



Pre-K program is glass 'half full, not half empty'

The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce gathered business and education leaders Wednesday to hear a pitch for patience with the five-year old Bright Beginnings program for at-risk 4-year-olds.

"If this community can stay with us, you are going to see a remarkably improved" record of student achievement over the next few years, said Frances Haithcock, CMS associate superintendent for education services.

Key data presented to the group of three dozen leaders was cited in an article last week (*Educate!*, Aug. 15).

The public relations push began after initial data on Bright Beginnings students who were tested this spring as third-graders showed little if any gains in achievement over children who had qualified for the program but did not attend.

The data was faulty because it ignored huge retentions at first grade among the "control group."

Most of the retentions for the kids not in Bright Beginnings came in first grade, "when you want children reading," assessment chief Susan Agruso noted.

Some of what CMS officials shared with business leaders dealt directly with Bright Beginnings. They noted improvements made in the program since the first class went through the program. They said stronger language instruction for children to be tested as third-graders in 2004 should keep test scores rising.

They also argued that Bright Beginnings was not a one-time fix for the kids who come to school behind. "All the research we have... is that if you start out with a solid pre-K foundation, you cannot abandon them," said Agruso. "You have to be ready to catch them if they start to fall back" later.

Barbara Pellin, assistant superintendent for student, family and

Continued on Page 2

Inside

Myers Park senior Amanda Shintay is helping organize a year-long exploration of diversity in connection with the Echo Foundation's February "Voices Against Indifference" event. Page 5.

The reason why the kids can't get to their free e-mail accounts from CMS computers. Page 7.

To gauge the success of mentoring programs, school board members ask for more information. Page 6.

Charlotte Advocates for Education wants to talk to your group about why the achievement gaps "are not necessary." Page 8.

State Board of Education huddles today in executive session as the state faces a Monday deadline to tell a judge what it's going to do to get all school districts to provide every child with a sound basic education. Page 7.

A summer of news ... Part Two

Second and last in a series of briefs on developments and views on education over the summer.

Federal law, rules

Vocabulary focus: At an American Educational Research Association conference, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development official G. Reid Lyon defended the federal focus on reading by poor children, according to the Association of

Supervision and Curriculum Development. "A 3-year-old child in an affluent family has a larger working vocabulary than the mother of a 3-year-old from a welfare family," Lyon said.

www.ascd.org

Blue-ribbon failures: There was embarrassment this summer for the 1982 federal program that's named 1,154 Blue Ribbon schools in the last five years. USA

Continued on Page 4

Pitch for patience made for pre-K

Continued from Page 1

community services, said staff visits to the home began in the program's second year (next year's third-graders) and had "made a tremendous difference" in raising parental involvement and support. She said CMS is considering a pilot program of staff visits to the homes of Bright Beginnings children annually as they move through the lower elementary grades.

Bright Beginnings faces another stiff challenge – continually training staff. "One-third of the teachers turn over on a yearly basis," Haithcock said.

But beyond Bright Beginnings, Haithcock had a much broader message for the business leaders: CMS has made strides toward banishing uncoordinated curricula, scattershot training and low expectations. The controversial adoption of Open Court reading materials last year was only the tip of the iceberg.

"We've had a real journey in pushing what the expectations are in this system," Haithcock said.

About children who were slow to read, Haithcock said, "CMS was grounded in a philosophy of 'don't directly teach those kids. You'll mess them up for life. They're just not ready.'"

"Now our philosophy is, 'If you DON'T teach those kids you'll ruin them for life.'"

Among the other reforms Haithcock mentioned:

- Assessments have been added for early identification of kids falling behind.

- Research on proven teaching programs continues.

- "Intensive care," a program of additional learning programs, software, materials and teacher training aimed at struggling readers, was added to this year's budget and has been activated.

