

Funny numbers?

CMS makes schools look empty when they won't be; effect may be to understate price of achieving equity

As it prepares to market its schools to a cost-conscious public, CMS is sending signals that some schools will be up to half empty.

Right here in Educate!, on page 5, it says Sterling Elementary will open next year with 31% of its 748 seats empty, about 4 miles from Hawk Ridge, which will be at 175 of capacity. What a waste of taxpayer money, right? Wrong.

Sterling will not have 230 seats empty. It will be full, at 101% or so of capacity.

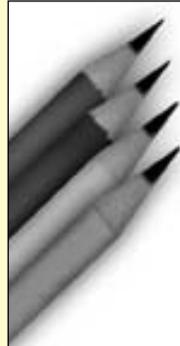
The reason: To raise achievement, CMS is cutting class size for underperforming children. Next fall, elementary classrooms at about two dozen schools across the system should have about 16 students.

Yet CMS's latest documents assume that these schools will have 22 children per classroom. The effects are startling, and appear in a chart on page 7:

Most so-called Equity Plus II schools, where smaller classes are mandated, are listed as being underutilized. When the data is re-figured based on small classes, however, taxpayer resources are being well used: Virtually all of those schools will be near capacity.

Why not re-figure the numbers? The answer may lie at schools that

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Your kid will spend 16,000 hours in school.

How long will you spend choosing one?

Section of CMS poster promoting upcoming information meetings.

School assignments make a 180-degree leap next fall from you-can-barely-change-them to you-must-choose-for-yourself.

To get every single Charlotte-Mecklenburg parent to participate in the so-called "Family Choice Plan," CMS is working on many marketing fronts.

Individual schools are holding open houses and tours. Paperwork will be coming home after Thanksgiving via

children (to save postage).

And starting this week, there are systemwide information sessions. Four sessions are on the choice plan. Also, the new Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology will be holding recruiting sessions.

Details are listed in the calendar on page 8.

A story and data on page 5 focuses on parents' options within the "choice zones."

Excuses for failing children: Choices of words may tell story

Students have been falling below expectations for a long time. Each generation is judged in part by how it responds to their needs.

A recent article in Teachers College Record recounts some history that might stir some re-evaluation of today's blase acceptance that our schools will fail to educate a quarter or so of our children.

Sarah Deschenes, Larry Cuban and David Tynack cite the work of Stanley J. Zehm, who collected

the words used in the literature of the time to describe poor performers.

In the early 19th century, poor performers were labeled:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Depraved</i> | <i>Shirker</i> |
| <i>Dunce</i> | <i>Sluggish</i> |
| <i>Incorrigible</i> | <i>Stupid</i> |
| <i>Idle</i> | <i>Vicious</i> |
| <i>Loafer</i> | <i>Wayward</i> |
| <i>Reprobate</i> | <i>Wrong-doer</i> |
| <i>Scapegrace</i> | |

The words contain some references to lack of brains. But mostly

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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: 2,571.

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.

What's hot (and who's hot) in N.C. schools coverage

What's hot in news coverage of the schools? Who's hot?

One small indicator is the School Bell awards announced last week. The annual awards are the work of the N.C. Association of Educators and the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

The honorees among newspapers of more than 30,000 circulation:

The Independent Weekly (Raleigh): "On the Bubble: The Questionable Role of High-Stakes Testing in North Carolina Classrooms."

The Fayetteville Observer: "Schools Pitch the Hard Sell."
Greensboro News and Record: "Change Inflates Testing Results."

The Fayetteville Observer: "I-95

Nightmare."

The Herald Sun (Durham): "Teaching 101."

The Winston-Salem Journal: "A Measure of Success: Inside North Carolina's Charter Schools."

In the radio category, WFAE's Amy Quinton won two awards for coverage of desegregation issues.

TV winners included:

WFMY, Greensboro: "Who's Driving Your Kids."

WGHP, High Point: "What's Right with Our Schools - Wilson Media Center."

UNC Center for Public Television, Chapel Hill:

"Something in Common."

