

Parents give the grades

Survey shows discontent greatest at high schools

Pre-kindergarten parents are high on CMS. Middle school parents are distinctly less so.

Maybe it's a reflection of involvement: Only 3.6% of pre-K parents had not attended a conference with a teacher, while 33.9% of middle school parents had not.

These and lots of other details are contained in family, student and teacher surveys for this year. School board members will review the full survey results Tuesday.

Among the findings in the

teacher survey:

- Less than 30 percent of teachers at any school level strongly agree that CMS has "sufficient options for dealing with discipline problems." The number was 17% at high schools.

- On the effectiveness of their schools, "excellent" ratings begin at 58% among pre-K teachers, 44% among elementary teachers, 33% at middle schools and 29% at high schools.

- 53% of elementary teachers

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Report Card Time

Percentage of parents in CMS survey giving their school indicated grade, by school type:

	PK	PK-5	K-5	Mid.	HS
A	41.8	24.4	28.1	14.1	16.9
B	22.5	25.1	25.6	29.6	34.8
C	3.5	8.5	5.9	13.1	13.6
D	0.0	0.7	0.6	2.7	2.6
F	0.4	0.3	0.1	1.0	0.3
NR*	31.8	41.0	39.6	39.5	31.8

* = No Response

Source: CMS

Are high schools 'not working'?

Student assignment debates have distracted the community from other educational challenges, a Charlotte Observer editorial



Flono

writer said Tuesday.

"Charlotte-Mecklenburg faces the same kinds of challenges that other urban school systems face," said Fannie Flono, who writes an editorial

column on a variety of school issues.

"The high schools are becoming a bigger issue... because most high schools are not working for a large number of students.

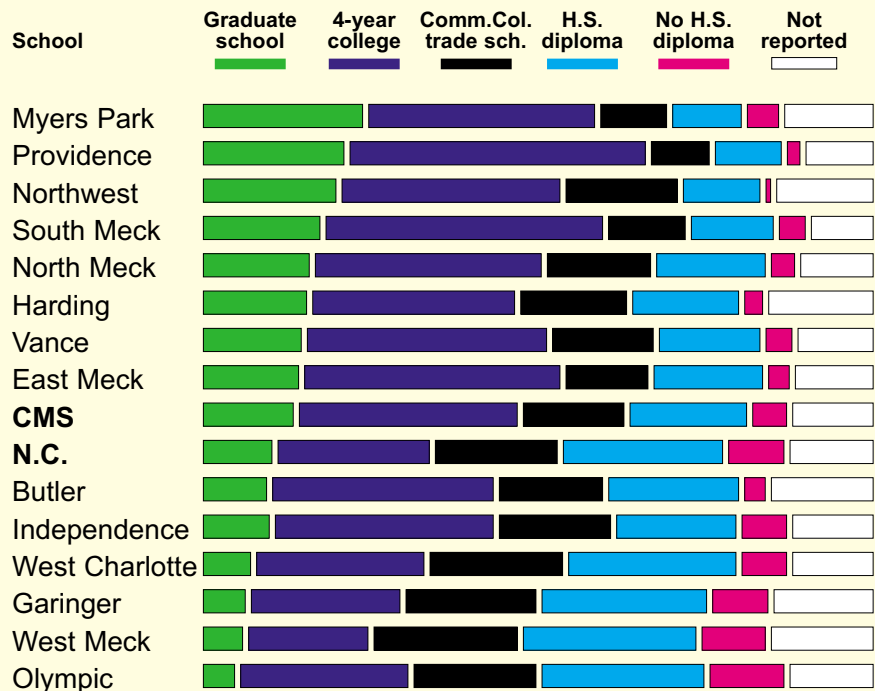
"Most places have pretty much decided that's OK. They are focusing on the beginning of the spectrum" - the lower grades.

During a speaking appearance at the Tuesday Morning Breakfast

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High schools, by parents' education level

N.C. student test results are now reported by parents' education. Bars below represent data on parents of high school students who last year took English I, a required course. Full details are on page 3.



Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Lots of happiness about schools; much anxiety, too

A few observations after holding five public meetings in the last two weeks about the future of our schools:

Most people are really happy about assignments, about student outcomes, teachers, curriculum and so forth. That's how I interpret low attendance at meetings held from Huntersville to N.C. 51. A session the Observer announced on its local section front drew six members of the public.