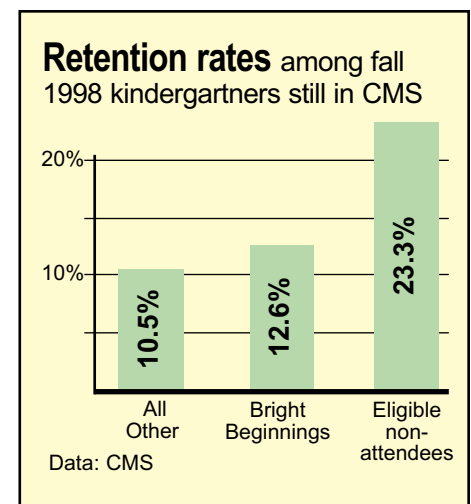
- Additional training for exceptional children's teachers and some others was added this summer. Monthly training for literacy coaches is under way.

- Planning time has been set aside so teachers can compare notes about who needs help and what works.

Agruso mentioned that the focus on literacy with Bright Beginnings may also account for some of their improved scores on the end-of-grade math test. All of the math questions on the EOG are word problems, she said.

Haithcock said CMS would in coming months make more clear what changes had been made over time that should improve future Bright Beginnings scores, and what initiatives will be taken in the future to keep achievement levels rising for Bright Beginnings children.

"I'm very excited about the potential.... For this year, for this data, these are the things that were in place. For next year, there is not a whole lot of change. But as we go out [in time], there were some extra changes and we do have an expectation that they are



going to make an impact. If they don't, I'm going to pack my bags and go home."

"Bright Beginnings deserves our support," Chamber leader Ernie Dehnert said. "We need to look at the glass as half full, not half empty."

Bright Beginnings enrollment is about 64% African American. The chamber audience was about 6% African American.

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: 2,073.

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.

To be removed from distribution, message: imailsrv@educateclt.org. In body of the message, type: unsubscribe swann name@domain.etc. To be added to our distribution list, message: imailsrv@educateclt.org. In body of the message, type: subscribe swann name@domain.etc

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!* strives 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.

A tip of the hard hat...

to the men and women of these contractors and their subcontractors who brought these new and replacement schools to completion:



Barringer Academic Center on June 11

**Beam Construction
Barringer Elementary**

**Edifice, Inc.
Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology
Lincoln Heights Elementary**

**Edison Foard
Jay M. Robinson Middle
Providence Spring Elementary**

**LeChase Construction Services
Highland Mill Montessori**

**Miles Campbell
J.H. Gunn Elementary
Sedgefield Elementary**

**Shelco, Inc.
Mountain Island Elementary**



Robinson Middle science lab on Aug. 9

Teachers' reasons for leaving their jobs – CMS, other systems, statewide

CMS has had good news: Teacher turnover declined last year to 19.31%. That 's down from 21.77% in 2000-2001, and more in line with the 1999-2000 rate of 19.44%. Below are reasons given by staff last year, and two years ago for comparative purposes, of why they left. Turnover rates for selected N.C. counties are at right.

CMS '01-'02		CMS '99-'00		Reason	N.C. ranking 2001	Turnover rates by system, in %		
No.	Rank	No.	Rank			Name	'99-'00	'00-'01
228	1	234	1	Resigned - Reason unknown	3	Asheville City	15.38	16.58
213	2	31	11	Did not obtain or maintain license	9	Buncombe	8.62	9.95
203	3	233	2	Resigned - Family relocation	4	Cabarrus	11.42	13.52
169	4	216	3	Resigned - To accept other employment	15+	Chapel Hill-C.	14.58	12.38
90	5	24	13	Interim contract ended	7	Cleveland	10.37	12.92
79	6	104	4	Retired with full benefits	2	Durham	16.93	18.12
78	7	103	5	Resigned - Dissatisfied w/teaching/career chg.	6	Forsyth	14.17	13.47
72	8	98	6	Resigned - Family responsibility/child care	15+	Gaston	13.81	10.53
39	9	36	7	Moved to nonteaching position in education	15+	Hoke	28.21	23.55
36	10	33	10	Resigned - Because of health/disability	12	Iredell	10.78	13.91
32	11	36	7	Resigned - To continue education/sabbatical	10	Lincoln	15.99	14.36
31	12	36	7	Resigned - Better pay	15+	Meck.	19.44	21.77
16	13	25	12	Resigned - In lieu of dismissal	15+	N. Hanover	16.48	11.68
13	14	8	15	Nonrenewed - Probationary contract ended	11	N.C.	13.59	13.96
9	15	4	16	Deceased	14	Tyrrell	27.87	20.34
9	16	4	16	Job abandonment	15+	Union	15.91	17.62
8	17	9	14	Dismissed	13	Vance	25.38	20.00
4	18			Resigned - To teach in a charter school	15+	Wake	10.78	9.20