WFMY, Greensboro: "Making the Pay Grade."

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

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.

Observations on a school board election, from hours at the back of the meeting room

Voters still trying to make up their minds in two hotly contested school board races might be interested in the following.

– In District 1, Larry Gauvreau, a plaintiff in the recent lawsuit against CMS, faces former District 1 representative Pam Mange. As part of his campaigning, Gauvreau likes to tout his service on various CMS citizen committees.

As part of my work for Educate!, I attended many of the meetings of the two committees on student assignment and equity of which Gauvreau was a member.

One important factor in evaluating which of the candidates might be a more effective board member was Gavareau's behavior as a member of those committees.

Once it became clear that a majority of both committees had different ideas about student assignment and equity from Gauvreau's, Gauvreau simply stopped coming to committee meetings rather than trying to work with the majority.

However the membership of a new board shakes out and whoever the board's chairman, Gauvreau's point of view will still be a minority of one on the board.

Voters will certainly want to consider whether they think he would be any more effective as a school board member than he was as a committee member. Will he be willing to make the effort to work with those with whom he disagrees or not?

– In District 4, two-term incumbent Louise Woods faces well-financed challenger Julian Wright, an uptown attorney.

Woods has been criticized by many, including some of her fellow board members, for her apparently inexhaustible attention to detail and her apparent

Araminta S. Johnston



willingness to pursue it endlessly.

During the recent board debate over assignment, however, Woods formed a new alliance with fellow board member Wilhelmenia Rembert, which has the potential for being a highly effective combination for forwarding board business if Woods is re-elected.

Following a Fourth Circuit court ruling that concluded that CMS has removed all vestiges of its formerly segregated practices and is now unitary, the school board voted not to appeal the court's decision. Instead, it turned to settling the issue of student assignment and choice which had been insoluble since Gauvreau and others first filed suit against system a number of years ago.

On July 31, the board voted to adopt a so-called choice plan. Woods was an important part of making the 8-to-1 vote possible to approve the plan, according to Rembert.

Of Woods, Rembert said, "She played a very important role in bringing us to a majority. There's no question that she was a force to be reckoned with."

Of herself, she added, "I'm not a detail person like Louise is, but I could lobby other board members. I could talk to other people that Louise couldn't talk to."

"As a board," she said, "I think we really benefit from her level of knowledge. She really pushed us. She was wise, I think, to push us as she did.

"She'd say, 'We've got to get

these things in the resolution [concerning student choice] now, because if we don't, they may never happen'.

"She clearly deserves credit for working with a lot of details and staying on course," Rembert said.

Woods' concern about the details of the choice plan were aimed primarily at assuring protection of and resources for poor and nearly-poor children.

Up to now, large school systems in the country that have adopted a choice plan have found that no matter what initial commitments to equity for poor children were made, those commitments soon evaporated in the face of political pressure and restricted budgets.

Woods, whose socioeconomically diverse district includes a significant number of children from lower middle class families, has focused on the needs of such children throughout the debate about choice and student assignment.

She has operated on the belief that if the board makes commitments to equity part of CMS's explicit policies, then poor and nearly-poor children will be much better protected against small budgets and large pressures in the future.

Rembert says, "Louise was extremely critical in getting the best from all board members and the best for all children."

While that may well be the case, it seems equally true that for voters who are particularly concerned about assuring equity for all children in Charlotte's schools, the combination of Woods and Rembert is a potent one.

Woods has an enormous capacity for detailed analysis and Rembert has the ability to work not only with Woods, but to communicate Woods' ideas effectively to other board members.

A history of excuses for failing children

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they suggest lack of character. Children who were offered exposure to the same education as the rich were personally to blame if the experience was not positive.

By the late 19th century, these words were in use:

<i>Born-late</i>	<i>Sleepy-minded</i>
<i>Dull</i>	<i>Slow</i>
<i>Immature</i>	<i>Stubborn</i>
<i>Overgrown</i>	<i>Wandering</i>

In the 1900-1950 period, educators started to separate children into learning groups, since compulsory attendance laws ended the old solution of the “sleepy-minded” simply not coming to school. It was a time when learning differences were disposed of by reference to “genetic inferiority.” And the pious attitudes remained.

