

## Great schools

### National report finds common threads in what successful urban districts are doing to raise student achievement

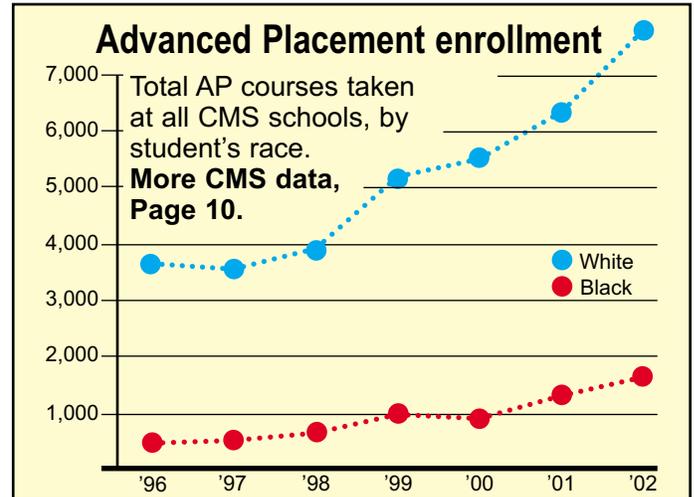
Last week's national report from the Council on Great City Schools goes three steps beyond the demeaning declaration that "all children can learn" to find similarities among large urban school districts that appear to be narrowing gaps and raising achievement levels.

Houston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Sacramento were closely studied, and some material was incorporated from the administrative district that operates low-performing New York City schools.

Details of the report will be better read in cities other than Charlotte. But the spotlight on what appears to be working could also give Mecklenburg citizens reason to support what has occurred here in the name of improving achievement for all children.

The council study began nearly four years ago. On-site visits and focus groups occurred last spring and fall. Among the patterns researchers found:

- Reform blossomed with the installation of new



superintendents who were willing to acknowledge that district failures, not student or teacher failures, were chiefly to blame for inequities and low performance. Superintendents' bonuses were tied to district performance, which allowed superintendents to hold principals and teachers equally accountable for school performance.

- Trust between superintendents and the school board led boards to give the superintendent authority to pursue the reform vision. Trust of the superintendent - and this appears to be particularly true in

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## Bond campaign kicks off, focusing on growth, repairs

School bond advocates Friday launched their campaign for passage of a \$224 million bond issue. Speakers talked about Plexiglass that's clouding, about water fouled by corroding pipes, about security at '60s-era schools, about dreams - and about having schools that won't create obstacles to learning.

Classrooms without space and labs without water are examples, board chair Arthur Griffin said, of the need to be "removing the institutional barriers the facilities create."

Deadpanned science teacher Susan Hoppy, when the fluorescent light ballasts in the 1960s Barringer Elementary building would burn up, "it was a great opportunity to teach circuitry."

The \$224 million bond package would finance in roughly equal proportions the district's need for new space to accommodate growth, and for renovation of older space to meet current educational standards.



A canopy at old Barringer Elementary shows its age. Voters will be asked in November to approve a bond issue for \$224 million to expand and renew CMS schools, and build new ones to keep up with growth.

About 11% of the money would be spent on long-range maintenance.

A-to-Z list of all schools involved in the bond issue, specifying the work to be done, page 3.

# Role of courts in schools discussed

*Notes from a breakout session at the Aug. 30 Chapel Hill conference on resegregation of public schools. The conference was sponsored by the UNC Center for Civil Rights and drew 500 people from across the country.*

Courts have never been true friends to civil rights, Charlotte lawyer James Ferguson told the crowd.

“No court I know has ever led a civil rights movement.” The courts have

always responded to this issue only from time to time, when they had to, he said.

But Ferguson, a partner in the law firm that has litigated the Charlotte-Mecklenburg desegregation case, said that for a country that can move from *Dred Scott* to *Brown*, there is reason for optimism. “Our day will come again!” When the fight for justice manages to move society, the courts will reflect that, he said. Today’s right-wing voices are heard beyond their numbers. Ferguson said he hoped other voices would soon be heard “according to their numbers, which I believe outweigh those voices that would hearken back to the good ol’ days that never were.”

The Supreme Court has caused resegregation, said Erwin Chemerinsky of the University of Southern California law school. The court’s decisions in the 1970s were responsible for the failure of desegregation, and its decisions in

the 1990s caused resegregation. Why? The reason is political – Republican justices appointed by Republican presidents.

Even in 1964, only 1.2% of African American students went to school with white students. The failure to desegregate in that decade was due to resistance from the people, to Congress’ failure to act, and to the courts.

In the early 1970s, there were three problems standing in the way of desegregation, he said: white flight, non-de jure segregation in the North, and unequal distribution of resources. And during that period, the Supreme Court made some of what he called its worst decisions, most of them on 5-4 votes.

In *Milliken v. Bradley*, the court disallowed inter-district remedies, which effectively eliminated northern desegregation. *Keyes v. Denver* spoke to the second issue, and ruled that lower courts could only formulate desegregation remedies with proof of purposeful segregation – a legal standard that was almost impossible to prove. As for the third point, in *Rodriguez v. San Antonio* the court found that wealth inequalities were not against the Equal Protection clause.

The courts have been trying ever since to declare victory and withdraw from the issue, Chemerinsky said. Yet he asserted that any change for the better will have to come through the courts. He recommended focusing on judicial selection.

– Abigail J. Cudabac

## From Readers

### No change in CMS vision

*The writer is CMS executive director of public information.*

In last week’s issue of Educate! an article noted a press release’s use of a “truncated” version of the CMS vision, which did not include the word “integrated.”

Dr. Pughsley asked me to change his quote in an earlier press release to reflect our vision statement in its entirety. I changed the press release; however, he did not review it again. The error was entirely on my part.

