

Valuing teaching: Supt. foresees \$50K base pay

A crucial bond issue vote is less than two weeks away. The momentum of a construction program designed to house new students and give all students equally usable facilities is at stake.

But learning is at stake every day in every classroom, and research drives

home a point that most parents know intuitively: Teacher quality counts for, well, just about everything.

Speaking to community leaders last week, Supt. Jim Pughley said that if he had any extra money it "would go to instruction, for a salary no one could back off of." He said CMS should aim for "a starting salary of \$50,000."

The current base salary is a bit more than \$28,500.

A study in Chicago last year offered evidence that students learn more when presented with challenging assignments. And all students benefited – both the well-prepared and those who had low test scores the previous year. Details are in the box at right.

"To our surprise," the authors added, challenging assignments were not found just in the "right" schools or in classrooms dominated by middle-class or white kids.

"Variations in assignment quality were apparently more a function of teachers' dispositions and individual choices, than of any of the characteristics commonly used to describe students' capaci-

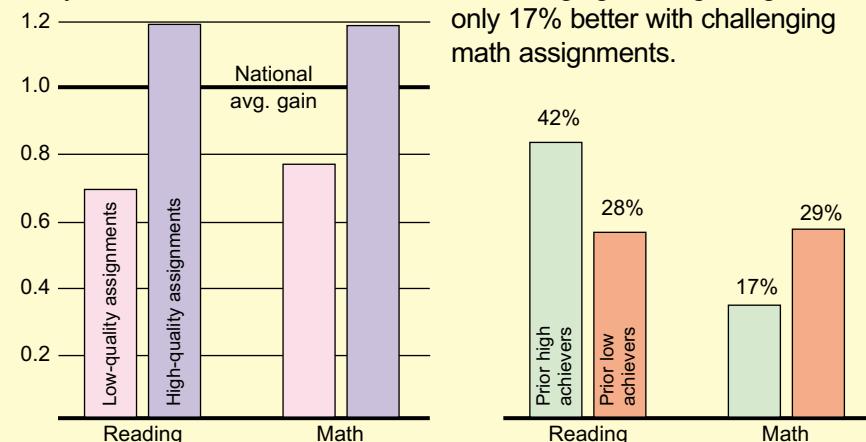
Commentary

Challenging assignments raise learning for all

In a study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, researchers collected examples of work actually assigned to students. They hired and trained Chicago teachers to judge whether the assignments were of low or high intellectual challenge, then tracked achievement of students given the two kinds of assignments. The findings:

First, as graphed below left, compared with the national average gain on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, students with high-quality assignments learned more than the national average, and far more than students given less-challenging assignments, in both reading and math.

Second, as graphed below right, students who the previous year had had low achievement scores, who were given challenging assignments learned 28% more in reading and 29% more in math than low-achievers given less-challenging work. Among students with high scores the previous year, scores were 42% better with challenging reading assignments, only 17% better with challenging math assignments.



Source: Newmann, Bryk and Nagaoka, "Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?" Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2001

ty to engage in challenging academic work.... Authentic intellectual assignments are occurring in at least some disadvantaged Chicago classrooms and, when

they do, students on average learn more."

Quality working environments certainly play a role in teachers'

Continued on Page 4

CMS pushes to meet '05 high school achievement goals

CMS officials Tuesday unveiled the third and final "project charter" or management system, this one designed to achieve "academic excellence for all CMS high school students."

The 29-page plan, chiefly for use by staff, defines the work to be done to support teachers. Examples:

By Halloween, key personnel at schools and the central office

should be able to get online to use Sparta, the Web-based repository of students' test scores and grades. By Jan. 31, an action plan should be in place for math

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Percent at or above grade level, '02

EOC	All	Black	White	Hisp.	Sub. lunch	Paid lunch
Algebra I	45	34	61	45	36	50
Algebra II	65	43	77	57	46	68
Biology	65	42	83	51	38	72
Chemistry	54	29	67	47	27	58
ELPS	60	40	81	41	34	69
English I	69	51	87	49	44	78
Geometry	46	22	66	33	24	51
Physics	80	61	85	81	53	82
U.S. History	52	28	70	35	23	58

CMS pushes to meet tough 2005 goals

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department leaders on how to improve algebra and geometry scores and how to close the achievement gap.

In the introduction, the document includes the numbers above and states:

"The heart of a school system is the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom.... Our commitment to excellence and our focus on access for all students in rigorous courses is seeing results."

About 28% of black students are enrolled in at least one advanced course, up from 14% in 1996. SAT scores have "remained steady" even as more students took the test. Blacks' scores are up 18 points in a year, to 853 of 1,600.

