

Science Testing

Last week's results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed little progress in science achievement, with grades 4 and 8 results little changed from four years ago. Full details are at www.nces.ed.gov

Percent at or above "proficient" level; states, etc. listed in descending order of grade 4 results.

Jurisdiction	Grade 4	Grade 8
Massachusetts	43	42
Iowa	38	na
Maine	38	36
Montana	38	46
Vermont	38	39
North Dakota	37	40
Connecticut	35	35
Minnesota	35	42
Missouri	35	36
Virginia	33	31
Wyoming	33	35
Michigan	33	37
Utah	32	34
Indiana	32	34
Ohio	32	41
Idaho	31	39
Illinois	31	30
Def. Dept. Overseas	30	38
Def. Dept. Domestic	29	35
Kentucky	29	29
Oregon	28	33
Nation	27	30
Maryland	26	29
Nebraska	26	37
New York	26	29
Oklahoma	26	27
Rhode Island	26	29
Tennessee	26	25
West Virginia	25	26
Texas	24	23
Arkansas	24	23
Georgia	24	23
North Carolina	24	26
Alabama	22	22
Arizona	22	24
Nevada	20	23
South Carolina	20	20
Louisiana	19	18
New Mexico	18	20
Hawaii	16	15
California	14	15
Mississippi	14	15
Guam	4	6
Virgin Islands	3	0
Am. Samoa	0	2

Showcase is Saturday, but key assignment plan details unresolved

By ARAMINTA S. JOHNSTON

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board apparently will come into Tuesday night's meeting, the final one on its school choice plan, with a number of key issues unresolved.

The issues, central to the equity of some of the plan's provisions, may be revisited when the board meets. Pressure to finalize all policies and regulations related to the choice plan is intense, however, since the Showcase of Schools, which inaugurates CMS's Family Choice Plan, is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 1.

Last Tuesday's board Policy Committee meeting, scheduled at a time when most board members said they could attend, attracted only committee chair Louise Woods and member Bob Simmons for most of the meeting. District 2 representative Vilma Leake arrived at the end of the meeting to raise the larger question of school size.

District 6 representative-elect Lee Kindberg was present for the entire meeting, but since her term doesn't begin until the new board is sworn in next month, she had a voice but no vote in the committee's deliberations.

As a result, key questions about promoting economic diversity in schools, student transportation, and definitions of school capacity remain unanswered.

Athletics

On the other hand, the issue of athletic eligibility under the choice plan would appear to be settled, and is a policy that CMS staff clearly supports. Board member John Lassiter objected to the policy at the last board meeting but was not present at the committee meeting.

With the inauguration of the choice plan, all students will be athletically eligible during the 2002-03 school year whether they are attending a new school or not.

After next year, however, the school system plans to return to its current policy which was adopted unanimously by the board in 1998 after scandals surrounding athletic recruiting at high schools.

That policy states that a student who changes schools must wait a full calendar year before becoming athletically eligible at his or her new school.

Under the choice plan, however, if a student's school change is a move to that student's home school, the stu-

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Greatness comes in 148 locations. School choice is yours!

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
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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 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

Support gift-giving choice, too

This holiday season you can give the gift of dignity to parents who are eager to spread Christmas joy for their children but may not have the financial resources to buy gifts at the market rate.

United Family Services is partnering with several residents and community groups of the Southside and Brookhill neighborhoods to set up a Parent Choice store for several days in December.

Rather than accept anonymous (sometimes embarrassing) sponsorship gifts, parents will be able to shop at this store because its prices are truly affordable. The prices will be low because the items will be donated from the community. Proceeds from sales will go into the neighborhood organizations and to future store operations.

You can help by bringing new (or very gently used) items for

children birth-18 years to the UFS office at Cotswold, 200 N. Sharon Amity or South Tryon Community Church, 2516 S. Tryon St. by Dec. 10th.

Wish lists usually include gift certificates, books, games, puzzles, clothing, dolls, cars/trucks, Legos, baseball cards, sports equipment, hair & beauty products for teens, fast food coupons, movie passes, nail care kits, jewelry making kits, wallets, watches, handbags, Sony Walkman, journals/diaries, art supplies, etc.

Tell your friends, community groups, house of worship, work team, etc.

The more donations the more likely the store will succeed in drawing parents into this empowering approach to charity!

Financial gifts also accepted. For more details contact Zanlandria Hardin at 704-375-0587 or me at 704-971-2634.