The commitment of the superintendent, the administration and the Board of Education to the total CMS vision statement has not been diverted nor has our focus on increasing student achievement for all children shifted. There has been no change in our vision statement or our efforts to make that vision a reality for all children in CMS.

Jerri Haigler

### **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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# The Bonds

## November package addresses growth, repair issues at 59 schools

*Between now and November, there will be lots of discussion of the proposed \$224 million bond issue for school construction and renovation. But first, please, the details!*

*Below is a list, by school, of exactly what would be built, replaced, or added at each CMS school that would be touched by the November bond funds. The list was developed with the cooperation of the CMS Building Standards Department.*

*One item not reflected below is money in the bond issue designed to replace 90 of the oldest mobile classrooms in the system. CMS obviously knows where those 90 are today, but not where they will be needed by the time they are replaced. So schools that might get some of the newly purchased mobiles may*

*not be listed below.*

*The listings also mention schools for which earlier bond issues had set aside money for relatively minor repairs designed to be a "Band-Aid" until fuller-scale renovation could be financed. In all but one case, those earlier projects have not begun. The bond issue going before voters in November includes more money for those schools, so they can be brought up to current standards, or in some cases expanded to accommodate neighborhood growth. The amount of the earlier bond issue money, and the nature of the earlier project, is listed, and in all cases money from both earlier bond issues and the November issue will be combined to finance the specified total cost of the larger project now planned.*

### **Albemarle Road Elementary**

– \$4,428,000 for renovations and new space, \$3,292,000 to meet standards, \$1,136,000 for growth, including 4 additional classrooms. A building addition will include classrooms, art, music, media and multipurpose centers. Administrative offices will expand into existing art and music areas.

– \$120,000 to install a 1/8 mile asphalt track, and resurface the bus parking lot.

### **Alexander Middle**

– \$1,112,000 for design only of complete renovation and expansion, including 9 classrooms, \$385,000 for expansion, \$727,000 to meet standards. Work involves plumbing, HVAC, and electrical systems and site work, and redesign of old junior high school into middle school grade wings. New building additions will include classrooms, dining, kitchen, music.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$3,761,856 in site improvements, fire protection upgrades and an 8th-grade science classroom addition will be committed to the larger project now planned.

– \$165,000 to repair track.

### **Berryhill Elementary**

– \$9,288,000 for design and con-

struction of a complete renovation of building to meet current standards. Work involves plumbing, HVAC and electrical systems, acoustical isolation of current open space classrooms, new multipurpose room, expansion of media center and kitchen and a classroom addition.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$2,038,638 in cafeteria and media center renovations, general renovation and refurbishment, site improvements and HVAC renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

### **Carmel Middle**

– \$16,598,000 design and construction for renovations and new space, including 2 classrooms, \$3,878,000 for expansion and \$12,720,000 to meet standards. Work includes structural repairs and code compliance, complete renovation of existing building including plumbing, HVAC and electrical systems, expansion of media center, dining and kitchen, addition of an auxiliary gym, and redesign of old junior high school into middle school grade wings.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$3,288,900 in kitchen and cafeteria renovation, media and administrative renovations and additions,

HVAC replacement, additional parking, plumbing replacement, ADA improvements and site improvements will help pay for the new larger project.

### **Clear Creek Elementary**

– \$8,836,000 for design and construction. Work involves renovation of existing buildings including HVAC, electrical, and plumbing, acoustical isolation of the current open space classrooms, a new building addition including art, music, and multipurpose center. School will be hooked to public water and sewer for the first time if a way can be found to do so. The old art/music room will be demolished.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$2,069,522 for cafeteria and media center renovations, general renovation and refurbishment, site improvements and plumbing renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

### **Cochrane Middle**

– \$998,000 for design only of renovation and expansion, including 11 classrooms, \$457,000 for expansion and \$541,000 for meeting standards. Design will cover complete renovation of existing build-

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# School bond issue touches these sites

Continued from Page 3

ings including plumbing, HVAC, and electrical systems, and redesign of old junior high school into middle school grade wings. New building additions include classrooms, dining, kitchen, music, arts, and career technical education.

– Project using earlier bond funds for \$3,139,663 in science classroom additions, site improvements and HVAC renovations in the 400-500 building is already in design stage, and will proceed.

## Chantilly Elementary

– Technology cabling will be installed.

## Cotswold Elementary

– \$10,613,000 for design and construction of renovations and new space including 8 classrooms, \$4,820,000 to expand capacity, \$5,793,000 to meet standards. Work involves complete renovation of existing building including HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems, a building addition including classrooms and an internal connection to the 1991 building. The two classrooms on the lower level will be replaced.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$2,084,778 in cafeteria renovations, general renovation and refurbishment, site improvements, HVAC and plumbing renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

