

## SATs and income

*Average N.C. combined verbal and math scores by seniors last spring on the SAT, by family income:*

Family income	Score
Less than \$10,000	826
\$10,000-\$20,000	870
\$20,000-\$30,000	919
\$30,000-\$40,000	944
\$40,000-\$50,000	981
\$50,000-\$60,000	991
\$60,000-\$70,000	1,013
\$70,000-\$80,000	1,024
\$80,000-\$100,000	1,055
More than \$100,000	1,108

Source: N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction

More on the SATs, Page 3.

# Hoke County-bound

## Prodded by judge, N.C. recasts assistance team model to rescue an entire low-performing school district

When schools fail to meet performance goals, North Carolina dispatches an assistance team to work with the principal and teachers to improve student achievement. A number of teams have been sent to Charlotte-Mecklenburg over the years.

Now, under the prodding of a Superior Court judge, state officials will try the same assistance team approach with an entire school system.

Brad Sneed, the deputy state superintendent who will head the yearlong effort, expects to create "a lesson plan of sorts" that will help Hoke County Schools raise achievement. And he expects that what's learned in Hoke will be exportable to other districts.

Whether Mecklenburg, with its vastly larger resources, will have much to learn from the state's jaunt into Hoke is unknown. But every move in this case they call Leandro is closely watched statewide, because the case could lead to fundamental changes in the way schoolchildren are taught, and how N.C. public education is organized and funded.

The State Board of Education last week approved the plan, and notified Judge Howard Manning, who is overseeing a nine-year-old case that's already led the judge to order the state to move all students to grade level by the 8th grade. Through Wednesday afternoon, Manning had not responded

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# Your congregation can adopt a school: Here's how

It was classic advice on starting a new program. Start small ... deliver what you promise ... pray about it ... communicate well ... go slow ... buy kindergartners some new shoes.

Kindergartners' shoes?

Two dozen people gathered last week at St. Luke United Methodist to learn how to start a successful volunteer relationship with a CMS school. On hand were representatives from a half-dozen Methodist churches, who asked lots of questions and got detailed answers.

On hand too were representatives from Communities in Schools, an organization that has staff members at the 20 or more schools most in need of volunteer

support.

North Carolina Methodist leaders are nudging their congregations to take an active role in supporting nearby schools. They think other church bodies will follow suit as they see Methodists succeed. Their "Hand in Hand" program is similar to programs in use throughout the nation. The time is right in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

"The choice plan has opened the door and created a tremendous opportunity for our churches to be involved," said Bill Jeffries, senior associate pastor at Providence United Methodist. "We can bring on the campuses of the schools the presence of the wider community."

Representatives from other churches at the meeting in St. Luke's basement were mainly interested in how-to advice. And their experts were Rev. Virginia Forbes and Jerry Edwards, veterans of St. Luke's program with Shamrock Gardens Elementary across the street from the church. CIS site coordinator at Shamrock, Angela Beavers, describes Shamrock as "a high-needs school." With 85% of the children on subsidized lunch, and a majority of children in single-parent or grandparent households, there are children in the winter coming to school without jackets or gloves. Some children need help buying the schools' uniforms.

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# Rule change could cripple big IB program

Hundreds of students last week were voting with their feet to abandon the International Baccalaureate diploma program, one of CMS's premier academic achievements.

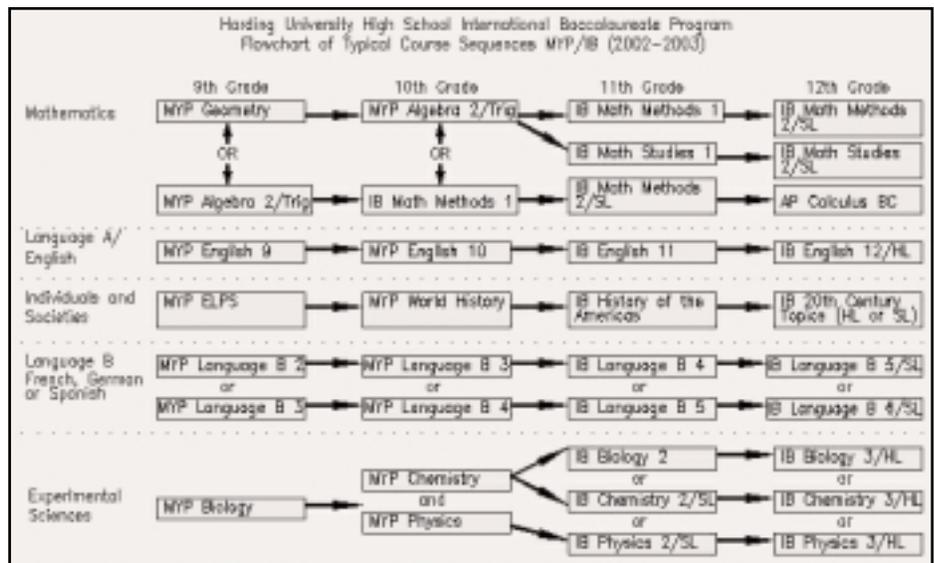
And CMS has nobody to blame but itself.

