

## The Porcupine Award



Chairman Arthur Griffin has a new tool in the battle to keep school board members' tempers in check and decorum observed during meetings. But in fact he hopes the Porcupine Award is one that is never handed out. Story, Page 4.

## School Board Retreat

# In search of civility

### Members want to debate tough issues, but without the personal attacks that erode the public's confidence

The voice blared down from the ceiling on the eardrums of school board members gathered in a multipurpose room at Berry Academy last week.

"GOOD MORNING STUDENTS."

First came the Pledge, for which all members stood. Then there was a moment of silence, followed by announcements. Then, on Thursday, came a reading of the high school's entire academic honor roll, one name at a time.

It was a nice taste of school-day reality to open a retreat for a school board that's easily caught up in legalities, finance, some of the most emotion-packed issues of our era – and the personal attacks among members that erode the public's confidence in its Board of Education.

It was on this latter point that

the retreat's agenda was heavily focused. And facilitator Bob Johnson minced no words:

"Groups need to have some common experience before they can trust each other to move forward," Johnson advised.

The group discussed recent lapses from the dais, and members agreed to rededicate themselves to Robert's Rules of Order.

They also went along with chairman Arthur Griffin's new Porcupine Award, which was designed to discourage uncivil behavior (story, page 4).

And they acknowledged the value of talking outside of meetings to fellow members about comments they found insulting. But members' scar tissue is broad and deep, and it's clear that some members rarely talk to one another – except when the cameras are rolling.

As the board explored how to achieve decorum while still allowing all members to speak their mind, John Lassiter recalled Jesse Helms' reaction to the recent death of fellow senator Paul Wellstone. No two senators were more bitterly divided over the issues, he said, but "Helms said [Wellstone] was a fine senator who spoke effectively for his positions." Senate decorum insists, Lassiter said, that members "focus on issues alone. We drift away from that all the time."

Chairman Griffin could have been gaveling members out of order for years, but his tendency is to let people speak. Now, how-

## Board names equity committee

By unanimous vote and without discussion, the school board named 11 members Tuesday to an Equity Committee. The names:

Rabbi James Bennett, Temple Beth El and former member of Committee of 23 in 2000; Rev. George Cook, Greater Mount Sinai Baptist; Kay Cunningham; Richard Helms, pupil assignment task force, Committee of 23; Jose Hernandez-Paris, International House executive director; Paulette Higgins of Charlotte's H.E.L.P. chapter and minister at St. Paul Baptist; Michael Kasper; Ellen Martin; Greg Metcalf; Rev. John

Walker, Macedonia Baptist Church; and Julian Wright, former board candidate and Charlotte lawyer.

The committee is charged with monitoring "the provision of equal access to excellent educational opportunities to all students" and to report its finding both on an ongoing basis and in an annual written report in January.

Board documents say each school board member would appoint one member, and the superintendent two. The source of each of the above appointments was not specified Tuesday night.

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# Pughsley thanks community for support of school bond package

*CMS posted this notice from Supt. Jim Pughsley last Wednesday on its Web site, [www.cms.k12.nc.us](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us).*

“To CMS Staff and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community:

“Yesterday, this community joined as one voice in support of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System. Now that the crucial bond vote has been cast, we must deliver on our promises: building schools to support extreme growth and replacing or renovating facilities that will give students a working environment in which they can thrive.

“In fact, your vote means more than the \$224 million needed to provide our students with a sound education; it means that this community believes in the successful

direction CMS is moving. A clear message has been sent to our students that we have kept our commitment to them. We will continue to provide what they need and deserve to prepare for greatness.

“Thank you for the countless hours that you have spent communicating our need for the bond dollars. Once again, you have demonstrated your support for public education.

“My promise to you is to continue the journey of excellence for every student. I have often said that education is a community initiative. You continue to provide evidence of that every day.”

## Schools, strength of democracy linked

*Excerpts from a speech by Knight Foundation president Hodding Carter on the link between democracy and education:*

“The enemies of public education come in many guises and their enmity arises from many causes, but at the end, the objective is the same: to starve the common schools and subsidize alternatives to them. In another time in the South, my time, it was the very fact of nonwhite faces in ‘white’ schools that was sufficient excuse to reject public education.... It is an old, sad story in this land, the story of race. So, too, the story of the old immigrants turning up their noses and turning their backs on the new immigrants — the English on the German, both on the Irish, all three on the Italians, all of them on the Jews and other Eastern Europeans and so on and so on. We are a forgetful people. But public schools cannot forget and do not forget. They are the great

point of entry to the new world and the great hope of exit to a better life....

“Education ultimately is and must be about more than the accumulation of knowledge. It is a community enterprise.... In this community, its essence is the democratic endeavor itself. The idea of democracy, of maintaining civic participation... is an absolute responsibility of the public schools ... if for no other reason than its own security. Only a healthy democracy can and will cherish and support a healthy school system. It is a responsibility that is not being met by the schools today. We have to change it.”

