

Editor's note: This edition of Educate! was distributed solely in e-mail format without pictures or graphics while issues related to transmission of PDF files was resolved. For purposes of archiving and subsequent distribution, the text of this edition has been converted to a PDF file. No other changes have been made.

The international, non-PDF version of the Oct. 14 edition of EDUCATE! a newsletter on education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg
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NOTE TO READERS: Since a very serious virus appeared several weeks ago, technicians have been adjusting e-mail servers to protect the Internet. In this period, some readers outside the AOL domain have been unable to open Educate!'s e-mail attachment.

The problem is not a virus itself. Instead, some newly-patched servers are frequently -- but not always -- misreading PDF files, rendering them unreadable and Educate's delivery unreliable. We are working with AOL and Adobe on a solution that will work for all Educate! readers and look forward to returning to PDF format in a few weeks.

Early indications are that we will need to convert Educate! production from old donated Macintoshes to IBM-compatible PCs. Persons willing to finance this conversion or willing to donate used Pentium III machines to the Fellowship for this purpose should leave a message at the office at 704-342-4330 immediately.

In the meantime, we are sending all subscribers this unformatted International Edition, created in January 2001 to serve Charlotteans doing mission work in Guatemala. Please bear with us during this temporary period. We value your support.

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CHOICE OPTIONS

For parents, it may come down to this: No Vacancy!
Fourth in a series on 2002 student assignments

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The 2002 pupil assignment has a layer of choice on top of its regular assignments and its magnet school options. This week, a look at those choices.

The choice options are not countywide. Parents will be able seek choice assignments only within geographic zones defined by the high school attendance areas. In the list below, zone one, for example, is the attendance areas of Olympic, South Mecklenburg and Waddell high schools. Anyone living in those attendance areas may seek choice assignments at the schools listed for the zone -- with some exceptions as noted for a few elementary and middle schools.

But many parents in fact are not likely to be successful with applications for choice assign-

ments in some zones. That's because choice assignments will be granted on a space-available basis. And the "No Vacancy" signs are already up at many schools.

In July, school staff made estimates of how many seats for fall 2002 at nonmagnet schools would be filled from each school's attendance area. An example: In Choice Zone One, Hawk Ridge in Ballantyne was projected to be at 150% of capacity just from children in its attendance area. No choice application is going to be successful at Hawk Ridge.

In the lists below, schools expected to be at less than 95% capacity are listed in upper-case letters. That means there might be some chance that choice applications might be successful. These estimates, of course, will change somewhat before assignment decisions are made next spring. But the current estimates are at least some indication of how applications for choice assignments will be processed, and what chances parents from elsewhere have of getting their children assigned to those schools:

+ Nearly all the high schools are full. Very little movement of students is likely via the choice assignment process.

+ The same is true, to a lesser extent, at the middle school level. The only middle school expected to have much space in Zone Three in the east, for example, is Cochrane, a school projected to have 64% of its students on free- or reduced-price lunch.

+ Access to elementary schools varies widely in the zones. Many suburban schools will be full. Perhaps the most glaring example of inequities is in Zone Three: Parents in nine predominantly low-income elementary schools, looking for another choice, have a chance of assignment at only one elementary school not dominated by low-income children: Selwyn. Alternatively, of course, Selwyn parents have at least nine choices, should they be interested.

Parents who are successful in choosing another elementary school will then see their children proceed on to the middle school to which that elementary is linked. Those links are outlined on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Web site at www.cms.k12.nc.us. Parents also would have the chance to return to the lottery in search for another choice assignment. But as noted earlier, the prospects for success are reduced at the middle school level, and nearly disappear for high school.

In the lists below, UPPER-CASED schools were in July projected to be at 94% or less capacity, opening the possibility of success at seeking a choice assignment. Schools marked with an asterisk (*), chiefly middle schools, are available to parents only if they already live in the school's attendance area. The maps for individual attendance zones are also at the CMS Web site, and were included in earlier Educate! editions.

CHOICE ZONE ONE:

Elementary: BEVERLY WOODS, Hawk Ridge, Huntingtowne Farms, Lake Wylie, McAlpine (west)*, NATIONS FORD, MONTCLAIRE, PINEVILLE, PINWOOD, SEDGEFIELD, Smithfield, Steele Creek, STERLING.

Middle: CARMEL*, M.G. DAVIS, Kennedy, NEW CATO*, Quail Hollow, SEDGEFIELD, S. Charlotte*

High: OLYMPIC, South Meck, WADDELL.