The saga is more a year in the making already, and the full impact may not be felt for several years. But IB, which has brought CMS an international reputation for the size and rigor of its program, may already be permanently damaged.

On the one hand, CMS wants to raise the number of students taking at least one advanced class, a useful and important goal. This spring, 48% of students did so. In three years, officials want the percentage to rise to 50%, which would mean about 100 more kids.

But, on the other, instead of limiting the push to increased enrollment in Advanced Placement classes, former Supt. Eric Smith ordered that, beginning this month, students could take courses in the IB program without being a diploma candidate.

Because the Nov. 30, 2001 memo titled "Expanded Access to the IB Program" was a regulation change rather than a policy



**The old way:** Portion of chart from Harding University High's Web site shows sequence of courses in IB diploma program. Students now may cherry pick the courses they want, but they won't get an IB diploma.

change, it didn't need to go to the board for review or approval. Some school board members were hearing of the change for the first time last week.

The effect of the change is that students can pick and choose what IB classes they want – or just what fits into their schedules.

Cherry-picking students may say they're in IB, but they won't be eligible for the prestigious IB diploma. Their decision will put out of reach not only the diploma, but the possibly greater potential for admission to selective universities that comes with the diploma.

And for all IB students, the decision raises the prospect that the quality of student work in IB

classes is likely to drop, marring everyone's experience.

School board members last week questioned whether all parents will know, or even whether all students will know, the full implications of their decision to cherry pick the course offerings.

## ***Educate!*** a journal on public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen interested in the welfare of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

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For more information, call Steve Johnston at 704-342-4330, message him at [sjohnston@educateclt.org](mailto:sjohnston@educateclt.org), or read the "You Can Help" page at [www.educateclt.org](http://www.educateclt.org).

# SAT scores compared, 2002-2001

	All students 2002				Change from 2001 by groups in CMS							
	No. tested	Verbal	Math	Total	All students		Blacks		Whites		Top 10%	
					Verbal	Math	Verbal	Math	Verbal	Math	Verbal	Math
CMS	3,889	494	502	996	-3	2	6	12	-1	3	-3	-4
NC	46,180	493	505	998	0	6	-2	6	0	5	0	7
National	1,327,831	504	516	1,020	-2	2	-3	1	-2	2	-3	0
Butler	254	480	493	973	2	4	30	9	-10	-2	27	1
East Meck	321	509	516	1,025	-2	-4	-12	-13	4	4	7	-13
Garinger	167	424	418	842	-14	-5	-12	-1	-1	-19	-3	1
Harding	245	480	504	984	-15	2	18	28	-13	14	33	28
Independence	274	496	504	1,000	1	-1	-10	13	12	-9	-9	-25
Myers Park	400	553	560	1,113	-4	6	16	4	-12	4	-10	6
North Meck.	417	512	523	1,035	8	15	41	40	2	15	-2	0
Northwest Arts	95	524	466	990	18	-13	33	45	8	-43	30	-11
Olympic	173	436	443	879	12	14	-3	3	-17	-18	2	-10
Providence	437	539	554	1,093	6	14	25	53	3	13	-15	-15
South Meck.	393	497	500	997	-9	-13	39	6	-12	-11	-4	8
Vance	335	483	491	974	-5	6	29	35	6	15	-12	3
West Charlotte	227	412	423	835	-8	0	-13	3	-5	-23	23	-6
West Meck.	121	444	457	901	1	3	0	5	4	13	-33	15
Midwood (Alt.)	26	403	397	800	-96	-83	-49	-98	-55	-9	NA	NA

Source: CMS

## Test gap narrows to 219

Tuesday's SAT report on last year's seniors included these developments:

- North Carolina ranks 45th among the states and the District of Columbia, up from 47th.
- The state score rose 6 points, and stands 22 points below the national average.
- CMS trumpeted its 10% increase in test-takers, to 73%, compared with 67% statewide and 46% nationally. Normally, Supt. Jim Pughsley said Tuesday night, adding that many test-takers would pull the average down, but it "held steady."
- CMS's top 10% of students scored higher (1,208) than statewide (1,182) or nationally (1,192).
- CMS's average for black students rose a combined 18 points, and the gap between white and black scores fell from 235 points to 219 points. But statewide, the gap is 207 points. It was 203 nationally.
- Pughsley cited big some big jumps: 26 points at North Meck and 20 at Providence. There was no mention of the 21-point drop at South Meck or the 19-point drop at Garinger, or the challenges that raising those scores may entail.