But the document also charts the challenge ahead:

"The goal for 2005 is to have 90% of students on grade level in all 9 EOC subjects. The chart [above] indicates that the numbers of students performing on grade level or higher have not yet reached that goal."

In explaining the project charter to the school board, assistant superintendent Lloyd Wimberley said attention would be paid to redesigning U.S. history and making it multiculturally aware.

End-of-course results in U.S. history are abysmal. At right are results for percentage of students on or above grade level last spring. Other EOC results are at www.ncpublicschools.org/vol2/rsds2002	N.C. CMS All 50 52 Blacks 28 28 Hisp. 40 35 White 60 70 Coll.* 57 77 <small>Source: N.C. DPI *College-educated parents</small>
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The charter school organizer agreed that these taxpayer-funded schools aren't the incubators of innovation that many early supporters had promised. And some of the reasons have nothing to do with lack of money. He offered two examples:

Kids are still put in classes with children their age, rather than with kids on the same achievement level, because the tradition is hard to break.

And when the school tried to replace A-to-F grading with something more meaningful, it was the parents who insisted on the old, familiar ways.

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

Story Corner

Educate! is 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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Bonds: The 'home movie'

Using pictures taken for *Educate!*, The Swann Fellowship has developed an eight-minute video on the bond issue, and it's available to show from your TV when you gather a group of friends. To schedule a showing and discussion, call Steve Johnston at 704-342-4330, or message him at swannfello@aol.com.

Involving parents: Another approach

Ensuring that parents are actively engaged in their children's learning doesn't require parents to take a trip to school:

Gov. Easley's Education First Task Force reported last spring on one such effort that is tailor-made to elementary schools.

"As this school, every student took a set of three color-coded folders home each night. One folder contained the evening's reading material. Parents were asked to read to or with their children for at least fifteen minutes per night, and to sign a sheet indicating that they had done so.

A second folder contained the student's homework assignments for the evening. Parents were asked to sign off on completed homework.

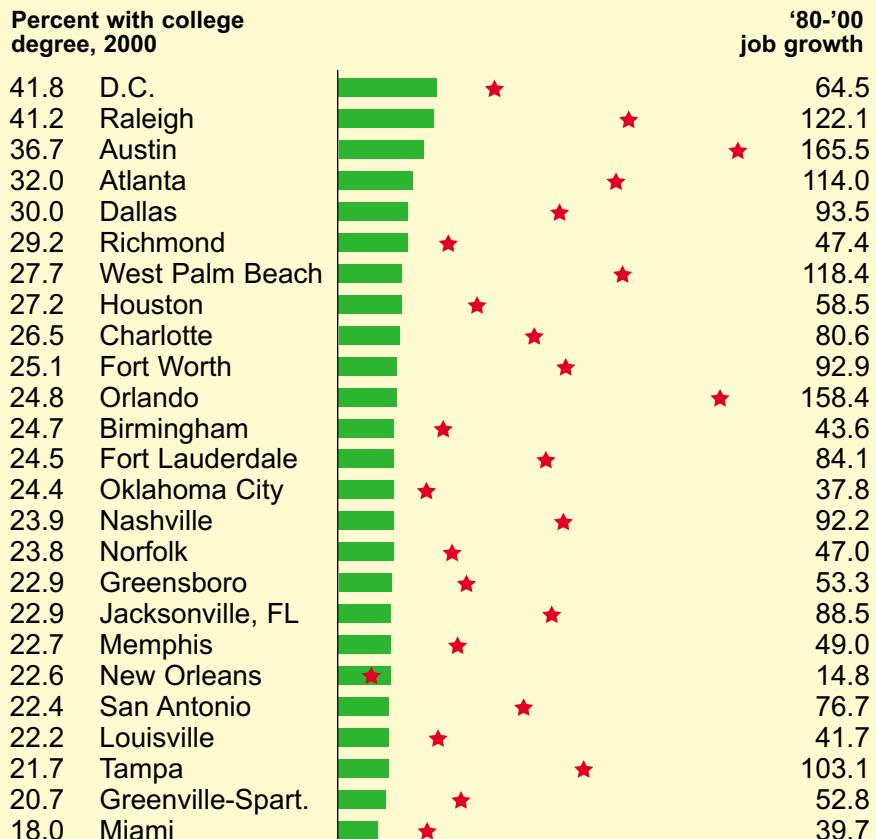
The third folder was for tests, quizzes, or other tasks recently completed in school and graded by the teacher. Again, parents were asked to sign off on this work.

This well-organized system engaged parents in their children's education without requiring them to volunteer in the school, or even to visit it...."

The task force, which was studying 12 successful schools, declared that "the potential of parent and community involvement... is far from fully realized even in most of these high-achieving schools."