But at central Charlotte meetings I heard lots of concerns over:

- High levels of poverty in dozens of schools come fall;
- Faculty turnover, leading to teacher inexperience;
- Equity being a buzzword, not a reality;
- Lack of understanding of the assignment plan, even among parents who had to make choices;
- Lack of openness at CMS;
- A serious disconnect: People

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.

Educate! is published by The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204. Voice and fax: 704-342-4330. E-mail: sjohnston@educateclt.org Lucy Bush, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director. Published since September 2000; 6-week average circulation through last issue: 2,139.

The Swann Fellowship, named for Darius and Vera Swann, was formed in 1997 out of several Charlotte religious congregations to be a witness to the value of diversity in public education and to educate 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.

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Steve Johnston



understand that kids can't learn if they're hungry or sick, but they may not want to use "school money" to solve those problems.

- Budget cuts that may slow kids' education;
- Teaching that is too focused on tests;
- And last, but definitely not least, concern that, at a time of rising racial tension, the commu-

nity cannot see it – or at least won't talk about it.

A local teachers' group has an interesting problem: They have to find a way to spend a \$9,000 grant designed to encourage "public engagement" in the schools. Usually, such grants pay for "facilitated discussion" events that always seem to draw the same few people. But are there any other ideas? Let me know at sjohnston@educateclt.org. My idea is a Taxi Fund to subsidize parents' fares to and from schools to deal with children's medical emergencies. Now that's what I call public engagement.

In survey, parents give the grades

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strongly agreed that their "efforts to implement the literacy goals are supported." Only 39% of middle school teachers and 26% of high school teachers also strongly agreed.

- 69% of pre-K teachers strongly agreed that "students at this school are often intimidated by other students." The percentage of teachers somewhat or strongly agreeing to the statement was 77% at pre-K, 74% at elementary, 50% at middle school and 63% at high school.

From the student survey:

- 80.7% of high school students agreed that the school is "strict about attendance."

- Agreement about effective positive communications with home ("this school tells my parents about the good things I do") fall from 76.6% at elementary school to 46.2% at middle school to 26.1% at high school.

- A larger percentage of high school kids (65.5%) than elementary children (57.7%) believe "teachers at my school enjoy teaching."

The parent survey was revised this year, so its results are not comparable to earlier surveys. It went to parents in five grades this year rather than all grades as in the past. The student survey went to those in grades 5, 7 and 11.

Underwrite an edition of *Educate!*

Individuals, community groups and businesses interested in supporting the publication of this community journal should inquire about our underwriting program. Let our readers know that you support quality public schools for all children, and the kind of regular communication about school issues that *Educate!* is striving to deliver.

For more information, call Steve Johnston at 704-342-4330, message him at sjohnston@educateclt.org, or read the "You Can Help" page at www.educateclt.org.

Editorial writer offers views on schools

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Forum, Flono said she received criticism from readers for focusing on equitable education.

“I get a lot of letters from people who tell me, ‘Why do you write about this so much?’... Too many people have written off large groups of kids because (the schools) haven’t found the key to helping them learn.... A lot of the folks who have written off the kids are educators.”

On other topics:

– Asked whether the school board should raise its own tax money for schools, Flono said she had written columns favoring the idea because it would clarify who should be held accountable. But she said she doubted it would happen, in part because people say they want another governmental body – currently the county commissioners – to review the schools’ budget.

“The present system provides a balance... but the truth is the county commission does not do any assessment.... You don’t actually get a system in which you decide what is needed and what we are willing to pay for... it’s disjointed....”

– Asked why the paper’s coverage seemed to ignore the black community, Flono said the Observer is “probably no different than a lot of majority-run newspapers in the country.

“If you look at the structure and the people who run it, you will find that, unfortunately, they are isolated from the regular community by where they live, how they interact with other people, and how their world view is shaped....”