—  
For more of Carter’s speech:  
[www.publiceducation.org/news/demobedrock.asp](http://www.publiceducation.org/news/demobedrock.asp)

### Correction

The Nov. 7 Educate! misspelled Lewis Guignard’s first name.

## An experiment with school supper

A federal program is paying to feed low-income students before they leave afterschool programs. The effort is designed to boost nutrition — and ward off the hungries.

Mandated by Congress in 2000, the program is open to afterschool providers in six states: Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

Neighborhoods where 50% or more of children qualify for subsidized lunch will be served. The age limit for participation has been raised to 18. Reimbursement per supper is \$2.09. Expansion of the program is not built into the law.

More info: [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/Regs&Policy/Snacks/SupperFaqs.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/Regs&Policy/Snacks/SupperFaqs.htm)

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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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## Board Retreat

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ever, he says, “we need to adapt as a board and learn not to be so negative.... It is not uncommon. What we have to do is fix it, not accept it or live with it, so we can improve the outcome for children.”

Supt. Jim Pughsley said “it would be sad for us to conclude or walk away from this retreat without something concrete, something we can salute... something that will allow us to demonstrate the courage that is necessary to make change.... I want to see something in writing.... It will make my job easier.”

### A bit of news

There were a few news items out of the retreat.

– The “dashboard” is coming.

The idea emerged several years ago as the district prepared to move to parent choice. In brief, administrators and advisory committees thought it would help parents if they could go to one location and find in brief outline all the statistical data about each and every school: location, demographics, teacher experience, test scores, etc.

Most of the data is already available, but is scattered. The power would be in gathering it in one place, keeping it current, and making it available on the Web.

Pughsley said the administration’s proposal would be ready in two to three weeks.

– Bell schedules are under review.

Opening and closing times have broad impact: on buses, the number of routes needed and the cost; on parents’ work schedules; and on how early kids must get up, and whether or not they arrive home to an empty house.

High schools now open at 7:15, middle schools at 8:45 and elementaries between 7:30 and 9:15.

Pughsley has staff looking at three scenarios. In all three, elementaries would open between 8 and 8:45.

The first scenario would continue high schools at 7:15 but move

middle schools to 8:15.

The second pushes high schools back to 7:30 and middle schools to 8:30.

The third involves high schools at 8 and middle schools at 7:30.

Lee Kindberg suggested something very different: a variety of start times in each choice zone so parents could make that issue a factor in their choice.

– Larry Gauvreau put the board on notice that he may ask the N.C. Department of Public Instruction to investigate CMS for inefficient use of transportation dollars.

He said CMS spends \$842 per child on buses when the state average is \$456 and the Wake schools spend \$600. “And that was two years ago,” he said, before choice increased daily miles (box, page 8). More than 200 buses carry 10 or fewer children, Gauvreau said. “We’re looking over it as though it doesn’t matter.... Our policy has got to recognize that enormous cost.”

Arthur Griffin said it was up to the board to decide if the cost of providing choice was worth it.

Staff said their most recent busing efficiency rating from the state was 100%.

### Code words and ‘the rat’

A lengthy but vital discussion occurred over race relations and stereotypes.

During the discussion, Kindberg asked Arthur Griffin to confine his use of the word “equity” to references to the district’s commitment to equalize resources. To do otherwise erodes the board’s effectiveness, at least in her district, she said. She said she thought he used the term “when you’re really talking about racism.... When you use that term for other things you blunt the focus and dilute the effort....

“We need to develop a way to assume that that person is not a racist. But there is this racism thing and that gets in the way all the time.”

Lassiter, who is white, offered that the goal should be “to make



The retreat was held at Berry Academy of Technology, the district’s newest high school and a monument to the community’s commitment to equitable resources for all children. The \$51 million facility integrates the three R’s with training for technology, construction and other trades.

us race-neutral.... Making us colorblind is the goal so we are focusing on the task at hand... children’s needs and system goals.”

African Americans on the board strongly objected.

“A lot of what we don’t want to talk about is probably what we ought to talk about,” Wilhelmenia Rembert said. “We can’t live in the U.S. and say we’re in a race-neutral society because we’re not.”

The Seattle school board recently “decided to take the rat and put it on the table. I wonder if we have the same courage in CMS.”

Racism is not a behavior, she asserted, but “a value and attitude” that may be reflected in behavior. Often, racism involves use of power, and can come out in gender and justice issues. But

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“everybody doesn’t understand the concept the same way,” she said. Comments get labeled racist, she said, “when I haven’t been candid or fair with you....”

The board may pursue the issue in January at a one-day retreat devoted to the subject.

### Reviewing the mission

Gauvreau suggested a separate meeting to review the district’s basic mission, which is “To ensure that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System becomes the premier urban, integrated system in the nation in which all students acquire the knowledge, skills and values necessary to live rich and full lives as productive and enlightened members of society.”