## N.C. districts

Combined verbal and math scores of selected districts, sorted by two-year change.

District	2000	2001	2002	'00-'02 Change
Union	991	1,009	1,017	2.62%
Wayne	933	950	951	1.93%
Gaston	949	973	963	1.48%
<b>N.C.</b>	988	992	998	1.01%
<b>CMS</b>	989	997	996	0.71%
Buncombe	1,059	1,060	1,066	0.66%
Cabarrus	1,013	1,006	1,019	0.59%
Wake	1,061	1,054	1,067	0.57%
Chapel Hill	1,175	1,185	1,177	0.17%
U.S.	1,019	1,020	1,020	0.10%
Durham	994	992	994	0.00%
Forsyth	1,003	1,000	1,002	-0.10%
Guilford	999	998	995	-0.40%
Cumberland	960	944	952	-0.83%
Catawba	1,010	1,025	992	-1.78%

Source: N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction

# Achievement gap represents 'crisis,' N.C. group says

A third annual report by a Raleigh-based nonprofit gives the state poor marks in reforming its K-12 education process to eliminate the achievement gap.

"The [black-white] achievement gap continues to represent a crisis in our education system that should be given priority over all other education issues," says "Exposing the Gap," a report by the N.C. Justice and Community Development Center.

The report provides a wealth of data to show that the gap is not just in test scores. It is in results on the SAT (story and charts, Page 3), in disciplinary action, in dropouts, enrollment in upper level courses and special education. There is also a marked gap between the percentages of African American children and African American teachers.

Maps and charts on these pages show that the gaps are not geographically isolated.

The report rehearses the history of the Leandro court case, and notes that Judge Howard Manning has ordered the state to change school procedures to deliver a sound basic education to all children. Manning has carefully avoided ordering the state to spend more money, but the Justice Center believes that more money will be needed:

Black-white gap in achievement	
Year	Points
'93-'94	32.9
'94-'95	34.4
'95-'96	34.7
'96-'97	34.3
'97-'98	32.0
'98-'99	30.7
'99-'00	30.6
'00-'01	30.0

"It is our belief that the court decision in the Leandro school finance case will require additional funds to implement strategies to insure that the state fulfills its constitutional education obligations.

"An infusion of new dollars will be needed so that schools can implement programs that will improve student achievement such as providing high-quality preschool programs for at-risk four year olds, reducing class size, and providing tutoring and other individualized instruction in summer and after-school programs.

"Additional funding is particularly needed to fully fund the state's special education program for disabled students and to educate the nearly 40,000 limited-English proficient (LEP) students who need special help in learning to read and write English. An additional way of providing more funds to address the achievement gap is to earmark more money for "at-risk" students.

"Although additional funding will be needed to end the achievement gap, money alone will not close the gap. Successful experiences from many schools suggest that schools can already do much more to eliminate the gap by firmly committing to closing the gap and by targeting existing resources to programs designed to address the gap."

## Gap of 35%-45%



Asheville City	45.3	Elkin City	37.6
Union County	40.9	Shelby City	37.5
Hickory City	39.0	Asheboro City	37.3
<b>CMS</b>	38.6	Washington County	37.1
Chapel Hill/Carrboro	38.1	Hyde County	37.0
Mooresville City	37.8	Forsyth County	36.9

## Gap of 30%-34%



Iredell-Statesville	34.9	Stokes County	31.6
Wake County	34.4	Franklin County	31.3
Guilford County	34.2	Lee County	31.2
Martin County	34.1	Nash/Rocky Mount	30.7
Durham County	34.0	Lincoln County	30.5
Pitt County	33.4	Cabarrus County	30.5
New Hanover Co.	33.1	Pamlico County	30.4
Tyrrell County	32.8	Dare County	30.4
Chatham County	32.7	Pasquotank County	30.1
Henderson County	32.4	Moore County	30.0
Anson County	32.1	<b>N.C. average</b>	30.0
Stanly County	31.7		

The Justice Center reiterated some of its earlier recommendations, then graded the state's progress so far in meeting them. The report says the letter grades A to F are a composite score "based on both the effort made towards implementing the recommendation and the actual progress made in successful implementation." The suggestions, and grades:

(1) Commit to end the achievement gap by 2005. The state changed the date to 2010, and based on that date, the center gave a grade of **C+**.

(2) Create a permanent commission to develop a

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# Achievement gap called 'crisis'

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comprehensive plan. Grade: **A-**

(3) Create local task forces to address the achievement gap. The state has made that suggestion, but has not required local districts to do it, and most haven't. Grade: **D**

(4) Prepare a comprehensive annual Minority Achievement Report Card. Last year's was published in August. This year's version hasn't arrived. Grade: **B**.