College degrees, job growth linked

In "The State of the South 2002: Shadows in the Sunbelt Revisited," Chapel Hill-baseed MDC Inc. argues for a new approach to job growth that acknowledges that education is a key to the future of what it calls the "ideopolis." In the chart below, green bars chart the numbers on the left: the percentage of each metro area's population that holds a college degree. The red stars chart the numbers on the right: the percentage job growth between 1980 and 2000. While the connection is not precise, less well-educated areas at the bottom of the list have not generally seen high job growth.



Sources: Lewis Mumford Center, BEA, Regional Economic Information System, cited in "The State of the South 2002," September 2002, MDC Inc., www.mdcinc.org

Contractor default puts Endhaven Lane project behind

Another contractor default has disrupted a tight schedule for opening a new CMS school.

Tuesday night, the school board approved replacing Charlotte-based Eagle Electric of NC on the Endhaven Lane elementary school project. A new \$632,300 contract will go to Dallas Electrical Contractors.

Eagle is not a minority contractor. While it had not worked for CMS before, it had completed

similar work for the Rock Hill schools. Additional costs associated with the default will be covered by surety. The school, off I-485 near Ballantyne, will relieve overcrowding at Hawk Ridge.

Delays mean CMS "will go right to the end of July or August" but the school will open, said Building Services chief Guy Chamberlain.

The incident plays into an ongoing debate about whether to build schools via a single prime contrac-

tor or via the traditional route of having four separate contracts by building specialty.

"If this had been been a single prime job, when the prime contractor heard that there was a problem they would have gotten somebody else on the job the next day. It would have been transparent to us," Chamberlain said.

Lack of private projects during this slow economy is weakening firms doing public work, he said.

Tough assignments yield more learning

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"dispositions," and students' as well. The Nov. 5 ballot question in Charlotte-Mecklenburg related to school bonds asks voters for authority to issue up to \$224 million more for school building needs. Money is not borrowed until it's needed, and given lengthy construction cycles, some bonds would not be issued and spent for years. Voters giving approval now, officials say, is important to reassure contractors, who might be tempted to move elsewhere, that the program to meet building needs will continue.

(The full list of bond projects was in the Sept. 12 edition of *Educate!*, which can be downloaded at www.educateclt.org.)

David Gordon, who edits the Harvard Education Letter, writes that the Chicago consortium's findings are "a rebuttal... to those who say that a back-to-basics approach is the best way to get students in such circumstances to achieve at higher levels.

"In fact, say the authors, embedding basic skills in challenging, 'authentic' assignments can accomplish a number of instructional goals at once."

Pughley, who inherited a school system with the state's ninth-worst teacher turnover rate, is cobbling together a batch

Calendar

24-5 Parent conferences at schools.

24 Task forces drawing boundaries for 3 new schools opening next fall meet together, 6:30 p.m., Metro School.

28 Task force on Endhaven Lane elementary boundaries, 6:30 p.m., Smithfield Elementary.

Classroom teachers, '00-'01, top districts

Rank	District	Pct. with grad. degree	District	Pct. with no experience
1	Chapel Hill-Carr.	53.5	Clay	0.0
2	Polk	50.8	Ashe	2.0
3	Alleghany	49.0	Elkin City	2.2
4	Asheville City	49.0	Roanoke Rapids City	2.3
5	Watauga	48.4	Alleghany	2.4
6	Jackson	44.6	Gates	2.5
7	Henderson	43.6	Henderson	2.5
8	Mooresville City	42.7	Currituck	2.7
9	Rutherford	40.9	Asheville City	2.8
10	Buncombe	40.3	Graham	3.1
(32)	Mecklenburg	35.9	(108) Mecklenburg	10.5

Source: N.C. Statistical Abstract, 2002

of initiatives to attract and keep the skilled teachers who can raise students' expectations of themselves and deliver those "authentic" assignments.

Salaries are a key issue. In July, Pughley met with members of the now-defunct Committee of 33. One of the messages he heard at that reunion was, "Every classroom needs an excellent teacher, and we must roughly double salaries to achieve that goal."

But salary is only one of the issues. There are working-condition issues – including those addressed by the current bond issue and ones that will follow.

There are leadership issues – not just leadership by the superintendent, but also by school-house principals and teacher team leaders.

And there are support issues dealing with curriculum aids and pacing guides and all the other internal support that Pughley and his staff are organizing via what-gets-done-when "project charters" (story, page 1).

The effort is highlighted, however, by the effort to find, and keep, those who can deliver the "authentic intellectual assignments" that lead to the biggest leaps in learning.