## Coulwood Middle

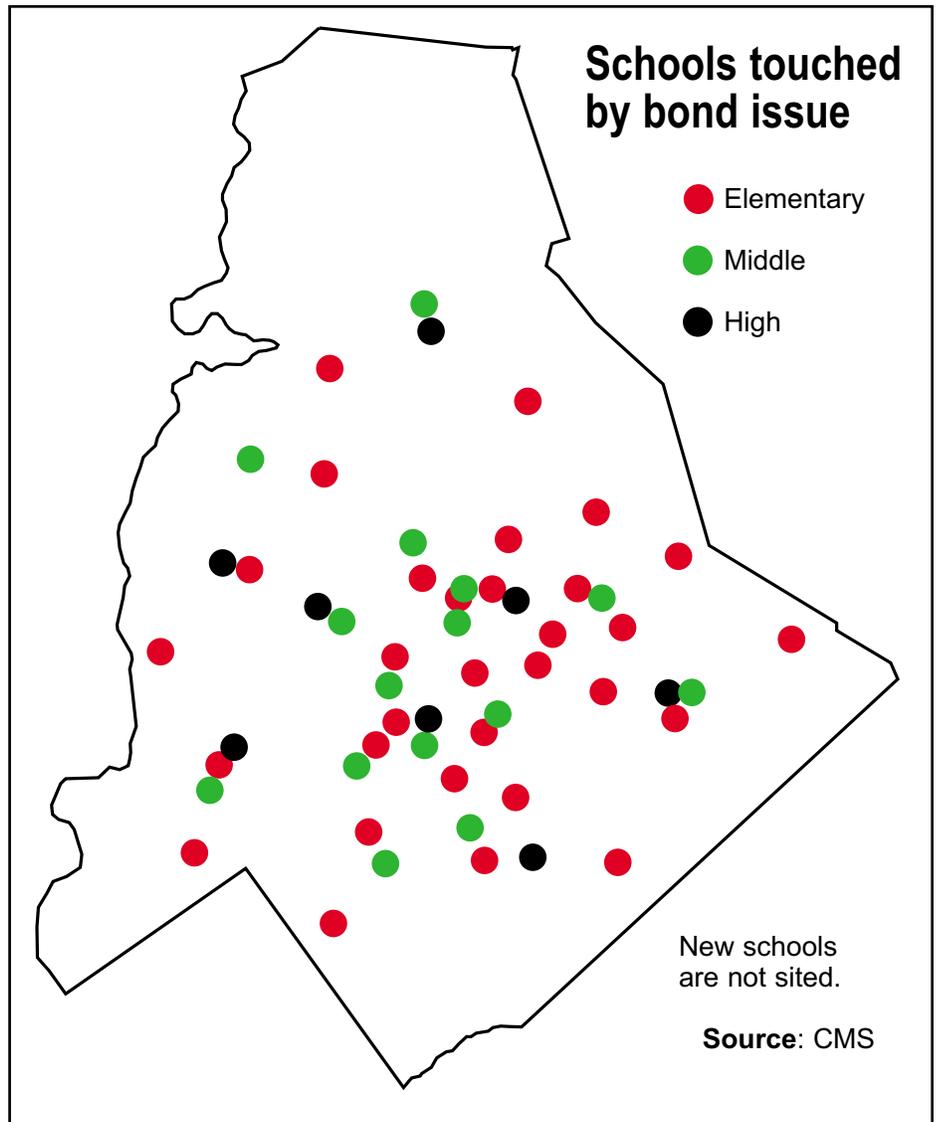
– \$578,000 to replace HVAC piping and controls.

## Devonshire Elementary

– \$1,855,000 to rebuild exterior walls. Temporary bracing has stabilized situation until work can begin.

## Dilworth Elementary

– \$7,692,000 for design and construction of renovation and new space, including 10 classrooms, \$1,800,000 for expansion, \$5,892,000 to meet standards. Work includes complete renovation



of the existing building including HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$1,866,477 in cafeteria renovations, general renovations and refurbishment, site improvements and plumbing renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

## Double Oaks Pre-K

– \$400,000 to replace plumbing and fixtures.

## Garinger High

– \$760,000 for phase 2 design of ongoing renovations to meet standards.

## Alexander Graham Middle

– \$2,512,000 for design only of renovations of as-yet unrenovated buildings, to meet standards, with

expansion including 17 classrooms, redesign of old junior high school into middle school grade wings, and replacement of window walls not replaced earlier.

## Harding University High

– \$275,000 to repair and resurface outdoor track to current standards.

– Project financed by earlier bonds involving \$5,298,752 in science building renovations, ADA improvements, minor HVAC and plumbing modifications, two stadium concession buildings, site improvements and a fire access road is proceeding.

## Hawthorne Middle

– Technology cabling will be installed.

## School bond issue touches these sites

Continued from Page 4

### Hickory Grove Elementary

– \$13,300,000 for design and construction to replace most of existing building, \$6,868,000 for expansion, \$6,432,000 to meet standards. New building for full 800 students will be larger than existing structure. Public agency swap may involve building new school on Parks and Recreation land adjacent to school site, with parts of old structure later turned over to Parks and Recreation, other parts to library system.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$2,865,337 in cafeteria renovations, site improvements, HVAC and plumbing renovations will help pay for the replacement project now planned.

### Hidden Valley Elementary

– \$4,993,000 to renovate HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems, and to end building leaks, all to address air quality and mold problems.

### Huntingtowne Farms Elem.

– \$7,737,000 for design and construction of complete renovation and expansion including 9 classrooms, \$4,034,000 for expansion, \$3,703,000 to meet standards. Work includes complete renovation of existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, and a building addition.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$1,283,249 in general renovation and refurbishment and site improvements will help pay for the larger project now planned.

### Independence High

– \$275,000 to repair and resurface outdoor track.

### Kennedy Middle

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Lake Wylie Elementary

– \$51,000 to install 1/8-mile asphalt track.

## Where the money would go

**43%** to accommodate growth – additions at existing schools, building one middle school, and beginning design work on two elementaries and two high schools.

**46%** to bring existing schools up to current standards.

**11%** to address operational needs that might be in a routine maintenance budget, but have not been taken care of that way because CMS has been perennially underfunded. Examples are stadium renovations, track resurfacings, overhaul of plumbing and ventilation, and updating of computers.

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Lansdowne Elementary

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Lebanon Road Elementary

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Long Creek Elementary

– \$1,064,000 for design only of project to replace most or, if necessary, all of the current facility, the oldest part of which was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Extensive work will require school to move another location during demolition and rebuilding.

### Mallard Creek Elementary

– \$477,000 to re-roof kitchen/cafeteria and part of a classroom wing.

### Matthews Elementary

– \$190,000 to re-roof the Ag Building.

