

## N.C. report card

Percent of N.C. students proficient on national NAEP test:

- Grade 4 math: 28%**
- Grade 8 math: 30%**
- Grade 4 science: 24%**
- Grade 8 science: 27%**

These numbers and hundreds more are part of an annual Quality Counts project published by Education Week.

More details from the report, Page 6.

## Crunch time on 'No Child'

### States have just weeks to settle on key definitions that schools must meet

It's crunch time for No Child, and the states are grousing.

States have until Jan. 31 to write key rules for a federally mandated testing program. The N.C. Board of Education meets today, and faces a list of 19 issues that have yet to be resolved.

A recent Washington Post story on No Child showcased North Carolina's Mike Ward. The state superintendent says about 60% of N.C. schools that are making progress still face being labeled failing because of No Child's "federal formula that doesn't make a lot of sense."

In Kentucky, the Lexington Herald-Leader estimated that 772

Continued on Page 3

# N.C. bucks a trend

## Controversial national study finds more dropouts and fewer graduates since high school exit exams began; but N.C. situation is different – and for a good reason

It was an important story published during the post-Christmas news lull so it got lots of attention: As broken by The New York Times, the story was that a study conducted at Arizona State University had found that "rigorous testing... does little to improve achievement and may even actually worsen academic performance and dropout rates."

The story spoke to, and heightened, fears of parents who worry that testing on a single day per year can't properly assess their children's academic progress.

For North Carolina parents, however, there's a surprise ending: North Carolina's experience defies the national trend.

N.C. dropout rates have decreased as compared to the nation's. Since exams began, the N.C. graduation rate has not decreased, as it has nationwide. The report says the trend (at right) is unclear.

And the rate at which North Carolinians are taking the GED exam rather than graduating from high school has decreased, rather than increasing as it has nationally.

N.C. testing guru Lou Fabrizio says North Carolina has avoided some of the negative fallout from testing because, from the beginning, it has been testing the material that's in the curriculum.

"Our tests are designed to test what our teachers are teaching," Fabrizio said from Raleigh last week. "Our curriculum is also aligned with NAEP," the national

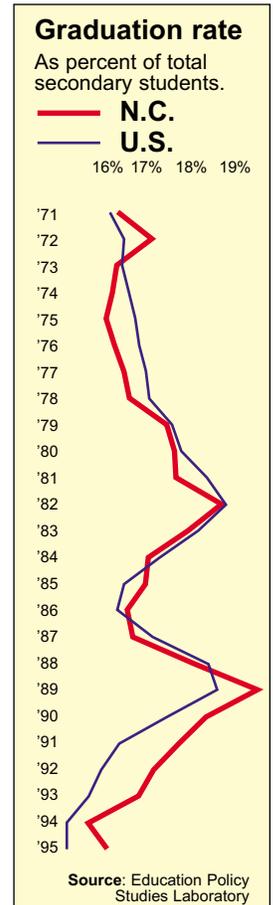
test that will take on more importance under the federal No Child Left Behind initiative.

"It seems to be doing what we had hoped for in North Carolina," Fabrizio said.

Another part of the study found that, compared with the national average, scores on the SAT, NAEP and Advanced Placement tests have fallen in the states that test a lot.

For North Carolina, score trends on most of the tests mentioned were unclear, but SAT scores had increased, not decreased.

Controversy erupted over the study because it was financed by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice, a Williamston, Michigan think tank affiliated with Midwest chapters of the National Education Association.



Continued on Page 4

# To meet 2005 goals, CMS needs to make 3 key changes

What will it take to reach CMS's 2005 goals?

First, we must send in the first team.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System is part of an educational industry that refuses to assign its best technicians to its most challenging situations. In "The Plain Truth," a publication published by The Common Sense Foundation, an article lists the two major factors preventing a "sound, basic education" as a teacher shortage and the failure to assign the most experienced teachers to the most academically challenged schools.

Second, we must allow all of the players in the game.

We must discontinue the policy of tracking students – often

---

## From Readers

---

minority and/or poor – into remedial and special education classes. Remediation is regressive rather than progressive. Remediation should only be used as a supplement to a core class (math, language arts, science and social studies.) Remediation should never be a core class.

Third, we must bring the "mamas" and the "papas" to the game.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education must require all administrators to make parental participation a major function of their job. An adminis-

trator's commitment to a high percentage of parental participation and effective level of parental participation should be a major factor in the hiring and retention of all administrators.

Finally, we must revisit "unitary."

Unitary must be defined by the fact rather than the cause. We will not be unitary until the same problems which have affected the same people for so long no longer affect anyone or affect everyone.