Joanne Stratton Tate

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

Assignment plan details not resolved

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dent would be eligible to play during the next season.

Lassiter had raised questions about returning to the current policy, arguing that it could discourage school choice.

CMS Athletic Director Vicki Hamilton told the committee that the advice she had gotten from other school systems that had adopted a choice plan was, "Don't let 'em change. Don't let 'em change. Just don't let 'em change."

Superintendent Eric Smith, also present at the meeting, indicated his agreement with Hamilton's statement.

Economic Diversity

On the issue of promoting economic diversity in schools, however, it appears that in the coming school year the school system will not carry out what Woods said Tuesday was the intent of a majority of board members.

Depending on whom you listen to, CMS administrators either misunderstood (said staffers) or perhaps chose not to implement (said Simmons) the board's intention to favor choices both by economically disadvantaged children into economically advantaged schools and by economically advantaged children into economically disadvantaged schools.

Instead, according to CMS regulations for the coming year, disadvantaged students who choose a school more economically advantaged than their home school will be given some priority for being assigned there.

Administrators said that a change that would reflect the board's intent is impossible for the coming year because computers are already programmed and materials are already printed to govern this year's choice lottery.

Prodded by Woods, Smith suggested that parents of economical-

ly advantaged children who want to attend economically disadvantaged schools for the sake of being in a more diverse environment could make use of the 10-day appeal period following the choice lottery if their children were denied a seat in those schools.

Woods said she thought that Smith's proposal "sounds reasonable for this coming year," but added that the school system needed to make the option clear to the public so parents would know they could appeal.

Simmons, however, dismissed the issue as unimportant and said the regulation "may have been a conscious choice [by administrators] under the circumstances we anticipate" – that no students would choose to be placed in a economically disadvantaged school if they have other options.

Giving priority to those students as well as economically disadvantaged ones "may have some symbolic significance but not much practical significance," Simmons said.

"I'd prefer to leave it the way it is now, even if a majority of the board intended otherwise," he told Woods.

Transportation

Board members and school officials both recognize that bus transportation under the choice plan is a more daunting and almost certainly more expensive proposition than it was under a so-called "forced busing" student assignment plan that CMS operated for several years.

Although no one is talking about it publicly, both board members and school administrators appear to assume that restrictions will probably be placed on changes in transportation that result from students entering a new school during the year.

On this issue, as with many others connected to the choice plan, the question appears to be whether economically advantaged or economically disadvantaged children will be favored when priorities have to be set.

At Tuesday's meeting, Woods, who throughout the student assignment debates has argued on behalf of disadvantaged children, attempted to ensure that the choices made would benefit poor children.

For example, about one percent of the CMS student population is designated "high mobility." These are children whose families move within the county three or more times in a school year. Experts agree that such children, who are likely to come from poor and otherwise troubled families, suffer educationally from being moved from school to school as well as from residence to residence.

Woods would like to ensure that these children, as well as children of homeless families and children whose families move within their choice zone, are assured transportation to the school at which they began the year even if they more to another home school area.

The issue appeared to remain unresolved at the end of Tuesday's meeting.

Smith said only, "We would like to provide transportation as freely as possible, but we have to work within the capacity of the system. Changing transportation once its established is a problem – I'm not sure we'll be able to do it."

School Capacity

Woods wants school system documents to state school capacity so that the board's intent of guaranteeing smaller classes for low-income, exceptional, and ESL students will be clear.

The administration appears to create a problem in this area because its internal documents list Equity Plus II school capacities at 22 students per classroom, the same as for higher performing schools, while board policy states that E+II schools will have only 16 students per room.

Administrators suggested Tuesday that rather than writing a separate policy, cross referencing various policies may deal with this problem.

Family Choice Calendar

26-27 Student assignment plan application and information brochure to go home with all students.

December

- 1** Showcase of Schools, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Charlotte Merchandise Mart, 2500 E. Independence Blvd.
- 1** 2002-2003 Student Assignment Plan applications may be returned.
- 8** Family Application Centers open to answer questions and provide assistance. Bilingual staff. 9 a.m. to noon, media centers at Garinger High (back entrance), Hopewell High, Waddell High and West Charlotte High.
- 15** Family Application Centers open to answer questions and provide assistance. Bilingual staff. 9 a.m. to noon, media centers at Garinger High (back entrance), Hopewell High, Waddell High and West Charlotte High.