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Myers Park High

– \$200,000 to resurface tennis courts and install lights.

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### New Elementary East

– \$1,064,000 for design only of new school to be built on CMS-owned land adjacent to new Mint Hill middle school off Idlewild Road.

### New Elementary North

– \$1,064,000 for design only of a new school on land not yet purchased in the lower northern end of the county. Facility will relieve crowding at Cornelius and Huntersville elementaries.

### New High School East

– \$2,500,000 for design only of a new school likely to be built under joint use agreement at Mallard Creek Park.

### New High School South

– \$2,500,000 for design only of a new school on land purchased off Community House Road.

### New Middle School North

– \$13,300,000 to design and build a small-capacity new middle school for later expansion. Initial occupancy will be to relocate the International Baccalaureate magnet now in expensive-to-maintain old Davidson Elementary; plus students from overcrowded Bradley; plus possibly some students from overcrowded Martin, if attendance lines are moved.

### Newell Elementary

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### North Meck High

– \$760,000 for design only of phase one renovations to meet current standards. All phases of the work involve renovation of the remaining buildings on campus, a new gymnasium or auxiliary gym

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## School bond issue touches these sites

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and an expansion of the kitchen.  
– \$2,250,000 to renovate stadium.

### Northeast Middle

– \$14,440,000 for design and construction of renovation and expansion, including 8 classrooms, \$3,889,000 for expansion and \$10,551,000 to meet standards. Work includes complete renovation of the existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, a reconfiguration of the old junior high to create grade wings and the interior classrooms for current code compliance. A building addition is also included.

– \$250,000 for repair and resurfacing of outdoor track.  
– Bond funds committed earlier to \$3,702,623 in cafeteria and media center renovations, general renovation and refurbishments, site improvements and plumbing renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

### Oakdale Elementary

– \$11,300,000 for design and construction of replacement of about 75% of campus' buildings, plus expansion including 7 classrooms, \$4,256,000 for expansion and \$7,044,000 to meet standards.

### Olde Providence Elementary

– \$101,000 to re-roof canopy and a classroom wing.

### Olympic High

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Park Road Elementary

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Pineville Elementary

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Pinewood Elementary

– \$13,300,000 to replace existing school and expand, including 11



Security is one of the reasons why it will be cheaper to raze Windsor Park Elementary than to fix it. Most of the school dates from 1960, when all classrooms were built with doors opening directly into the neighborhood.

classrooms, \$4,256,000 for expansion, \$9,044,000 to meet standards.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$1,920,142 in cafeteria and media center renovations, general renovations and refurbishments, site improvements and plumbing renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

### Plaza Road Pre-K

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Providence High

– Technology cabling will be installed.

### Quail Hollow Middle

– \$15,158,000 for design and construction of renovation and expansion, including 4 classrooms, \$5,998,000 for expansion, \$9,160,000 to meet standards. Work includes renovation of the existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, a reconfiguration of the old junior high to create grade wings and the interior classrooms for current code compliance. A building addition is also included.

### Randolph Middle

– \$15,324,000 for design and construction of renovations and expansion, including 8 classrooms, \$6,064,000 for expansion and \$9,260,000 to meet standards.

Work includes renovation of the existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, a reconfiguration of the old junior high to create grade wings, and the interior classrooms for current code compliance. A building addition is also included.

– Bond funds committed earlier to \$5,992,639 in cafeteria and media center renovations, general renovation and refurbishment, site improvements and HVAC and plumbing renovations will help pay for the larger project now planned.

### Reedy Creek Elementary

– \$8,376,000 for design and construction of a complete renovation plus expansion including 5 classrooms, \$4,031,000 for expansion, \$4,345,000 to meet standards. Work involves renovation of existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, site work, expansion of media center, and a building addition including a multipurpose room and classrooms.

– Bond funds earlier committed to a \$1,064,798 renovation of cafeteria and media center, general renovation and refurbishment, and site improvements will be used to pay for the larger project now planned.

### Sedgefield Middle

– \$1,064,000 for design only of a renovation and expansion, including 13 additional classrooms,

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# Citizen group renews search for school budget reform

Back from a summer off, the Education Budget Advisory Committee Wednesday asked Supt. Jim Pughsley to develop responses to a growing list of proposals for budgetary reform.

The list includes recommendations made last May and approved in principle by county commissioners.

The suggestions now on the table include:

- Dedicate a standing portion of property tax dollars to the schools. This revenue stream is relatively stable, and is growing 3% a year. Last spring, then-Supt. Eric Smith strenuously objected to any plan that would lock in

budget growth, arguing that such a plan would perpetuate current inadequate levels of funding.

- Designate the county to maintain school and county buildings.

- Move to an annual budget that looks three years out.

- Use so-called zero-based budgeting, which is designed to force reassessment of every program's value every year.

- Revise budget to clearly show program costs over time. The current document, geared to N.C. reporting requirements, focuses the budget debate each year on "new" money for program enhancements.

- Adopt suggestions of the

McKinsey report that dealt with streamlining the business side of the school system. Some recommendations have been adopted, some have not; some may be illegal under N.C. law.

- EBAC also called last spring for unspecified "management structure" reforms.

Pughsley suggested focusing first on three-year budgeting. Members held out for a review of all issues, suggesting there may be much common ground.

In other business, former Charlotte mayor Ken Harris was re-elected chair. Wachovia real estate finance executive Geoffrey Curme was elected vice-chair.

## School bond issue touches these sites

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\$609,000 for expansion, \$455,000 to meet standards. Design will cover complete renovation of the existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, a reconfiguration of the old junior high to create grade wings, and classroom and student services additions.