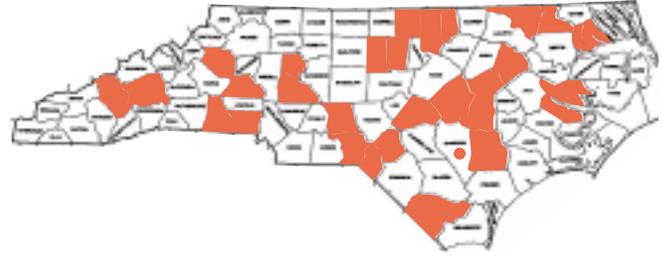
(5) Create a special administrative unit at state level to evaluate minority achievement, send assistance teams and impose sanctions on districts not taking steps to close the gap. New division has opened, but has worked with only three schools since January. Grade: **C-**.

(6) Suspend new promotion policies until all children are receiving a basic education. The state is going ahead. Grade: **F**.

(7) Review discipline and alternative school policies that leave minorities disproportionately disciplined. Review a policy that in effect financially rewards principals when they banish discipline cases to alternative schools. State has not acted. Grade: **F**.

(8) Fund programs that work to close the gap, including preschool (**C**); reducing class size (**D**); smaller schools (**F**); additional funds for at-risk kids (**D**); \$1,000 per child for Limited English Proficiency services (**C**); special education to the level suggested by numerous commissions (**D**); parent involvement coordinators for all schools with high minority

## Gap of 25%-29%



Montgomery County	29.4	Catawba County	26.8
Perquimans County	29.3	Hoke County	26.5
Haywood County	29.3	Clinton City	26.5
Whiteville City	29.1	Scotland County	26.4
Vance County	29.0	Buncombe County	26.4
Rowan-Salisbury	29.0	Cleveland County	26.3
Orange County	28.7	Newton-Conover	26.2
Edenton/Chowan	28.7	Kannapolis City	26.2
Granville County	28.6	Duplin County	26.1
Caldwell County	28.6	Person County	26.0
Richmond County	28.5	Beaufort County	25.9
Northampton County	28.4	Johnston County	25.7
Wayne County	27.9	Hertford County	25.7
Alamance-Burlington	27.6	Harnett County	25.3
Wilson County	27.5	Roanoke Rap. City	25.1
Edgecombe County	27.2	Columbus County	25.1
Davie County	26.9	Gaston County	25.0

enrollment (**D**). Overall grade: **D**.

(9) N.C. colleges and universities should promote the strategies that work. Grade: **B+**.

(10) Increase the number of minority teachers in local school systems. Grade: **F**.

# Bus mileage comparison was apples-oranges

When the end of the first week of school came last Friday, CMS officials had calculated that they were running 130,000 miles per day to pick up all children. They wanted to tell the media how that compared with last year.

But they didn't have information on how many miles the buses ran daily last year. So they used what they had: 100,000 miles driven daily, which was based on data for the 20th day of school, a month after school began.

Lots happens every year between Day 1 and Day 20. Some bus stops are dropped as parents relocate or decide to drive their kids. Some routes are combined,

and some shortened. By Day 20 this year, that 130,000 miles per day is probably going to be less. There's no telling how many miles were cut last year.

In any case, the report that there is 30% more busing this year than last because of growth and the choice plan may be off target a bit, though only a bit.

The district is left with the irony that busing miles have risen as court-ordered busing has ended. Eric Smith rarely talked about this additional cost of giving parents choice. School board member Larry Gauvreau, who favors neighborhood assignments, got no support Tuesday night

when he sought work sessions to discuss the "absurd" increase in busing (Board Notes, Page 8).

## Um, Help!

To complete research and photography in support of the bond issue in November, we need a number of people to call principals and to visit schools to take pictures. Call 704-342-4330 or message Swannfello@aol.com

— Steve Johnston

## State to send team to Hoke County system

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to the state board's plans.

It's anybody's guess whether the state's narrow focus on Hoke will satisfy a judge who has pointed out problems faced by dozens of districts statewide. And then there's the issue of just how much the state will do in Hoke.

"We're not going in as a SWAT team," Sneed emphasized, joking at one point that with the state budget crisis he may have to hold a car wash to finance the assessment and assistance effort.

In a letter Monday to the judge, Supt. Mike Ward and state board chair Phil Kirk promised to examine Hoke's management practices and whether Hoke should use any or all of the 28 low-cost possible reforms already embraced by Manning (story, page 7). An "on-site investigation" would be complete in "a few weeks," according to the letter, but Sneed anticipates that the assistance team will be in Hoke County all school year.

In their letter, Kirk and Ward said the assistance team would be "comprised of experts in school administration, teacher quality, curriculum, testing, accounting and other appropriate areas."

"We aren't going to be going in and evaluating teacher performance," Sneed said. He compared the effort to an accreditation visit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and said it would take a while to develop the assessment tools the "district assistance team" would use.

