



Members of HELP caucus on school audit procedures Sunday.

A Smith move to test citizens' support of school district

The community may be about to learn whether CMS is Dr. Smith's school system or Charlotte-Mecklenburg's.

Will citizens and community leaders come together, with or without Eric Smith in the superintendent's office, to help the schools

Commentary

push forward? Or will everyone retreat to their cul-de-sacs, leaving the schools to mark time – or deteriorate?

As the superintendent entertains a job offer from Anne Arundel County in Maryland, there will no doubt be rhetorical efforts to unify the county behind the schools.

But talk is cheap. The real test is the schools' budget, which at the weekend faced proposed new cuts of about \$26 million from what the school board approved.

It's an election year, and commissioners, who must approve the school budget, have keen ears. They will no doubt act on their constituents' wishes. So the decision is really up to citizens.

With top leadership at the schools possibly in flux, is this the time to lay off teachers, cut programs, suspend the construction program? Or is this the time to reaffirm the community's support for delivering excellent education to all, by raising taxes if necessary to fund the schools' needs, and maintain a steady course?

Portland looks now like just a

Checking up on equity

HELP readies for audit; support grows for reinvestment

The week brought hopeful signs that the community's verbal commitment to equity will continue to translate from words into action.

Helping Empower Local People, or HELP, agreed to examine schoolhouses for signs of decay.

And there was leadership from out of wealthy District 6, where schools along the eastern and southern rim of the county are projected to have only 16% of children on subsidized lunch this fall.

"For the choice plan to be acceptable to this community," District 6 school board member Lee Kindberg told the Education Budget Advisory Committee Wednesday, "the equity piece is a requirement."

At Greater Providence Baptist Church Sunday, HELP congregations met to rebuild their organization, and their communities.

"We are here to shine the light of the promise of equity from

West Charlotte to Myers Park, from South Charlotte to North Charlotte," said the Rev. Fred Gibson, the church's pastor.

Delegations ranged in size from one to nearly 50, with black churches sending the largest delegations. Attendance was 325.

"We are here today to search the soul of our city, our neighborhoods, the commitment of our communities," said the Rev. Gregory Moss of St. Paul Baptist. "We want to turn the floodlight on the schools. We want them to be right, we want them to be safe, we want them to be whole."

"With the new assignment plan, many of our schools have been resegregated," said Myers Park Baptist's Jim Henderlite. The audit, he said, was designed to cultivate a "deeper relationship with the schools to see what needs they have... the equity gaps

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Educate! a journal on public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

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.

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Community absorbs idea of Smith move

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rehearsal. This past week, more people in the community seemed convinced that Supt. Eric Smith will really leave.

Perhaps it is Smith's level of interest in Anne Arundel, which seemed genuine. Perhaps it is his well-known penchant for sailing that made a move to the Chesapeake Bay seem a good fit.

Perhaps it is that, after the shock of seeing the superintendent being interviewed for a top job on the West Coast, it has dawned on people that Smith just might not just be flirting with suitors.

County commissioners and other community leaders seemed persuaded. And the school board, for its part, met in emergency session Thursday night to examine how it would deal with Smith's compensation should he leave

before his contract expires.

Smith's final decision could come quickly, but more likely will take two or more weeks. Those are weeks during which Charlotte-Mecklenburg must move toward deciding how to fund a growing school system during lean times.

Some commissioners put on a puzzling show of nonunity, questioning whether now's the time to ask voters for new bonds to continue school renovations. There were such questions as: With Smith likely gone, should the schools be given the money needed to educate all children?

It's testing time in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, in more ways than one.

In classrooms, students are gearing up to show their stuff. They have learned to take responsibility for their learning. In most cases, they are ready for EOCs and EOGs.

Will adults be as ready?