January

- 5** Family Application Centers open to answer questions and provide assistance. Bilingual staff. 9 a.m. to noon, media centers at Garinger High (back entrance), Hopewell High, Waddell High and West Charlotte High.
- 18** Deadline for applications.

5 Ways to Apply

- 1** Apply online at www.cms.k12.nc.us.
- 2** Apply through the automated phone line at 704-444-8157.
- 3** Return your application to the Showcase of Schools on Dec. 1.
- 4** Visit one of the Family Application Centers Dec. 8, 15, Jan. 5.
- 5** Return application to your child's current school.



Offer your friends an *Educate!*ion

Please forward this issue of *Educate!* to people you think would find the information useful.

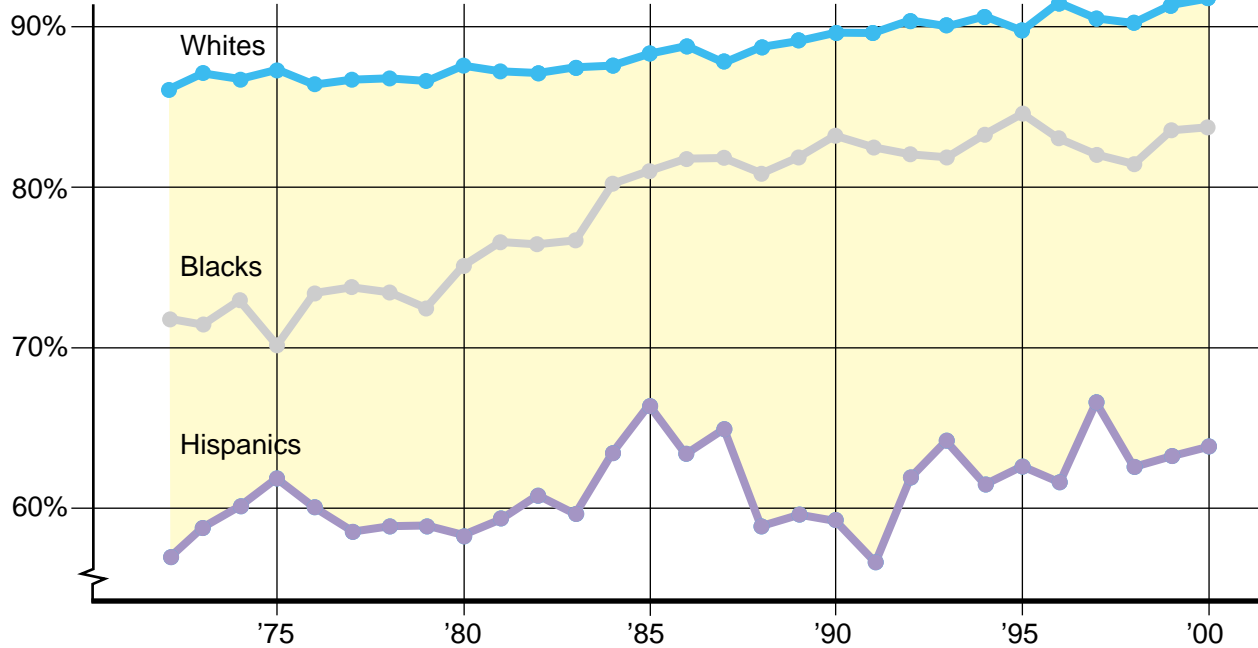
And please let us know if there are people in your address book you think we should be sending each issue to.

Just send us their names and e-mail addresses and we'll add them to our regular distribution list.

Send those names to:

SwannFello@aol.com

High school completion rates for 18- to 24-year-olds



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

The portrait above of high school success rates is about the rosier that can be drawn. Most such portraits are even less encouraging.

The differences among statisticians tend to affect the estimated number of teens overall who are getting an education. What appears not in dispute is the huge achievement gap among ethnic groups – above signified by space between the horizontal lines.

The chart above is based on the November report on dropout rate data from the Center for Education Statistics, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. The “completion rate” for high school is defined as “the proportion of 18- through 24-year-olds who have left high school and earned a high school diploma or the equivalent, including a General Educational Development credential.”

The National Center concludes that “these numbers have not changed appreciably in recent years. The cumulative effect of hundreds of thousands of youths leaving school each year short of finishing a high school program translates into several million young people who are out of school, yet lack a high school credential.

