



Bright Beginnings success clear in low retention rates

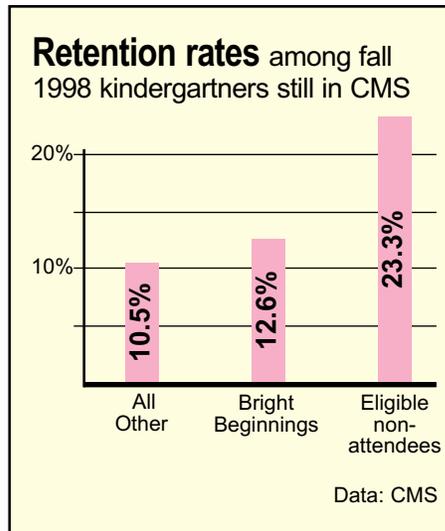
Questions were raised over the summer about the success of Bright Beginnings, the expensive pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds launched by CMS in 1997.

The real success of the program is shown not just in test score attainments of this spring's third-graders, who were the first to go through the program. The achievements of the program include the number of Bright Beginnings kids who made it to third grade on time.

Many children don't make it in the usual three years. The Bright Beginnings kids did better than their peers.

Among poor kids on the subsidized lunch programs, those who had gone to Bright Beginnings had the lowest retention rate.

Among black children (the bulk of the attendees), Bright Beginning kids had a lower retention rate than two other groups: all other black children in CMS, and a small "control group" of



black children who qualified to go to Bright Beginnings but did not do so.

School board members, who received the first data on Bright Beginnings alumni in June and got more in July, plan to seek more information on the program. Some want to be reassured that

Continued on Page 2

Inside

New and renovated buildings will mostly be ready Monday. Page 7.

Lacrosse will not become a varsity sport this year. Page 6.

Perhaps the Battle of the Bonds 2002 has begun. Page 4.

Mixed news on summer school retest rates. Page 5.

New CMS maps, on the surface, merely split up administrative chores among the new regional superintendents appointed by incoming Supt. Jim Pughsley. But they may also suggest that CMS's new leader has created a management plan to weather some possible storms ahead. Page 3.

A summer of education news ... Part One

Welcome back to *Educate!* Since this journal last published a regular issue June 2, there's been a lot of news. Here are some briefs about some of those developments and public comments, organized more or less by subject.

Finance

Lottery proceeds: When Ohioans approved a lottery, they changed to constitution to specify that new money from the lottery could only be used for education,

the Cleveland Plain-Dealer reported. An Ohio judge has now ruled that when legislators cut their funding of education by the same amount the lottery was raising, they were violating that constitutional requirement. The state reportedly will appeal.

www.cleveland.com

Reconstituting in D.C.: A year after nine District of Columbia low-performing schools got additional resources, new staffs and principals, scores are

not up, according to the Washington Post. Harvard researcher Gary Orfield's study suggested it may take three or so years to see improvements. But meanwhile, as the district seeks to transform more schools, it has added five more schools but not increased the program budget, so some staff added at the first batch of schools may be pulled out.

www.washingtonpost.com

Public relations spending: In

Continued on Page 5

Bright Beginnings: Promotion rate high

Continued from Page 1

the Bright Beginnings kids were in front of quality kindergarten, first- and second-grade teachers who could build on their academic head start.

Millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs are at stake. The program now serves about 3,000 children and was budgeted at \$16.5 million for this year, 86% of that for salaries and benefits.

Conservative budget-cutters seem particularly focused on the program, and one editorialist recently lumped it among "vote buying schemes .. not about helping kids, but about job security for educrats."

According to CMS data released in July:

– Among the 4,686 CMS students who began kindergarten in 1998 and who are still in the system, 10.5% had been retained before third grade.

Among the 1,016 children in the first Bright Beginnings class, 12.6% were retained.

Among the 163 students eligible to be in the first Bright Beginnings class but who for any number of reasons did not attend Bright Beginnings, 23.3% were retained before third grade.

– More Bright Beginnings graduates were on grade level (60%)

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than eligible non-participants (52%). And far more Bright Beginnings were excelling in reading (20.6%) than eligible non-participants (12.9%).

– Among poor children on subsidized lunch, more Bright Beginnings graduates (50%) were at or above grade level in math than all other children on subsidized lunch who started kindergarten with the Bright Beginnings kids in 1998 (46.8%). The Bright Beginnings kids were also far ahead of the children eligible for the children who did not attend (39%).