— Steve Johnston

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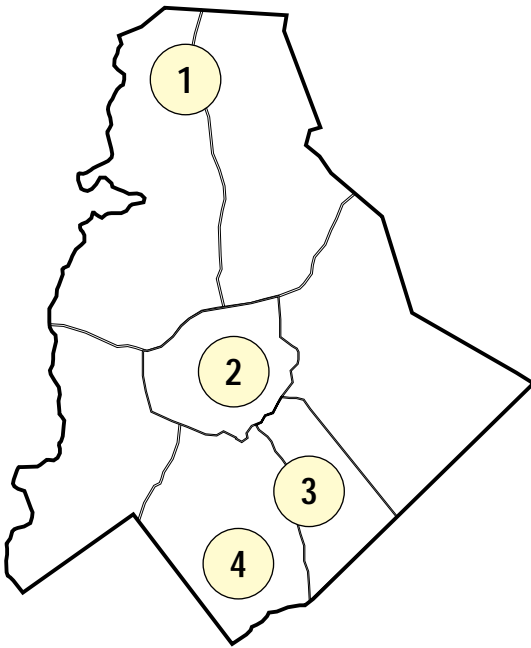
IS THERE ENOUGH TO DISCUSS?

THE COURTS HAVE CLOSED LONG-RUNNING LITIGATION.

SUPT. ERIC SMITH HAS HIS EYE ON A JOB IN MARYLAND.

A NEW CHOICE PLAN IS ABOUT TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

BUDGET CUTS LOOM. THE PROMISE OF EQUITY IS AT RISK.



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING UPCOMING MEETINGS TO DISCUSS OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM AND ITS FUTURE.

Time	Convenor and location	Map site
Tuesday, April 30 Drop-in 1-2:30 p.m.	Steve Johnston at Jackson's Coffee House, I-77 Exit 23, in Rosedale Shopping Ctr., Huntersville	1
Wednesday, May 1 7 p.m.	Curt Bradley at his home 4530 Rosecliff Drive off Strawberry Lane off N.C. 51	4
Thursday, May 2 Noon	Ginny Rosenberg at Temple Beth El 5101 Providence Road	3
Tuesday, May 7 7 p.m.	Julian Wright at Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church, Hope Building, 600 Seigle Ave., corner of Seigle and 10th St. in Belmont neighborhood	2

The Swann Fellowship

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Schools put budget management tool in place

CMS has unveiled its first stab at saying how much money it spends to accomplish its various goals. The tool, part of a "balanced scorecard" management system, is widely used in business to help leaders make budgeting decisions.

Below, the \$806 million budget for next year has been restated by objective. Separately, objectives are measured. (For example, one says 82% of third-graders should read on grade level this year, and 95% by 2005.)

In the future, the two assessment tools should combine to give the board and superintendent a better way to adjust the budget to meet unmet goals.

CMS has settled on nine categories of spending. The figures are for the proposed 2002-2003 budget. And remember, this is the budget for current expenses. The millions spent on building and rebuilding schools are in the capital budget and are not reflected in these percentages.

Objective	Percent of budget
Student achievement	56.37
Family and community involvement	10.39
Resource equity	1.86
Faculty equity	1.50
Student assignment	0.57
Instructional facilities	0.36
Organization capacity, plan mgmt.	16.00
Staff development	5.12
Other	7.83

Tuesday night, the school board received a breakdown of each of the 10 parts into their separate balanced scorecard objectives. Finance office staffer Grace Holton explained that all department heads allocated their budget dollars by scorecard objective, splitting costs where necessary to reflect the goal served. Where appropriate, both personnel costs and nonpersonnel costs were split.

Even the cost of creating this budgeting system is broken out (under organization capacity).

The more detailed list looked like this:

Pct. of
Budget Objective

Student achievement	56.3
12.19 Students in grades K-8 will perform on grade level or above in reading skills	
3.02 Students in grades K-8 will perform on grade level or above in writing skills	
8.27 Students in grades K-8 will perform on grade level or above in math skills	
10.83 Students in grades 9-12 will perform on grade level or above on the EOCs	

"This should be, in my view, a document that should be part of future board retreats, programmatic decision-making. The issues of the template and equity, not only achievement but resources and support, all that is embedded within this, and really should be ... the fabric that holds all the threads together...."

