II: In an investigation of teacher certification, the Chicago Sun-Times found that 5,250 of 67,000 Illinois teachers whose records it examined had failed at least one test in the state’s certification program. Many later passed, but the study found that children in the state’s low-scoring, high-minority and high-poverty schools were “roughly five times more likely to

encounter teachers who stumbled in efforts to pass the tests.”

www.suntimes.com

Raising the bottom: The Kansas City schools, under threat of state intervention, beat statewide test averages for moving students from the lowest achievement levels. But the Kansas City Star reported that state Education Commissioner Kent King wants 80% of students scoring “proficient” or better, and with only about a third of students doing so statewide, there is lots of work to do. Percentages of students at proficient or higher levels statewide and for Kansas City on various parts of the Missouri Assessment Program: Grade 4 math, 35.3% statewide and 11% Kansas City; grade 4 social studies, 26% and 7.9%; grade 8 math, 9.7% and 1.9%; grade 8 social studies, 36.4% and 13.4%; grade 10 math, 9.7% and 2%; grade 10 science, 4.5% and 0.9%.

www.kansascity.com

Early lunch: With 4,000 students in a school built for 3,400, and a schedule crowded with academic classes, Lowell High in Massachusetts has scheduled its first lunch period at 9:26 a.m.

www.boston.com