Richard A. McElrath, Sr.

## Correction

The Dec. 19 *Educate!* should have identified Richard C. Little as co-pastor of Advent Lutheran Church.

# Conferences planned on character education, technology

Two half-day conferences are coming up on education issues.

On Jan. 21, CMS and Information Technology Charlotte, an arm of the Charlotte Chamber, will hold an Education and Technology Summit designed to promote additional government and private investment in technology in classrooms through afterschool and neighborhood programs. Speakers and panelists include Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, Columbia University emeritus Prof. Dale Mann, Duke Energy Executive Vice President Ruth Shaw, CMS Assistant Supt. Frances Haithcock, Cotswold Principal Donna Cianfrani and teacher Diane Crowther, CPCC President Tony Zeiss and Phillip Cates, director of Partnerships for the Public School Forum of North Carolina.

On Feb. 20, CMS Partners for School Reform, an arm of the Charlotte Chamber, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board hold "Character Development and Work Ethic: Are They Linked?"

Part of the What's Working in Education series that earlier focused on reading, the workshop's subject was suggested to the Chamber by Supt. Jim Pughsley, who will address the conference.

Other speakers include Phil Vincent of the Character Development Group and Marvin Berkowitz of the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

Additional meetings with the speakers will be held with school leadership teams, youth leaders, CMS assessment personnel and the Charlotte Advocates for Education research committee.

According to the chamber, the event will address the need for prospective employees to have "soft skills" such as work ethic, honesty, the ability to work in teams and integrity.

The Jan. 21 technology summit will be held from 1 to 4:30 p.m. at the Carole A. Hoefener Community Center off Sixth Street downtown. There is no charge, but register at [www.edtech2003.com/pages/4/index.htm](http://www.edtech2003.com/pages/4/index.htm).

The Feb. 20 conference will be 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Westin hotel. For free reservation, e-mail [kcramer@charlottechamber.com](mailto:kcramer@charlottechamber.com).

## Underwrite an edition of *Educate!*

Individuals, community groups and businesses interested in supporting the publication of this community journal should inquire about our underwriting program. Let our readers know that you support quality public schools for all children, and the kind of regular communication about school issues that *Educate!* strives to deliver.

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

## Crunch time for states, 'No Child'

Continued from Page 1

of the state's 1,270-some schools could be labeled failing under federal rules, though most are labeled successes under Kentucky's own standards.

Florida has defined its terms in such a way that it has no failing schools. Texas says it has only two. Yet California has more than 900. And Minnesota officials told the Star-Tribune that virtually all Minneapolis and St. Paul schools may be labeled failures because existing state standards are so stringent.

Across the land, some states are considering easing their earlier standards as a strategy to avoid the "F" label.

Then there's Nebraska, a Republican state. Nebraskans are in open defiance, insisting that they won't impose a statewide test on small, largely rural schools where teachers must have more flexibility to assess academic progress. In a profile of the Nebraska situation, the Baltimore Sun reported that "some education reformers warn that if the administration gives even one state too much wiggle room, the entire foundation of the law could crumble."

Clearly, No Child runs the risk of being an orphan. As crunch time comes closer, it's clear it is becoming difficult indeed to implement the law's notion that,

### Law ignores that all kids don't learn at same pace

"All children can learn but all children cannot learn as much as all other children.

"And all children cannot learn to some preset state or federal standard, as is currently mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act....

"The punitive nature of the legislation is forcing teachers to teach to a test instead of teaching children; consequently, there may be a superficial rise in test scores. However, for solving the problem of low achievement by at-risk children, it is tantamount to putting a Band-Aid on a headache.

"Saying that 'all' children must achieve to a predetermined standard on a test is like saying that all children in physical education classes must run a six-minute mile on a physical fitness exam. And saying that all children must show one year's academic growth for one year in school is like saying that all children in the

school lunch program must gain 10 pounds and grow 2 inches in one year....

"The law ignores the fact that schools in the low-income areas serving predominantly at-risk children have much higher percentages of children with special 'medical problems and legal circumstances.'...

"Maybe our legislators need to come into the 'underperforming' schools. They might learn some things they did not know before. Perhaps this would bring about some responsible legislation aimed at solving some of our problems instead of creating new ones, such as an exodus of quality teachers from the at-risk schools, where they are needed most."

– 32-year veteran educator  
David Finley, principal of Mesa, Ariz., Webster Elementary, writing in the Arizona Republic  
[www.arizonarepublic.com](http://www.arizonarepublic.com)

by 2013-14, all children should be on grade level.