<i>Backward</i>	<i>Mental deviates</i>
<i>Inferior</i>	<i>Ne'er-do-wells</i>
<i>Laggards</i>	<i>Occupational student</i>
<i>Limited</i>	<i>Coverage</i>
<i>Low division</i>	<i>Slow learner</i>
<i>Low IQ</i>	<i>Sub-z group</i>

The authors cite experts from the period writing that bad spellers “do not have a spelling conscience. They must come to feel that to miss a word is to commit a real social offense.”

In the 1950-1980 period, educators made room for “new” groups: blacks, Hispanics, women, the handicapped and more. The authors see two groups of words in the education literature. The first suggests an understanding that “the blame lay more with the school than the students.”

<i>Culturally different</i>
<i>Educationally deprived</i>
<i>Educationally handicapped</i>
<i>Forgotten children</i>
<i>Pushouts</i>
<i>Rejected</i>

A second group of words in use during the period, they say, reflect “older habits”:

<i>Dullards</i>
<i>Socially maladjusted</i>
<i>Educationally difficult</i>
<i>Terminal students</i>
<i>Immature learners</i>
<i>Unwilling learners</i>
<i>Marginal children</i>

“In each era,” the authors conclude, “Educators have used ... labels in part to explain away failure. There has always been a reason for failure that, for the most part, has been rooted in individual or cultural deficit.

“The institution of schooling has won out in each of these eras.

Labels have created categories of individual failure that have left school structures largely intact.”

Labels first called it the child’s problem. Then they allowed tracking. Some of the more recent labels continue to suggest that nothing can be done. Is this the way we want our schools to operate?

“The problem is now that the structure of schools still does not allow for the variety of students and the variety of areas in which they might excel. As a result, students who do not excel in the age-graded, narrowly academic world may once again be subject to the kinds of labeling and failure that their predecessors were.”

To move from giving failure new labels to preventing failure itself will require three intentional changes, the authors argue:

– “Hard as it may be to change the school to match the student, it is a more promising strategy than trying to fit the student to the school.”

– “Acknowledge and address social inequality... Poorer neighborhoods by definition have fewer resources than their wealthier suburban counterparts and in many cases have a harder time meeting standards because of this.”

– “Undertake comprehensive changes that take no features of

current schools for granted. Humans have created the structure of schools and humans can change them, however much the status quo seems to be etched in stone.”

Do we need to reconsider elements of school we take for granted?

First grade, second grade ... and on to 12th, complete with “promotion.”

Students placed in groups defined not chiefly by need for education but by age.

Curriculum split into little pieces – science disconnected from literature, music from math – and foreign language left to 30 minutes a week, if there’s time.

The authors hasten to note that age-graded classrooms and most of the other mechanisms of the modern school work reasonably well for most children – particularly the middle-class children whose parents tend to control school systems.

What about other children?

– Millions of CMS dollars are being spent moving low-performing and low-income children from classes of 22 children to classes of 16 children. Will most of the children who don’t do well in a crowded class benefit from being in a smaller class of 16? When some still fail, will we take away the resources, and simply label them “slackers” or “educationally difficult” without asking more detailed questions about why the classroom environment failed them?

– Millions more will be spent to isolate poor children next fall at schools that middle class parents are unlikely to “choose.” Is this a way to “acknowledge and address social inequality” – or a way to perpetuate it?

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“Mismatch: Historical Perspectives on Schools and Students Who Don’t Fit Them” by Sarah Deschenes, Larry Cuban and David Tyack of Stanford University may be downloaded as a PDF file from www.tcrecord.org. Use the site’s Quick Search to look for Deschenes.

Inside 4 zones, parents have some options

School officials call it a "Family Choice Plan," and one of the simpler elements is this: Within some geographic zone, if you want to enroll and there's space, you should be able to "choose" that school.