“This is a mission from the past. We have done that,” Gauvreau said.

Molly Griffin said the district should refocus on teacher retention. “We’re doing that but I don’t think we’re saying it.”

“How are we describing what we’re doing?” asked Lassiter. “We’ve lost some of the focus.”

Pughsley said Human Resources was working on a plan to boost retention.

Louise Woods suggested focus on three issues: retention of good teachers at schools with a bad reputation; equal quality at all schools to make all choices good ones; and broadening the curriculum at all schools so parents won’t feel they have to choose a school in a wealthy neighborhood just to get art or music.

Arthur Griffin says his goal is simple: to have all children who are not dealing with serious physical or mental issues to be on grade level. “We should do whatever it takes to make that happen.”

Wilma Leake said she wanted orderly classrooms, sought more emphasis on parental responsibility for their children’s success, and expressed concern that least-prepared lateral-entry teachers were handed the most difficult assignments. She criticized the

## Robert’s Rules – and a prickly reminder

Last week’s retreat focused directly on the personal attacks among school board members that erode the public’s confidence.

The group agreed to abide by Robert’s Rules of Order, but chair Arthur Griffin was clearly looking for something with a bit more bite or, um, sting.

Enter the Porcupine Award.

Here’s how it is supposed to work:

During a board meeting, any member can pass a note to the chair nominating another member for the award after a violation of decorum. At the end of the meeting, any member who has been mentioned in at least five nominations will receive the award.

Griffin was not clear on whether the award would be announced during the televised portion of a meeting.

Most members had no direct comment on the tactic. But said Larry Gauvreau, “This is silly. You’ve got the gavel and we should respect that.”

Perhaps so, but Griffin seemed to be seeking to harness members’ self-discipline instead of depending on the gavel after the fact. And public embarrassment might be a strong motivator.

But alas, this pointed effort to achieve civility may have gotten off to the wrong start. Griffin said he hoped the award would never need to be awarded. An attitude like that may make the award moot as a tool, unless...

Unless the public has a way to make the nominations.

So *Educate!* will take on the task of accepting nominations. Citizens who view board meetings on TV or at the Education Center are invited to submit nominations by noon on the Wednesday following any future board meeting. Leave your message at 704-342-4330 or message swannfello@aol.com, and state your reason as specifically but as decorously as you can. The Porcupines will be awarded in the next day’s *Educate!*



board’s unwillingness to assign the best teachers to Equity Plus schools “where they are most needed.” And she added, “People will talk about a school” and said the public has a perception that “where black kids are, you’re going to have problems.... Wherever there is an influx of an ethnic group the educational expectations are down.”

“Thank you President Bush,” Arthur Griffin responded. He apologized, but in our book he won himself the first Porcupine.

One of the more bizarre moments in the retreat came when Pughsley tried to recast the teacher retention issue. The state accounting system, by which CMS teacher turnover last year was

19.3%, includes teachers who had been fired, not retained, had abandoned teaching, had not renewed their licenses, retired, died and so forth. With those people set aside, the “real” number of teachers departing was, by Pughley’s accounting, only 12.4% last year.

But Yancey County’s rate by the state method was 2.63%, and Wake came in at 9.48%.

### Market share

Lassiter noted that despite population explosions in predominantly white Districts 1 and 6, the number of white children in CMS has been constant for five years, resulting in a declining

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percentage. “Districts 2, 3, 4 and 5 are all impacted by that.

“The consequence is when we go to make a public case for tending the needs of all the district, we are going to have a declining support base to do that. We need to examine what causes folks to migrate out of various parts of this district.

“Maybe we can’t fix it,” he said, but “if we want to maintain a viable system it’s got to work in every precinct or we will end up with enormous splits that will not only divide the board but make it difficult to make things happen.”

Rembert recalled that the choice plan promised to increase market share. But she wondered whether the first year was the right time to judge success.

George Dunlap said he favored diversity in schools, but assumed that as more people came to the county that private schools would grow. Instead of focusing on gaining a larger share of the market, he suggested improving outcomes for children now in the system.

### A consensus budget

There will be the usual budget preparation meetings and hearings this year. And a more fiscally conservative Republican majority on the Board of County Commissioners may well shape the schools’ final budget request. But in the meantime, there’s a new twist, and it’s called the back room.

Usual practice is to have the superintendent present the board a budget proposal. That proposal gets broad publicity, and in the public’s mind the superintendent’s budget becomes the schools’ budget.