### Sharon Elementary

- \$8,866,000 for design and construction of renovation and expansion, including 6 classrooms, \$6,145,000 for expansion, \$2,721,000 to meet standards. Work involves renovation of the existing building, electrical and plumbing systems, a cafeteria expansion, acoustical isolation of the existing open space classrooms, a classroom addition, and a new multipurpose room.
- Bond funds earlier committed to a \$2,650,547 renovation of cafeteria and media centers, general renovation and refurbishment, site improvements, HVAC and plumbing renovations will help pay for this larger project.

### Smith Middle

- \$170,000 for repair and resurfacing of outdoor track.

### South Meck High

- \$2,250,000 for repair and code compliance at the stadium.
- Technology cabling will be installed.

### Spaugh Middle

- \$165,000 for repair and resurfacing of the outdoor track.

### Steele Creek Elementary

- Technology cabling will be installed.

### Tuckaseegee Elementary

- \$9,425,000 for renovation and expansion, including 7 classrooms, \$3,516,000 for expansion, \$5,909,000 to meet standards. Work involves renovation of the existing building including HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems, cafeteria and media expansion, ADA accessibility to all existing levels and interior connections to separate buildings.

- Bond funds earlier committed to \$3,285,996 in cafeteria renovations, general renovation and refurbishment, site improvements and HVAC and plumbing renovations will help pay for the new larger project.

### Villa Heights Elementary

- \$125,000 to replace plumbing and fixtures.

### West Meck High

- \$275,000 to repair and resurface outdoor track.

### J.T. Williams Middle

- \$160,000 to repair and resurface outdoor track.

### Windsor Park Elementary

- \$13,300,000 for design and construction to replace entire school, adding 3 classrooms, \$4,257,000 for expansion, \$9,043,000 to meet standards.
- Bond funds earlier committed to \$1,611,217 in cafeteria and media center renovations, site improvements and plumbing renovations will help pay for the new larger project.

### Winterfield Elementary

- \$8,935,000 for design and construction of renovation and expansion, adding 11 classrooms, \$5,235,000 for expansion, \$3,700,000 to meet standards. Work includes renovation of existing facility including HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems, and a building addition that includes dining, kitchen, classrooms, music and art, and student services.

# Common threads in reforms

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Charlotte – led to substantial budget support from county commissioners.

The council took note of other CMS initiatives: equity spending; smaller class sizes for low-performing students; the A+ program that prepares daily lesson plans for inexperienced teachers; adoption of a single reading program across the district; unified planning time for teachers; and focusing teacher training dollars on the newly installed curriculum.

Which of those initiatives contributed to CMS's success is still an open question. The council's work did not attempt to "prove" the efficacy of any one initiative.

The nine "overarching similarities" of the successful districts, the council said, were: focus on low-performing students and schools; beginning reform at the elementary level; stable leadership focused on achievement; measurable goals, with timetables; accountability starting at the top; systemwide curriculum; teacher training focused on the curriculum; monitoring of classroom use of the curriculum; and regular use of testing to measure progress.

## 'Challenges' remain

The council included in its report a number of troubling issues that came up during its research:

- By far the most important is that none of the districts studied has found a formula for making high schools work. Achievement is at best flat. Similarly, gains at the middle school level are spotty.

- CMS's focus on teaching the math and reading skills that are tested "has meant that schools have backed away from teaching science and social studies.... Some principals fear that eliminating these subjects will create other problems in the long run."

- Other complaints from teachers dealt with the number of testing days in high school; the blow to morale when valiant efforts to raise scores don't lead to monetary rewards; class sizes are rising at non-Equity Plus II schools and in advanced classes.

- Principals reported "having to make greater efforts to raise teacher morale and promote the new curriculum," and having to spend more time on budgeting at the expense of classroom observations and mentoring teachers.

## Mixed news on achievement gap

While one of the points of the study was to highlight districts that are succeeding in closing achievement gaps, the evidence strongly suggests just how intractable the achievement gap problems are.

The data provided by CMS to council researchers show some gains since 1995 in closing the achievement gap between whites and blacks. In the first table, for example, the 1995 record of below-grade performance by blacks (63% were below grade level)

and whites (24%) yielded a 39-percentage-point achievement gap. That gap narrowed to 30 points by 2001. The percentage of all elementary students below grade level declined during the period from 40% to 25%. All of this is good news.

Numbers marked with a minus (-) sign in the change (Chg.) column at the far right are generally good news. A plus sign marks changes that represent widening achievement gaps.

### Black-white gap, elementary students below grade:

| (In % pts)     | '95 | '96 | '97 | '98 | '99 | '00 | '01 | Chg. |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| <b>Reading</b> |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
| Grade 3        | 39  | 39  | 42  | 33  | 33  | 30  | 30  | -9   |
| Grade 4        | 41  | 41  | 39  | 39  | 35  | 36  | 34  | -7   |
| Grade 5        | 42  | 41  | 39  | 33  | 33  | 30  | 24  | -18  |
| <b>Math</b>    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
| Grade 3        | 42  | 39  | 43  | 40  | 39  | 37  | 37  | -5   |
| Grade 4        | 40  | 39  | 38  | 35  | 30  | 28  | 23  | -17  |
| Grade 5        | 40  | 37  | 37  | 34  | 30  | 26  | 22  | -18  |

The news is mixed, however, at the middle school level.

Overall, the percentage of middle school students below grade level dropped during the period: from 39% to 34% among sixth-graders, from 36% to 29% among seventh-graders, from 31% to 22% among eighth-graders.

For the children still below grade level, there was some narrowing of the gap at eighth grade, but no change at sixth grade and an increase in the gap at seventh grade in reading.