And deals may be being cut.

On the N.C. board's agenda today, for example, is a suggestion that noncompliance sanctions in No Child be used not against any school that violates the act, but only against Title 1 schools, those using federal money to assist low-income children.

More broadly, the primary cause of state officials' concern is the meatiest part of No Child: the principle that, to be performing well, a school must be seeing academic gains by all categories of students. Average gains across the student body won't do. Every year, whites must make progress. Blacks must make progress. Low-income children must make progress. Special education children must make progress.

In North Carolina, for example, there are 10 categories, each of which must make progress annually. The 10 are: the school as a whole; Asian; American Indian; Black; Hispanic; Multi-racial; White; Economically disadvantaged as tracked by participation in subsidized lunch programs; Limited English Proficient; and Students with Disabilities.

If students in one category miss

### Equity requires more than test results

"You can't just crunch some numbers and expect that this will lead to effective, real-world decisions.

"How, for example, do you measure growth, teacher effect, student ability? What is evidence of quality?

"Good data about these things

require more than just standardized test results."

– Katherine Gemberling, former Montgomery County, Md. deputy superintendent, quoted by Scott LaFee in "Data-Driven Districts" in December's School Administrator, [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org)

## Crunch time for states, 'No Child'

Continued from Page 3

the mark one year, and students in another category miss the mark the next year, the entire school is labeled failing.

The N.C. Board of Education will discuss proposals, however, that might blunt that mandate.

First, North Carolina will say that subgroups must contain at least 30 students. That's in a state where test scores will continue to be tracked for groups of as few as five children.

Second, if a subgroup at a school drops in number by 10% from the previous year, a failure by that group to meet annual progress goals would not trigger the "failing" label. So, for example, if 8 of the 65 poor students at a mostly wealthy school left – or were pushed out – and the remaining poor students were not on grade level, the school could avoid being labeled "failing."

Hundreds of issues will be dealt with this year by states and local school districts. An example:

### Have we defined our standards correctly?

"At the national and state levels, in the late 1980s and early '90s, specialists from each discipline were convened to draft standards. Not surprisingly, these writers were inclined to find important virtually everything in their fields of study.... It's no surprise that a federal laboratory in the Midwest estimated that students would need an additional nine years of schooling to meet the national requirements alone.

"If we had commissioned historians to write the math standards, scientists to write the history

standards, and so on, they probably would have come up with a much better measure of what kids need to know. The slavish commitment to coverage results in facts and information being valued more than reasoning and understanding. It has prompted schools to isolate bits of knowledge rather than connect them in interdisciplinary ways. And knowledge out of context is trivia."

–Ronald Wolk in "Trivial Pursuits" in January's Teacher Magazine, [www.teachermagazine.org](http://www.teachermagazine.org)

Federal regulations for No Child, issued in November, allow but do not require districts to make agreements with adjoining districts to allow students to transfer across district lines to escape underperforming schools. Experts quoted by the New York Times said federal officials were unlikely to pressure districts to set up such channels.

But the provision in the law could prompt parents to pressure districts to do so.

Full details of federal regulations tied to the No Child initiative are at [www.nochildleftbehind.gov](http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov).

North Carolina has collected material on No Child at [www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/nclb).

### Sound off! for quality education

*Your words in support of a quality, equitable, integrated education can help make the case for community support of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Pick up your pen! Or get your mouse in motion!*

*Here's information on how to submit your letters to area media.*

**The Charlotte Post:** By e-mail:

[thepost@clt.mindspring.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:swannfello@aol.com); by fax: 704-342-4550; by mail: 1510 E. 7th St. Charlotte, NC 28204.

### N.C. bucks trend in study

Continued from Page 1

The NEA opposes allowing a single test to control graduation, teacher placement and finance decisions, and one of the study's co-authors is a published critic of vouchers.

The study used news clippings and other qualitative data to conclude, for example, that high-stakes tests lead to more low-performing students being suspended or expelled before testing days, or being excused by being reclassified as special education or Limited English Proficient.

"It is quite possible," the study says, "that the adverse consequences of high-stakes tests outweigh the benefits that advocates claim they have since even the intended benefits, for example increased academic achievement, of these tests are hard to corroborate."

Copies of the studies are available at [www.greatlakescenter.org](http://www.greatlakescenter.org).

## Equity committee shoulders task, looks to widen scope of school data tracked

The 11 members of the new CMS Equity Committee are surrounded by data – and questions.

What kinds of data will help parents understand whether a school is able to provide their children what's necessary for success?

If principal leadership is a key to school quality, can one isolate great principals from the pack, and be sure they are sent where they are needed most?