– Supt. Eric Smith

Board chair Arthur Griffin said the balanced scorecard would help the board not only "communicate... and also to be responsive and accountable to the citizens... about how we are utilizing the resources and how they are aligned to the goals."

Griffin said third-grade reading at grade level had been achieved by about 90% of whites but only 60% of African Americans, and that both groups were rising at 2% to 3% a year.

"Would it be correct for us to look next year in the balanced scorecard presentation, how do you accelerate the bottom group... because they'll never get to where you want them to get by 2005... how do we realign our resources or strategies... to accelerate our bottom group...."

"You would see that in this document," Smith said. "If we didn't have as much gain as the board would like in K-8 reading, and we had too many students falling behind, one would expect that over the course of the next year prior to the budget discussion" that the board would see adjustments in budget allocations to put more money into achieving the goal. Similarly, if the recession continues and new cuts must be made, the balanced-scorecard documents would help the board decide where to find the dollars. The document also clarifies "how many major initiatives you can afford at one time."

Pct. of
Budget Objective

4.32	Students in middle and high school will increase participation in higher-level courses
8.11	Students requiring EC services will be successful in CMS
6.49	Disparity based on race/ethnicity or socio-economic status will be eliminated

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Budget management tool, part of balanced scorecard, unveiled

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Pct. of Budget	Objective	
0.41	The average SAT score will meet or exceed the national average without reducing the percentage of students taking the test	
2.07	Students from all racial and economic subgroups who enter kindergarten ready to learn will be increased	
0.66	All students will pass the 8th grade computer skills test	
Family and community involvement		10.39
1.14	Unexcused absences will be reduced among all populations of students	
3.16	The dropout rate will be reduced among all populations of students	
2.12	Increase parent participation in their child's school and education for all populations of students	
0.79	The district will establish and maintain community collaboration	
3.18	The district will maintain a safe and orderly school environment	
Resource equity		1.86
1.86	The district will ensure that every school has an equitable inventory of resources and co-curricular programs	
Faculty equity		1.50
0.70	Equity Plus II schools will be staffed reflecting the 1998 Schools of Excellence and Distinction	
0.14	All CMS schools will maintain strong leadership at the principal and assistant principal level	
0.62	Each CMS school will be fully staffed with instructional personnel prior to the first student day of the school year	
0.04	Each CMS school will be staffed with instructional personnel having clear licensure	
Student assignment		0.57
0.57	No breakdown has been made yet	
Instructional Facilities		0.36
0.36	CMS will build new schools and renovate or replace existing school facilities to ensure equitable resources for all students	
Organization capacity, plan mgmt.		16.00
0.21	The district will align its budgeting in support of programs and services	
0.86	The retention rate for CMS employees will be increased	

Pct. of Budget Objective

CMS support activities will be done in a timely, cost-effective and high-quality manner with a supplier attitude in the following areas:

0.73	Finance	
0.03	Public information, volunteers @ partnerships, and CMS-TV	
0.14	Planning and student placement services	
0.15	Human resources	
1.13	Information technology	
0.07	Child nutrition	
6.87	Building services	
0.13	Graphic production center	
0.37	Storage and distribution	
3.95	Transportation	
0.76	Other support services	
0.60	Plan Management Oversight Committee projects will be completed on time, on budget, with 100% accuracy, and within scope	
Staff development		5.12
3.43	The job-related knowledge, skills and abilities of instructional, noninstructional and administrative personnel will improve to better perform all jobs in support of overall district objectives	
1.69	The district will provide in-service training to all CMS staff about inclusion, diversity, and racial, economic and cultural awareness	
Other		7.83
0.41	Legal	
0.04	School board	
3.54	Athletics	
1.51	Foreign language	
1.62	Arts	
0.38	Charter schools	
0.33	Driver's education	

It is from these calculations that staff estimate that 84% of the annual budget goes into direct schoolhouse activity. The other 16% is categorized as school support.