As has been reported nationwide, math scores are rising far more than reading scores, and the gaps between white and black achievement among those below grade level has narrowed as well:

### Black-white gap, middle students below grade:

| (In % pts)     | '95 | '96 | '97 | '98 | '99 | '00 | '01 | Chg. |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| <b>Reading</b> |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
| Grade 6        | 40  | 41  | 39  | 42  | 37  | 41  | 40  | 0    |
| Grade 7        | 35  | 42  | 43  | 38  | 36  | 38  | 38  | +3   |
| Grade 8        | 35  | 35  | 38  | 37  | 35  | 31  | 30  | -5   |
| <b>Math</b>    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |
| Grade 6        | 37  | 38  | 38  | 38  | 32  | 33  | 29  | -8   |
| Grade 7        | 39  | 43  | 43  | 36  | 34  | 35  | 32  | -7   |
| Grade 8        | 39  | 40  | 45  | 41  | 38  | 38  | 34  | -5   |

In average scale scores on end-of-grade reading and math tests, CMS closed some of the achievement gap between blacks and whites. And except in sixth grade, the average black score rose more than the average for all students. But particularly in the middle school grades, the achievement gap widened, both in reading and math.

# Common threads in reforms

Continued from Page 8

## Black-white gap, all elementary students:

| (In scale points) | '95 | '96 | '97  | '98  | '99  | '00  | '01 | Chg. |
|-------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| <b>Reading</b>    |     |     |      |      |      |      |     |      |
| Grade 3           | 9.9 | 9.8 | 10.4 | 9.4  | 10.0 | 9.2  | 9.5 | -0.4 |
| Grade 4           | 9.5 | 9.6 | 9.9  | 10.4 | 9.5  | 10.1 | 9.5 | 0    |
| Grade 5           | 9.4 | 9.1 | 9.3  | 9.1  | 9.1  | 8.5  | 8.3 | -1.1 |

## Math

|         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Grade 3 | 12.5 | 12.0 | 13.1 | 11.9 | 12.5 | 11.9 | 12.8 | +0.3 |
| Grade 4 | 11.6 | 11.6 | 11.8 | 12.0 | 11.4 | 11.2 | 10.2 | -1.4 |
| Grade 5 | 10.7 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 10.8 | 10.2 | 9.4  | -1.3 |

## Black-white gap, all middle school students:

| (In scale points) | '95 | '96 | '97  | '98  | '99  | '00  | '01  | Chg. |
|-------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Reading</b>    |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Grade 6           | 8.8 | 9.9 | 10.0 | 10.3 | 10.0 | 10.9 | 10.5 | +1.7 |
| Grade 7           | 8.2 | 9.5 | 10.2 | 9.1  | 9.2  | 9.3  | 9.5  | +1.3 |
| Grade 8           | 8.1 | 8.4 | 9.5  | 9.3  | 9.2  | 9.0  | 8.9  | +0.8 |

## Math

|         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Grade 6 | 10.8 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 11.8 | 11.9 | 12.1 | 12.7 | +1.9 |
| Grade 7 | 10.9 | 11.8 | 12.8 | 11.4 | 11.8 | 12.8 | 11.5 | +0.6 |
| Grade 8 | 11.3 | 12.1 | 13.2 | 12.9 | 12.9 | 13.1 | 12.2 | +0.9 |

One conclusion to be drawn from this data is a rather simple one: While these achievement gaps between white and black children have been closing in some cases, they remain huge and they remain persistent, at both elementary and middle school levels.

As for high school achievement, the council said there was no comparable data available, but that none of the districts had improved.

### An historical note

Newcomers to CMS may not understand why the schools, and longtime residents, are so focused on achievement gaps. The gaps are measured in terms of race or socioeconomics, and have deep roots in discriminatory practices – on both counts – that persist to this day. One area educator of teachers insists that some teachers still maintain distinctly different expectations for minority or poor children and white children. Another example was captured in the council’s report:

“In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the superintendent

before Eric Smith proposed goals and targets that were adjusted for students’ backgrounds. This effectively resulted in different goals for students of different races, a policy that was not received well by some members of the school board and factored into the superintendent’s departure from the district. Eric Smith’s commitment to ensuring that all students were educated to a high standard and to achieving parity in the performance of minority and white students resonated strongly and positively with the board.”

### Work still ahead

The council says school staff face burnout. Former CMS Supt. Smith was described as “relentless” in pressuring staff to improve. Teachers and principals, the report says, found that the pressure “took a toll on their emotions and threatened to take the joy out of being educators and working with children.” Many district-sponsored events to celebrate success appear aimed at addressing morale. And in this regard, voters’ decision in November on CMS bonds may play a key role. Improving working conditions is a slow process and affects few sites at a time. But all teachers are aware when continual progress toward the goal is being made.

Still ahead are two big, and related, challenges. One is achievement at middle and high schools, an issue that will require far broader programs than pushing a few more students into International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement classes.

The other, and it is one apparently faced by all three districts studied, is how to move from success with low-achieving students to success with all others. The report says “...leaders of the case study districts readily admit that while their reforms addressed basic academic achievement, they did not yet create reforms that would be necessary to move to higher levels of academic performance on a systemwide basis.”

Last week, Supt. Jim Pughsley of CMS released a statement saying, “We must remain focused on our core business – teaching for learning – and we have to keep our expectations high for all students.”

Tuesday night, in mentioning the council report to the school board, he said, “Certainly we expect to continue the march toward excellence.”

While Pughsley appeared to be admonishing his own staff, the entire community may need to take the message to heart.