Source: CMS

Source: Dept. of Public Instruction

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 1

Today found that of the 8,652 schools nationwide initially identified as "failing," at least 19 are also "Blue Ribbon" schools. Bush Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced new standards for the Blue Ribbon honor.

www.usatoday.com

"Highly qualified" redefined: The "No Child Left Behind" law requires states to certify that all teachers hired in low-income schools be "highly qualified," which means fully credentialed. Teachers at all schools must meet the test by 2005-'06. Federal officials say California was trying to bypass the law when it sought to redefine "highly qualified" to include teaching interns and novices with emergency permits. California says that under a liter-

al interpretation of the federal rules, it could not hire enough teachers, and class sizes would balloon to 50 or more students. www.latimes.com

Finance

Race matters: An Education Trust survey based on 1999-2000 data showed that school districts with the fewest minorities spent \$6,684 in state and federal funds, not counting federal Title I funds aimed at low-wealth schools. That compares with \$5,782 for heavily minority districts, the New York Times reported. The gap of \$966 had been reduced from \$1,139 in 1997. Similar disparities were noted between high-poverty and low-poverty schools; the poverty gap in school funding was \$2,152. www.nytimes.com

Pay little different: Administrators work more months and get more pay than the teacher making the median salary, but on a pay-per-day scale, reimbursement

is little different, according to an Educational Research Service report. Education Week reported a 13% overall difference between teachers' \$225.89 daily rate and high school assistant principals' of \$255.13. But the scale was only 4% higher for administrators at the elementary level.

www.edweek.com

Profit potential: Wisconsin's teachers union has filed notice it may sue to block private companies and school districts from offering "virtual" schools. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that with fewer teachers to hire and the same per-pupil reimbursement from the state, the virtual schools could become quite profitable in the future. One of the state's first two proposed statewide virtual schools may open this fall.

www.jsonline.com

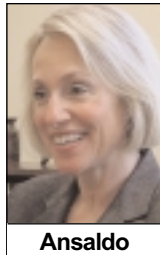
Texas to the middle: Texas

Continued on Page 5

School wants to make diversity study a yearlong event

They have the technology. They have the energy. And now they have the acronym.

Faculty and students at Myers Park High and South Charlotte Middle are collaborating to broaden Stephanie Ansaldo's Echo Foundation annual February "Voices Against Indifference" event into a year-long examination of the world that exists beyond the noses of high schoolers and middle schoolers.



Ansaldo

Myers Park senior Amanda Shintay credits her mother with the acronym: STAND, for Student Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. Shintay has created a new club by that name for Myers Park to encourage discussion and community service around diversity and human rights issues.

Myers Park, which will be the host CMS school for "Voices," seeks both to broaden the project into multiple events, but also involve students across the region. The vehicle is the fiber optic world that the kids are increasingly comfortable in.

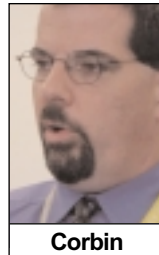
The goal is broad. "There is life outside North Carolina," says South Charlotte principal Christine Waggoner. "We don't live here in our own little oyster. There are people out there who struggle. It's a concept people have to get early on.... We need to come up with ways we are extending their critical thinking skills."

Myers Park will use software and staff time to create Web sites and chat rooms for the project, so kids all over the region can have access to the materials and can join in the conversation. All chats will be supervised either by a teacher or a student trained to keep the conversation on task. The chat room will be open during hours that students have

access from school-based computer labs.

And Shintay plans to involve the school's Phoenix Club, an academic achievement support group for the school's African Americans.

Myers Park teacher Robert Corbin says he's seen how student interest in his environmental studies classes has been transformed when kids knew they were working online on real issues that made a difference to people. What started as a data exchange with Costa Rican students has mushroomed into a full-scale inquiry by the students over how the two countries use or waste resources, for example.