Will challenged schools ever get better if we don't assign our best teachers where they are needed most – even if they wouldn't choose that assignment?

Much of the three-inch-thick pile of data each member of the new committee received in December has nothing to do with some of their biggest questions.

The data focuses on what committee members say is an important but less difficult task: assuring that buildings, materials and other resources are in the right places in the right amounts.

So the committee, which was set up with no dissolution date, will in time start grappling with some of the larger questions.

First, though, it must tussle with its immediate charge, which is to report by mid-February its assessment of “whether all students are being provided with equal access to excellent educational opportunities” and, if they are not, “recommendations on how to ensure” that that happens.

“I don't see any way that that's possible,” member Dick Helms said. Board chair Julian Wright added, “...Whatever equity is, we're not there yet.”

School board vice chair Louise Woods urged the committee to focus on two or three areas that have a bearing on the budget to be written this spring.

The equity group is not the only committee gearing up for this spring's budget wars. Last month,

the Education Budget Advisory Committee pleaded with county commissioners to invite the school board to next week's county board retreat – just to listen informally to the board's budget needs. As of Tuesday there was no word on whether the groups would meet together.

Historically, the lack of equity was clear. In the early part of the 20th century, Charlotte and the county were building three-story brick schools for whites. Blacks were scraping up nickels and dimes in matching funds to construct three-room Rosenwald schools – while their tax money helped build schools they couldn't attend. The state spent \$9.55 on white teacher training for every dollar spent on black teacher training.

Today, CMS says 17% of all schools meet the equity standards to which new buildings are being built. It will take another decade of successful bond campaigns to bring all schools to standard.

Most of the data on building conditions and supplies, teacher experience and training should be in a database open to all. And Supt. Jim Pughsley told the school board at its Nov. 7 retreat that such a database or “dashboard” of numbers would be ready in two to three weeks. No word why the tool, so important to parents during this choice season, has been delayed.

In an address Oct. 6, Pughsley said, “We have pockets of excellence. All of our schools are not where they need to be.”

One idea that gets beyond the data was floated at last week's equity committee by Jose Hernandez-Paris. As a committee, let's go to the schools, he said, where many students are underperforming, “to see what needs to change.”

– Steve Johnston

## Only 29

more issues of this journal may be published, based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month. Another number: About

# 7%

of people now regularly receiving *Educate!* have ever helped defray the cost of its publication. A community journal must have the support of its readers. Are you doing your part?

### Supporting *Educate!* is easy online

To make tax-deductible donations to support *Educate!*, just go to [www.networkforgood.org](http://www.networkforgood.org), and type in the keywords Swann Fellowship.

---

*Educate!* is a journal on public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg financed by individual and corporate donors and a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen interested in the welfare of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. *Educate!* is published by The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204. Lucy Bush, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director. Voice and fax: 704-342-4330. E-mail: [sjohnston@educateclt.org](mailto:sjohnston@educateclt.org). Published since September 2000; 6-week average circulation through last issue: 2,510.

The Swann Fellowship, named for Darius and Vera Swann, was formed in 1997 out of several Charlotte congregations to be a witness to the value of diversity in public education and to educate the public on school issues as they relate to this and allied subjects. The Swann Fellowship is a nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code 56-2106776. Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 1-888-830-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the state.

To be removed from distribution, message: [imailsrv@educateclt.org](mailto:imailsrv@educateclt.org). In body of the message, type: unsubscribe swann yourname@domain.etc. To be added, subscribe at [www.educateclt.org](http://www.educateclt.org).

Data on remaining issues and percentage of regular readers who have been donors is approximate and will rise or fall with readers' financial support. Details available upon request.

# Education Week grades the states

Education Week's Quality Counts project was released this week, and is at [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org). It has a volume of information on state efforts to improve education. Much of the data pursues an old story for Charlotte-Mecklenburg: the huge achievement gaps among demographic groups. But EdWeek analysts also graded the states on key issues (below) and compared the states in per-pupil spending (right). For more information, go to [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org). Below, states were not scored in all areas.