A “Taking Back Our Neighborhoods” series in the ‘90s helped create ties to the community, she said. The paper published extensive coverage of five neighborhoods, written, she said, on the theory that “it is more important to listen, with the understanding

High school parent data



On Page 1 is a chart showing the distribution of parents in CMS high schools by their terminal level of education. Below is the data behind that chart, which is taken from reports on 2000-2001 end-of-course tests for English I. For example, 25% of Myers Park’s parents attended graduate school; 5% never got a high school diploma.

School	Graduate school	4-year college	Community coll., trade	HS diploma	No HS diploma	Not reported
Myers Park	25	36	11	11	5	14
Providence	22	46	9	10	2	10
Northwest	21	34	17	12	0	15
South Meck	18	43	12	13	4	10
North Meck	17	36	16	17	4	11
Harding	16	32	17	17	3	16
Vance	15	38	16	16	4	11
East Meck	15	40	13	17	4	12
CMS	14	34	16	18	5	13
N.C.	11	24	19	25	9	13
Butler	10	35	16	20	4	16
Independence	10	34	17	19	7	13
West Charlotte	7	26	21	26	7	13
Garinger	7	23	20	26	9	17
West Meck	6	19	23	27	10	17
Olympic	5	26	19	25	12	14

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

that [people] know how to solve their own problems and weren’t waiting to be rescued. They just didn’t have the ability to get those ideas to the people making the decisions.

“We brought the power brokers to the table. For a while, that actually had some impact. It was really empowering to the people in those communities.

“Unfortunately, we got tired of that game and we moved on to something else and everybody else did.” Neighborhood residents, she said, “lost a powerful ally....”

“At the paper, like other places, we need more diversity at the top so when people are talking about the kinds of stories we approach and the kinds of things we devote our resources to... that we have a broader view of what those important issues are. You as the public have some impact by coming to us and telling us what our failings are. The squeaky wheel does get

the oil – especially if you complain using a lot of facts.”

– About Supt. Eric Smith, Flono said money did not appear to be the reason he was leaving, and that the school board would not try to coax him into staying by offering a huge contract.

“He has a large ego and he is a man who wants his ego stroked in a number of ways. He’s looking for a place that is going to do that again. There is a lot of down side to his saying, and not a lot of up.”

– Asked about the family choice assignment plan, Flono explained her skepticism.

“The choice plan is going to require a lot more of a commitment, and not just from parents. It’s going to require that everybody be committed to every child having a quality education, and when they see that not happening, we should want to change course and do something differ-

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Editorial writer offers views on schools

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ent.

“My fear is we’ll say it’s a done deal and will let sleeping dogs lie. I am skeptical because it’s never worked in another place.” Making it work will require spending money for smaller class sizes and better curriculum, she said. “We will have to be proactive on a lot of levels to be sure that all kids get what they need.

“And that means every child, not just my child.”

– Asked what it would take to convince black leaders that the public schools will never teach black children, Flono said, “I’m not willing to give up on the pub-

lic school. That is what most kids are going to have to attend.

“It’s not that kids can’t learn and a lot of them will learn in an alternative setting. But the economics of the situation is it is pretty hard to set up alternative schools without more resources.”

– A questioner suggested that many black children for decades had returned from school to an empty house, but that the phenomenon didn’t get the “latchkey children” name until white children started having to do it.

“We need to do more on affluent parents and their role and what their priorities are,” Flono said, adding: “I’m not going to tell anybody if you’re a successful female lawyer that you should be in the home” but said “those choices are ones people need to look at.”

– Asked about “vitriolic” com-

ments in the paper about school board chair Arthur Griffin, Flono said, “Arthur and I call ourselves friends.... I don’t think the paper itself is anti-Arthur Griffin. There are people who write for the paper who are. They are columnists. You know who they are.

“Arthur is correct in saying that he draws more of the fire than Eric Smith.... It’s apparent that he really cares for kids and he works really hard.”

– As for how to encourage the Observer to cover more community stories, Flono suggested calling Observer Editor Jennie Buckner (begin at 704-358-5040). “When I talk to Jennie, it does not have as much impact as when citizens call,” Flono said.