Corbin

Just how this enthusiasm can translate into breaking down diversity barriers remains to be seen. But Myers Park International Baccaulaureate coordinator Ron Thomas believes Myers Park "can be a catalyst, but it has to be grass-roots." And principal Ron Anderson has

backed what the kids and their teachers are doing:

"So many of our students have no clue about how good they have it.... I do fear that as the choice plan goes forward, [Myers Park High is] going to become whiter. It is really important that we promote diversity, understanding and tolerance."

The speaker for the showcase February event has not been finalized, but Ansaldo is hopeful she can get Jeffrey Sachs off the road long enough for the event. Sachs, new director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, has been in

Cambodia and China recently, and next week is to attend the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. Ansaldo says Sachs "writes very passionately about the disparity between the rich and the poor, and that globalization is accentuating that difference."



Sachs

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 4

teachers are pushing for \$5,000 annual raise that would bring them to the \$43,250 national average, the Dallas News reported. The annual cost would be \$2.5 billion and is justified by extra work implementing national standards, according to the Texas State Teachers Association and Texas Federation of Teachers.

www.dallasnews.com

International

British teacher pay: In Britain, the head of the education ministry says she wants contract

negotiations with teachers to focus on linking pay raises to an annual competency test taken by teachers. Estelle Morris also wants school leaders to have more freedom to set pay for staff, and to boost pay for hard-to-find math and science teachers.

<http://education.independent.co.uk>

China's economy: Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji called for new investment in vocational education at all levels of government, saying a skilled workforce is necessary to meet economic development and modernization goals, the China Daily reported.

www1.chinadaily.com.cn

Japan's anxiety: Curricular

Continued on Page 6

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 5

reforms implemented in lower grades this year aim to teach Japanese students the critical thinking skills needed in the information economy, Education Week reported. But the entry tests for college and secondary schools haven't changed, and that disconnect has parents putting more and more children into so-called "cram schools" to drill in the basics. More than 70% of students seek private tutoring by the time they enter high school.
www.edweek.com

Our times

Book sales down: The trend in children's book sales is down, the Christian Science Monitor reported. Sales were down 7% in 2001 from the previous year, according to the Book Industry Study Group. This despite 5,000 new titles each year.
www.csmonitor.com

Ritalin: A Brooklyn legislator wants New York to join Connecticut, Texas and Virginia in barring school officials from recommending that a child be given Ritalin or other psychoactive drug, the New York Post reported. Critics say educators push Ritalin to curb classroom discipline problems.
www.nypost.com

Talking achievement: Louisville area leaders are debating how to close achievement gaps. Jefferson County Schools Supt. Stephen Daeschner wants a plan by February, the Courier-Journal reported. At a recent meeting, experts suggested focusing on teacher training to adjust teaching to individual student learning styles; improve child care; and reduce class size.
www.edweek.com

More data needed on mentor issue

The first statistical data on how well mentors did keeping first-year teachers in the profession gives an incomplete picture. School board members have asked for more information on a program that holds the promise of contributing to lower teacher turnover.

The costs of turnover are measured in lower teacher experience, lost continuity in teaching program and schoolhouse esprit and, according to Charlotte Advocates for Education, about \$11,000 in hiring costs.

The data available so far on turnover rates among first-year teachers represents 2001-2002 experience at Equity Plus II schools, which have large populations of high-poverty or low-achieving students.

Some new teachers were mentored by veteran teachers who had classes to teach themselves. These mentors were paid \$1,000 per year for their part-time efforts.

Other new teachers were mentored by full-time mentors, who were paid their usual teacher salary just to assist new teachers.

Structural issues

K-8 debate: A Philadelphia Education Fund researcher says the benefits of K-8 education are not automatic, but in some communities may be worth reaching for. Among the advantages: Parents who now are far more active in the elementary years

Results for '01-'02

Information important to assessing the information in this chart is in the accompanying story.

Teachers mentored by part-time mentors

Level	Total hired	Left system	Turnover
Elementary	190	45	24%
Middle	193	80	41%
High	116	39	34%
Total	499	164	33%

Teachers mentored by full-time mentors

Elementary	5	0	0%
Middle	62	25	40%
High	45	16	36%
Total	112	41	37%

Source: CMS

Full-time mentors cost a great deal more, but teachers have expressed real enthusiasm for the program.