State	Standards and testing	Improving teaching	School climate	Resource adequacy	Resource equity
Alabama	C+	D+	C	C	C
Alaska	D	D-		C+	C
Arizona	C+	D-	B-	F	D+
Arkansas	B-	B	C	C	B-
California	B+	B	C	D	C+
Colorado	B	C-		C-	C
Connecticut	B	B	B-	A-	D
Delaware	A-	D+		A	B
D.C.	D+	C	D+		
Florida	A	C-		D+	B
Georgia	B-	C-	D+	B	D+
Hawaii	D+	C-	C-	B-	A
Idaho	D+	D	B	D+	C
Illinois	B-	C+	C	C+	F
Indiana	B-	B-	B-	B+	C-
Iowa	F	C		B	C+
Kansas	B+	D-	C+	B	B-
Kentucky	A	B	C-	C+	C+
Louisiana	A-	C+	D+	C	C+
Maine	C	D	B	B+	C-
Maryland	A	C	D+	B	D-
Massachusetts	A-	C+	B-	B	D+
Michigan	B-	D+	C+	A-	C-
Minnesota	D-	C	B	B	B-
Mississippi	C	C-	F	D+	C-
Missouri	B+	C+	C+	C	D-
Montana	F	D	C	B-	D-
Nebraska	F	C-	C+	B	D+
Nevada	B-	C-	D+	C-	B
New Hampshire	C	D		C+	D
New Jersey	C+	C		B+	D
New Mexico	B	C-	C	C	B
New York	A	C	C+	A	D+
<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C+</b>
North Dakota	F	D-	C	C+	F
Ohio	B-	B-	C+	B	D-
Oklahoma	B+	B-	C	C-	B-
Oregon	B	D-	C	B	C+
Pennsylvania	B-	D+		B	D-
Rhode Island	D+	C-	C+	A-	D+
South Carolina	B	B+	D+	B	C-
South Dakota	C	D		C+	C
Tennessee	B-	C+	C-	D	D+
Texas	C+	D+	C	C+	B-
Utah	C	D	C	F	B+
Vermont	C	C	C+	A	C
Virginia	B	C	C-	B-	C-
Washington	C-	D+		C	C
West Virginia	C+	C+	C+	A	C
Wisconsin	C+	C-		A	C
Wyoming	D-	D-	C+	A	C

Source: Education Week [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

## Dollars per student

Education Week calculated average education spending per student, adjusted for regional cost differences, and spending as a percentage of U.S. average.

State	Spending	Pct. of avg.
Vermont	\$ 9,907	131.7
West Virginia	\$ 9,758	129.7
New York	\$ 9,563	127.1
Delaware	\$ 9,392	124.8
Rhode Island	\$ 9,265	123.1
Connecticut	\$ 9,136	121.4
Wisconsin	\$ 9,048	120.3
Wyoming	\$ 8,957	119.0
Indiana	\$ 8,595	114.2
Oregon	\$ 8,570	113.9
Nebraska	\$ 8,522	113.3
Michigan	\$ 8,479	112.7
Pennsylvania	\$ 8,461	112.5
Massachusetts	\$ 8,429	112.0
Ohio	\$ 8,407	111.7
New Jersey	\$ 8,328	110.7
Maine	\$ 8,315	110.5
Georgia	\$ 8,194	108.9
Iowa	\$ 8,078	107.4
Minnesota	\$ 7,987	106.2
South Carolina	\$ 7,930	105.4
Montana	\$ 7,792	103.6
Kansas	\$ 7,721	102.6
Maryland	\$ 7,689	102.2
Virginia	\$ 7,689	102.2
New Mexico	\$ 7,634	101.5
New Hampshire	\$ 7,563	100.5
South Dakota	\$ 7,540	100.2
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>\$ 7,524</b>	
Alaska	\$ 7,444	98.9
Illinois	\$ 7,363	97.9
Texas	\$ 7,248	96.3
North Dakota	\$ 7,239	96.2
Kentucky	\$ 7,214	95.9
<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>\$ 7,170</b>	<b>95.3</b>
Louisiana	\$ 7,016	93.3
Washington	\$ 6,969	92.6
Missouri	\$ 6,924	92.0
Oklahoma	\$ 6,859	91.2
Hawaii	\$ 6,794	90.3
Alabama	\$ 6,652	88.4
Arkansas	\$ 6,615	87.9
Florida	\$ 6,512	86.6
Nevada	\$ 6,438	85.6
Colorado	\$ 6,334	84.2
Idaho	\$ 6,291	83.6
California	\$ 6,161	81.9
Mississippi	\$ 6,006	79.8
Tennessee	\$ 5,994	79.7
Arizona	\$ 5,487	72.9
Utah	\$ 4,995	66.4

Source: Education Week [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

## Briefs

**Unconstitutional, Part 3:** For the third time, the Ohio Supreme Court has ruled that state's financing of public education unconstitutional, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported. Few expect the legislature to end the system's dependence on local property taxes, which leads to funding disparities, because the ruling imposed no deadlines and a change in membership may switch the court's 4-3 balance of power. But observers say another change may have an effect: Senate leadership moves from a legislator from the wealthy Cincinnati suburbs to one representing southern Ohio, where most of the underfunded districts are centered.