After it receives the superintendent’s recommendation, the board makes whatever changes it finds the votes for and then presents it

## Cleaning up their act

*A major focus of last week’s school board retreat was talking out how to rid board meetings of unprofessional or embarrassing personal attacks and other unprofessional conduct. The upshot of the discussion was that the board recommitted to using Robert’s Rules of Order. When facilitator Bob Johnson asked, “What image do you want to portray as an individual or as a member of the Board of Education,” here’s what members came up with.*

- Engage in debate, but role model mutual respect.
- Utilize an orderly process.
- Freedom to express yourself and to demonstrate diverse views.
- Create a risk-free environment (differences of opinions are allowed to be expressed with respect).
- Focus is child-centered (focus on what is in the best interest of all children; actions and demeanor should be focused toward the success of all children).
- Provide comments that are relevant to agenda item.
- Mutual respect (listening skills; focus on the subject at hand).
- Discuss public business in a civil manner.
- Effectiveness (come to meetings well-prepared, behave professionally with a desire to solve problems).
- Focus on decorum (i.e., Robert’s Rules of Order).
- Focus on an educational policy agenda.
- Practice open public records.
- Take individual responsibility for your image as a professional.
- Use personal discipline to adhere to the standards established by Board members.
- Recognize culturally sensitive message that you send which may be interpreted in a way other than you expect.
- Recognize and identify your body language or mannerisms and how they may impact others.
- Use consistency in the communication of terms specific to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; define a process.
- Focus on the priority of student achievement.
- Set aside times to discuss difficult issues (i.e., racism).

to the county.

In the past, however, if a school board added to a proposed budget, commissioners and the public tended to blame the board for excessive spending.

This year, between Jan. 6 and Jan. 17, board members will meet privately with Pughsley about the budget. The upshot, if the process works, may be few additions later. “To the extent that we can incorporate our concerns in the development of the superintendent’s budget, it helps our cause,” said Dunlap. “In a lean year the chance that anything we add will get any consideration is unlikely,” added Woods.

Several board members

expressed dismay that community groups funded by the board do not help promote the school budget when it’s in front of county commissioners. The conversation had the distinct ring of, “this is where the ax may fall.”

“We’ve got some trimming to do,” said Gauvreau, “and I don’t think any of these cuts will affect what’s working.”

Arthur Griffin suggested that the February timing of the annual report on achieving equitable resources at all schools came too late to affect the budget. But Pughsley replied that even if the report wasn’t finished, the numbers would be available and

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would guide his budget request. The board has committed itself to bringing every school up to standards by 1995, not just for textbooks but for lab equipment, computers, library books and other resources.

### Unintended consequences

Board members raised a number of issues that may lead to action over the next months.

– Advanced reading programs have put in middle schoolers’ hands works with sexual content designed for high schoolers. And parents have noticed.

– Middle schoolers are being pushed to take algebra, but when they do they don’t get high school credit for it. Depending on a high school’s math offerings, they may be obliged to take calculus to get the four math courses needed for graduation. Board members, some of whom appear not to have enjoyed or done very well when they confronted calculus, would like to offer some alternatives. Pughsley said the real answer lies in getting the state to allow high school credit for algebra, whenever it is taken.

– Kindberg said that Independence High students have chosen not to follow their old International Baccalaureate program to East Meck, and its loss has led Independence students to take fewer advanced courses. That’s an issue for the agenda, Pughsley responded.

– Woods suggested a study of the schools not chosen. “We need to evaluate schools where people chose away from, to see what we need to do to make sure those schools are reasonable choice options for parents as they see it.” At Tuesday night’s board meeting, she added that one unnamed school had seen more than 90 transfers out over the summer. Pughsley promised a report.

### Accord on the accordion

The board appeared unanimous in its distaste for the way the

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## Where the Pre-Ks are

*CMS Bright Beginnings and other 4-year-old students are spread around the county. These numbers are from Sept. 17, the 20th day (and end of the first month of school) that is used to compute state funding. Bright Beginnings is growing: Enrollment was up 2%, to 2,693, as of Oct. 16. Totals below include all 4-year-olds, not just Bright Beginnings.*

*The majority of the 4-year-olds are in Pre-K Centers devoted exclusively to the program. But 41% are in classroom space at K-5 schools. Research projects are under way to ascertain whether or not, all other things being equal, Bright Beginning children find greater success when enrolled at a facility devoted exclusively to 4-year olds.*

*The research should have a real impact on whether CMS can continue to place the program in classrooms left vacant by the regular program. It might reduce proximity of the programs to some neighborhoods. It also might have an impact on whether parents in the future should be given choice of locations.*

Total Pre-K	School	Regular	EC	Total* enrolled	Pct. of school
506	Starmount	500	6	506	100
373	Double Oaks	368	5	368	100
296	Plaza Road	269	27	324	100
291	Tryon Hills	291	0	291	100
220	Amay James	217	3	220	100
106	Winding Springs	106	0	371	29
104	Clear Creek	104	0	542	19
94	Rama Road	88	6	505	19
92	Long Creek	78	14	541	17
88	Sedgefield	77	11	441	20
80	Morehead	75	5	887	9
79	Merry Oaks	79	0	506	16
78	Park Road Mont.	78	0	346	23
76	Greenway Park	76	0	680	11
71	Piney Grove	71	0	597	12
56	Windsor Park	56	0	446	13
55	Highland Renais.	55	0	413	13
53	Grier Road	53	0	636	8
44	Reedy Creek	44	0	610	7
43	Highland Mill Mont.	43	0	237	18
35	Idlewild	33	2	569	6
5	Selwyn		5	489	1
3	Lebanon Road		3	647	0
3	McAlpine		3	728	0
2	Cotswold		2	494	0
1	Myers Park		1	508	0
<b>2,854</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,761</b>	<b>93</b>		

\*This number for each school does not include EC students

Source: CMS

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administration has documented how many children can be assigned to each school. And Pughsley promised action – sometime.

