

Keep Ed Center downtown, panel advises

Mindful of unmet needs for classrooms, top choice is to stay in existing building

The school board's finance and facilities committee recommends that the schools dig in where they are in downtown Charlotte, renovating their 1970s building on 2nd Street and hoarding capital dollars for schoolhouse needs.

The Education Center, the committee believes, will meet the schools' needs for administrative space for the next 20 years.

If the schools must move, the committee recommends doing it in a way that avoids capital outlays by selling the 2nd Street land and building where publicly owned land downtown can be transferred to the schools without cost.

The recommendations, to be heard in full at Tuesday night's school board meeting, come after the board last month committed to renovate Metro School, across 2nd Street from the Education Center.

Planners and downtown boosters have had their eye on both properties for reuse for upscale residential use. In connection with a city-county plan for 2010, the committee was asked to study suggestions that the board move its offices to another site in the government center area, or to land on Freedom Drive or Wilkinson Boulevard.

The committee recommends staying downtown, so that CMS will "remain readily accessible to all members of the community."

N.C. commission reports 11 recommendations on solving a challenge to equitable education

The week brought a new look at the persistent gap in achievement among ethnic groups in public schools. The N.C. Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps was appointed by Gov. Easley in summer 2000, and in the excerpts here the group presents 11 recommendations on both local and state public policy.

The 26-member group is chaired by former superintendent Robert Bridges and includes CMS assistant superintendent Calvin Wallace and N.C. Black Leadership Caucus president Robert L. "Bob" Davis Jr. The group promises future reports on the underachievement student's "mindset or personal vision of self as an academic achiever;" on equitable deployment of excellent teachers to all groups of students; and on "ways to intervene" in "a trend toward the resegregation of school systems across the state."

These excerpts begin with the commission's perspective on how to approach the issues it raises:

A way of thinking

We must remain diligent and steadfast in our effort and commitment to raise achievement

outcomes for all students throughout the state. Much progress has been made in this regard over the past decade, which must be continued. We must, at the same time, recognize that closing the gaps that exist in achievement outcomes between specific minority groups and white students presents an extraordinary challenge. The goal must be to raise achievement for all students while accelerating the progress of those who are seriously under-achieving.

History would suggest that deep and hidden roots are anchoring this condition and keeping the gaps in place. Continuing or even ratcheting up traditional and routine school improvement practices alone probably will not produce significant and sustained improvement in this case. A rising tide will lift all boats but their physical relationship to each other will not change without some additional intervention. We must create new traditions in this case and go beyond the routine... and in some cases, beyond our comforts if we are to succeed in this endeavor.

Continued on Page 2

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 mailing list, message educate@educateclt.org with "remove" as the subject

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: 2,449.

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.

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 1

While coming to grips with our failures in this area and searching for an acceptable approach to dealing with the challenge, it is helpful to recognize that the issue is not really so much about the gaps that exist as it is about the undeveloped academic potential of thousands of young people who are present for instruction in classrooms across the state. And disproportionately, they are minorities.

We can no longer afford to avoid the discomfort often associated with recognizing that ethnic culture (race) is somehow associated with this failure. The evidence is compelling. In every analysis of EOG test data from the ABCs program presented to the Commission over the past year, the factor of race was dominant in differentiating levels of achievement.

When poverty is factored out, middle class white students still score significantly higher than middle class African American students. The Commission believes that only through recognizing this association and a willingness to think and talk responsibly but openly and candidly on the subject, can we begin to understand and effectively address the situation.

We should not expect to eliminate these gaps overnight or that change will occur through patching a few holes in the system or even by realizing that the credibility and ultimate survival of our public schooling system may hang in the balance. Sustained success in this case will require fundamental changes in the way we do business in the village. The current checks and balances for the system's operation will simply not effectively protect against continuing failure where minority students or students who live in poverty are concerned. Political persuasion as a primary influence on school operation, majority cul-

ture expectations, preparation and practice as the standard for operation, and reliance on the individual dispositions of professionals where the issue of race or ethnic culture is concerned – these are some of the costly elements in the way our public schooling system works.

Student participation

A central question was raised by the Commission as it began deliberations. How involved are minority students in the full range of course offerings and how does their level of participation compare to that of white students? It was determined early that missed instructional opportunity occurred far more frequently for African American and American Indian students than for any other group due to suspension and dropout activity.