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

**Answers anytime:** Two Michigan counties will provide librarian services 24 hours a day to anyone asking for help with subjects taught between 4th and 12th grades, the Detroit Free Press reported. While aimed at students, the librarians will also assist adults befuddled by percentages, for example.

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

**Left behind:** In a study for the National League of Cities, labor economist Andrew Sum found that 82% of immigrants aged 16 to 24 without a diploma had jobs, Boston Globe columnist Charles Stein reported. Among U.S. natives, it was 59%, and among blacks it was 37%. And 63% of blacks in the age range were "neither working nor in school." Two factors cited for low black employment: criminal convictions that ruled out some jobs, and fathering children, which makes wages subject to garnisheeing for child support.

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

**Individual instruction:**

## 2003-2004 CMS calendar

Aug. 18: First day  
 Sept. 1: Labor Day  
 Sept. 26: Teacher work day  
 Sept. 29: Teacher work day  
 Oct. 23-24: Teacher work days/parent conferences  
 Nov. 4: Teacher work day  
 Nov. 11: Veterans Day (teacher work day)  
 Nov. 26-28: Thanksgiving holidays  
 Dec. 22-Jan. 2: Winter break  
 Jan. 19: King Holiday (teacher work day)  
 Jan. 20: Teacher work day  
 Feb. 13: Teacher work day

Feb. 16: Presidents' Day (Teacher work day)  
 March 29: Teacher work day  
 April 9: Teacher work day  
 April 12-16: Spring break  
 May 31: Memorial Day  
 June 8: Last day of school  
 June 9-11: Graduation  
 Make-up days: Jan. 20, Feb. 13, Feb. 16, April 9, March 29  
 Mid-quarter progress reports distributed: Sept. 18-19; Dec. 2-3; Feb. 23-24, May 4-5.  
 Report cards: Nov. 5, Jan. 28, April 7, June 8 (elementary) and June 15 (secondary).

Washington State could join Maryland, Vermont and Virginia in requiring personalized education plans for all students, the Seattle Times reported. State Supt. Terry Bergeson has called for "accelerated learning plans" for all 7th-graders who fail the state's annual tests. The plans are a simplified version of the paperwork required for special education students. Educators say such plans, written as a teacher-student-parent project, can lead to greater parent involvement.

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

**Twang Twang:** The Seattle Times profiled Kirkland's Rock School, a nonprofit afterschool program that teaches 12- to 21-year-olds music theory and instrument techniques ([www.rock-school.org](http://www.rock-school.org)). No word on whether it cuts the dropout rate, but one can imagine the possibilities.

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

**Less soot:** In an effort to reduce children's exposure to pollution, California officials ordered school bus drivers not leave motors idling on school parking lots or elsewhere where children face lengthy exposure to the fumes, the L.A. Times reported. There's an exception for days

when heaters or air conditioners are in use. California and Washington State have the oldest, most polluting school bus fleets in the nation.

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

**Back to school!** Britain has given principals the right to fine parents of chronically truant students, the New York Times reported. Parents face up to about \$4,000 in fines. A spokesman for the principals union said the power to fine should be left with law enforcement officers.

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

**Bookies now:** Some eighth-graders at a Chicago area school were busted for betting on professional sports games, the Tribune reported. Parents were reportedly shocked, but educational experts were not. New Jersey next fall will add information about compulsive gambling to its school health curriculums for both elementary and secondary school.

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

**Computing absences:** Henderson Middle in Georgia's Butts County is one of several Georgia districts testing the idea of arming students with laptops,

Continued on Page 8

## Briefs *continued*

the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. And maybe it's unrelated, but 26% of Henderson students were absent 10 or more days last year, down from 43% the previous, laptop-less year.

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

**Math expertise:** In the third of North Middlesex, Mass., math classrooms where Singapore math is taught, 78% of sixth-graders were at proficient or advanced testing levels last spring, compared with 53% among those taught using other programs, the Boston Globe reported. Singapore math uses word problems and visuals to get students to think through problems rather than just using a formula provided by the teacher.

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

**Recognition:** Every Friday morning since it opened 16 years ago, Great Falls Middle has named a student or students of the week, the Springfield, Mass., Union-News reported. Teacher-nominated students tend to have behaved well, or are being honored for undertaking unusual tasks. For CMS students, what may be most striking about the weekly assembly at which children are honored is that the whole school gathers together every week. (The school has about 300 students.)