– Steve Johnston



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# More kids take, succeed in AP classes

CMS Tuesday reported gains in the numbers of students taking Advanced Placement. Among the milestones:

**23%** Increase in one year in number of courses taken.

**30%** Increase in number of courses taken by black students.

**32%** Increase in number of students taking at least one AP or IB course.

**50%** Percentage of graduates completing at least one AP or IB course, meeting a 2005 goal.

**28%** Percentage of black graduates completing at least one AP or IB course, up from 24%.

**28%** Increase in number of AP exams taken.

**59%** Increase in number of AP exams taken at Independence.

**5.6%** Number of AP scores of 5, up from 4.4%.

**19%** Number of AP scores of 4 or 5.

**41%** Number of AP scores of 3 or better.

## AP pass rates

*Even as enrollment grew, the percentage of tests scored 3 or better held steady or rose.*

|        | Total tests taken/Pct. passing |      |      |       |
|--------|--------------------------------|------|------|-------|
|        | '99                            | '00  | '01  | '02   |
| All    | 5874                           | 6339 | 7918 | 10174 |
|        | 41%                            | 41%  | 38%  | 41%   |
| Whites | 4226                           | 4557 | 5666 | 7240  |
|        | 46%                            | 46%  | 43%  | 46%   |
| Blacks | 740                            | 736  | 1064 | 1512  |
|        | 19%                            | 15%  | 16%  | 19%   |

*Next week: CMS scores on International Baccalaureate.*

## AP course results, by 2002 pass rate\*

| School     | 2000   |      |       | 2001   |      |       | 2002         |      |       |
|------------|--------|------|-------|--------|------|-------|--------------|------|-------|
|            | Passed | Kids | Exams | Passed | Kids | Exams | Passed       | Kids | Exams |
| Provid.    | 76.8%  | 350  | 899   | 72.9%  | 387  | 951   | <b>67.2%</b> | 601  | 1391  |
| Myers P.   | 44.2%  | 310  | 683   | 54.3%  | 440  | 937   | <b>59.3%</b> | 511  | 1187  |
| Butler     | 35.4%  | 189  | 345   | 29.8%  | 266  | 506   | <b>50.4%</b> | 247  | 458   |
| South      | 45.1%  | 327  | 678   | 34.6%  | 371  | 911   | <b>45.1%</b> | 407  | 960   |
| Vance      | 46.9%  | 218  | 463   | 37.0%  | 298  | 617   | <b>39.0%</b> | 337  | 752   |
| East       | 42.6%  | 238  | 542   | 41.2%  | 279  | 684   | <b>39.3%</b> | 383  | 915   |
| N'west     | 52.9%  | 79   | 191   | 37.0%  | 95   | 230   | <b>38.6%</b> | 136  | 241   |
| Harding    | 24.0%  | 221  | 512   | 27.7%  | 201  | 530   | <b>37.6%</b> | 303  | 728   |
| Indep.     | 39.0%  | 145  | 282   | 32.9%  | 187  | 429   | <b>34.9%</b> | 319  | 684   |
| North      | 37.3%  | 252  | 555   | 35.2%  | 285  | 718   | <b>33.6%</b> | 362  | 917   |
| Hopewell   | -      | -    | -     | -      | -    | -     | <b>23.2%</b> | 126  | 241   |
| Waddell    | -      | -    | -     | -      | -    | -     | <b>19.0%</b> | 37   | 79    |
| Olympic    | 8.1%   | 170  | 321   | 11.5%  | 146  | 331   | <b>18.8%</b> | 186  | 383   |
| W. Meck.   | 22.8%  | 104  | 167   | 21.8%  | 124  | 257   | <b>17.4%</b> | 141  | 287   |
| W. Char.   | 24.8%  | 168  | 517   | 14.1%  | 140  | 389   | <b>15.7%</b> | 194  | 492   |
| Midwood    | -      | -    | -     | 20.0%  | 10   | 10    | <b>8.0%</b>  | 21   | 25    |
| Garinger   | 14.1%  | 96   | 184   | 4.5%   | 201  | 418   | <b>6.7%</b>  | 223  | 434   |
| White      | 46.1%  | 2036 | 4557  | 42.6%  | 2416 | 5666  | <b>46.3%</b> | 3071 | 7240  |
| Hispanic   | 39.1%  | 68   | 138   | 31.5%  | 78   | 165   | <b>41.5%</b> | 135  | 265   |
| <b>CMS</b> | 41.4%  | 2867 | 6339  | 37.6%  | 3430 | 7918  | <b>41.0%</b> | 4534 | 10174 |
| Asian      | 38.4%  | 234  | 617   | 30.2%  | 250  | 665   | <b>37.3%</b> | 312  | 766   |
| Other      | 42.3%  | 123  | 291   | 36.3%  | 148  | 358   | <b>37.3%</b> | 194  | 391   |
| Black      | 14.9%  | 406  | 736   | 16.4%  | 538  | 1064  | <b>18.5%</b> | 822  | 1512  |

\*Pass rate defined as a score of 3, 4 or 5.