The document prepared for the school board also lists the dollars going to every scorecard item by its source: county, state, and federal and other. It is here that the anomalies of school finance become apparent. Two examples:

- Human resources is a department that is mandated by the state, and must follow state rules on employment and compensation. But none of the money to run the department comes from the state. The department's entire budget comes from county dollars.

- CMS has made a decision to have teachers arrive early each fall so they'll be ready for the first day of school. The state doesn't pay for it. Nearly 2% of all local funds spent on CMS is spent on those teacher work days each August.

HELP to launch more school audits

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that may still exist..."

Henderlite said the audits would be focused on two school choice zones where at-risk children are concentrated and where HELP's congregational members are also concentrated.

"We want to reconnect and build relationships with our neighborhoods," said Bee Jay Caldwell.

Reflecting on the meeting at midweek, HELP organizer Paulette Higgins said she had hoped for "a few more folk" and noted that there were "a lot of new people" at Sunday's meeting.

"We are regrouping... starting a second phase of our work." Earlier actions, such as the group's opposition to an uptown arena and a living wage, had created divisions within some congregations, she said. There was ample evidence Sunday that school equity brings the congregations together.

Addressing the crowd, school board chair Arthur Griffin said it had taken him 10 years to get many leaders to acknowledge that there were differences among school facilities. He mentioned as an example that science teachers have a curriculum that requires running water for experiments, but at older middle schools some must teach in rooms that have no water.



HELP drew 325 people from member congregations to its meeting.

"Facilities matter," Griffin said. "And you can't make it without quality teachers in that classroom."

"The Board of Education has taken a lot of heat... what people should be asking for is justice." Griffin urged HELP to judge schoolhouses against the board's policies on equity, particularly the "instructional template" that lists in detail what should be present in each school (Educate!, March 24).

"We can't wait for 10 years down the road" for equity, he said.

Griffin said the schools had made progress, but noted that in last year's testing, 40% of black third-graders were below grade level in reading and 53% of black high school students taking

English I were below grade level.

HELP, which uses a strategy of inviting public officials to join in its actions, had only a short list of advance commitments. Included were Supt. Eric Smith, Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Cannon and Louise Woods, who announced her commitment at the meeting. School board member Lee Kindberg had expressed interest.

HELP will conduct its school audits between May 2 and May 24, its neighborhood audits on June 8 and June 15. It will focus on supermarkets and facilities for senior citizens this fall.

Billy Hopkins of Walls Memorial AME Zion said HELP planned this fall to audit the quality of goods in neighborhood supermarkets. The goal, he said, is to support business services that would help "each of our neighborhoods be a place where anyone would want to live."

The school audit was designed to be a repeat of the 1997 audit, and HELP organizer Higgins said the form that auditors would use was little changed since 1997.

But a great deal has changed in schools, and in school policy, in those five years. The audit form doesn't cover all items in the instructional template, the heart of the school board's effort to assure equity in all schools.

Parents: Watch for form on bus transportation

Planning has begun for bus routes for the new choice plan, and CMS officials said they would send home this week a form for parents to fill out about bus transportation for next fall.

Parents should be able to indicate if their child will ride the bus in the morning, the afternoon or both. Only parents whose children will be eligible for bus transportation will be sent the forms. (For some of the options in the choice plan, no transportation was provided.)

The forms are due back May 10.

Parents who do not receive a form or have questions should call their school or the transportation office at 704-343-6715.

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Budget advisers consider calling for new cuts

A subcommittee of the Education Budget Advisory Committee has suggested new school budget cuts for the coming year.

A subcommittee suggested a county contribution of between \$258 million and \$265.9 million. With the school board seeking a \$9.5 million increase from last year's \$265.9 county contribution, the subcommittee's numbers represent new cuts in school operations of between \$9.5 million and \$17.5 million – on top of the nearly \$23 million already removed.