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

**Tutoring budgets:** Federal "No Child" legislation mandates tutoring for low-income children at schools that have been low-performing for three years. But in Bismark, N.D., the Washington Post reported, the federal budget for the tutoring is inadequate and school officials, in order to meet the new law's demands, may have to cut reading specialists to pay for tutors.

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

## Why Americans don't value learning math

"Western culture is a culture of the book, the Bible. It was very important for a person to be able to read that book. Numbers were historically not as important.

"The number of books an American person reads is much greater than in most other countries. I come from a village

in India where only 50 percent can read and write. But I can't find many people who don't know numbers. They can do mental arithmetic in their heads. It's a cultural and social phenomenon."

— Mahesh Sharma, a Cambridge College math professor, in a Boston Globe Q&A

**Philly blues:** One of private manager Edison's star new principals in Philadelphia has resigned, the New York Times reported, "exhausted, frustrated and finally defeated by the Philadelphia system's bureaucracy, which left her without enough teachers, and entrenched union rules, which kept her from even meeting with her teachers." Philadelphia is using a web of schools, some run by the city, some by Edison, and some charter schools, in an effort to improve.

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

**Barrier to learning:** In a survey by the National Mental Health Association, 22% of gay and lesbian teens said they skipped some school during the last month because they didn't feel safe, the San Jose Mercury News reported. The code of silence and denial showed up in the survey: Just 4% of teens would admit to harassing gays or thinking it's funny. And only 5 percent said they defend targets of harassment.

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

**High school makeover:** Boston Supt. Thomas Payzant has proposed revamping all 12 of the city's non-exam high schools into campuses of small "learning communities," the Globe reported. Southern Regional Education Board official Gene Bottoms was quoted as saying that smaller schools make "everybody feel better but they have not raised aca-

demic standards."

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

**Drug use down:** The latest National Institute on Drug Abuse survey of 8th, 10th and 12th-graders found smoking, drinking and use of illegal drugs falling simultaneously, the New York Times reported. Use of heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine was holding about even, however.

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

**Unblocking:** Dallas schools are considering dropping block schedules to save money, the Morning News reported. Block schedules generally give students 90-minute classes in core subjects every other day. Teachers teach three of the four periods each day. Some Texas systems says they will save \$1.2 million to \$3 million in teacher salaries if they have shorter classes that teachers teach more of daily.

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

**Social promotion:** Even after failing end-of-grade tests three times, most N.C. students were passed on to the next grade, the News & Observer reported. In fifth and eighth grades, 75% moved on; in third grade, it was 60%, and most of the decisions were made under principal prerogative. The N&O quoted state board chairman Phil Kirk as saying the state's promotions policy has been a failure.

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

Continued on Page 9

## Briefs *continued*

**Time to build:** At a recent meeting, the Wake County school board was told that if the schools use an existing design, it takes 47 months to build a high school, 38 months for a middle school, and 31 months for an elementary school. Starting with a new design adds four months.

[www.wcpss.net](http://www.wcpss.net)

**Innovation:** At a closed elementary adjoining two housing project, Chicago will install a choice K-12 site housing three small schools, the Chicago Tribune reported. The three are an experimental primary to be developed by Chicago's Erikson Institute; a site for KIPP, a middle school concept applauded by President Bush, and program like a Providence, R.I. high school that emphasizes internships.

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

**4-day week:** All public schools in Grand County, Colorado, have extended days and then meet only four days a week, the Washington Post reported. About 100 counties in seven states use the schedule. The major reason is to cut labor and heating costs. The Post offered no evidence on whether achievement is higher or lower at the affected schools.

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

**The Top 10:** At the end of each year, Teachers College Record lists the most-read articles on its Web site. Some are new, some are longer of tooth. The list for 2002, by title and year of publication: "Educating Student Teachers to Teach in a Constructivist Way - Can it all be done?," '01; "Ravitch and Reform: Should Left Back be Left Back?" '02; "Relational Knowing in the Reform of Educational Cultures," '01; "Education and September 11: An Introduction," '02; "Patriotism, Pedagogy, and Freedom: On the

## The magic 20%

*Gene Carter, executive director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, writing about research on outcomes in Connecticut prekindergartens:*

"In these West Hartford preschools, all of the children's scores increased – but low-income children who attended preschools in which no more than 20 percent of the students are from low-income families made the greatest gains.

"After six months in the program, their vocabulary scores

rose to the same level as their more affluent peers, far outpacing the language development of children in programs of equal quality that serve only low-income students.