## AP course results, by 2002 CMS pass rate

| Course*             | 2001  |        | 2002  |              | N.C. Passed | South Passed | U.S. Passed |
|---------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
|                     | Taken | Passed | Taken | Passed       |             |              |             |
| Music theory        | 76    | 62%    | 55    | <b>65.5%</b> | 66.1%       | 64.2%        | 69.8%       |
| Adv. calculus       | 103   | 70%    | 141   | <b>65.2%</b> | 78.2%       | 80.0%        | 81.2%       |
| Art .. drawing      | 32    | 75%    | 54    | <b>64.8%</b> | 75.5%       | 76.8%        | 76.5%       |
| Chemistry           | 207   | 43%    | 221   | <b>53.8%</b> | 51.7%       | 50.8%        | 57.4%       |
| Physics             | 276   | 33%    | 272   | <b>52.9%</b> | 57.0%       | 53.3%        | 60.1%       |
| Biology             | 325   | 44%    | 357   | <b>52.7%</b> | 61.1%       | 58.1%        | 64.6%       |
| Basic calculus      | 429   | 48%    | 533   | <b>47.5%</b> | 64.2%       | 63.8%        | 67.3%       |
| Physics mech.       | 37    | 68%    | 51    | <b>47.1%</b> | 79.3%       | 62.1%        | 68.1%       |
| Euro. history       | 362   | 41%    | 455   | <b>46.6%</b> | 65.9%       | 67.3%        | 70.8%       |
| Psychology          | 968   | 34%    | 1193  | <b>46.5%</b> | 60.5%       | 67.5%        | 72.4%       |
| Eng. language       | 1037  | 40%    | 1158  | <b>45.9%</b> | 63.7%       | 62.1%        | 61.5%       |
| Spanish             | 228   | 36%    | 272   | <b>42.6%</b> | 58.8%       | 71.1%        | 77.1%       |
| U.S. govt. & pol.   | 242   | 49%    | 324   | <b>41.4%</b> | 60.7%       | 52.4%        | 53.9%       |
| <b>All subjects</b> | 7908  | 38%    | 10174 | <b>41.0%</b> | 59.2%       | 59.0%        | 63.4%       |
| Eng. literature     | 744   | 41%    | 1009  | <b>40.9%</b> | 61.3%       | 63.4%        | 66.0%       |
| German              | 42    | 19%    | 66    | <b>40.9%</b> | 57.8%       | 57.7%        | 64.8%       |
| U.S. history        | 1163  | 29%    | 1311  | <b>32.1%</b> | 54.7%       | 50.3%        | 53.7%       |
| Macro econ.         | 43    | 14%    | 66    | <b>31.8%</b> | 51.7%       | 49.5%        | 60.4%       |
| Statistics          | 410   | 33%    | 586   | <b>28.7%</b> | 50.6%       | 49.6%        | 56.9%       |
| Micro econ.         | 62    | 11%    | 78    | <b>29.5%</b> | 47.3%       | 57.8%        | 62.1%       |
| Envir. science      | 668   | 36%    | 1043  | <b>29.1%</b> | 45.0%       | 43.9%        | 53.4%       |
| Computer Sci.       | 175   | 32%    | 244   | <b>25.0%</b> | 43.7%       | 54.9%        | 63.2%       |
| French              | 99    | 15%    | 136   | <b>20.6%</b> | 54.3%       | 56.1%        | 60.1%       |
| Latin lit.          | 25    | 4%     | 30    | <b>3.3%</b>  | 38.3%       | 52.4%        | 55.6%       |

\* Courses in which fewer than 20 tests were taken are omitted.

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## Briefs

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**2 scores each:** Maryland is revamping its state testing, and when the new version is used this spring it will produce two sets of scores, the Baltimore Sun reported. One score will assess the student's achievement against state standards. The other will rate the student against national standards.

www.sunspot.net

**Computer ratios:** In stories about three area high schools that opened this fall, the Dallas News included computer-per-student ratios. The \$45 million Ranchview High in Irving has a computer for every two students. The \$36.6 million Mansfield High has one for every four students. At the \$38 million Juan Seguin High in Arlington, the ratio is one for every three students. Last year, CMS had 51% of its schools at a one-to-eight ratio, and 19% of its schools at a one-to-five ratio.

www.dallasnews.com

**Promises, promises:** Vermont Sen. Jim Jeffords, writing in The Hill newspaper, recalled that in 1967 the Congress agreed to pay 40% of the additional costs of providing special education to mentally and physically handicapped children. The \$7.4 billion Uncle Sam will spend this year will cover only 17% of the bill. "Our states, our towns and our local taxpayers are left to foot the bill for the federal government's failure to keep its promise," Jeffords wrote.

www.hillnews.com

**Ain't got your number:** A new study says a revision in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, has masked a big decline in students' ability to do basic computation of addition, subtraction and

the like, the Washington Post reported. During the '90s, the portion of students getting arithmetic skill questions correct dropped from 76.3% to 71.9%. Students were least able to cope with fractions.

www.washingtonpost.com

**More subs:** A struggling economy has increased the number of substitute teachers in Illinois by 39% in a year, the Baltimore Sun reported. Average pay for "guest educators" is \$65 a day.

www.sunspot.net

**Budget cuts:** Reviewing how districts are dealing with leaner state budgets, the Monitor reported that Tulsa has cut two-thirds of its bus stops. Las Vegas has killed basketball and cheerleading programs. Kansas City ruffed 35 custodians. And at scattered districts, class sizes are on the rise.

www.csmonitor.com

**In control:** In a review of how a technology lab changed outcomes for at-risk learners, Scott Day noted that students vastly preferred videotaped or computer-stored instructor lessons to seeing the same material live. Slower learners could simply rewind to review material they didn't catch the first time, reducing their stress levels.

www.principals.org

**Meatloaf:** During the first days of a year teaching, San Francisco Chronicle journalist Larry Slonaker recalled, a student wrote, "Its a plauser to meat you Mr. Slonaker."

"For several moments I stared at this – particularly at the words 'its' and 'meat.' I began to picture my body passing through a hamburger grinder, with the student hospitably turning the crank."

Slonaker described his year as "heartbreaking... fun... surprising, irritating, elevating, frustrating.... But mostly, I learned that teaching is hard."

www.bayarea.com

Floyd Davis is the new head of Community Link, the group once known as Travelers Aid that

brings numerous sources of community assistance together for homeless families and others who want to achieve independence and break the cycle of poverty.

But in his first five weeks, Davis has seen first-hand the state of Charlotte's economy: In all of 2001, the agency worked with just over 2,500 families. This year, the number is 2,450 – and there are four months of the year left.

And for those focused on schools, Davis would advise: Half of his "customers" are children.

*Send us your story. For addresses, see page 2.*

## Calendar

### September

**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.

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

Personnel/Policy Committee, 1 p.m., Board Conference Room.

**19** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.

**24** Board meeting, 6 p.m., Board Room