BB&T exec Ernie Dehnert said his subcommittee felt the 15% tax

increase last year by commissioners wouldn't be repeated. "We don't think it is realistic to ask anywhere near that this year in light of the economic situation...."

Supt. Eric Smith warned that an additional \$17 million cut would shut down Junior Achievement, end all cultural programs arranged with the Arts & Science Council, close all alternative schools for suspended and expelled students, slice into budget forecasting and public information – "and then we'll have to move into school operations."

"I refuse to compromise on

achievement and equity," he said. "I forewarn you that you will not see the same system."

The debate will come to a head May 8th at 7:30 a.m. at the Government Center, when the full committee is scheduled to finalize its recommendations.

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Members of the committee, chaired by Ken Harris, include Irma Blanchett, Sue Breckenridge, Russ Crider, Geoffrey Curme, Ernie Dehnert, Louis Guignard, Howard Haworth, Betty Hunter, Lee Keesler, Angela Kelly, Casey Kimbrough, Ted Koskores, Palmer McArthur, Haze Moore, Eric Smith and Deborah Ware.

HELP to launch more school audits

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Higgins said she would meet with Supt. Eric Smith on May 1, the day before the audits are to begin, about what to add to the audit.

David Kaylor of Seigle Avenue Presbyterian drew parallels between HELP and the New Testament story of Peter and John's encounter with a lame man begging for money outside the temple. "In HELP we don't have money to give. We do have power... and we have the commitment to use that power for the collective good...."

"Together we can speak the truth to public officials... With God's help empowering us and our unwavering dedication, we can make a difference in Charlotte.

"More power to the people."

HELP also heard from Johnnie Spears on behalf of a group called Homeless Helping Homeless, which meets Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m. at the Urban Ministries soup kitchen on North College Street uptown.

Here is the list of schools to be audit-

ed, and the churches that will be involved.

-- Allenbrook, Bruns Avenue, Cotswold; Crestdale, Marie G. Davis, Spaugh; Myers Park: Covenant Presbyterian, First United Presbyterian, Myers Park Baptist, Myers Park Presbyterian, Myers Park United Methodist, Sharon United Methodist, St. Gabriel Catholic.

-- Druid Hills, Irwin Avenue, Lincoln Heights, Thomasboro; J.T. Williams, Wilson; West Charlotte: First Baptist West, Greenville Memorial AME Zion, C.N. Jenkins Presbyterian, Mayfield Memorial Baptist, Memorial Presbyterian, Mt. Carmel Baptist, Simpson-Giollespie United Methodist, University Park Baptist, Walls Memorial AME Zion.

-- Rama Road, Shamrock Gardens, Windsor Park, Winterfield; McClintock, Northridge; East Meck: Chapel of

Christ the King, Optimist Park, Plaza Presbyterian, Seigle Avenue Presbyterian, St. Martin's Episcopal, St. Paul Baptist, St. Peter's Episcopal -- Devonshire, Hickory Grove, Merry Oaks; Albemarle Road, Cochrane, Eastway; Garinger: Advent Lutheran, Antioch Baptist, Briar Creek Road Baptist, Greater Providence Baptist, Shamrock Drive Baptist, Solid Rock Baptist, St. Thomas Lutheran -- Hawk Ridge, J.H. Gunn; Carmel; Providence: St. Matthew Catholic -- Huntersville, Long Creek, Hornets Nest, Cornelius, Davidson Elem.; Bradley, Ranson; North Meck: Chapel Hill Baptist, Mount Olive Baptist, St. Mark's Episcopal, St. Phillip Baptist, United House of Prayer

N.C. board to debate achievement gap rewards

The N.C. Board of Education this week will debate how to reward schools for closing the achievement gap among subgroups of students.

Four suggestions have been made: One applies current ABC rewards to subgroups, further complicating the ABCs program. A second adds an incentive for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), increasing top payouts to \$1,800 per teacher. A third keeps

some ABCs goals along with an AYP recognition. The fourth eliminates all old ABCs incentives, replacing it with a single AYP incentive.