Data from the two programs, above, may suggest that part-time mentoring was just as successful in retaining teachers as the more expensive full-time program. But the here's why more information is needed:

The full-time mentors were sent to the schools where teacher turnover had been greatest. Comparable schools need to be compared, and two or three years worth of data need to be compared.

Staff at the school board's personnel/policy committee meeting Tuesday promised more information next month.

will stay involved if they don't change schools; and children behave more responsibly as they take on the role of protector of the younger children at the school.
www.middleweb.com

N.C. home schooling: The number of N.C. home schools

State faces new deadline on 'basic education' issue

The State Board of Education was to convene via conference call this morning in closed session as the state prepares for Monday's deadline to answer how it will deliver a basic education to all children in North Carolina.

In a letter to state officials, N.C. Superior Court Judge Howard Manning said, "The State of North Carolina cannot sit back and do nothing but carp about the ineffective use of resources by [Hoke County School System] or any other [Local Education Agency] when the ineffective use of those resources negatively impacts on the children's opportunity to receive a sound basic education."

In rulings last fall and this spring, Manning found that the N.C. Constitution requires the state to provide all children a basic education. The court has defined that as having all children on grade level or above by grade 8. Manning has asked the state to outline what school systems will do to assure that every child meets that goal. He has not required that the state spend any more money, and has taken note that achievement levels of low-income students lag in both low-wealth and high-wealth districts.

In a July 29 letter and supporting documents, state officials outlined what they were already doing, such as running the annual

testing program, adhering to the federal No Child Left Behind statute, teacher training and a study of how well local initiatives are working. Gov. Mike Easley weighed in, saying his More at Four program for at-risk 4-year-olds would help – if the legislature funds it.

Manning was not satisfied, and threatened a new round of hearings in the eight-year-old lawsuit. The suit was brought by low-wealth counties, but was joined by Mecklenburg and other systems with a large number of high-poverty children, whose educational needs require additional resources.

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 6

jumped 19% last school year, to 23,909 schools educating 46,909 students, the News and Observer reported. Wake County has the largest number in the state. The portion of Wake's children in the public school system has dropped from 90% in 1996 to 83.3% last year.

www.newsobserver.com

Accountability: Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Richmond's new superintendent, has her contract tied to substantial gains in test scores in a year's time, the Times-Dispatch reported. The standards, proposed by Jewell-Sherman when she was head of the district's testing program and applied for the top job, require that 20 of the city's 55 schools be accredited, up from five two years ago; only 12 schools, down from 29, may have the lowest accreditation rating; and 16 of 31 elementaries, up from three, must have 70% pass rates on third-

grade reading tests. One expert called the goals "pretty unrealistic."

www.timesdispatch.com

Protected by tenure:

Connecticut's Supreme Court has ruled that, while superintendents may be dismissed at will, assistant superintendents have the protection of tenure the same as teachers, the Courant reported. A fired Hartford school official brought the case.

www.ctnow.com

Admissions suit: A white woman whose child was denied entry to a Lynn, Mass. school has filed a challenge to that city's 1988 assignment plan, asserting that raced-based assignment violates her constitutional rights. The case could become a vehicle for a court decision with national scope on how race may be taken into account in assignments, transfers and attendance boundaries.

www.boston.com

Slow gains: Examining results at Texas schools where a private group is spending heavily to encourage parent participation,

At school, kids have been denied access to their free Yahoo and Hotmail e-mail accounts. Why? One explanation is that, with the Internet filters on CMS computers blocking access to obscene and pornographic sites, kids were sending such material to themselves by e-mail from home, then opening it at school to share with their friends. Long before computers, kids were testing the limits; guess they always will.

– B.A.