More than half of the long-term suspended students from 1997-98 through 1999-2000 were black or multiracial. Blacks make up about 33% of the public school population. A disproportionate loss of instructional time for American Indian students occurs through dropouts. The percentage of Indian male students who dropped out of school in 2000 was greater than for each other race and gender group. The percentage in this case was 3.98%. Asian students posted the lowest percentage with 1.74% for males and 1.23% for females.

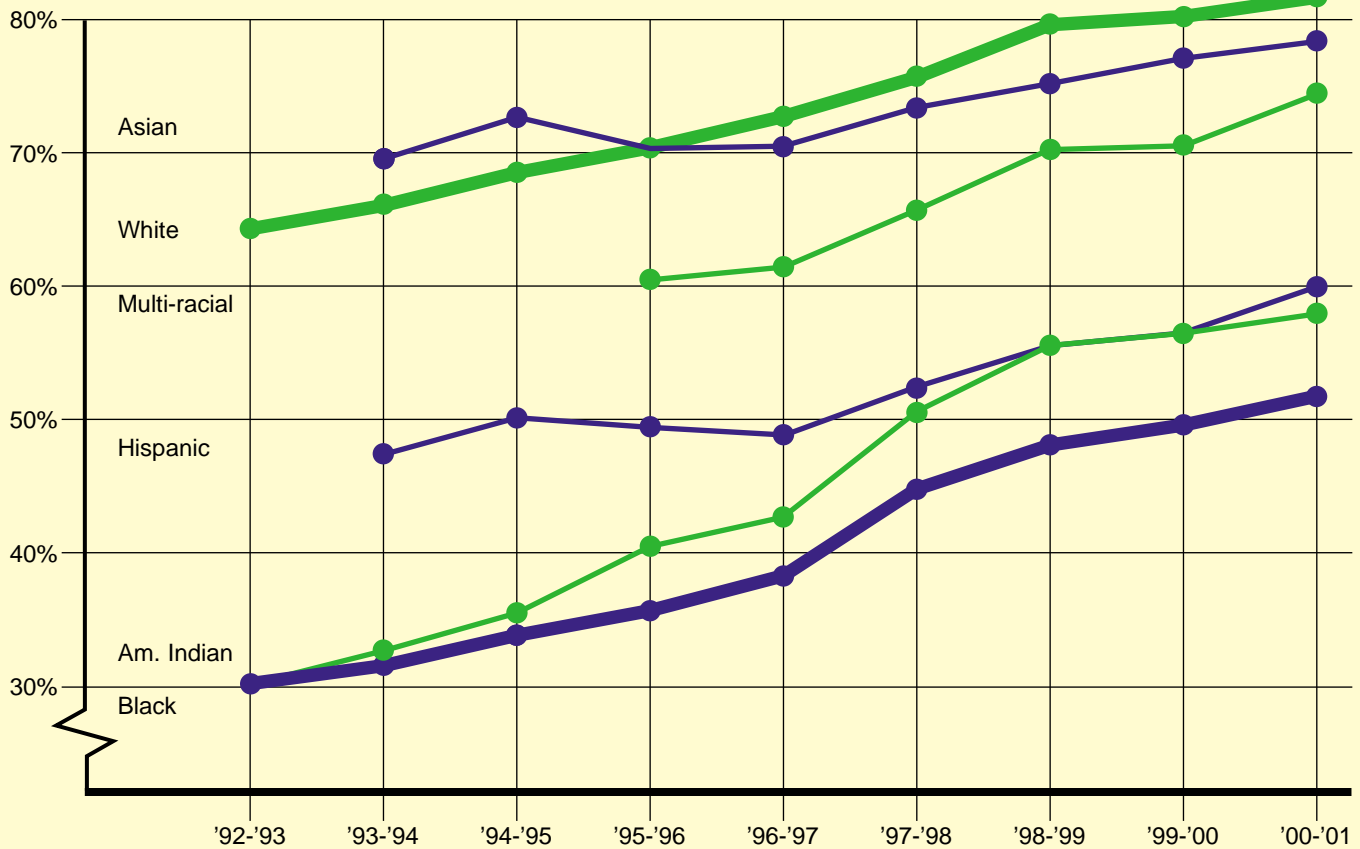
While time out of school is significant, the broader and much more defining response to the earlier question has to do with the great majority of minority students who remain in school and participate at some level in the instructional program. Where do they participate?