Bob Davis, a Charlotte member of the N.C. Commission on closing gaps, Tuesday expressed disappointment in the state's overall plan on closing the gap, which he said "will take more than my lifetime and the gap will never close."

Briefs

Principal quits: In Seattle, Ballard High Principal David Engle quit last week, the Seattle Times reported, in protest of a U.S. Circuit Court decision striking down the city's assignment policies that give Ballard a racially diverse student body. The school district will appeal the decision overruling the use of race as a tie-breaker in admissions at racially unbalanced schools.

www.seattletimes.com

Great books: Some Massachusetts schools, the Providence (R.I.) Journal reported, have introduced the Junior Great Books program to improve the critical thinking skills needed for state testing.

www.projo.com

Housing I: To attract teacher applicants, Chicago schools have arranged for rental and home-purchase discounts for their teachers, the Sun-Times reported. The district itself will finance a housing resource office.

www.sun-times.com

Housing II: Santa Clara Schools took an old school site, the Mercury News reported, and have build 40 apartment units for rent at below-market rates to district staff while they save for a home downpayment. The project cost \$6 million.

www.bayarea.com

Principal gap: Indiana may see enough retirements that there will be a shortage of principals in the next decade, the Indianapolis Star reported. A survey done by Ball State University found that both current principals and those considering the position say the job involves too many hours and too much stress.

www.indystar.com

Bigger, bigger: Over parent protest, the San Diego school

board voted to proceed with a \$58 million, 1,800-student middle school, the Union Tribune reported. California standards for limiting middle schools to 800 students. (Projections suggest 19 of 27 CMS middle schools will have more than 800 students this fall. Two will have more than 1,800.)

www.uniontrib.com

Big gap: Minnesota educators weren't celebrating recent test scores. Passing rates have leveled off, and no progress has been made in a racial achievement gap, the Star Tribune reported. In eighth-grade reading, the black student pass rate of 33% is 47 percentage points below the white pass rate.

www.startribune.com

L.A. cuts: In Los Angeles, the schools face \$459 million in cuts, 9% of its general fund spending, the Times reported. Supt. Roy Romer has proposed increasing class size in grades 4-12 by two, a change that will put some classes above 40 students.

www.latimes.com

Voter backlash: Voters do not

want school budgets cut and will vote against elected officials who do so, according to a new poll sponsored by Public Education Network and Education Week. Asked what should be shielded from budget cuts, 53% respondents cited education and schools, "a percentage equal to the combined total of all other responses," according to material on the poll.

www.publiceducation.org

Popular school: Where were there 1,700 applicants for 50 available seats next fall? The Courant reported that the school is Univeristy of Hartford Magnet, which is part of a court-ordered effort to reduce racial isolation in Hartford schools.

www.ctnow.com

Failing schools: A Bush education official predicts 3,000 to 5,000 schools will be labeled "failing" under the new federal education reform, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported. Schools on the list will have to offer tutoring or transportation to a higher-performing school.

www.philly.com

Calendar

May

- 4** District 6 meeting, 9 a.m., Matthews Presbyterian Hospital.
- 9** Curriculum Committee, 9:30 a.m., board conference room.
- 14** School board meeting, 6 p.m., board room.
- 16** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Room 414.
- 18** Jump Start For Parents, UNCC Cone Center, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m., sponsored by Winners Plus Agency. Topics include father's corner, parents speaking out, suspension, family resources, CMS EC programs and services, testing, working

with your children's teacher, how to volunteer. Information: Blanche Penn 704-890-4101.

- 20** School board breakfast with legislators, 7:30 a.m., board room.
- 21** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services. Personnel/Policy Committee, 3 p.m., board conference room
- 30** Commissioners hold public hearing on county budget, which includes money for schools.

June

- 18** Commissioners to vote on county budget, which includes money for schools.