"Researchers believe that the more affluent children who entered the program with greater vocabularies served as peer models. They have announced plans to further explore these preliminary findings in an expanded study."

– [www.ascd.org/education-news/kids/kids122002.html](http://www.ascd.org/education-news/kids/kids122002.html)

Educational Meanings of September 11," '02; "John Dewey's Conundrum: Can Democratic Schools Empower?" '01; "What Happens During the School Day?: Time Diaries from a National Sample of Elementary School Teachers," '02; "Frameworks of State: Assessment Policy in Historical Perspective," '01; "On the Spirit of Patriotism: Challenges of a 'Pedagogy of Discomfort'," '02; "On the Limits of Liberalism and Multiculturalism," '02.

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

**Digital school:** Akron's public schools have held on to 115 students by enrolling them in a virtual charter school, the Beacon Journal reported. The district, which is losing enrollment to privately operated charters, joined a consortium of Ohio public systems that provides the computers and contracts with local teachers.

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

**Not pocket change:** At a recent meeting, the Wake County school board was told it received annual revenue of \$2 million from its vending contract with Pepsi.

[www.wcpss.net](http://www.wcpss.net)

**\$90 million school:** Los

Angeles, which hasn't built a comprehensive high school since Richard Nixon's presidency, has begun Central High No. 10 that will cost \$90 million, the L.A. Times reported. The city expects to use about \$7 billion from various sources in its rebuilding effort (which involves about 120 schools over the next 10 years). Costs are rising because of small parcels and the need to share the land with other public uses. One 800-student Wilshire Boulevard project will include retail, housing and a subway stop on 7 acres.

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

**Top teachers:** Chattanooga have studied and videotaped 100 high-performing teachers. Their conclusions, according to the Detroit News: The best and brightest were in the classroom by age 25, wanted to be there since their teens, have more experience than their district's average, set high expectations and, well, don't sit down. Rather than lecture, most move about as students work in small groups.

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

**Fully wired:** Mississippi is the first state in the nation to have an Internet-connected computer

Continued on Page 10

## Briefs *continued*

operating in every one of its 32,352 public school classrooms, Newsday reported. The state used donations and trained students to build computers to lower the \$40 million price tag to just \$6 million.

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

### Calendar

- 15** Evening honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 7 p.m., Wedgewood Baptist, Tyvola at Wedgewood Drive. Two videos on peace issues to be shown.
  - 21** Education and Technology Summit, 1 p.m.-4:30 p.m., Hoefener Community Center downtown. Free, but register at [www.edtech2003.com](http://www.edtech2003.com).
  - 31** Sit-In Reunion celebrating 1960 and 1961 confrontations at segregated lunch counters in Charlotte, Rock Hill. Through Feb. 1. Information: Kemuel Murray, Levine Museum of the New South, 704-333-1887 ext. 222 or [kmurray@museumofthenewsouth.org](mailto:kmurray@museumofthenewsouth.org)
- February**
- 20** "Character Development and Work Ethic: Are They

## Indicators of academic challenge

*Sonia Nieto in "Profoundly Multicultural Questions":*

"I use 'calculus' as a place marker for any number of other high-status and academically challenging courses that may open doors for students to attend college and receive advanced training.

"For instance, we find that although slightly more than 12% of white students are enrolled in calculus, only 6.6% of African Americans and 6.2% of Latinos and Native Americans are enrolled.

"In the case of physics, the numbers are 30.7% for whites, 21.4% for African Americans, 18.9% for Hispanics, and 16.2% for Native Americans (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002).

"This situation has serious implications for reforming such policies as rigid tracking, scheduling, and counseling services. Access to high-level and demanding academic courses has a long-term and dramatic effect in terms of college attendance and subsequent quality of life. For instance, the 2000 U.S. Census reported that annual average earnings for those with a bachelor's degree were nearly double the amount for those with just a high school diploma: \$45,678 compared with \$24,572 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b)."

[www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlede/0212/nieto.html](http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlede/0212/nieto.html)

### CMS Physics

Percent of seniors taking end-of-course exam, spring 2002:

Blacks	12%
Nonblack	31%

Linked?", 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Westin hotel downtown. Free, but for reservation, message [kcramer@charlottechamber.com](mailto:kcramer@charlottechamber.com).

### March

- 3** Author Jim Trelease, author of Read Aloud Handbook, at

Stella Center, 7 p.m., on the value of reading to children.

- 29** Parents on the Move, parent conference, UNCC, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For information: Blanche Penn, 704-890-4101.



**VOLUNTEER IN YOUR SCHOOLS**

**FOR A RESERVATION, CALL 704-343-6245**