Statewide data clearly establishes that minority students are seriously over-identified and placed in special programs for the mentally- and behaviorally-handicapped. It can also be observed and documented that black, Indian, and Hispanic students are

Continued on Page 3

A Persistent Achievement Gap

Percent of N.C. students, grades 3-8, at or above grade level in both reading and math, by ethnicity.



Source: N.C. Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, First Report to the State Board of Education, December, 2001. Data current through

August 2001. Percentages are based on number of students at or above level III in both reading and math. Missing data for subgroups was not reported.

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 2

underrepresented in gifted and advanced placement classes around the state. More subtle and difficult to examine is the degree to which a majority of minority students participate in the more rigorous and elevated courses in the standard K-12 curriculum.

Visits to schools and the review of a state-funded independent study of conditions strongly suggest disproportionality, with minority students populating lower track classes more frequently. Informal observation and reporting have shown a disproportionate number of minority students (especially blacks) are being

served in alternative schools and programs across the state. The level of instruction offered in these programs is being studied further by the Commission.

The Commission believes that minority students must be fully exposed to the instructional content and level of knowledge required if they are to meet expectations or better when tested.

For whatever reasons (and a number probably apply), minority students in the three ethnic groups in question are both out of school and in less rigorous classes disproportionately when compared to white students. A root cause for the achievement gap, therefore, must be identified with the minority student's reduced

opportunity to participate in high-level course offerings.

Numerous researchers have recognized that students should not be expected to know or demonstrate what they have not had the opportunity to learn.

1 That the state take steps to reduce, then eliminate the disproportionate number of minority students assigned to special education programs.

As a part of the ABCs reporting process, require that schools provide descriptive data, in table format, that will allow for comparisons between the percentage of students assigned to the various categorical special education programs in school districts with

Continued on Page 4

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 3

state averages in those same categories; and with the rates of incidence of the various handicapping conditions in the general population of our nation.

Reduce the tendency to over identify minority students for assignment to special education by requiring that those who assign them make public their data and stand accountable.

2 That the state recognize its obligation to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to learn by promoting, encouraging, and funding instructional approaches that expose minority students currently functioning at or near grade level to advanced content, challenging strategies, and quality work thus increasing the number of minority students who perform at the highest levels on standardized and end-of-grade tests.

There are sizable numbers of minority students who are capable of learning and achieving at the highest levels, but who are caught in well-intended programs and/or expectations that deny them this opportunity.

Home & community

Parental involvement has been thoroughly recognized as a powerful force in a child's school experience. Social and academic skills development are key elements of the overall development process. They must happen to varying degrees in both the home and the school settings. This being the case, the serious state of disconnectedness that exists between a large percentage of minority families and their schools must be recognized as a significant root cause of the achievement gap between minority students and their white counterparts. Under the most strained nonrelationships examined by the Commission, both parents and school officials typically

adopt an independent and sometimes hostile attitude toward each other while becoming convinced that better achievement outcomes can only be realized when the other party does his/her job. Even when there is no significant friction or conflict, there is still enough discomfort with interaction to inhibit effective and productive communication.

Schools that have made substantial progress in closing the achievement gap have first been successful at closing the communication and interaction gap between home and school. School personnel are very clear about what middle class white parents can and wish to do to be involved in schools and in their students' education. They are not as clear about minority parents and are often reluctant to press for answers in this regard. In most cases, the absence of knowledge and understanding of minority cultures gives rise to this reluctance.

3 That a professionally designed public information campaign be initiated statewide to get the attention of parents (especially those with consistently under-achieving students) and local communities.

The primary purpose should be to raise awareness of attitudes and practices that are critical to raising student achievement to elevated levels. Attitudes and practices believed to be hindering academic achievement and detrimental to positive youth development should also be featured. While the overall message and primary themes should be distributed statewide, they should be designed in such a way as to be readily adaptable to local communities without great expense. Each LEA should be at least



encouraged to connect to the campaign.

A number of outlets or vehicles must be used to get the message of the campaign out to the priority audience. Major media outlets will be useful in getting the general citizenry to take note and begin talking about the message. However, the legwork of the campaign must be done closer to the priority population in comfortable settings

and through trusted avenues of communication and interaction. The Martin Luther King Center, churches, Greek fraternities and sororities, the Latin American Resource Center, the neighborhood grocer, and a variety of local service organizations should be invited to participate in getting the word out with encouragement. They should be provided user-friendly campaign materials to facilitate local community interaction.