**Assignment
2002**

6th in a series

In the 1999 plan, choice zones were two contiguous high school areas, which meant seven choice zones. Today's four zones mean more choice – and potentially longer bus rides. But the concept hasn't changed much.

But for parents considering their options, the key is space. The charts below reflect the schools' Oct. 29 revised projec-

tions of how full those "choice" schools might be. The projections are only that: If Hawk Ridge parents get disgusted at 175% overcrowding and apply to be "choice-bused" to Sterling and Sedgefield, then space might open up at Hawk Ridge.

Transportation is to be provided to any school within the choice zone. So, for example, a McKee parent who works uptown could use choice to enroll a child at Irwin Avenue near work, take the child to school each morning, be close to the child for lunch and emergencies, then have the bus transport the child home in the afternoon. The possibilities for use of this option are endless.

Except, of course, that many schools are full. And many schools with low enrollment may have severe difficulty attracting students not already assigned.

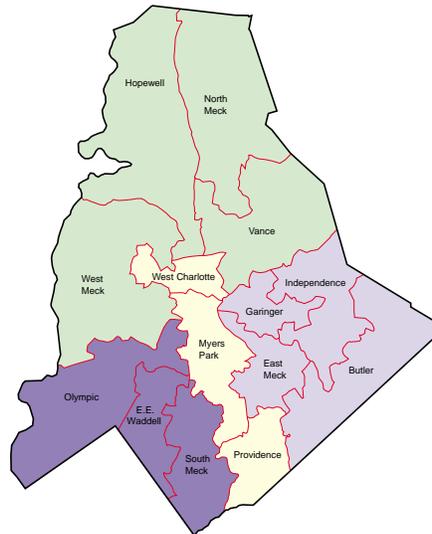
If this element of choice is used by parents, it will likely be used mostly for elementary school. The data shows most middle schools, and most high schools, at or near capacity.

And other "choice" parents have higher priority for open seats. Among them: Students enrolled this year; students who've attended in the past but whose move took them out of the "home school" area but not outside the "choice zone" area; and siblings of students already admitted.

The Choice Zones

The four zones are at right. Within a choice zone, a parent may apply for admission of their child to any schools listed. Applications will be accepted only if there is room after seating all children for whom the school is their "home" school.

Data includes: "Percent full", a projection of space used for "home school" children; and "Percent FRL," the percentage of home-school children who are on free- or reduced-priced lunch, an indicator of low family income. Schools with star(*) available only to students for whom it is their home school.



Myers Park, Providence, West Charlotte

	% Full	% FRL
ELEMENTARY		
Cotswold	100	47
Olde Providence	100	8
McAlpine (east)	98	7
McKee	99	2
Elizabeth Lane	98	3
Sharon	94	24
First Ward	86	88
Providence Road	85	1
Irwin Avenue	84	67
Thomasboro	82	91
Selwyn	75	23
Lincoln Heights	74	69
Druid Hills	73	89
Allenbrook	72	80
Eastover	71	30
Bruns Avenue	57	92
Billingsville	56	97
New Greenville	55	92
Oaklawn	50	89

Olympic, South Meck, Waddell

	% Full	% FRL
ELEMENTARY		
Hawk Ridge	175	3
Smithfield	114	33
Huntingtowne Farms	113	60
Steele Creek	103	39
Beverly Woods	100	4
Lake Wylie	99	16
McAlpine (west)	98	7
Pineville	85	36
Montclair	74	72

	% Full	% FRL
Pinewood	73	63
Nations Ford	71	86
Sterling	69	68
Sedgefield	68	84

	% Full	% FRL
MIDDLE		
Kennedy	102	39
Quail Hollow	100	37
Sedgefield	100	54
Carmel*	96	25
South Charlotte*	95	6
New Cato*	94	3
Marie G. Davis	77	92

	% Full	% FRL
MIDDLE		
Wilson*	102	57
Crestdale*	100	9
Carmel	96	25
Alexander Graham	95	32
South Charlotte	95	6
New Cato	94	3

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No 'low-performing' schools; Hawk Ridge to be at 175% capacity

Supt. Eric Smith, and a whole bunch of people at West Charlotte High, welcomed last week's news that corrections in the school's ABC scores had removed the school's label as being "low-performing."