How many children can attend Elizabeth Lane Elementary? As first noted in the Sept. 26	7-4-01	1,100
	10-29-01	792
	2-21-02	792
	3-27-02	1,034
	4-3-02	814
	7-10-02	924

### Elizabeth Lane capacity reports:

Sources: CMS documents

*Educate!*, six separate estimates were published in a 12-month period declaring five different capacities for the school.

How full or empty are inner-city schools? The capacity formula says every classroom systemwide should hold 22 students. But many high-poverty and low-performing schools are supposed to have 17 or 19 students per class. When a school becomes an Equity Plus II school, it is “full” when it reaches about 80% of formula capacity. But CMS has stuck to its formula, and routinely publishes capacity lists based on the outdated formula. So the public perceives many schools to be underutilized.

Some schools ARE underutilized because of parent choice. Byers and Westerly Hills elementaries are examples. But most of the inner city schools that have low capacity rates (see *Educate!*, Nov. 7) are full, nearly so, or overcrowded.

“I’d like once and for all for you to tell me what capacity is and stick with it,” said Lassiter.

Pughsley said he would revisit the issue, but warned of consequences: Some schools have music and art rooms. At other schools, those teachers work off carts in classrooms empty during planning periods. Should all schools have art rooms? If so, the board may face the need to move mobile classrooms in.

As assistant superintendent Eric Becoats put it, “You will be increasing what you determine your need is.”

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## The Grandfathered

The choice plan allowed rising 5th, 8th and 12th-graders to stay put, and 3,823 did so despite assignment elsewhere. Affected schools may see some shifts in racial ratios next fall. The grandfathered children’s departure might also cut some busing (box, page 8). Source: CMS

Pct. of grade	Total kids	School	'02-'03 percent nonwhite	Pct. of grade	Total kids	School	'02-'03 percent nonwhite	
<b>5th Grade</b>								
56	35	Statesville Road	79	9	12	Smithfield	55	
47	56	Reedy Creek	55	9	5	Druid Hills	99	
44	28	Eastover	40	08	5	Oaklawn	98	
42	31	Clear Creek	27	8	11	Albemarle Road	88	
42	36	Tuckaseegee	68	6	7	McAlpine	24	
40	25	Nations Ford	87	5	5	Huntersville	17	
39	30	Lincoln Heights	90	5	3	Reid Park	99	
39	75	Blythe	27	4	2	Chantilly	93	
38	31	Selwyn	22	4	2	Oakhurst	74	
38	44	Hornets Nest	79	3	6	Matthews	19	
37	18	Cotswold	61	3	1	Irwin Avenue	87	
36	51	David Cox Road	49	2	4	Cornelius	13	
36	26	Winterfield	89	2	1	Barringer	66	
35	9	Sterling	92	2	1	First Ward	96	
35	18	Lansdowne	46	1	2	Hawk Ridge	20	
34	32	Merry Oaks	86	0	0	Mtn. Island (new)	30	
33	24	Pinewood	79	0	0	Prov. Spring (new)	9	
32	21	Huntingtowne Farms	67	0	0	W. G. Byers (new)	99	
30	59	Nath. Alexander	86	<b>8th Grade</b>				
30	22	Westerly Hills	93	47	51	Cochrane	92	
28	30	Olde Providence	20	45	67	Ranson	85	
26	28	J.H. Gunn	70	33	43	Wilson	81	
26	39	University Meadows	78	32	140	Alexander	41	
27	22	Montclair	83	24	120	Bradley	26	
26	30	Crown Point	52	21	94	Northridge	81	
26	23	Idlewild	90	21	89	Northeast	31	
26	30	Newell	76	19	54	South Charlotte	19	
25	13	Ashley Park	95	18	53	Carmel	41	
25	32	Hickory Grove	77	18	20	Sedgefield	80	
24	17	Windsor Park	83	16	43	Albemarle Road	78	
24	32	Mallard Creek	52	16	19	Spaugh	93	
24	29	Pineville	44	156	61	Quail Hollow	53	
24	13	Berryhill	63	14	32	A. Graham	32	
23	40	Elizabeth Lane	12	13	71	Martin	84	
22	19	Shamrock Gardens	89	13	49	Coulwood	59	
22	21	Devonshire	97	12	55	Crestdale	25	
22	24	Lebanon Road	53	12	28	Eastway	86	
22	20	Briarwood	99	7	22	McClintock	57	
20	17	Sedgefield	87	4	14	Kennedy	63	
20	16	Paw Creek	51	1	2	J.T. Williams	97	
20	16	Thomasboro	96	0	0	Marie G. Davis	96	
20	29	Davidson	12	0	0	Robinson (new)	20	
19	11	Allenbrook	86	<b>12th Grade</b>				
19	22	Greenway Park	61	49	167	Butler	31	
19	15	Pawtucket	77	49	53	West Charlotte	95	
18	13	Beverly Woods	29	46	169	East	51	
18	31	Lake Wylie	41	38	159	Myers Park	36	
17	19	Bain	13	36	177	Vance	70	
17	17	Piney Grove	65	31	141	Independence	60	
16	28	Steele Creek	68	28	35	Garinger	88	
14	10	Highland Renais.	90	21	108	Providence	18	
12	9	Rama Road	57	18	54	North	29	
12	7	Oakdale	72	18	33	E.E. Waddell	74	
11	17	McKee Road	14	12	23	West Meck	73	
10	6	Sharon	33	11	44	South	33	
9	7	Hidden Valley	98	8	16	Olympic	60	
9	7	Long Creek	31	6	20	Hopewell	31	