SACS uses checklists for accreditation that focus on staff members' academic degrees, job descriptions, training programs and the like.

Sneed said it would be "healthy if the judge wants to get involved" in the assessment. "We all want the same thing."

Sneed emphasized that there were no national models for intervention in low-performing school systems. The work, he said, "is going to be very complex."

"Some of the things we'll see are symptoms of low income, low participation by parents, high turnover among teachers, leadership turnover."

And despite saying that the plan was no SWAT team, he predicted that the state effort would ultimately challenge some cherished parts of the educational status quo.

Possible targets, he said, were the length of the school day, the 180-day school year, tutorial and remediation programs, and efforts to push students beyond minimum achievement levels.

Bob Spearman, attorney for the low-wealth counties who brought the Leandro case to court, said he would be filing more papers in the case to encourage the court to force the state into a timetable "for a specific plan." He said he didn't think "state officials were particularly enthusiastic" about

their Hoke plan, but needed to respond to Manning's Monday deadline.

"Whatever one's view of sending a team to Hoke County," there is still a question of "how it pertains to the much broader issue" before the court, Spearman said.

In April, Manning issued his third opinion in the case, in which low-wealth counties, and others including Mecklenburg, challenged the state's level of financial support for education, and how that money was distributed.

At earlier points of the case, the N.C. Supreme Court has supported the notion that the state constitution requires the state to provide a "sound basic education." But the high court admonished Manning to let the legislative and executive branches determine how much money should be spent.

One of the material impacts of the case so far has been a state fund used to subsidize education budgets in the poorest N.C. counties, where tax bases don't generate enough money to provide quality schools.

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## League, universities launch research

The Urban League of Central Carolinas has brought together representatives from five area colleges and universities to study how an emerging Charlotte is dealing with critical urban questions. Possible topics include housing and employment, income and wealth, health and habits, crime and punishment and, from the education sphere, the challenge of Equity Plus schools and the case for education taxes.

Beverly Cureton, director of the league's Joe Martin Institute for Race Relations, says the academics will narrow and refine the topics over the fall. And she's pleased with their approach.

Topics were designed so each institution could work on its own, but representatives say they'd rather have experts in similar dis-

ciplines collaborate across institutional lines. "That's the ultimate of what we hoped to achieve," Cureton said.

Depending on the research results, Cureton said the projects could lead to action or advocacy. An example is the study on giving the school board its own taxing authority.

"We may not support the idea once the research is done. But the concept was to use this opportunity to research a novel and forward-thinking concept."

Research results will be the centerpiece of a fall 2003 conference designed to mark the 25th anniversary of the Urban League. The league sponsors a number of workforce development efforts, and is heavily involved in the state's "welfare-to-work" program.

# The 28 Points: Judge lists what schools can try

*In an Aug. 15 letter to state education leaders, Judge Howard Manning listed teaching and other strategies to increase student learning. All of them were initially identified by state officials, who earlier in the Leandro case complained that it was up to local school boards to make such decisions. In a ruling that is under appeal, Manning held that it is ultimately the state's responsibility to educate the state's children.*

*Manning noted that "many of these practices would not require additional expenditures...." A glossary of terms is at the end.*

1. HCSS could restructure the school day to better utilize the time for instruction.

2. HCSS could restructure the school day to better utilize the time teachers have for collaborative planning.

3. HCSS could require teachers to hold grade level meetings to share strategies that work for their students. Good teachers are frequently an under-utilized resource in schools.

4. HCSS could rearrange teacher schedules to provide tutoring before, during and after school.

5. HCSS could rearrange class schedules to produce more student/teacher contact hours and more student time on task.

6. HCSS could increase the length of the school day to increase instructional time or teacher planning or staff development time.

7. HCSS could restructure teacher contracts. If an LEA is allotted 120 months of certified teachers, it could hire 10 teachers for 12 months, or 12 teachers for 10 months, whichever it believes will best serve the needs of its students.

8. HCSS could establish teacher teams so that the students in the middle schools get all their instruction from fewer teachers, thereby reducing disruptions and increasing teaching consistency.

9. HCSS could assign its most experienced and able principals to lower performing schools, just as it did with Darlene Clark.

10. HCSS could assign its most experienced and able teachers to lower per-

forming schools and students.

11. HCSS could concentrate the assignment of teacher assistants in schools or classes with the highest number of low-performing students.

12. HCSS could assign more teachers to lower-performing schools, instead of assigning them strictly according to ADM.

13. HCSS could concentrate materials and supplies in schools or classes with the highest numbers of low-performing students.

14. HCSS could require all principals to personally address all disciplinary problems. That policy was implemented at East Hoke Middle School and substantially reduced student disciplinary problems, substantially increased teacher instructional time and substantially increased parental involvement at East Hoke Middle School.