The following thoughts should be considered in building the message and themes of the campaign.

- Parents must begin early and continue helping their children think and feel positively about themselves as academic achievers. They must be convincing in this effort by whatever means necessary.

- Home and school must be on the "same page" with the child if the child is to read and compute well when it is time. When parents have a problem with the school, they should define it and "work it out" rather than withdrawing and becoming adversarial.

- An overdose of TV time can be deadly where a child's development is concerned. Highly credible studies have shown that too much TV can negatively affect learning on the part of children. African American children have been shown to be overexposed to TV at

Continued on Page 5

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 4

home. This minority group is experiencing the lowest achievement level of all ethnic groups.

– School/community mentoring programs are providing adult partners for young people in need of guidance and someone who cares and is available to advise and encourage. Such programs are organized jointly by schools and communities and are typically operated by the community organization or agency. Mentors are carefully recruited, trained, and supported in the mentoring process.

4 That each LEA be directed to request the following from each school in its district:

– An annual action plan for creatively seeking to improve the school's image with parents and to raise the level of connectedness to parents in general but specifically to those not usually involved with the school. The plan should include methods used to assess involvement and feelings about the school on the part of parents and should be filed with the local superintendent's office by August 1 annually.

– Parent involvement records should be kept identifying parents who come to school to assist and support the school and the child in the teaching and learning process. Attendance at mass meetings such as PTA, public forums, etc. should not be recorded for this purpose.

– Voluntary home visits by teachers and administrators should be considered for the simple purpose of building a trusting relationship between home and school. When such visits are taken, the results in terms of opinions held and conclusions drawn should be recorded and used for faculty orientation and training.

Teacher preparation

Most policymakers, parents, educators, and researchers now generally agree that nothing is more closely tied to student achievement and underachievement than the preparation, support, and quality of classroom teachers. It follows then, that nothing is more critical to our efforts to close the achievement gap than making certain that every student, especially those who have been traditionally underserved by public schools, has access to competent, caring, qualified teachers in schools organized for success. This was the position taken by the Commission on Teaching and America's Future, and it is this Commission's strong belief, as well.

Development of highly competent, caring teachers is no easy task. It's not something that you do once and it's done forever more. Colleges and universities, private and public, traditional and non-traditional must be held accountable for graduating excellent beginning teachers as measured by whatever indicators have been deemed appropriate by the public, policymakers, and professionals.

Just how much teacher professional development is enough is anyone's answer. Should it be no better than that provided heretofore, perhaps teachers have already had enough!

But assuming that new professional development is based on national models and standards and centered on the achievement problems that teachers face each day, one measure of sufficiency will be when teachers are success-



ful in teaching groups of diverse learners, as outlined in the six core standards developed and adopted by the North Carolina Teaching Standards Board and the North Carolina Association of Educators representing the teachers of our state. The State Board of Education adopted these same standards for North Carolina's teachers in November 1999. Standards, without the means of reaching them, however, are a travesty.

A better way to know how much professional development is sufficient is when we can no longer predict the academic performance of groups of students based on ethnicity. Certainly this is a tough measure, but one that we believe is justified, as this is our task—to recommend means of closing the gap.

But even the beginning teacher is more likely to be successful in teaching all children when they themselves have been taught by teacher educators who model what we want them to be. University teacher educators themselves must have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully teach diverse student populations. And, they themselves must be comfortable addressing the uncomfortable issues of race, religion, and ethnicity in the classroom and in society.

Because most often university faculty members are selected based on knowledge of their discipline and not on their knowledge of how to teach their discipline to culturally different audiences, teacher preparation candidates have been put at a disadvantage. More excellent university teaching models are needed and university faculty are entitled to and should receive greater support and opportunities for growth.

Finally, preliminary information raises questions about the assignment of a disproportionate number of the least qualified teachers to our most needy student populations. All of these topics will be

Continued on Page 6

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 5

studied and addressed in future Commission update reports.

To paraphrase the late Dr. Ron Edmonds, we already know more than enough to improve the quality of teacher preparation and teacher support and to meet the nation's audacious goal. The question remaining is how we feel about the fact that we haven't yet applied what we know to better serve all students, but most especially to raise achievement and close the gap.

5 That the State Board of Education and the Superintendent immediately make a public commitment to design and fund a required, but flexible, professional development initiative that will ensure that classroom teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be successful in teaching a diverse population of students.