Continued from Page 7

**Face time**

A portion of the Friday discussion dealt with board members' time together. Under N.C. law, those times must be in public view, and TV cameras are nearly as common as Palm Pilots at meetings. Playing to the cameras – or communicating with one's constituencies – is a constant problem.

A case in point was a discussion of Bright Beginnings. Gauvreau's critique of the program was not new, and the defenses of it by Woods, Molly Griffin, Rembert and Pughsley weren't either.

But it WAS a discussion, which is relatively rare at regular meetings like Tuesday's. A number of board members suggested more time to discuss big issues. But the chairman asked for patience, because other members think the board meets too much already.

In years past, in addition to the two regular meetings a month that are televised, the board held a work session. Attendance was sometimes light. Since then, regular agendas have become chock full of recognitions, awards ceremonies and lengthy Power Point presentations from staff. Stalwarts in the TV audience and at the Education Center rarely see board members really explore an issue with each other.

Rembert said getting staff reports more in advance of regular meetings would aid discussion. That was the format for the retreat: Board members received a thick notebook of staff reports

**The busing load**

*The choice plan offered transportation to more children, and with grandfathering (chart, page 7) and other options the number of miles driven zoomed on the first day this fall to 133,329, from 100,073 last fall.*

*But since opening day, much has settled down. Daily mileage has dropped, for example, from 133,329 to 122,519. Here are some of the transportation effort's vital statistics this fall. The comparison numbers are mostly from the beginning of the '01-'02 year, but those marked with an asterisk (\*) are from the end of that school year.*

	'01-'02	October '02	Change
Total school population	105,936	112,163	+6%
Eliible for service	97,000	104,709	+8%
Assigned to bus runs	92,091	87,231	- 5%
Total A.M. stops	*25,299	30,712	+21%
Total P.M. stops	*27,556	32,652	+18%
Alternative stops (mostly day care)		1,439	
Total A.M. routes	*2,130	2,312	+9%
Total P.M. routes	*2,131	2,331	+9%
Buses in use	1,043	1,135	+9%
Total mileage daily	100,073	122,519	+22%
Total hours	6,242	7,502	+20%

As for ride times, this rural state considers a 75-minute ride to school reasonable. CMS ride times now average 18 minutes for home-school students, 28 minutes for those going to choice schools, 36 minutes to magnets, and students returning to their old schools under grandfathering provisions average 36 minutes.

Of the 87,000 students assigned to bus rides, about 2% ride more than 75 minutes: 114 to home schools, 154 to choice schools, 979 to magnets, and 104 under grandfathering.

For parents, the data may not ring true. That's because CMS counts the time from pickup to school arrival. Parents count from pickup to when class begins – which can be a much larger number.

Source: CMS

in advance. It led to more intelligent debate.

"The public might have enjoyed

some of the discourse here yesterday and today," Rembert said.

– Steve Johnston

**Sound off! for quality education**

**The Charlotte Post:** By e-mail: thepost@clt.mindspring.com; by fax: 704-342-2160; by mail: Editor, The Charlotte Post, 1531 Camden Road, Charlotte, NC 28203-4783.

**The Charlotte Observer:** By e-mail: opinion@charlotteobserver.com; by fax: 704-358-5022; by mail: The Observer Forum, The Charlotte Observer, P.O. Box 30308, Charlotte, NC 28230-0308.

**La Noticia:** 6101 Idlewild Road Suite 328, Charlotte, NC 28212.

**Educate!:** By e-mail: swannfello@aol.com; by fax: 704-342-4550; 1510 E. 7th St. Charlotte, NC 28204-2410.



# Choice adds to concentration of minorities, poor

To fulfill a school board member request, CMS released school data on minority and subsidized lunch populations for this year as compared with last year before the choice plan was implemented.