The change occurred after revisions of diploma counts in the college tech prep and college prep graduation tracks. Those numbers are a factor in the ABCs standards.

Similar revisions raised scores and standings at Providence and at Northwest School of the Arts. Providence won "exemplary

growth" status and Northwest and West Charlotte reached "expected growth" levels.

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Enrollment projections used throughout this issue were released last week, and represented updates based on 20th-day enrollments in September. There were some big changes and they fell into several categories:

Growth: Hawk Ridge was already expected to be bursting at the seams at 150% of capacity. The new report puts it at 175%. Other less dramatic increases were at Nathaniel Alexander,

Hopewell, Independence, New Cato, New Plank Road and Newell.

More poverty: Eastway was earlier listed with 59% of its students on subsidized lunch. The new report says it will be 70%. Other schools seeing big increases: Coulwood, Northridge.

Ranson and West Charlotte should see lower subsidized lunch numbers.

Enrollment falloffs: Chantilly was listed earlier at 97% full, but now is at 78%. Other schools seeing drops are Pinewood, Billingsville, Rama and Spaugh.

Funny numbers on school utilization

Continued from Page 1

are rated as closer to capacity, or over capacity.

Take, for example, Albemarle Road Elementary, a school expecting 878 children next fall.

At 22 children per classroom, the 34 regular classrooms plus 2 mobile units would be at 111% of capacity.

But this year, Albemarle Road is an Equity Plus II school. And next year's enrollment is projected at 62% on free- or reduced-price lunch, meaning smaller classes are required under system policy.

At 16 children per classroom, Albemarle Road becomes as listed in the chart on this page: at 152% of capacity.

If CMS is to keep its promises to equitably fund programs for all children across the system, the budgetary challenges begin at places like Albemarle Road: Providing enough classrooms for smaller classes alone would involve about 19 more mobile classrooms.

One school board member says the staff isn't motivated to face the financial implications.

Perhaps the school board and county commissioners will be.

It is impossible from this data

Underused, or not?

The chart lists, separately, this year's Equity Plus II elementaries where class sizes should be reduced to about 16 student; and schools whose home-school populations suggest that they will be Equity Plus II schools next fall. The first percentage is the CMS utilization projection based on 22 children per classroom. The second percentage recalculates school capacity based on 16 students per class.

Current E+II schools

School	Nominal % Full	At small classes
Albemarle	111	152
Allenbrook	72	99
Ashley Park	67	92
Berryhill	71	98
Briarwood	79	103
Devonshire	71	97
Hidden Valley	75	102
Highland	67	93
Irwin Ave	84	116
Merry Oaks	71	89

alone to calculate the cost of providing all teachers with a fully equipped classroom – a vital part of the commitment to provide equity.

The latest CMS projections were included in last week's update on

School	Nominal % Full	At small classes
Montclair	74	102
Nations Ford	71	98
Oakdale	69	91
Oaklawn	50	68
Pinewood	73	101
Sedgefield	68	94
Shamrock	58	80
Statesville Rd	84	115
Sterling	69	104
Thomasboro	82	113
Westerly Hills	53	89
Windsor Park	72	99

Likely E+II in 2002

A.James/Reid Pk.	64	76
Billingsville	56	77
Bruns Ave.	57	79
Chantilly	78	107
Druid Hills*	73	100
First Ward*	86	119
Lincoln Heights*	74	102
New Greenville	55	80
Winterfield	73	100

*Partial magnets

attendance at all schools next fall. Earlier issues of Educate! have included CMS's Aug. 14 projections; the new numbers, dated Oct. 29, account for enrollment trends as of the 20th day of school this fall.