15. HCSS could spend all of its low-wealth supplement funds for additional teachers or for supplies and materials instead of spending 25% of that money for clerical assistants.

16. HCSS could plan its acquisition of textbooks and materials. For example, HCSS should plan the acquisition of textbooks to coincide with the State Board of Education's five year cycle for adoption of new textbooks.

17. HCSS could devote more resources to textbook needs. For example, of the \$1,300,000 HCSS was allotted in low-wealth supplemental funds in 1997-98, it decided to spend only \$311 on textbooks.

18. HCSS could require students to complete more rigorous academic programs for high school graduation.

19. HCSS could restructure graduation requirements to improve academic performance. HCSS does not require that any of the 14 elective courses required for graduation come from the 6 academic areas that have a known positive correlation with higher SAT scores. Likewise, HCSS does not limit the number of non-academic courses such as "Physical Conditioning" that a student may take for credit toward graduation.

20. HCSS could reduce the number of physical education courses and other non-academic courses that a student may count toward graduation from high school.

21. Even within the curriculum there is substantial local discretion. The

expenditure of resources on specialized courses, and non-academic courses in a high school is entirely a local decision. HCSS could choose to expend resources spent on these courses on core academic courses.

22. HCSS could reduce class size in core academic courses by increasing class size in non-academic courses.

23. HCSS could use resources to provide transportation home for students who need extra help or for students who stay to tutor other students on the same terms that it currently provides transportation home for athletes after practice.

24. HCSS could have a homework assignment policy. Many HCSS students are not assigned homework and two-thirds of Hoke County High School students in the HSTW study reported doing one hour or less homework a day.

25. HCSS could provide training in effective disaggregation of EOG and EOC testing data and require principals to review disaggregated data to identify instructional trends in students, teachers or courses. If HCSS principals and teachers effectively disaggregated their testing data, they could identify objectives in the Standard Course of Study that they were not effectively teaching and make adjustments in their instruction on those objectives.

26. HCSS could disaggregate EOG and EOC testing data to examine the performance of subgroups of students and the performance of individual teachers.

27. HCSS could review disaggregated student EOG and EOC scores to determine which students, schools or classes are not meeting reasonable growth standards and allocate resources to those students.

28. HCSS could request more free staff development from DPI Student Accountability Services which is responsible for training assistance and assessment teams for its central office staff, principals or lead teachers.

## GLOSSARY

**ADM:** Average Daily Membership, a student head count used to calculate the number of state-paid teachers.

**DPI:** N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

**HCSS:** Hoke County School System.

## How congregation can adopt a school

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Listed below are major points discussed during the meeting that might be useful to additional congregations.

**F**irst task? Find a lay leader who will be passionate about the project. For Forbes, that was Jerry Edwards. “I don’t think it will work unless the pastor is passionate about it. But if only the pastor is passionate, you all know it won’t work,” Forbes said.

**N**ext task was to meet with the principal – Ron Dixon, now at Bradley Middle. And at that meeting was learned an important first lesson: Small has value. “We had six to eight people who were excited,” Forbes said. “I told [Dixon], ‘We don’t know how many people we can get.’ And Ron said, ‘Look, if you get 10, that’s 10 more than we have now.’”

**A** letter of intent was signed between church leaders and the school, outlining their relationship. In the case of St. Luke, a church with an older congregation and very modest resources, the CIS coordinator helped immeasurably as the St. Luke program took root. Edwards says he is in touch with CIS’s Beavers at least weekly.

**C**reating a committee inside the church to oversee the school partnership was next in the case of St. Luke, and it was appointed by a standing outreach committee. Every person was recruited. Edwards advised including the lay leader with authority to commit church resources. “Questions come up on use of church facilities,” he said. Also early on, the group decided how and who would disperse funds – who would be involved in deciding to spend partnership funds, who would sign checks, etc. The policy was in place long before there was any money to spend, Edwards recalled.

**D**idn’t you first clear the project with the congregation, Forbes was asked. The answer was, simply, no. “There was not any point to getting the church on fire if Dr. Dixon wasn’t interested,” Forbes noted. And, she admitted, “Every step of the way we were just feeling our way.... The congregation stayed overwhelmed for over a year. But once we gave them something specific, they were wonderfully supportive.”

**F**irst project? Edwards suggested Prayer Partners, a program that offers schoolteachers a partner who will be praying for them. The relationship can be entirely private, and many teachers have not met their prayer partner. About 25 members of the congregation are involved. CIS coordinator Beavers explained that the prayer program was broached at a staff meeting, and there was no pressure on staff to sign up. Some partners send a birthday card to staff, and Beavers said it’s appreciated. “A lot of times they are overlooked. It’s not often they get a pat on the back.” Beavers lobbied Forbes and Edwards for a tea this year where teachers can meet their prayer partner if they want to.