Percentage of students at Level III (grade level) or IV on English I, 2000-2001, by level of educational attainment of their parents

(# valid tests in 5 categories)*	Graduate School		4-year College		Comm. College		HS Degree		No HS Degree	
	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV	Tested	III-IV
North Carolina (79,089)	10,248	84%	22,622	79%	15,195	73%	23,716	55%	7,308	44%
CMS (6,104)	1,036	84%	2,496	77%	899	64%	1,327	47%	346	38%
CMS High Schools										
Butler (436)	55	80%	187	78%	68	62%	110	59%	16	63%
East Meck (438)	78	87%	206	87%	49	63%	89	54%	16	63%
Garinger (309)	27	52%	91	70%	62	61%	101	43%	28	43%
Harding (287)	58	84%	113	81%	47	83%	60	68%	9	100%
Independence (470)	58	83%	194	73%	77	78%	107	50%	34	41%
Learning Academy (58)			18	17%	12	17%	19	11%	9	22%
Midwood (16)			10	20%			6	17%		
Myers Park (571)	167	93%	239	85%	63	59%	74	36%	28	32%
North Meck (635)	123	87%	261	81%	101	69%	126	60%	24	42%
Northwest (126)	32	88%	53	83%	22	77%	19	53%		
Olympic (338)	20	55%	110	54%	60	63%	106	38%	42	29%
Providence (559)	141	91%	292	86%	48	73%	65	54%	13	31%
South Meck (538)	111	87%	265	83%	60	62%	78	53%	24	46%
TAPS (7)							7	43%		
West Charlotte (396)	37	49%	130	49%	68	41%	131	31%	30	27%
West Meck (346)	28	46%	85	61%	73	64%	123	40%	37	27%
Vance (530)	96	84%	234	80%	79	66%	98	54%	23	30%

Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Notes: *Numbers in (parentheses) may understate the number of students tested in each parent education category because if the number of students in a category at each school or district is smaller than 5, those results are not reported.

Integration

It's 'not a social experiment – it is a mingling of relations'

The following was written as a tribute for the Tuesday funeral of John Arthur Davis Jr., a longtime CMS educator. The writer is an assistant superintendent with supervisory responsibilities for the Olympic, Providence and West Charlotte areas.

By **JOHN FRIES**

According to the computer screen I scanned today, John Arthur Davis Jr. served 45 years, 11 months as an educator in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. He began in 1949, and with the exception of two years of [military] service 1952-1954, his labor was continuous. That tenure alone is a legacy to the dedication that John had to children of this community.

But there was more to John Davis than just a long history of service. He began as a teacher of science and was fortunate to live in a time when science made tremendous strides. Having an insider's understanding, he was in awe of the potential resting in man's hands and also the responsibility we have for our environment. When we first talked, he had fond memories of his days at Northwest and the lives he had inspired, first as a teacher and then as an administrator. You see, John understood that teaching is more than passing on knowledge; it is shaping lives, building character and, in the true sense of science, learning from our mistakes. Even in retirement he continued to promote lessons of the past to our young people so that history would not repeat itself.

John and I began working together in the summer of 1976 when the U.S. was celebrating its 200th birthday and CMS was about to look for a new superintendent. In Frye Gaillard's book,



John Davis

The Dream Long Deferred, he writes that when Jay Robinson was offered the job of superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg in 1977, the necessity was not to accomplish integration, but to try to preserve it. In that same book, he also implies that West Charlotte Senior High was the flagship of that effort....

I was young and still very wet behind the ears. Louis Layne [standing behind Fries during the tribute] was handsome, eager to please, and younger than me. Whereas John was a seasoned veteran of many years at both Northwest and AG.

John was as laid back as I was tense, and in retrospect that was a wonderful combination. I am sure it must have been difficult for him to take orders from someone 15 years his junior, and in a perfect world he should have been in that first seat. But resentment was not his style. He accepted his role. He offered quiet advice, and he taught me a great deal about his community.

Most of all, he did what he did best, and that was once again to serve as a role model for the young people he loved. Together we demonstrated that three people

from very different backgrounds could work together in harmony, and integration could not only be preserved but also enhanced.

In recent months, I have asked myself, what did we accomplish, as some 30 years later I look back and see how our work could so easily unravel. But as was his style, John has given me one last lesson.

Reflecting on how I may pay tribute to John, I have come to the realization that a man's success is not to be judged by the rank he holds but by the lives he touches and the relationships he forms. Each of us in this room has a relationship with John Arthur Davis Jr., and in many ways we are blessed.