Briefs

Endangered: Budget cuts threaten to end CNN Newsroom, the late-night, no-commercials news show that teachers tape for use in class. The 12-year-old program has never made money, the Atlanta Journal reported.

www.accessatlanta.com

Teacher trainees: Britain has more teachers in training, but a study for the National Union of Teachers says more than half leave within four years, the Guardian reported. This in a country where, after their first year of training, all recruits receive a £4,000 "golden hello."

<http://education.guardian.co.uk>

GPA and sports: Milwaukee schools have launched a test of dropping the 2.0 GPA requirement for participating in team sports. Their theory: Sport is a learning environment, and students involved in extracurriculars tend to have better grades. Experts say there is little research to support the premise of the 2.0 requirement – that the threat of being kicked off a team would motivate students to keep up their grades.

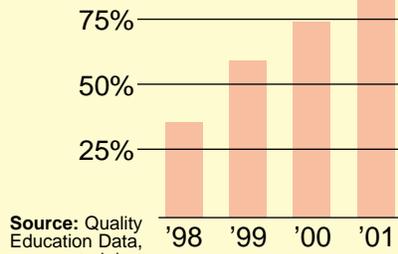
www.csmonitor.com

Taking a risk: Santa Ana, Calif. school officials have for the first time allowed recruiters from mostly northeastern boarding schools to make a pitch to the urban schools' best students. The Los Angeles Times reported that local officials refuse to see the program as a brain drain, but as an opportunity for students to excel and find their way to top colleges, as most boarding school graduates do. Students report initial adjustments, but eventually settle in and thrive in classrooms of eight students.

www.latimes.com

Got it made. Not!: In a story

Internet in U.S. classrooms



Source: Quality Education Data, as reported by The New York Times, www.nytimes.com

about retaining young teachers, the Washington Post wrote about Greg Harris, who works in one of the richest areas of the nation (Fairfax County, Va.), makes, at \$43,000, \$1,300 more than the national average teacher's salary, but has \$25,000 in college loans to pay off. He can't afford an apartment, and works at the Gap part-time, both for the salary and the 50% discount.

Staying on task: At East Chapel Hill High School, 85% of students take AP or honors courses. In the Wake County system nearby, only 18.9% took AP exams in a recent year, the News & Observer reported. A National Commission on the High School

Senior Year recommends that, to keep seniors focused on academics, schools should expand college-level courses, widen community service opportunities, apprenticeships and internships that will help students understand the value of their education, and require a senior-year project.

www.newsobserver.com

No laptop: Palo Alto schools shelved a plan to have 6th-grade parents buy laptops for their children, the San Jose Mercury reported. Some parents objected to the \$2,000 cost, others to the creation of a new test of "haves" and "have-nots." The system ruled out the \$1.6 million annual cost, and covering the cost through fund-raising was rejected because that source is already tapped for teacher aides and other programs.

www.sjmercury.com

No filters: The San Francisco Board of Supervisors banned Internet filters on city libraries, Wired.com reported. The action may lead to a test of the federal Child Online Protection Act, which mandates filters by 2003.

www.wired.com

Calendar

- 5** Community information session on choice plan, 6:30-8 p.m., old University Park Baptist Church building, 2348 Keller Avenue.
- 8** CMS Choice Plan information line opens, 704-343-6192. Curriculum Committee, Board conference room, Education Center, 9:30 a.m.
Information session on Berry Academy of Technology, 6:30-8:30 p.m., West Charlotte High.
Community information session on choice plan, 6:30-8 p.m., Oakhurst Baptist Church, 5037 Monroe Road.
- 13** School board meeting, Education Center, 6 p.m.
Community information session on choice plan, 6:30-8 p.m., First Baptist Church-Huntersville, 119 N. Old Statesville Road.
- 15** Information session on Berry Academy of Technology, 6:30-8:30 p.m., East Meck High.
Community information session on choice plan, 7-8:30 p.m., Moore's Sanctuary A.M.E. Zion Church, 4101 Morris Field Drive.