CMS officials believe that changes in Bright Beginnings since the first class went through the program will improve third-grade test scores even more in future years.

Program changes that were made after 1998, and accompanying teacher retraining, focused on developing the children's reading skills.

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: 2,084.

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Administrative regions deserve close look

When incoming Supt. Jim Pughsley announced his senior staff last June, he appointed three regional superintendents for elementary schools, two for middle schools, and one for high schools. Maps below show their geographic responsibilities.

Commentary

Below the maps a chart shows how well-balanced the regions are, by number of schools and stu-

dents, by incidence of high-poverty (EC+) schools, magnets and other student demographics.

Let it be understood that, at this point, it appears that these regions will be used only to parcel out administrative chores.

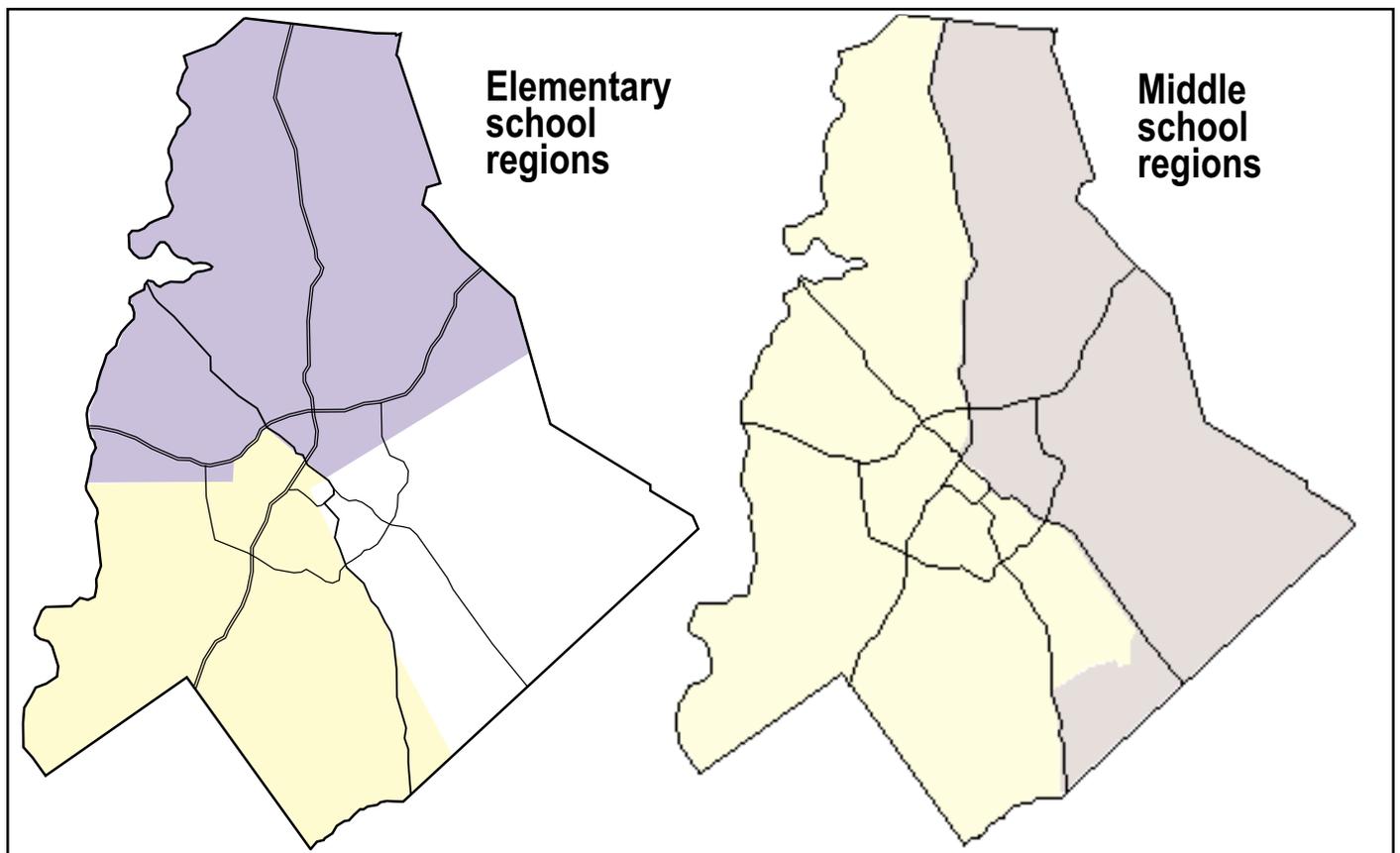
But what if the public demands that CMS shut down the high-poverty schools created by the choice plan that many of us believe will, in time, prove to be educational failures? What if a

court ordered that change?