“In 2000, there were 3.8 million 16- through 24-year-olds who, although not enrolled in school,

had not yet completed a high school program. Overall, 10.9 percent of the 34.6 million 16- through 24- year-olds in the United States were dropouts. Although there have been year-to-year fluctuations in this rate, over the past 29 years dropout rates have gradually decreased in a pattern with an average annual decline of 0.1 percentage points per year....

“The goal of reducing the dropout rate is to increase the percentage of youths who complete a high school education.

“Despite the increased importance of a high school education for entry to postsecondary education and the labor market, the high school completion rate has shown limited gains over the last three decades and has been stable throughout the 1990s.”

Stability is not the hallmark of the Hispanic rate of completion, but the Center points out that Hispanics’ completion rate is little improved from the early 1980s.

In terms of completion rates, note that there has been essentially no narrowing of the gap between whites and blacks, again since the early 1980s. The Center report offers no explanation, simply noting that gains by both blacks and whites have leveled off.

Briefs

Money bind: Michigan schools, whose funding was moved in 1994 from local property taxes to a state sales tax, are now hurting for money as retail sales decline. Sticking with the old system, the Detroit News reported, would have given the schools \$2 billion more this year. Proponents of the sales tax say the change was made to equalize funding of all schools and that the problem is not so much the funding source as the state's unwillingness to fund school needs.

www.detroitnews.com

Selling education: Last week found former president Clinton at Harvard. It was – surprise – a long speech. But it included this international perspective on education: “There are a hundred million kids that aren't in school today. We ought to get them in school. Every additional year of schooling in a poor country adds 10 to 20 percent to a child's income. Brazil has 97 percent of its children in school. Why? Because they paid their mothers in the poorest 30 percent of the families a monthly fee if they send their kids to school 85 percent of the time. So they have almost everybody in school. In my last year as president, we got \$300 million to provide a meal to children in poor countries, but only if they'd come to school to get it. Do you know what \$300 million will buy? A meal for over six million children every day of the school year. And the results are coming in and enrollments are exploding in places where this program is being put in place. Now, we ought to fund programs like this and get these kids in school.”

www.harvard.edu

Memphis blues: Tennessee school board member Avron Fogelman of Memphis, according

to the Commercial Appeal, wants a separate graduation requirement set for low-income schools. He says the state's new graduation requirements will leave 70% of Memphis' 12th-graders without a diploma. The system has 70% of its 118,000 students on subsidized lunch. The state's standard for graduation is to perform at or above the 50th percentile nationally on achievement tests in algebra I, English II and biology.

Fewer hires: The Yamazaki Baking Co. will hire 550 high school graduates this spring, just 42% of the number it hired a decade ago, the Daily Yomiuri reported from recession-bound Japan. The editor of a job-placement magazine was quoted as saying, “The tendency to hire part-time workers and depend on outside agents for temporary workers will continue.... The jobs previously held by high school graduates will gradually be filled by university graduates.”

www.yomiuri.co.jp

Follow the money: In the journal Child Development, three academics suggest that if a below-poverty family of four sees its income rise \$13,400 over three years, the preschool kids in that family will perform as well on

readiness-for-school tests as kids whose families have twice the income. Says Harvard educator and childhood education researcher Kathleen McCartney, “Programs leading to redistributions of wealth will improve children's school readiness scores and social skills.”

www.harvard.edu

Tech works: An article in T.H.E. Journal featuring four technology-savvy school districts highlighted Wilson County, N.C. in Eastern North Carolina, which has 12,000 students and 4,000 computers in its 23 schools. The article noted that school leaders “realized that if educators weren't comfortable using technology and didn't understand how to use it, there was no way they would make technology part of their daily routine or integrate it into the curriculum.” The district put 100,000 hours into training over five years. The results: higher student test scores and “11 volumes of multimedia lesson plans that are available on CDs, notebooks, the network and, soon, the Internet.” Wilson County has 65% of Mecklenburg's per-capita income. The local supplement it can afford to put into school operations is 58% of Mecklenburg's.

www.thejournal.com

Calendar

- 27** School board meeting, Education Center, 6 p.m.
Information session on Berry Academy of Technology, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Waddell High.
- 28** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, Education Center, Room 408, 4 p.m.

December

- 4** Marian Wright Edelman to receive 2001 Citizen of the Carolinas award at Charlotte Chamber annual meeting, 7 p.m., Convention Center.