29 Task force on southwest middle school boundaries, 6:30 p.m., Kennedy Middle.

31 Task force on Mint Hill middle school boundaries, 6:30 p.m., Crestdale Middle.

November

2 District 6 meeting, 9 a.m., Presbyterian Hospital Matthews Community Room.

4 Task force on Endhaven Lane elementary boundaries, 6:30

p.m., Hawk Ridge Elementary.

5 No school; teacher workday.

5 Task force on southwest middle school boundaries, 6:30 p.m., Quail Hollow Middle.

7 School board retreat begins at 8:30 a.m., Berry Academy. Continues through Friday.

7 Task force on Mint Hill middle school boundaries, 6:30 p.m., Lebanon Road Elementary.

Briefs

Parent contact: Minneapolis area schools are putting attendance, grading data and even homework assignments online for parents to check at home, the Star Tribune reported. The result: No more arguments about what homework's to be done, and lots of warning if assignments aren't getting turned in. Educators said skipping class is more in control, and work is getting done on time. They see the system as a supplement, but acknowledge it is deepening the digital divide between parents who do and do not have Internet access.

www.startribune.com

Cogita! The College Board says the number of students taking Latin exams for college has nearly doubled since 1993, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported.

www.cleveland.com

No child: The regulations implementing the No Child Left Behind law will allow lateral entry teachers who are in training but have not completed their coursework to be deemed "highly qualified," the New York Times reported. The lateral entry programs are popular with conservatives in the Bush administration.

www.nytimes.com

Synthesis on testing: Maybe both are true – both the arguments that high-stakes tests don't measure the true learning taking place, and the argument that tests ensure teacher competence and accountability, the Washington Post reported. National Board of Professional Teaching Standards official Gary Galluzzo told the Post that schools should test until fourth grade, then bolster the curriculum with "exploration, asking good questions, testing hypotheses and the like."

www.washingtonpost.com

School current expenses, '00-'01, by source

District (enrollment)	State	Federal	Local	Total spent
Durham (29,237)	58.4%	6.7%	34.9%	\$223.7 million
Mecklenburg (101,712)	59.7%	6.0%	34.3%	\$751.4 million
Wake (97,348)	64.0%	5.2%	30.8%	\$656.1 million
Guildford (61,894)	64.2%	6.4%	29.4%	\$428.1 million
Forsyth (43,948)	63.6%	7.5%	28.9%	\$304.5 million
Cumberland (50,453)	68.1%	9.5%	22.4%	\$315.6 million
Union (22,588)	72.1%	5.6%	22.3%	\$132.7 million
Hoke (6,110)	77.1%	10.3%	12.6%	\$37.3 million

Source: N.C. Statistical Abstract, 2002

Not gifted: Los Angeles math teacher Jaime Escalante, whose success with Latino teens on the AP exam inspired the movie "Stand and Deliver," told a Texas audience he doesn't believe in the term "gifted," the Houston Chronicle reported. "No, you don't need to be gifted. You need only practice, patience and the dialogue with the kids to make them understand."

www.chron.com

Another choice: In St. Paul, 8,200 students had the chance this fall to exit underperforming schools but only 500 did so, the Pioneer Press reported. Said University of Minnesota official Mark Davison, "some of the kids want to be able to walk to school, they want to go to school with their friends."

www.pioneerpress.com

Key to gains: Two researchers believe trust is what leads to school improvement, Education Week reported. Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider, in a study measuring trust among staff and between schools and parents in Chicago's schools, found that schools with high levels of trust in 1994 were three times more likely to report subsequent test-score gains. And schools with low levels of trust in both 1994 and 1997 had "virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading or mathematics," the researchers said.

www.edweek.com

Power of data: At a San Jose arts magnet, staff began collecting data on the premise that students most involved in the arts would prove to be the highest-achieving students. The data, however, revealed a more pressing issue: a huge achievement gap between white and Hispanic children. Writes school portfolio director Marcy Lauck, the findings led to "schoolwide change in teaching practices that is personalized, accessible and varied to fit individual learning needs in order to close the achievement gap."

<http://eff.csuchico.edu/middle.htm>

Acting out: In article about a New York remedial education effort, teacher Liz Locatelli describes behavior problems among failing students and says once teachers got to know the students it became clear that "anxiety was at the root of a lot of this behavior. School was a threatening place for them – a place where they expected to meet failure, embarrassment, and ridicule."

www.ascd.org

Computer blamed: Seattle Supt. Joseph Olcheske is scrambling to cut budgets after it was learned that the schools spent \$21 million too much last year, and the current year's budget is \$12 million in the red, the Seattle Times reported. Officials blamed faulty conversion from aging financial systems to a new computer system.

www.seattletimes.com