What if the economy got so tight that CMS had to end the teacher incentives, additional supplies and support that are now going into keeping the high-poverty schools afloat?

At that point, we might find that Pughsley had anticipated the problem, and already had in place the structure for more balanced, equitable, diverse assignments.

– Steve Johnston



Map demographics by region

	Total Schools	E+II Magnet	Total students	FRL	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	EC	ESL	
Elementary (left)											
North	29	12	9	16,934	44%	42%	44%	7%	4%	2%	4%
West	28	11	10	15,700	42%	48%	37%	8%	4%	2%	5%
East	31	10	8	17,530	48%	40%	44%	10%	4%	2%	7%
Middle (right)											
West	14	6	6	12,605	42%	47%	42%	6%	4%	4%	4%
East	13	8	7	11,916	45%	40%	49%	6%	4%	3%	3%
High (not shown)											
Single region	17	7	11	28,243	28%	49%	40%	5%	5%	3%	3%

Source: CMS

Decision on contract begins bonds debate?

Perhaps the Battle of the Bonds 2002 began Tuesday night.

The Education Center skirmish boils down to whether the board spent \$250,000 too much to overhaul a school – an issue that could damage hopes for passing a bond issue in November to finance the next chunk of school-house expansions and repairs.

The board Tuesday did not choose the cheapest way to pursue the project. What it did choose was the path that staff believes will offer the greatest prospect of completing the project correctly and on time.

Thousands of parents are relieved right now that new buildings promised for Monday will actually open Monday. (Story, Page 4.) They know the value of completing projects correctly and on time. Now if they only can hold that thought until November....

Tuesday's school board agenda included approval of a contract for work at Piedmont Middle School. The project involves gutting a 1920s building – complete with asbestos removal and who knows what surprises – and adding new classroom space. The job includes unusual and complex work, including turning the old gym into a two-floor space to house the cafeteria and media center.

The overall project will cost \$15.3 million; the contract on the agenda was for about \$10 million. Largely to be sure the job is done right and on time, the staff strongly recommended use of a single prime contractor. Now some background.

Traditionally, N.C. governmental bodies bidding out a job take the low bids from four companies: a general contractor, a mechanical contractor for ventilation, an electrical contractor and a plumbing contractor. On these "multiprime" jobs, the general contractor isn't the boss, and when things go bad on the job site, as has happened

on several recent school jobs, contractors can end up blaming each other for delays while the job gets further and further off schedule.

In single prime work, CMS hires one company, then that company hires others. The single prime route puts one contractor in charge, and makes one responsible. The bids, for that reason among others, tend to be higher.

Single prime is new to North Carolina. CMS went to the General Assembly for permission to use it. It's a common tool elsewhere. To gain experience with the new tool, CMS officials put the Piedmont job out to bid both as a single prime job and as a multiprime job.

With single prime being new, CMS doesn't have a lot of data on single prime cost overruns. But preliminary data shared with school board members show that change orders, which increase the cost of the project above the original bid, tend to run about 2.6% of the contract cost, while multiprime jobs tend to produce about 6.5% in change orders.

Nobody knows now, but it is possible that the single prime contract – costlier at the beginning – might turn out cheaper than having gone the multiprime route. In fact, building services chief Guy Chamberlain predicted precisely that Tuesday night.

"Because of the nature of the [Piedmont] job, it's not going to be 6%" but will be higher with multiprime, Chamberlain said. With single prime, "the final cost is going to be less."

By a 7-1 vote, the board went with that advice. Board member Larry Gauvreau, who voted no, said, "We are spending money like it's dropping off trees.... A quarter of a million dollars is worth debating and scrutinizing."

The board's decision may be debated during the fall bond campaign. But it unearthed three

additional issues.

Oversight: The first is how, and whether, similarly complex contracts should be routinely reviewed by a citizen panel before they get to the school board.

Board member Louise Woods suggested two possible review bodies: an already standing school board committee, or the appointed Bond Oversight Committee. The board took no action Tuesday night.

Minority presence: Single prime may reduce the participation of minority contractors in public projects because the single prime contractor has full authority to choose subcontractors. More experience, and more analysis, will be needed to explore that issue.