CHOICE ZONE TWO:

Elementary: ALLENBROOK, BILLINGSVILLE, BRUNS AVENUE, Cotswold, DRUID HILLS, EASTOVER, Elizabeth Lane, FIRST WARD, IRWIN AVENUE, LINCOLN HEIGHTS, McAlpine (east), McKee, GREENVILLE, NEW PROVIDENCE, OAKLAWN, Olde Providence, SELWYN, Sharon, Thomasboro.

Middle: ALEXANDER GRAHAM, Carmel, Crestdale*, M.G. DAVIS*, NEW CATO, RANSON, S. Charlotte, SPAUGH*, J.T. Williams, WILSON*.
 High: Myers Park, Providence, West Charlotte.

CHOICE ZONE THREE:

Elementary: Albemarle Road, BAIN, BRIARWOOD, Chantilly, Clear Creek, CROWN POINT, DEVONSHIRE, Greenway Park, J.H. Gunn, Hickory Grove, Idlewild, LANSDOWNE, Lebanon Road, MATTHEWS, MERRY OAKS, NEW GRIER ROAD, OAKHURST, Piney Grove, RAMA ROAD, Reedy Creek, SHAMROCK GARDENS, WINDSOR PARK, WINTERFIELD.
 Middle: Albemarle Road, COCHRANE, Crestdale, Eastway, McClintock, Northeast, Northridge.
 High: Butler, East Meck, Garinger, Independence.

CHOICE ZONE FOUR:

Elementary: AMAY JAMES/REID PARK, ASHLEY PARK, Barringer, BERRYHILL, Blythe, Cornelius, David Cox Road, Davidson, HIDDEN VALLEY, HIGHLAND ACADEMY, Hornets Nest, Huntersville, Long Creek, MALLARD CREEK, NATHANIEL ALEXANDER, NEW PLANK ROAD, Newell, OAKDALE, PAW CREEK, PAWTUCKETT, STATESVILLE ROAD, Tuckaseegee, University Meadows, WESTERLY HILLS.
 Middle: ALEXANDER, Bradley, Coulwood, M.G. DAVIS*, Martin, Ranson*, SPAUGH, WILSON.
 High: Hopewell, North Meck, Vance, WEST MECK.

NOW THE FINE PRINT:

Children of parents who apply for choice assignments will be entered in a lottery. Requests must be made by January; decisions will be announced in March.

The rules essentially list the priority order for entry into any given school. The priorities:

- (1) Children in the attendance area.
- (2) Children at the school this year. That will often mean this year's magnet children get a chance to stay at their school building if the magnet program leaves. Accommodated first will be rising 12-graders, 8th-graders and 5th-graders; then rising 11-graders, then all others in order of their lottery numbers.
- (3) Children who are at the school this year because they were in the attendance area, but have since moved within the choice zone.
- (4) Siblings of children at the school who live in the attendance zone.
- (5) Children whose presence would bring balance to the schools free- or reduced-price lunch numbers without throwing the school over 50% FRL. This priority is aimed at low-income children attempting to leave high-poverty schools for low-poverty schools. But the priority ranking is fifth; the chances of finding a seat this way are unknown but don't seem very high. (Children not on free lunch could use this priority to be admitted to high-poverty schools, should they choose.)
- (6) All other applicants in order of their lottery number.

Those are the priorities for fall 2002. In later years, priorities are added for low-income students and all at low-achieving schools. At this point, those priorities are ranked below the level (4), which deals with siblings.

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FROM READERS

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Eric Smith has implemented a systemwide "Open Court" reading program for CMS. What is your opinion of the ABC results of the three schools that had "Open Court" as a pilot program?

Druid Hills Elementary met its goals and had 70% of children on grade level. Myers Park Traditional Elementary met its goals and had 84.8% of children on grade level. Thomasboro Elementary met its goals and had 53.8% of children on grade level.

Based upon the Oct. 7 Educate!, they seemed to do OK. What is the teacher ratio and minority ratio at these schools?

Rainey Ashcraft

Editor's note: The traditional magnet programs at Druid Hills and Myers Park have long used Open Court, which is now in use at all elementaries. During the first year of Open Court at Thomasboro, year-end ABC scores rose 14.7 percentage points. Class sizes are reduced to roughly 1/16 at Thomasboro, but not at the magnets. The latest available FRL numbers showed Druid Hills at 56%, Myers Park at 26% and Thomasboro at 85%.