A new core standard was adopted by the North Carolina Teaching Standards Board, endorsed by the North Carolina Association of Educators, and adopted by the State Board of Education in November 1999 addressing this need.

Raising the bar just increases the problem if we don't coach those who must reach the new heights. Thus, standard setting for teachers will fall woefully short and fail to close the achievement gap unless the state provides increased opportunities for teachers to learn.

6 That the state provide the substantial TIME that classroom teachers need to update their skills and gain new skills in working with diverse populations by requiring that veteran classroom teachers accept paid 11- month contracts once during every four-year period.

Teachers have long said that time, not commitment and desire, is the problem when it comes to improving results.

7 That the State create, fund, and support special seminars and course development for existing university teacher education faculty designed to ensure that they command and model the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to prepare preservice teachers to be successful in teaching diverse student populations.

How can university professors who teach teachers model what they themselves have not had opportunities or a need to learn?

8 That the State Board of Education seek the support of the President of the University of North Carolina and the various chancellors to require all search committees for new teacher education faculty members to assess and rate applicants as to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will need to teach preservice teachers to work successfully with diverse student populations.

We must adopt personnel policies and practices at all levels that support the goal of closing the achievement gap.

9 That the State demonstrate seriousness about resolving the shortage of qualified classroom teachers in North Carolina prepared to be successful with diverse popula-

tions.

Design and implement a specific preparation delivery system that provides monetary incentives, then identifies high school and community college graduates who want to teach; preparing, graduating, and placing them in high-need schools and teaching areas.

Acknowledging the problem and doing something about it are two different things. Only a well-crafted system stands a chance of addressing a problem as critical as the teacher shortage across this state and nation.

Law & Policy

The State Board is required by legislation passed this year to incorporate a "closing the achievement gap" component in the state's accountability system and to implement this component for the 2002-03 school year.... The question, then, is not whether to address closing the gap, but how. As the Commission has considered this issue, it has been guided by the following belief statements, many of which evolved through discussions of research that was presented to the Commission.

- Closing the gap must be achieved by accelerating the achievement of the lower-performing groups, not by reducing the rate of growth of the higher-performing groups.

- The performance standard for all groups should be challenging but obtainable.

- The closing the gap model should provide clear standards and incentives as well as additional tools for measuring progress.

Closing the achievement gap by raising achievement levels will not occur across the state if current patterns continue. The closing the gap model should encourage those practices known to significantly increase minority student performance.

- The closing the gap model should help in recognizing the benefits of diversity in the student population, and, at the very least, it should not unintentionally cre-



Continued on Page 7

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 6

ate incentives for segregation.

– The closing the gap model should also be useful in helping educators, community leaders, and parents better understand the distinctions between socio-economic factors and cultural factors as reasons why the gap exists. It should reinforce the fact that with this increasingly diverse student population comes cultural differences that must be understood, respected, and addressed.

10 That the State Board adopt a closing the gap component to the accountability system that sets a universal standard and sets measures and incentives at the school district level.

The Commission recognizes that one possible approach to incorporating a closing the gap component in the accountability system is to simply disaggregate data already generated at the school level by various race/ethnic groups and socioeconomic groups. However, this approach does not address the strongly held beliefs of the Commission that it is important to set clear standards and measures for closing the gap. The ABCs model best shows whether growth expectations, based upon historical data, have been met. It is not designed to set a standard for closing the gap or measure progress towards ending the gap.

Put another way, requiring growth of all students is positive and essential, but it does not meet the Commission's belief that more accelerated growth is necessary in order to close the gap.

The Commission recognizes the value of the ABCs as the fundamental approach towards improving student performance. In terms of closing the gap, the Commission encourages the State Board to look beyond the ABCs model to other approaches that may be better suited to meeting

the goal of closing the gap.

More specifically, the Commission recommends that the State Board explore setting a "universal standard" by which to measure the performance of racial/ethnic populations and socioeconomic groups. This is accomplished by setting a goal and a timeframe for meeting that goal. For example, the one standard studied by the Commission is for 95% of all ethnic/racial and socioeconomic groups to reach grade level proficiency by the year 2010. This approach sends some clear messages about goals:

– Closing the gap is important enough to set very clear measures that can easily be understood.

– Following historical growth patterns will not be sufficient to close the gap and more concentrated policies and practices will be necessary to accelerate the growth of lower-performing groups.