Communication: During the debate, Larry Gauvreau felt he was the target of board member George Dunlap's comment that someone was contesting the Piedmont contract because a contractor whose bid had been turned down was a personal friend. "In response to the comments directed at me, that's just baloney," Gauvreau said before a television audience.

And it was baloney. Louise Woods says her husband told her about hearing the contractor grouching about the Piedmont contract. She said she started asking questions last week so CMS would be in a position to justify its decision. Woods still has questions about the advisability of single prime contracting, but she says neither she nor her husband are personal friends of the contractor, and that her motives were misconstrued.

There's great value in N.C. statutes requiring open meetings. But there's also great value in elected officials working out SOME things amongst themselves.

– Steve Johnston

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 1

a repeat of debate in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the Detroit schools faced criticism for a \$1.5 million public-relations budget that included consulting fees, billboards and the cost of school open houses, the Detroit News reported. "We don't need a billboard. We need all this money to go into student achievement and teacher training," the News quoted one grandmother as saying. Philadelphia schools contracted more than \$700,000 of PR work in one six-month period. The Dallas in-house PR budget is \$2.5 million. CMS's budget is about \$2 million for the current year.

www.detroitnews.com

Pay to play: In the Baltimore area, Carroll County Maryland schools decided to charge \$60 per athletic season per player. Fees will be waived for students in financial hardship or on the reduced-price lunch program. The fees should raise \$250,000 at a time the schools cannot fully underwrite athletic program costs, the Sun reported.

www.sunspot.com

Federal law, regulation

Drug testing: The National Association of Secondary School Principals says there's a negative correlation between drug use and participation in high school extracurriculars. But the U.S. Supreme Court upheld an Oklahoma school district's random drug testing program of participants in extracurricular activities. The Tecumseh district requires two positive tests before removing a student from an activity, and the test results are not shared with law enforcement or used as the basis for other disciplinary action.

www.principals.org

High schools: A new coalition called the National Alliance on the American High School is

pressing for reforms of an educational institution stuck in the status quo. Report co-author Monica Martinez was quoted as saying that "policies specific to high schools carry some unpleasant messages about how relatively unchanged high schools have remained during the past two decades, despite unprecedented changes in state education systems."

www.hsalliance.org

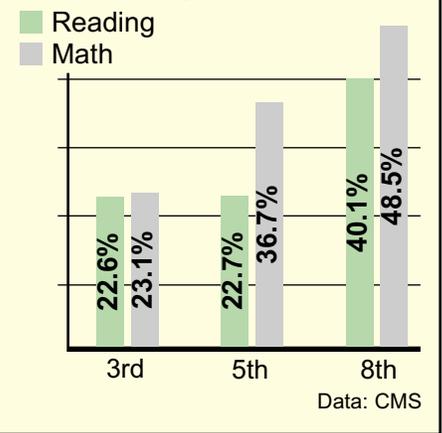
Special ed: The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education reported to Congress that the federal program "fails too many children with disabilities" and recommended use of vouchers, the Detroit Free Press reported. But critics scolded the commission for failing to urge Congress to fully fund 1997 mandates that, they say, have just begun to show success. Federal aid to special ed is up for reauthorization in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act pending in Congress.

www.freep.com

Few transferring out: The federal mandate to give parents a way to leave low-performing schools will result in few transfers this fall, Education Week reported. Examples: 2% of the eligible families in Colorado Springs, Colo., opted for transfer. About 3% of eligible children were expected to transfer in Fulton County, Ga. It was about 2% in Clark County, Nev., which includes Las Vegas, and barely

Gateway results

Percent of students tested at end of summer school who performed on grade level. All of these students had failed the test twice before entering summer school.



over 1% in Montgomery County, Md. In many rural school districts, there is no alternate school to transfer to. And in Chicago, where 125,000 students are eligible, there are only 2,500 seats at better-performing schools. Baltimore has 200 seats available for 30,000 students eligible for transfer.

www.edweek.org

Preschool

California initiative: The Los Angeles commission controlling that county's share of proceeds from a 50-cent-per-pack state cigarette tax is considering a program that would pay for 4-year-

Continued on Page 6

Ah, summer school

Around 2,500 students were in summer school. For most, it was another chance learn and to take tests that would lead to promotion. At the end of the June 13-July 17 session, 1,424 students in grades 3, 5 and 8 were tested in math. The demographics of that group:

73% The percent who failed first retest in May and who were tested in July.

- 50%** Male
- 77%** African American
- 8%** White
- 7%** Hispanic
- 8%** ESL
- 74%** On subsidized lunch

No varsity lacrosse teams – at least for this year

In a discussion that segued from budget constraints to equity to college scholarships, the school board Tuesday ruled out varsity status for boy's lacrosse teams at six high schools for now. The decision will be reviewed in a year.