I left West Charlotte after two turbulent years. Later Louis left to assume his first principalship, and John remained, still second-in-command. Louis returned to West Charlotte as principal, and John was there to greet him.

Shortly, a young freshman named John Fries Jr. joined them. For three years John kept a watchful eye on my firstborn.

Some years later John's granddaughter, Rika, would enter first grade at Mallard Creek only to be greeted by Mrs. John Fries Sr. And who showed up to tutor but Mr. John Davis, former assistant principal at West Charlotte.

Now as I reflect here tonight, I am sure John Davis is in heaven smiling that wonderful smile. You see, he is saying integration is not a social experiment – it is a mingling of relations. Thank you, John: it is a lesson to remember, and our relationship was a wonderful lesson.

Used with permission of the author. John Davis' widow, Barbara Davis, is a member of the board of The Swann Fellowship.



Fries

Briefs

No bullying: Oklahoma became the 12th state to pass anti-bullying legislation, the Dallas News reported. The News said 10% of those who drop out of school cite repeated bullying.
www.dallasnews.com

Credit for clerking: While big-city school systems in Tampa, Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles and Seattle offer teens academic credit for performing clerical duties, some educators are asking if that's a good use of the school day, the Los Angeles Times reported.
www.latimes.com

Reassessing AP: It's not just Harvard that's taking another look at Advanced Placement classes, the Washington Post reported. The rapid expansion of AP offerings nationally has left schools scrambling to find teachers prepared to teach the rigorous curriculum. Harvard now will give credit only for a "5," while many schools accept a "3."
www.washingtonpost.com

Race for reform: Two failing Chicago schools will get help, the Sun-Times reported. One will be reshaped under direction of the system's administrators. The other will be overhauled by its teachers union. The union will work with existing teachers. The administrators plan to close their school and bus kids out until they can train a faculty.
www.suntimes.com

Deadline: Federal law requires N.C. schools to hire only "highly qualified" (meaning licensed) teachers beginning this fall. The News and Observer reported that nearly 17% of the state's 85,000 current teachers are not licensed. Those teachers will have four years to win certification.
www.newsobserver.com

Rules for judgment: A non-profit has spent five years on "Student Evaluation Standards," an attempt in 220 pages to lay out a model to help teachers make good use of testing data to evaluate students' achievement, Education Week reported. Eighteen education organizations were represented on the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation.
www.edweek.com

Locker control: Schools have begun installing lockers that can be opened by electronic command from a school office computer for checks for contraband, the Christian Science Monitor reported. At \$300 a piece, they're a bit pricey for many districts.
www.csmonitor.com

Early-grade discipline: As the number of out-of-school suspensions of children 5 to 8 years old rises in Minnesota, educators are questioning the practice, the Pioneer Press reported. The focus on discipline comes in the wake of Minneapolis schools intervening at Bancker Community School, which suspended 42% of its students last school year.
www.twincities.com

Teaching math: Gannett, publisher of USA Today, has signed a contract with math textbook publisher Glencoe/McGraw-Hill to place USA Today charts in textbooks, Education Week reported. Proponents say the colorful charts will help students apply algebraic and other concepts. Critics oppose having the newspaper's logo in front of thousands of children.
www.edweek.com

Nongraduates?: More than 700 Buffalo, N.Y., high school seniors – a third of the potential graduates – have yet to pass a required state Regents math exam, the News reported. Some have failed it one or more times. Last year, 120 didn't graduate.
www.buffalonews.com

Housing help: For teachers willing to buy a house in a struggling neighborhood and stay at the area school for five years, Chattanooga will advance \$10,000 toward the purchase price, the Chattanooga Times & Free Press reported. The program is financed by local foundations, and at least for the first 60 recipients, will cut a \$100,000 mortgage from \$847 a monthly to \$695.
www.timesfreepress.com

Calendar

May

14 Education Budget Advisory Committee reports to county commissioners, 3 p.m., Government Center room 267

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.

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

Personnel/Policy Committee, 3 p.m., board conference room

28 School board meeting, 6 p.m. Board Room.

30 Commissioners hold public hearing on county budget, which includes money for schools, 6 p.m., Government Center.