**B**y far the most questions dealt with anxieties over church-state separation. “We don’t have to back away from the fact that we are a church,” said Forbes. “We don’t proselytize, we don’t witness, but if a teacher wants to be prayed for by a Christian church, there’s a form there for them.”

**M**oney helps, and St. Luke decided to clone its spring barbecue sale for a fall event whose proceeds would be dedicated to the new school outreach project. (Teachers at the school have donated baked goods to the event.) The sale created money for the work, but it also raised the profile of the outreach effort within the congregation.

**R**eal enthusiasm, both in church and at school, was generated by the church’s first big project: providing shoes to the

kindergartners. Needed shoe sizes were posted in the sanctuary. Members could go shopping for a shoe size, or could make a donation. Among the lessons Edwards said they learned from the first shoe ingathering: Simpler is better. The cards listing shoe sizes don’t really have to be elegant. And there’s no need for donors to personally fit the shoes on the recipient over at the school. It was enough to hear the reaction. “I wish you guys could have seen how the kindergartners reacted,” CIS coordinator Beavers told the group last week. “Their faces lit up. It’s always a big thing.”

**T**he school is a St. Luke mission, and Forbes keeps reminders of the work constantly in front of the congregation. “It’s very important,” she says. “We pray for our mission across the street. Or we pray for the teachers across the street.” She is working to reshape the church’s sign out near the street to read, St. Luke United Methodist Church/Shamrock Gardens School/Hand in Hand. “We’re a church that is alive and involved. This has made it possible.”

**I**n just two years, a small partnership has grown. “Be creative,” Forbes advises. “There is no restriction or boundary as long as the school wants it done and you have the funds to do it.” The church consecrated three violins, a viola and a cello for loan to the school’s orchestra. When program funds were cut last spring, a private foundation provided St. Luke with a grant to hire an orchestra leader. This fall, 10 students will gather once a week at St. Luke for orchestra. “Wherever God touches your heart, see what you can do,” says Forbes.

Said Cynthia Marshall, executive director of Communities in Schools, “We can help connect your ministry to the students who are most in need.” The challenge is “developing individualized partnerships with your school. The opportunities are endless, and the needs are endless.”

– Steve Johnston

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## Briefs

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**Testing setbacks:** The Christian Science Monitor wrote a testing overview from Raleigh in part because the Princeton Review heralded the state's testing program as the best in the nation. Cautioned testing chief Lou Fabrizio, "They'll have to figure out a lot of this on their own.... Things change whenever tests all of a sudden become part of high-stakes accountability." Over the summer, N.C. officials trashed results from 4th- and 10th-grade writing pilots. In a recheck of test papers, Nevada officials found they'd erroneously told 736 students they'd flunked a math test. New Mexico superintendents reported testing errors, and Georgia had problems with scores on primary-grade tests.

[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)

**Recruiting tool:** Texas is recruiting 3,000 to 4,000 teachers from other states, the Dallas News reported. The state has signing bonuses and more money for supplies, but the key is salary, which can be \$10,000 to \$15,000 more than in other states.

[www.dallasnews.com](http://www.dallasnews.com)

**Few takers:** Only 7% of the students eligible to flee low-performing schools in Chicago asked to do so, the Tribune reported. Parents had limited choices: Transfers had to be to schools within 3 miles of the failing school, and parents were limited to schools barely better-performing than the failing ones.

[www.chicagotribune.com](http://www.chicagotribune.com)

**Attention span:** Teachers Magazine found jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis in Harlem teaching kids about the late saxophonist John Coltrane. During the show, many kids were restless, but Marsalis didn't blame kids: "If we expected them to do it, they would do it. Kids are

## Nearly all teachers hired by 1st day

**Nearly full staff:** Supt. Jim Pughsley said CMS began the first day of school with only 32 vacant teaching positions, after having hired 1,200 people for the 7,200-teacher district.

**Bond issue:** The school board officially requested Mecklenburg commissioners to put a \$224 million bond issue on the ballot in November. Commissioners decide Sept. 4, and a kickoff of the bond campaign is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 6 at 10 a.m. at Barringer Elementary.

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### Board Notes

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**Heat over bus miles:** Last week's announcement of a 32% increase in busing miles this year may have been overstated (story, page 5), but it was part of board member Larry Gauvreau's latest attack on choice. "We've got policy that this board created, this choice scheme, that is not working.... The superintendent and his staff are trying to put something in that I don't believe can ever work in Mecklenburg County.... Kids are getting on buses at 5:30 in the morning. My own children are at 10 of 6. That's wrong. We've got to discuss that as a board and take action."

Said board chair Arthur Griffin, "You think that the current family choice plan, according to your words, is baloney ("It is baloney," Gauvreau said) and you would like to see us do something different. The board ... has gone through one civil war with respect to pupil assignment or busing... If the board wants to go back through that, this is a democracy and we can certainly take steps to do that. I just don't get an indication from board members that they want to recreate the civil war about busing [but that they] want to move forward."