East Meck, Myers Park, North, Providence, South Meck and Vance highs have lacrosse teams as afterschool clubs, financed by donations and student fees.

Athletics staff at 13 of 14 high schools recommended against agreeing to the request by the Lacrosse Parent Boosters Club, athletics director Vicki Hamilton told the board. The board vote was 7-1, with Larry Gauvreau voting no and Lee Kindberg absent.

Supt. Jim Pughsley told the board his administration was "not opposed to lacrosse. But there are a number of considerations that I feel we should not move on at this time. Once we have satisfied certain things... then we'll embrace the process as we have 29 other varsity level sports."

For school officials, there is no way to easily, or cheaply, turn the club sport into a varsity program. One equity issue, never questioned Tuesday night, is that if CMS sanctions lacrosse at one or even all six high schools that cur-

rently have teams, the district must make it available at all 15 high schools with athletics programs. CMS is unusual in both making athletics universally available, and assuring that all students can play without charge.

Hamilton said first-year costs at each school would be \$25,000, or \$400,000 for the district after Berry Academy of Technology opens its athletics program in 2003. Such a sum is not easily dealt with at the Ed Center: Once the N.C. General Assembly completes its budgeting, Pughsley expects to have to cut \$15 million from the current year's budget.

After the first year, the \$25,000 figure per school would drop some, Hamilton said, but not much because equipment wears out and uniforms are replaced after three years. "It's an expensive sport, is what you're saying, huh?" said Gauvreau.

The lacrosse clubs recruit players on school grounds, and play at a variety of fields, including public schools, private facilities and private schools. One of the side-lights that came out of the discussion is that CMS has undertaken unknown legal liability in connection with lacrosse. When board member Vilma Leake asked what liability the schools would have,

board chairman Arthur Griffin said, "We don't know right now" and asked that the liability question be discussed privately.

"It wouldn't take a brilliant plaintiffs' lawyer to attach us in a lawsuit if somebody got hurt in a club event between two Charlotte-Mecklenburg high schools," board member John Lassiter quipped.

A CMS decision to create varsity lacrosse is separate from any decision by the N.C. High School Athletic Association to sanction the sport, which brings with it a statewide playoff structure. Hamilton said the state estimated 23 to 26 N.C. schools have clubs, but under questioning from Lassiter admitted that that number did not include CMS's six schools because the district had never been asked to report about its lacrosse clubs.

State sanctioning of lacrosse as a statewide varsity sport will come when there are about 87 teams operating as district varsity teams or as club teams, Hamilton said.

Hamilton also advised the board that state athletic officials have decided that when lacrosse is sanctioned for boys, that schools will be asked to add field hockey for girls. The pairing is in response to federal Title 9, which guarantees boys and girls similar access to athletic teams. Field hockey for girls will cost about as much as lacrosse for boys, Hamilton said.

Lassiter said lacrosse in all high schools "would create a drawing card across the system that makes it very competitive against kids who might go to a private school in another location to get this sport, because a lot of kids do in fact get scholarship opportunities even in club lacrosse, but the participation at state competitions creates a clear opportunity. I would hope we continue to press to find ways to make this happen and make it more inclusive...."

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 5

old kindergarten for all children, not just the poor. The proposal, received warmly by the child care provider community and the L.A. school system, would involve all current providers, including individuals who operate day cares in their homes.

www.edweek.com

Reform strategies

Boycott: In Durham, Hillside High parents angry over dismissal of the school's principal and reshuffling of teachers, vowed to boycott a shopping mall. The action, the News and Observer reported, would recall the 1968 "Black Christmas" when African Americans shopped outside Durham, at a cost to merchants of nearly \$1 million. That protest led to the first black appointments to the housing authority, higher-paying jobs at downtown stores, and access for black real estate agents to the city's multilisting service.