– A part of the strategy for closing the gap is to set high goals and incentives for reaching them.

While the Commission has tried to focus on policy, rather than technical issues, the two, as the State Board knows well, are at times inextricably linked. This is the case with the issue of small group size.

Both a disaggregated model of the ABCs or a universal standard may suffer from having group sizes that are simply too small to be reliable. The smaller the group size, the more measurement error is inherently involved. This could result in wild variations in results that are not related to the actual performance of students so that at a particular school, results could zig-zag from year to year with no apparent reason or some schools are unfairly identified for rewards while more deserving schools are overlooked. This would have serious consequences for the reliability

ty and credibility of the model. Researchers have written in fairly stark terms about the unreliability of disaggregated data at the school level for the purpose of an incentive program. These concerns would either need to be adequately addressed or it would appear to be reason enough not to pursue a school-level model.

What is the option to a school-level model? A school district-level model would address the technical issues. It may also create incentives for strategies that reach beyond the school-level efforts for addressing the gap. The

Commission has heard extensive research on issues related to resource allocations, teacher assignment patterns and student assignment patterns, and the impact these policy choices have on minority student achievement. A district-level model is the best choice for directing incentives and measures at these types of policy choices. In this manner, it also complements the

ABCs, a school-level accountability program. It also could provide a key role for the Local Taskforce on Closing the Achievement Gap that is encouraged in legislation and State Board policy. Note that school-level data can still be used as an analysis tool, especially when used in concert with other measures of student performance and indicators of successful programs.

The Commission recognizes developing a closing the achievement gap model is difficult and that any model will have its benefits and disadvantages. The Commission recommends the district-level universal model as offering the most to what we currently have in place through the State Board's accountability program. The Commission urges the State Board to consider the issue



Continued on Page 8

Closing the gap

Continued from Page 7

of validity of disaggregated school-level data as a threshold question before further exploring either of the school models....

Educating minorities

There does not appear to be an inclusive and credible written history accurately profiling the education experiences of American Indians and African Americans in North Carolina. Where and how were they educated from the onset of publicly funded schooling in the state? How has the state assumed its responsibility for the academic training of these two cultures that represent the original and the largest minority groups in the population?

A few historians and scholars have written books focused on the cultures with some attention given to formal education. However, most have approached the topic with an investment in a particular perspective or bias and were not inclined to attend the education history in any depth or detail. And North Carolina history books are still inadequate in this respect.

As our nation approached the Civil War, a very young system of "common schools" was gaining respect throughout North Carolina and impressing other states with its local attendance rates and the level of financial support generated through the state's "Literacy Fund." Some 65,000 students were in attendance in the late 1850s; and the Fund, from which school expenditures were drawn, had a balance in the \$2 million range. The war was to do considerable damage to the fledgling system of schools and would influence the path that public education would take into the future.

Calvin H. Wiley, credited by many with establishing North Carolina's first network of schools, was a fearless and influential force for maintaining the system

during the war. His favorite pitch with those in position to help protect his creation was "... North Carolina's supreme need is the education of all the people."

When the war ended, this very concept and how to realize it was at the heart of the issue facing the new governing body. With the influential Republican Party led by mostly carpet-baggers and newly-freed Negroes pushing for "mixed race" schools, the legislature refused to solidly get behind public school funding, launching over a century of state-supported segregated education.

The Commission finds that the state has struggled with its responsibility to educate all of its citizens from the beginning. It must, therefore, be recognized that some cause for the current gaps in achievement between majority and minority students is "rooted" in that struggle. The Commission further believes that accurate and complete information about the history of minority education in North Carolina can serve a major purpose as we seek to prepare and encourage today's generation of professionals and stakeholders to pursue accelerated minority achievement outcomes with higher expectations. As we know, knowledge about the past helps us interpret the present and plan more effectively for the future.

11 That a study be commissioned by the state to examine and profile the history of organized education for American Indians and African



Americans in North Carolina.

The primary purpose should be to generate a document that factually tracks the formal academic training of these two cultures from the onset of public schooling to present practice. Specific attention should be given to the state's assumption of responsibility for educating these two groups within the public schooling system.

Schooling experienced by Indians outside the influence and support of the state should also be included as it occurred. As much as can be documented about the instructional approach and management practices employed by the segregated system serving minorities should be recorded. Since no organized effort was made to examine the strengths of the segregated system that had served African Americans for a century, oral accounts from credible sources should be pursued.