Later, Supt. Jim Pughsley said, "If and until the administration is directed to move in a different direction, we need your support, every one. You send a powerful message when you sit here and you speak to the TV audience as well as the staff sitting there. We want your support, we deserve your support and nothing less. Nothing less."

**Management tool:** Staff members reviewed for the board one of 18 CMS "charters," management tools designed to schedule and clarify responsibility for meeting the district's Balanced Scorecard goals. The charter outlines how elementary students' progress will be monitored, and how central staff will support schoolteachers to give lagging children a boost, and to accelerate others beyond the norm. Board member Lee Kindberg said, "Progress doesn't happen by accident.... This is what's driving the improvement.... I've seen a lot of corporate strategies from billion-plus dollar companies and this is right up there with any of them." Said board chair Arthur Griffin, "What we're looking for in a lot of cases is acceleration. We're making progress. We need to accelerate that over the years to get where we need to be."

unbelievable. Can a kid have a 20-minute attention span? Yeah, definitely, if they're expected to have that."

[www.teachermagazine.org](http://www.teachermagazine.org)

**4th straight:** Los Angeles saw

test scores rise for the fourth year in a row and one testing advocate was ecstatic, the Times reported. Said Jeanne Allen at the Center for Education Reform in Washington:

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## Briefs

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"All the excuses [about] poverty really can be overcome in part by holding schools accountable."

Elementary scores have risen more than middle schools, and high school scores are flat.

www.latimes.com

**Perceptions of drugs:** A survey by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that the number of students who considered their schools "drug free" had doubled in four years, the Boston Globe reported. But kids told surveyors that marijuana was easier to buy at school than beer or cigarettes.

www.boston.com

**ACT scores:** Scores on the ACT college entrance dipped nationally last spring, to 20.8, down from 21.0. Officials cited decisions in Illinois and Colorado to give the test to all juniors, even those not in college-prep courses. North Carolina's composite score rose 0.2 to 19.9. Among N.C. students who had taken ACT's core curriculum, black students scored 17.5 compared with 17.6 nationally. White students scored 22.3, compared with 22.6 nationally.

www.ncpublicschools.org

**Out of field:** In its latest survey, this of 1999-2000 data, the Education Trust found nearly 25% of the nation's teachers assigned to subjects they did not study in college. Rates varied from 7% in Minnesota to 40% in Louisiana. The Atlanta Journal quoted Trust exec Kati Haycock as saying, "You can't teach what you don't know. There's lots of research to show that kids who have teachers with a strong grounding in the subject learn more. Surprise, surprise!"

www.accessatlanta.com

**The research trap:** Writing for Teacher magazine, Ronald A.

## Grant to expand AP in rural districts

High school students in 13 rural and low-wealth systems are taking online Advanced Placement coursework this fall thanks to a Department of Public Instruction grant. Districts taking part are Elkin City and Cleveland, Franklin, Granville, Haywood, Lenoir, Pasquotank, Pender, Pitt, Robeson, Scotland, Union and Washington. The online courses were developed at UNC Chapel Hill and at the Web Academy in Fayetteville operated by Cumberland County Schools. Courses include biology, calculus, English composition, English literature, environmental science, physics and psychology.

Wolk says the problem with federal mandates for curriculum based on "scientifically based research" is that research projects contradict one another. "Motivated by strong evidence that kids learn better in smaller classes, California enacted legislation forcing reduction in class size for kindergarten through 3rd grade. In the process, the state compounded an existing teacher shortage, made inequities among schools worse, and aggravated serious financial problems."

www.teachermagazine.org

**Retention problem:** Thomas Carroll, director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, says the nation's teaching problem is getting college-trained students into the classroom, and then keeping them there, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported. Colleges train 200,000 teachers annually, but

only half teach. And of those that do, a third will quit within three years. Some schools will lose half their new teachers within five years. Carroll says the teacher shortage is "a shortage of people who will teach in the schools today, with the conditions and at the pay that we're offering."

www.philly.com

**The calling:** Writing in the New York Times, University of Virginia English teacher Mark Edmundson says the "consumer-oriented, test-obsessed state of American learning" is ruining education. "Socrates, the philosopher Alexander Nehamas has observed, looked into the minds and hearts of his students and let them know, kindly, generously, that he did not much like what he saw. Then he began to help them to change."

www.nytimes.com

## Calendar

### September

- 2** No school; Labor Day holiday.
- 4** Commissioners vote on bonds, 6 p.m., Government Center.
- 6** Bond campaign kickoff, 10 a.m. Barringer Elementary.
- 10** School board meeting, 6 p.m., Board Room.

- 12** Curriculum Committee, 9:30 a.m., Board Conference Room.

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.

- 16** No school; teacher work day