Continued on Page 7

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 6

Teens at the mall told a reporter they couldn't see a connection between the mall and the schools, but an older resident said, "It's always about money when it comes to stuff like this. A dollar talks, you know."

www.newsobserver.com

Economic integration: In a Denver Post essay, Piton Foundation program officer Alan Gottlieb argues that test scores from Denver and elsewhere show two things: that low-income children in high-poverty schools do less well academically than their low-income peers attending schools where fewer than 50% of the students are low-income; and that the education of better-off children does not suffer when low-income children are present. Gottlieb writes: "If we can establish that low-income children learn best in environments where few of their peers are poor, why do we persist in a system of neighborhood schools, most of which are segregated by socioeconomic status?"

www.detroitpost.com

Making connections: The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, in a list of suggestions for nurturing school ties with families, mentioned brochures and signs and such, then added, "Personal contact, whether by telephone or in person, is the best way to promote two-way communication."

www.ncpie.org

Students

Watching for the bullied:

Educators at a summer conference with the Secret Service were told that 71% of students who committed school attacks since 1974 felt pushed around, that the attacks were planned well in advance and that the students had told friends what they would do, the Boston Globe reported. In

Buildings will be ready for Monday

With only a few exceptions, CMS will have its new and renovated schools ready in time for Monday's opening of school.

The school board heard an update Tuesday night on the status of all major building projects. Assistant Supt. Guy Chamberlain said the key date in getting schools open is the date when building inspectors will allow all teaching staff to occupy the building. In the list below, that is the day mentioned.

Once the teachers are allowed in, the children can quickly follow, so schools should in all cases open on time. While other buildings will be occupied later this school year, here is the full list of those scheduled for August openings:

Barringer Elementary was to open to staff Wednesday.

Berry Academy, the new vocational/technical high school, will be ready for staff Thursday.

Berryhill Elementary opened Tuesday.

Chantilly Elementary was to open Wednesday.

Crown Point Elementary is already open after extensive emergency structural repairs.

Derita, site of management schools, opened last week.

Garinger High was to open Wednesday.

J.H. Gunn Elementary, a new building being built next to the

existing facility, will open Sept. 17, with the first four weeks of school being held in the old building.

Highland Mill Montessori is to open today, Thursday.

Independence High opens today after scheduled renovations plus an emergency removal from the campus's oldest buildings of brick facing that was about to fall off the two-story school.

Lincoln Heights Elementary opened Tuesday.

Mountain Island Elementary is already open.

North Meck High was to open today.

Providence Springs Elementary was to open today.

Robinson Middle is already occupied.

Sedgefield Elementary opens Friday.

At Sedgefield Middle, the new cafeteria kitchen will be serving meals on Monday.

At Smith K-8 Language Academy, work on one wing will continue, but all regular classrooms will be occupiable Friday.

Thomasboro will move from its existing classrooms when the new wing is done; the date was not specified. After the move, old classrooms will be renovated and mobile classrooms removed.

Westerly Hills Elementary's addition was to open Wednesday.

other words, the attacks were preventable. Said New Bedford police chief Arthur Kelly, "The key is communication, communication, communication."

www.boston.com

Dyslexics' reading: Yale researchers using MRI testing of dyslexic and regular readers have shown that regular readers use the occipito-temporal, lower back region of the brain, in reading, the Boston Globe reported. Dyslexics use parts of the brain normally devoted to speech to

overcome a genetic flaw in the occipito-temporal region. Researchers said the finding, which confirms long-held hypotheses about dyslexia, should help educators fashion ways to make it easier for dyslexics to learn to read.

www.boston.com

Reaching all students: Ways to design the classroom for the many ways in which children learn have been put online by a collaboration between the Disney

Continued on Page 8

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 7

Learning Partnership and Thirteen Ed Online. The site is at www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/month1/. The site is free.

Lunch economics: Montgomery County, Md. schools won't offer doughnuts this fall, one of a number of offerings banned in an effort to meet new nutrition standards, the Washington Post reported. The story asserted that because federal subsidies do not cover the cost of the lunch program, many schools balance their budget by stocking their "a la carte" menus (which are exempt from the nutrition standards) with high-fat, high-sugar foods they know the students will buy.

www.washingtonpost.com

Working moms: Children whose mothers are working more than 30 hours a week by the time the children are 9 months old lagged on school-readiness tests, the New York Times reported. Earlier studies suggest that the ill effects last until age 7 or 8. The study, published in *Child Development* magazine, found — as earlier studies had — that boys are more vulnerable than girls to the effects of their mother's early employment. For reasons dealing with the nature of the available data, the study involved only white non-Hispanic children.

www.nytimes.com

Dropout stats: A state study found Arizonans dropping out at the following rates, according to the Arizona Republic: Overall, 22% of the Class of 2000 left before graduating. For Hispanics and Native Americans, rates were more than 30%. The rate for blacks was 25%. The Phoenix schools had a 40% rate. About 75% of girls graduated, compared with 67% for boys.