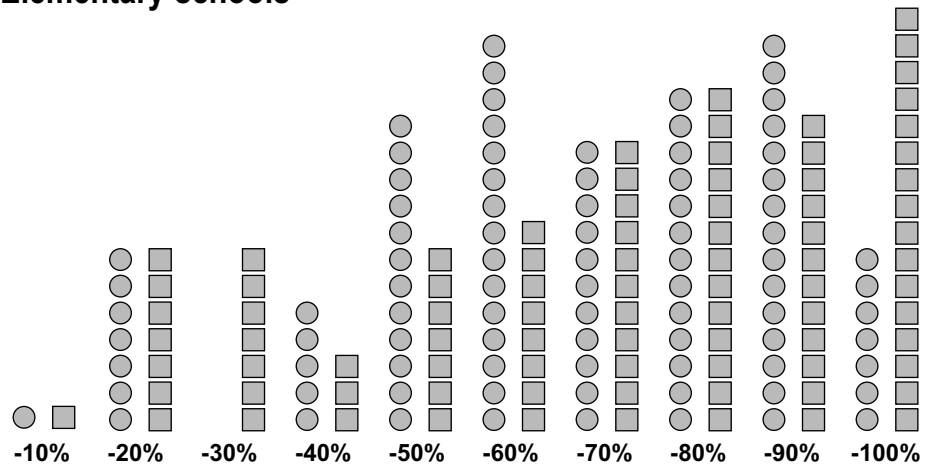
The minority charts are at the right. In the elementary chart, for example, the number of schools with 91 to 100% minority enrollment has risen from 7 schools to 16. And while there's been no change in the number of schools with minority enrollment of 20% or less, the number of schools in the 41% to 60% range has dropped by 44%.

Charts below show schools with subsidized-lunch enrollment of 50% or more. The major change with the choice plan, as predicted, has been a large increase in the number of elementary schools with 80% or more of their students poor enough to qualify for subsidized lunch.

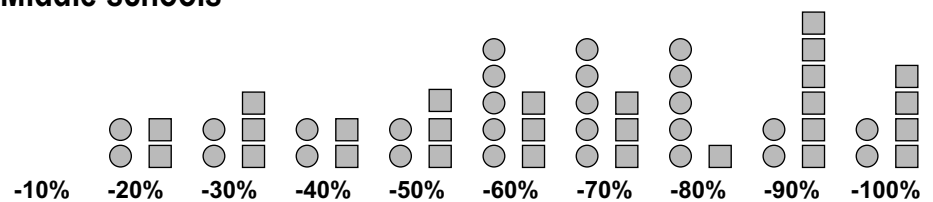
The concentration of poor children helped drive the number of costly Equity Plus II schools to 54 this year.