Much of the history of American Indians' schooling experience can be studied in settings that still exist today. The results from this study will hopefully contribute to what should become a broader effort to build a credible body of knowledge about minority cultures that can be used to prepare professionals, especially teachers, to more comfortably exchange or interact across ethnic/cultural lines in the classroom and beyond.

With the state's teaching ranks becoming less diverse annually, we can no longer expect majority culture teachers to be either comfortable or effective with an increasingly diverse student population while relying solely on their own personal experiences with minorities, with what they see on TV, or with what they learn during Black History Month. Ignorance in this case can breed fear and force decisions made without accurate information.

The full text of the commission's report can be downloaded in PDF format via a link at www.ncpublicschools.org

Briefs

Reading: With half of 6th-through 11th-graders at or below the 25th percentile in reading, but also with a \$117 million budget shortfall, L.A. schools Supt. Ray Romer last week offered his board a plan to boost scores in middle and high schools, the Daily News reported. Board members called the plan “gobbledygook” and suggested a pilot program to work out the kinks. But Romer said the district doesn’t have time for a pilot. It is already using in elementary grades the Open Court materials that CMS adopted systemwide this fall.
www.dailynews.com

And math too: Education Week spotlighted math curriculum in use in New York City and 1,600 other districts that is heavy on reading problems. Advocates say children learn more math when they have a context in which to put the material, and learn vocabulary and reading skills to boot. Critics say the curriculum makes math inaccessible to students with impaired reading and those with English as a second language.
www.edweek.com

Minority hires: After criticism that Kentucky schools didn’t hire minorities because applicants didn’t have proper credentials, Western Kentucky University went to work training minorities to be principals, the Lexington Herald reported. The university’s leadership program had 33 grads looking for jobs this year. Three landed principal slots, six got hired as assistants – for a 25% placement record. With a 13% minority student population, just 5% of the state’s educators are minorities.
www.kentuckyconnect.com

4-day school week: The Osseo school district in Minnesota voted

Science & Internet

Average U.S. science scores by whether students use the Internet at home:

	Yes	No
Grade 4	156	143
Grade 8	159	140
Grade 12	153	136

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2000 Science Assessment

last week to cut the school week to four days. By ending recess and going to 4 days, the financially strapped district will save \$759,046 in busing, energy and staff costs, the Pioneer Press reported. Advocates say the plan cuts overhead, leaving student-teacher contact time intact. The 5-1 vote saw board chairperson Judy Peterzen voting no. She worried that children would be unsupervised on the day off.
www.pioneerpress.com

Charter study: Charters and tuition vouchers neither benefit students nor harm traditional public schools, according a Rand Corp. study. The full study is at:
www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1118/

Too fast, too cheap: An audit for the N.C. Department of Public Instruction concludes that a staff too small for the workload and too little time devoted to program

preparation led to last year’s debacle of setting the passing score for end-of-grade math tests too low. State Supt. Mike Ward said the audit’s suggestions would help the state “rebuild confidence that was shaken” by the errors.
www.ncpublicschools.org

Pay for performance: Thursday’s report in Denver gave tentative indications that a pilot program tying \$750 in teacher bonuses to meeting student performance objectives is working, the Denver Post reported. But it’s not easy, participants said. The pilot was stretched from two years to four as teachers and principals struggled to agree on what students should be taught. Example: Rather than say some percentage of students should get better test scores, one objective reads: “Seventy percent of students will recognize by sight or sound violin, trumpet, clarinet, flute, snare drum, bass drum, harp and piano. They will be able to write a paragraph about the instruments.” The district has 16 schools participating in the pilot, and 90% of teachers met their objectives at a cost of \$4 million. A teacher who received bonuses said she wasn’t sure it was the right way to pay teachers, but “it’s a really great way for a school to focus, for teams to focus and for individuals to focus on aspects of the curriculum and on areas where people feel they would like more support.”
www.denverpost.com

Calendar

- 11** Installation of new school board members, 5 p.m., Board Room. Board meeting, 6 p.m. Board Room.
- 13** Curriculum Committee, 9:30 a.m., Board Conference Room.
- 18** Joint lunch with school board, city council and county commission, noon, Government Center room 267. Personnel and Policy Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 19** Last day of school for the year. Resumption date: Jan. 2, 2002