www.arizonarepublic.com

Dyslexics' hearing: Researchers at University College

London found that dyslexic children had a harder time hearing rhythms in music, the BBC reported. Understanding speech requires an understanding of the rhythm in a voice. The finding could change how dyslexia is diagnosed and treated.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Teen habits and disease: The Center for Disease Control says six types of behavior that cause many serious health problems among people over age 5 are based on habits often acquired during the teen years, according to the Association for School Curriculum and Development. The six are: behaviors that result in unintentional and intentional injury; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors; tobacco use; dietary patterns; and physical inactivity.

www.ascd.org

Teaching

Bolstering teaching:

Consultant Mike Schmoker, writing for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, says test scores invariably rise when three things happen at schools: When teachers agree that assessments really test key learning skills; when they align their teaching with the learning skills tested, and put to use the guidebooks that fully explain the skills; and when they start working together to perfect daily lessons designed to bolster children's weaknesses. "The evidence is overwhelming that chaos reigns in an enormous number of our classrooms," Schmoker writes. "Larry Lezotte has been saying for some time that children generally learn what we teach them, but 'there is a huge gap between what is taught and what is tested.'"

www.sedl.org

Mali material: Virginia's decision to add the study of Mali to its elementary school curriculum has spawned Web site content on the African nation. The ASCD site has collected a number of URLs for teachers and students. Among

Teacher has put out on each child's desk the books for the year: Open Court, mathematics, "Living in Our World," "Your Health."

But the size of her class is still unknown to her. She hasn't even counted the desks. "Gee, I hope I don't have 32."

The CMS instructional template says there will be no more than 23 students in this class.

But there are 28 student desks, not counting the activity tables. And at each one is a neatly stacked pile of books.

— A.K.

Send us your story. For addresses, see Page 2.

them: www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/ontheline/schools/magicmali/index.htm, the British site that includes a multimedia look at Mali and other African nations.

www.ascd.org

Methods vs. content: The Washington Post outlined the battle raging between education school leaders, who want to improve their graduates' teaching skills, and the Bush Education Department, which wants to cut "theory courses" to bolster teachers' understanding of what they are teaching. Caught in the middle are the states, who are under federal mandate to certify in the next three years that all of their teachers are "highly qualified."

www.washingtonpost.com

To block, or not: While most N.C. high schools use block scheduling -- teaching in 90-minute periods -- the early '90s reform movement now has its detractors. And some research, according to the Christian Science Monitor, suggests that students do less well at test time under the longer periods. While patterns vary, a course that used to be taught for a full year might be covered in

Continued on Page 9

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 8

one semester, leaving students lots of time to forget the content before moving on to the next course in the sequence the following year. A Philadelphia English teacher told the Monitor, "The kids are wildly bored, the teachers are wildly bored, discipline is worse, and the kids are out of the loop for standardized tests." Advocates say block scheduling allows work in greater depth, regains time lost in changing classes, and is great for lab classes.

www.csmonitor.com

Pep rally: Edison Schools flew about 150 Philadelphia school-teachers into Atlanta to give them training in Edison's ways as the controversial private firm prepares to run some of the city's lowest-performing schools. The Inquirer reported that some educators were enthusiastic about Edison's team teaching approach and "houses" of 120 to 150 students. But other participants were skeptical that organization alone could turn around lagging achievement. "I'm excited, but I'm scared, too," said one. "It will take a paradigm shift. And paradigm shifts take time."

www.philly.com

Pep critique: Former Edison official Ramon Cortines says Edison has imposed its own plan for running Philly schools, rather than listening to community suggestions, the Inquirer reported. Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Charles Zogby, who controls \$55 million to be spent on private management of the system's schools, says Edison and others need "free rein" in deciding how to raise achievement at the underperforming schools.

www.philly.com

Quality teachers: The PEN-Education Week poll of 800 registered voters again placed raising teacher quality as the public's No.

1 priority for improving education. And county commissioners, hear this: Nearly one in three of those polled is a teacher or has a present or former teacher as a close family member.

www.edweek.com

Money talks: New York City Schools Chancellor Harold Levy said pay increases had fueled teacher interest in job openings in city schools, the Times reported. Raises of 16% to 22% bring the pay range to from \$39,000 to \$81,231, and the maximum that can be offered a new teacher with experience has risen to \$61,000. But the Times also said Levy had set aside a policy that gave troubled schools first opportunity to hire applicants. The policy was seen as a deterrent to recruitment.