## Schools by minority enrollment, '01-'02 (○) vs. '02-'03 (■)

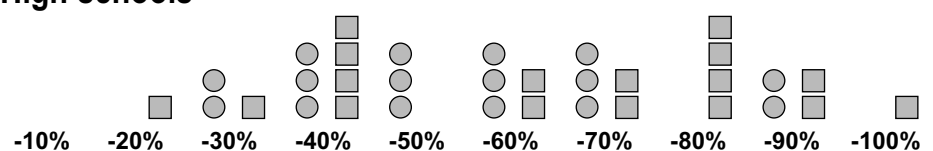
### Elementary schools



### Middle schools



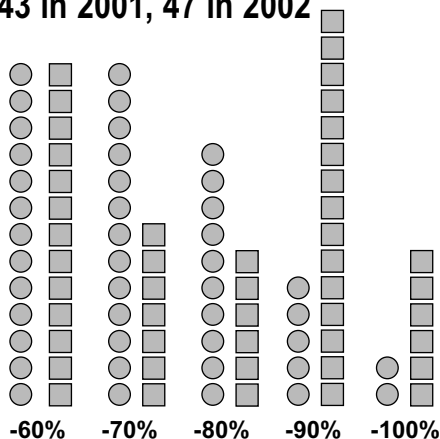
### High schools



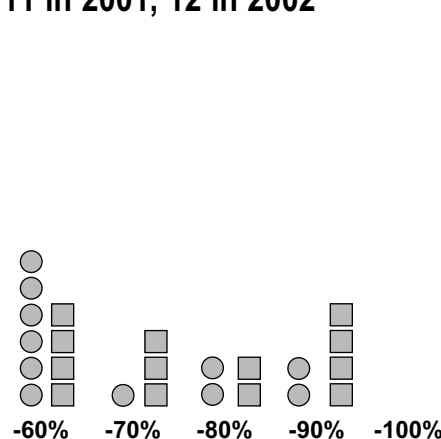
Data source: CMS

## Schools by subsidized-lunch enrollment, '01-'02 (○) vs. '02-'03 (■)

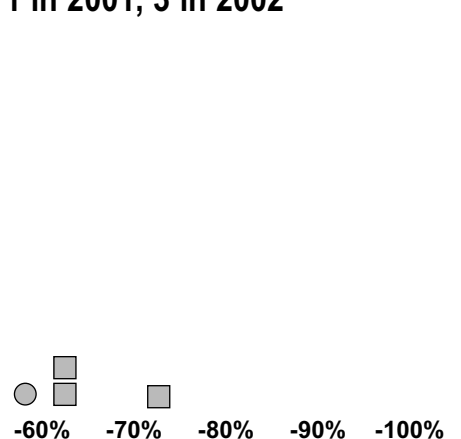
### Elementary schools: 43 in 2001, 47 in 2002



### Middle schools: 11 in 2001, 12 in 2002



### High schools: 1 in 2001, 3 in 2002



## Briefs

**Lube while you teach:** The Seattle Times reported that a school on Mercer Island has a new twist on perks to attract teachers: A local business picks up cars from school and performs pre-arranged maintenance. Expansion of the project may involve a dry cleaner, florist and a drugstore.

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

**Miami choice:** The Miami-Dade schools will adopt a choice plan, Education Week reported. The 365,000-student district enrolled 7,000 fewer students than projected this year, and blamed vouchers, charter schools and other choice options. School officials expect the plan will cut busing costs by dispersing magnet programs closer to home.

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

**Class size:** State deficits are blamed as Los Angeles classrooms overflow, the Times reported. Classes range to 50 students in white middle-class neighborhood schools that don't get funds targeted to high-poverty schools.

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

**Veni vidi dormivi:** The Power Nap Club ("I came, I saw, I slept") is 4 years old and members are still nodding off at Greenwich High in Greenwich, Conn., the Chicago Tribune reported. The high-achieving students learn relaxation techniques or just fall asleep at 20-minute meetings Monday afternoons.

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

**Houston bonds:** As Mecklenburg approved \$224 million in school bonds by 63%, Houston voters approved an \$808.6 million bond issue by 67%. Property taxes will rise 6 cents. The bond issue is the second of three to equalize facilities across the Texas district.

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

## Mister Smith goes to Washington

*Excerpts from a lengthy Sunday article in the Washington Post about former CMS Supt. Eric Smith, now superintendent of Anne Arundel County, Md. schools:*

"Already, all eyes are on him, this 52-year-old, tall, lanky guy with the floppy boy's haircut and a remarkably large head whose size seems proportionate to his ego. Everyone is wondering: Did he create a model in North Carolina that can be followed anywhere? Or is what he achieved in Charlotte a fluke?..."

"In Florida he learned one of his most important lessons in education.... Visiting an algebra class with a mentor... the teacher was going gangbusters, standing at the board with 'chalk flying everywhere,' he remembers. Smith was impressed. His mentor was appalled. 'Don't look at the teacher,' his mentor directed. 'Look at the kids. What are they doing?' In that algebra class, the 'teacher was engaged. The kids were sound asleep.' To this day, Smith's mantra remains: 'If the kids didn't learn it, you didn't teach it'...."

"Additionally, Smith's grand ideas come with hefty price tags – and this time, he's in a county with a voter-imposed tax cap and a history of being tightfisted with its public schools. Until recently, the state was forking over millions of dollars in new aid to local school systems, but that was before it faced a projected shortfall of \$1.7 billion. Now Smith will have to fund his ambitious goals without much help from the state. Already, he's cut \$12 million from Anne Arundel's school construction budget, which could be used to fund an International Baccalaureate program or the creation of magnet schools. But some school board members are already voicing worries about the cost of new programs."

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9133-2002Nov5.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9133-2002Nov5.html)

**Choose families:** In a column for the Association of School Administrators, Huron, S.D., Supt. Randall Zitterkopf satirically writes that if pundits are right that family is the most important determinant of a child's success, then instead of parental choice of schools, we ought to exploring children's choice of parents.

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

## Calendar

- 14 Task force on Mint Hill middle school boundaries, 6:30 p.m., Albemarle Road Middle.
- 14 Panel on arbitrary police profiling, 9 a.m., Police & Fire Training Academy.
- 16 Workshop on African-American Genealogy, \$5 per person, 8:30 a.m. registration, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church,

3301 Beatties Ford Rd. Bring bag lunch; drinks furnished. Sponsor: Comprehensive Genealogical Services.

- 19 Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services.
- 20 School board work session, noon, Board Room.
- 21 Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Education Center.
- 26 Curriculum Committee, 3:30 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 26 School board meeting, 6 p.m., Board Room.

## December

- 3 Board work session, noon, Board Room.
- 12 Parents on the Move workshop, 7-9 p.m., Sugaw Creek Recreation Center, 943 W. Sugar Creek Rd.