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

Times columnist Richard Rothstein says "test scores... have not surpassed those at comparable schools, perhaps because most Texas scores have been rising and it is hard to distinguish where parental support has been a cause. The motivation pupils gain from having parents and teachers

Continued on Page 8

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 7

collaborate may ultimately show up in other ways, like rising graduation or college enrollment rates.”

www.nytimes.com

Small schools: In a column for the Washington Post, Ann Marie Moriarty cites the work of federal consultant Fran Rothstein in making these points: Students perform as well or better in small high schools than in large; are in class more often, drop out less, are less involved in truancy and have a better attitude toward school. And such schools do a better job closing racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, and provide relatively more extracurricular opportunities (smaller school, same size football squad); and the cost per graduate is similar.

www.washingtonpost.com

Same-sex classes: In a story about an Indiana school proposing to teach girls and boys separately, the Indianapolis Star reported on the results of a pilot program at Paducah Middle in Kentucky. Among girls: 94% saw science grades go up, 78% improved in math. Among boys, grades rose for 64% in both science and math, and disciplinary referrals dropped from 48 to two. The pilot is being extended this year to all sixth- and seventh-graders.

www.indystar.com

Students

Autism Rx?: A federal study found that a medicine designed for adult schizophrenics might, at lower doses, control some of the tantrums and violent behavior of autistic children, the Washington Post reported. The FDA has not yet approved use of Risperdal by children.

www.washingtonpost.com

Value of college: OK, stu-

Learning gaps ‘not necessary’

Officials of Charlotte Advocates for Education have a road show ready that discusses education achievement gaps. And they want to be in front of your group.

The presentation notes that 12th-grade Latinos and African Americans score at the same level as eight-grade whites on a national test. It cites success stories at some selected schools across the country and in CMS.

It recommends clear goals and standards, a rigorous curriculum linked to the standards, improving teachers’ skills and assuring that the children who need extra help actually get it.

“Many of our children start behind. Typically, they don’t catch up and fall further behind. There is no excuse for that and our message has to be that we are not accepting it any longer,” says Margaret Carnes, the group’s managing director.

“We are not blind cheerleaders for CMS, but we do believe that the school system is on the right track on setting goals.”

Carnes and her staff used the material as part of a presentation this week to the Tuesday Morning

Breakfast Forum. Among the reactions from the predominantly African American audience:

- Use of subsidized lunch numbers creates a stereotype of children on the program. And some children are on it only temporarily as their families hit bumps in the road.

- The CMS curriculum is eurocentric and teaches black children to hate themselves. Professional development programs do not prepare teachers to cover African American history.

- Feedback from state testing is insufficient to help parents and tutors identify and reteach the skills the children were missing.

- Housing patterns and availability of low-income housing must be addressed.

- Teacher turnover is OK if the teachers leaving didn’t like their job or weren’t very good at it.

- Discussions about education never seem to address “the 22-ton elephant in the room” – a reference to racism.

For further information about the Advocates’ presentation and to schedule a visit for your group, call 704-335-0100.

Teaching

Drawing on expertise: In a Middleweb listserv exchange on successful teaching experiences, “Cossondra” wrote that after many students plagiarized for an assignment on the ‘60s, she assigned a 750-word essay on plagiarism: what it is, why it’s wrong, how they feel about kids who don’t get caught. Cossondra said it was the only assignment all year that every student completed. “I got the feeling, for some it was one of the first things they had ever completely done on their own!”

www.middleweb.com

Cyber attendance, grades: A
Continued on Page 9

dents: Listen to this argument for staying in school, as reported by the Denver Post: “College graduates with a bachelor’s degree earn \$17,500 a year more than high school graduates, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.”

www.denverpost.com

Summer school incentive: The Kansas City schools offered a \$100 gift certificate for perfect attendance, and lesser amounts for up to two days absence. The system met competition from Edison, which has offered incentives since 1999. The public program will cost \$200,000.

www.kansascity.com

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 8

Detroit area school system is moving teachers' daily attendance and grading chores to software, the News reported. Eventually the \$100,000 system will allow parents to log into a record of daily reports on their child's progress.

www.detroitnews.com

Arizona leads: Arizona has the highest proportion of uncertified teachers, the Republic reported. One out of six teachers have not completed certification.

www.arizonarepublic.com

Short supply: The state of Washington has a shortage of special education, math and science teachers, the Seattle Times reported. The problem could grow: 11% of the state's teachers are eligible to retire in the next five years.

www.seattletimes.com

Racial disparities: Wide variations were found in Wisconsin placements in special education programs, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported. Blacks were more than twice as likely as whites to be in the program. One district had more than a quarter of its black students labeled disabled, according to the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute study.