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BRIEFS

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Smaller is better: Baltimore has two kinds of high schools. Those with citywide attendance areas have entrance requirements and 90% of graduates go to college. At nine neighborhood high schools with more than half district's students, 62% of teachers are not certified in the subject they teach, 71% of students drop out before graduation, and only 40% of graduates attend college. The Baltimore Sun reported on schools chief Carmen Russo's \$55 million plan to replace the 2,000-student schools with 400-student units, in the same buildings or in new ones. Each new school would have a theme, and some could be run by for-profit businesses. Themes are up in the air. "I am not wedded to any [model] but small," Russo told the Sun.
www.sunspot.net

Open Court delivers: Scores are in from the first year of using the Open Court reading program in Los Angeles: First-graders raised their reading scores 21 percentage points from two years ago, their spelling 18 percentage points. The Los Angeles Times reported that African-American scores were up 10 percentage points, white scores up 9 points, Asian scores 8 points. The increases put the district in the 56th percentile, above the national average. Several years ago, California ended bilingual education. The 60% of the first-graders who are still learning English saw their scores rise from the 33rd percentile to the 48th in a year.
www.latimes.com

Cafeteria style: At a recent conference in Washington, publishers of the nation's math textbooks got some tips on revising their offerings, Education Week reported. Educators want fewer topics covered in more depth, and new tools to reach children at all levels. Rather than a single text designed to move an entire class from one subject to the next, some educators suggested a variety of resources that teachers could choose from to meet individual students' needs.
www.edweek.org

Certified problems: A Chicago community group named ACORN, following up on a newspaper

series found that high-minority, low-achieving and low-income schools were more likely to have teachers "incorrectly certified," the Chicago Sun-Times reported. The Sun-Times articles, based on state certification records, showed that lowest-scoring, highest-minority and highest-poverty Illinois schools were roughly five times more likely to have teachers who had flunked at least one certification test.

www.suntimes.com

Certification attacked: A firestorm developed quickly over last Monday's Abell Foundation report questioning the very premises of teacher certification. The report, which focuses on Maryland regulations, claimed that a review of the literature found no connection between teacher training and student achievement, the Baltimore Sun reported. Defenders of the current system called certification a "crude measure," but said it was better than recent innovations that put adults in the classroom after only a few weeks of training.

www.sunspot.net

Des Moines follows: The scenario is similiar to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's: There's a 30-point achievement gap between haves and have-nots. Most of the greenest teachers are in schools with the neediest students. And the solutions may look a lot like CMS's Equity Plus II program. As soon as next year, according to the Des Moines Register, school officials may offer teachers incentives to teach in low-performing schools, and give such schools more teachers to allow smaller classes. Des Moines is also talking with its teachers union about assigning experienced teachers to such schools. CMS is not unionized, and its board gave its superintendent powers to reassign teachers this summer.

www.dmregister.com

Costs unknown: A Florida legislator from Miami is leading an effort to constitutionally mandate cutting K-3 class sizes to 18, grade 4-8 classes to 22 students and high school classes to 25. The effort has launched a noisy argument on how much it would cost, and whether the project would be worth it at any cost. The Florida Times-Union reported estimates of \$10 billion in annual costs, and said one professor thinks "it's not worth the money." Carolyn Herrington at Florida State University said "it's a hugely expensive reform and the research is just not substantiated that it would have that great an impact."

<http://jacksonville.com>

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CALENDAR
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Calendar

October

16 Bond Oversight Committee, Building Services, 7:30 a.m.

Personnel/Policy Committee, Education Center, 3 p.m.

18 Common Sense Foundation town hall on state testing, Education Center, 7 p.m.

19 Charlotte Reads presents Phyllis Hunter with tips on helping children become lifelong learners, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Charlotte Chamber, 330 S. Tryon St. Bring a bag lunch. Free.

Register at www.charlottereads.com or call 704-378-1338.

23 School board meeting, Education Center, 6 p.m.

25 Community Relations Committee forum for religious leaders on school issues, Little Rock AME Church, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

November

8 Curriculum Committee, Board conference room, Education Center, 9:30 a.m.

13 School board meeting, Education Center, 6 p.m.
 20 Bond Oversight Committee, Building Services, 7:30 a.m.
 Personnel/Policy Committee, Education Center, 3 p.m.

 We welcome your comments and observations on this newsletter. Send us e-mail addresses for people who would like to receive it. To write about your school's activities, just do it -- then send the material to us.

THE SWANN FELLOWSHIP

Lucy Bush, president
 B.B. DeLaine, vice president

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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 as an integral part of children's education, and educating the public on public school issues as they relate to this and allied subjects. The Swann Fellowship is a nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A copy of the license to solicit charitable contributions may be obtained from the N.C. Department of Human Resources, Solicitation Licensing Branch. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.