www.nytimes.com

V-learning: A federally funded project has created a virtual learning environment in which which hearing-impaired and deaf children in Florida can learn the state's third-grade math and language arts standards, eSchoolNews.com reported. Tests for 60 students taken after work on the software showed 35% improvement from a pre-test taken before instruction began. Math score increase were even higher.

www.eschoolnews.com

Slow down the day: Writing for responsiveclassroom.org, Responsive Classroom advocate Chip Wood assaults the idea of schools as "fact factories," proposing instead that schools "foster thinking, dialogue, and meaningful relationships." Among his suggestions: Begin the year slowly. Have children help create the classroom environment. Take time to set rules and expectations, and learn how the building works. Work first on social skills that will later support an academic environment.

www.responsiveclassroom.org

Testing

Wake celebrates: Wake County has nearly 90% of its stu-

dents at or above grade level on grade 3-8 end-of-grade tests, the News and Observer reported. The scores by grade, with comparable preliminary CMS data, are below.

www.newsobserver.com

2002 EOCs percent at or above grade level

Grade	Reading		Math	
	Wake	CMS	Wake	CMS
3	88	78	87	76
4	87	74	95	88
5	92	81	94	87
6	83	71	90	86
7	87	73	90	80
8	91	82	88	80

SAT makeover: Changes approved this summer in the SAT taken by most college-bound students will affect the testing in three years, Education Week reported. The changes involve: adding a writing exam and grammar questions; dropping analogies from the verbal exam and renaming it the critical reading exam; and broadening the math exam to include Algebra II and other higher-level courses. The changes will add 30 minutes to the SAT's length, add \$8 to \$12 to its current \$26 registration fee, and, according to critics, not address bias issues. The test was last overhauled in 1994.

www.edweek.com

N.C. writing test: The State Board of Education threw out results from this year's writing test, and ordered field testing next year in hopes of creating a statistically valid exam, the News and Observer reported. The writing test, which asked fourth-graders to write about a "great day" at school, was field-tested and only 25% of the 1,000 students who wrote on the subject passed. In the official test this spring, 47% passed. State officials say field-test results have not proven to be good predictors, so they agreed to accept favorable teacher comments as validating the test.

www.newsobserver.com

SATs and the disabled: After

Continued on Page 10

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 9

September, the College Board will stop reporting to colleges when the exams are given under “special conditions” designed to assist disabled students, the New York Times reported. Accommodations can involve extra time, computers, or quiet rooms. Educators fear that if the accommodations are not reported, there will be an avalanche of requests from non-disabled students.

www.nytimes.com

Vouchers, charters

Cleveland vouchers: Writing for Teachers College Record, Arthur Levine argues that the Ohio voucher case will have little impact because too few private schools will agree to take the vouchers, because vouchers will continue to pay too small a portion of tuition, and because the academic gains made by children using vouchers will be too small. The next big change in education, he writes, will occur when “we come to view an adequate education as a civil right. A court decision recognizing this would be the equivalent of the Brown ruling, declaring separate and unequal education for children of color in our inner cities and rural areas

Calendar

August

- 15** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 19** First day of school.
- 20** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services.
- 20** Board lunch with city, county, Room 267, Government Center.

unconstitutional.” Such a ruling would force states to accept responsibility for equal access to quality education, and would represent “an extension of federal practices mandated for disabled students to disadvantaged students attending inadequate schools. But this extension would be a difference in kind, rather than degree.”

www.tcrecord.org

Voucher silence: Veteran educator Chester E. Finn Jr. offered some explanations for the “mushy” response from private school educators to the Supreme Court decision on Cleveland vouchers. Among them: The schools “may really not feel ready to succeed with larger numbers of disadvantaged, at-risk and spe-

- 20** Personnel/Policy Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference room.
- 27** School board meeting, 6 p.m., Board Room.

September

- 2** No school; Labor Day holiday.
- 12** Parent information session, 7-9 p.m., Greenville Center, 1330 Spring St.. Topics include testing, cumulative folders, working effectively with teachers and administrators. Free. Sponsor: Winners Plus Agency.

cial-needs kids. In other words, they’re not sure they’re up to the education challenge.... Some, maybe many, are nervous about the governmental interventions and policy shifts that they fear will accompany vouchers.... They’d rather stay poor, small and exclusive than let the government set foot on their campuses.”

www.edexcellence.net

Unfulfilled promises: A teachers union asserted that charter schools have not fulfilled their promise, the Washington Times reported. “Most charter schools don’t improve student achievement, aren’t innovative and are less accountable than the public schools,” union president Sandra Feldman said.

www.washingtontimes.com



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