www.jsonline.com

Quality matters most: The Public Policy Institute of California, studying the state's six-year-old initiative to cut class size, said the initiative has not delivered better education because teacher quality has deteriorated, USA Today reported. Lower quality teaching "negated nearly all the benefits from cutting class size," the paper said in an editorial. "States still pouring millions into the effort need to study the lessons from California:

Eric Smith installs more Open Court

Anne Arundel County, Maryland Supt. Eric Smith has chosen Open Court reading and Saxon math curriculum for use this fall, the Baltimore Sun reported. But in a change from his system-wide adoption of controversial teaching methods while he led Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Smith will use the curriculums this fall only at 14 low-performing schools, and only at the elementary level. Smith told the Sun he hopes to expand the \$600,000 Open Court program when the county can afford it.

www.sunspot.net

Teacher quality trumps class size every time."

www.usatoday.com

Greek returns: Carl Lenhart has 40 kids signed up to learn Greek twice a week at Boston's Barnstable High School, the Globe reported. "What is noble and what is good is all in Homer," Lenhart said. "Kids are still in awe of life.... A lot of my job is to inspire. That's what makes a high school kid succeed. You've got to move them."

www.boston.com

Teaching all: Reporting from Duplin County, N.C., The New York Times found a third of the students at Rose Hill-Magnolia Elementary to be children of Hispanic immigrants. "Some people here think they shouldn't be here and let's send them back to where they came from," Principal Darrell Grubbs told The Times. "But the reality is, they are going to stay. And if they are going to stay, we've got to educate their children."

www.nytimes.com

Old pattern: Nearly all the teachers working on emergency certificates this fall in Philadelphia will be teaching in high-poverty, low-achieving schools, the Inquirer reported. "There are plenty of credentialed teachers out there," said Education Trust leader Katy Haycock, "but there tends to be a mismatch between the teacher

pool and where they are." As in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Philadelphia teachers may seek transfers to more prestigious schools.

www.philly.com

Reviving math, science: The National Research Council has proposed a pilot program to encourage U.S. scientists and engineers who can't find jobs in industry or the academy to return to K-12 classrooms as teachers, CNN reported. The proposal would involve only 30 teachers at a cost of \$2.5 million annually. Two-thirds of U.S. teachers are expected to retire or quit teaching in the next decade, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

www.cnn.com

Testing

Balanced approach: The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform issued a statement opposing use of assessment tests as the sole criteria for promotion and placement. The group says "multiple measures" may "include portfolios, exhibitions, performances, demonstrations, and tests..."

www.mgforum.org

Down, down, down: Fifth-grade writing scores in Illinois dropped 10.9 percentage points this spring, the Chicato Tribune reported. The drop was bigger than in North Carolina. And the percentage of fifth-graders pass-

Summer Briefs

Continued from Page 9

ing the test has been dropping every year since 1999, when the test was first given.

www.chicagotribune.com

AP vs IB: Advancement Placement tests totaling 1,585,516 were given last May to 937,951 students in 35 subjects, the Washington Post reported. The International Baccalaureate tests number 70,000 to 27,000 students in 36 subjects.

www.washingtonpost.com

Vouchers, charters

Wariness: Michigan bans spending public money in private schools, and voters two years ago rejected vouchers 69%-31%, the

Calendar

August

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

September

2 No school; Labor Day holiday.

Washington Post reported. Race is part of the discussion, "particularly among black parents who wonder why so many outsiders, many of them white, are suddenly interested in helping their children."

www.washingtonpost.com

Florida vouchers: A state judge ruled that Florida's vouchers spend tax dollars to aid religious schools, and thus violate the state's constitution. Gov. Jeb Bush appealed.

The judge barred "opportunity

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.

scholarships" for 10 failing schools in four counties. If ultimately upheld, the ruling might also end a transfer policy that allows students to leave academically troubled schools.

www.miami.com

Virtual reality: Ohio reports a huge spike in interest in creating virtual schools. More than 60 of the 192 requests for charters are for "digital academies," the Plain Dealer reported. Most would be run by school systems.



VOLUNTEER IN YOUR SCHOOLS

FOR A RESERVATION, CALL 704-343-6245