

That all have quality teachers

Supt. to curtail transfers by veteran teachers to slots in top-ranked staffs to hasten day all students have equal chance at being taught by the best

In a controversial break with CMS tradition, Supt. Jim Pughsley said Wednesday he plans to narrow teachers' options when transferring from one CMS school to another. The policy change would curtail an annual source of teacher instability that hurts students, decimates school-house esprit, and historically has led to concentration of the most experienced teachers in the schools with the easiest-to-teach kids.

"We need to be dealing with the distribution of teachers,"

Pughsley told 30 members of a Charlotte Chamber committee at a morning meeting. "I am hoping we can accelerate all schools to meet the same standards, rather than just leaving it to chance."

To implement the policy, Pughsley said he would create a teacher quality standard, then review each school annually. Schools that met the standard would be off limits to transfers, and would fill positions from new recruits (both new teachers and veterans applying to CMS from elsewhere).

A school closed to transfers one year might be open the next, as the profile of the faculty changes over time.

The teacher transfer plan is part of a much larger agenda for change in recruitment, retention and deployment of teachers that Pughsley released Wednesday. (Story, page 3.)

To create a teacher quality standard, Pughsley said he would use quantifiable factors shown to be related to teaching excellence. He's considering including clear licensure, average years of teaching experience, national board certification, holding of advanced degrees and two other factors he did not specify. He did not say when or how he would decide on the standards to be used.

In a dry run using three of the six factors, 23 of the district's 146 schools met the standard, he said.

Two of the 23 were Equity Plus schools, which serve high-poverty, high-minority or low-achieving students. But in general, he told the group, schools that would

meet the final standard would probably "already be schools of distinction or schools of excellence," a reference to the state's ABCs recognition program that honors academic achievement. In an interview, Pughsley declined to further characterize the schools identified in the dry run.

"We still have some work to do with the concept," he told the Chamber group, but added, "We



Pughsley

have not taken the right to transfer away from anyone. We just have limited the places where they may transfer."

Teachers already working at schools closed to transfers

would retain the right to transfer out, but few are likely to, he said.

The superintendent said he had not reviewed the proposal yet with his principals, but predicted that "they will be in support of it because it is in the best interests of their students."

Teacher opposition caused former Supt. Eric Smith to abandon a 1999 plan to use involuntary transfers to balance faculty quality at all schools.

Pughsley said his plan will not require board action. He said he hoped to have it in place before the teacher transfer season begins this spring.

Charlotte Advocates for Education head Margaret Carnes, who attended the Wednesday meeting, said teachers might be "a little irritated" by Pughsley's plan, but may support it because

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Upcoming: Dashboard

Citizens groups have long sought a "dashboard" of numbers that would help parents gauge the strengths and weaknesses of CMS schools. Supt. Jim Pughsley reports that the first version is in an equity report to be unveiled Jan. 28. Alas, that's four days before parents' choice period ends.

Inside

Not a creative writing exercise: Try your hand at composing parts of an Equity Committee report. Page 2.

Some schools will be in temporary quarters next year. Page 5.

CMS urged to look more closely at multicultural agenda. Page 4.

Calling all writers: Help Equity Committee write its report

The CMS Equity Committee has crafted the broad outlines of what it wants to write in a mid-February report to the school board. The first draft is due Jan. 24, a week from Friday. There's lots to do.

Maybe you could help out?!

Committee chair Julian Wright has parceled out the writing task to committee members. He said Friday he wants no more than 15 pages total. Member Dick Helms, a man who specializes in to-the-point comments, urged that they limit themselves to five pages.

So you won't have to write a whole bunch. And you can write about any one or all of the sections of the committee's outline.

At the right is the outline the committee came up with at its last meeting. Write your piece, e-mail it to swannfello@aol.com, and we'll publish what we get next Thursday. In the meantime we'll pass the material to the committee members who are working on that part of the report.

From the committee's meetings, here are some notes and comments about the outline items:

I. The committee is well aware that the school board has dedicated itself to making resources available to all children. This section will be a tip of the hat to their efforts, which represent a public consensus that all schools should have quality teachers, facilities that support the curriculum, and safe and orderly environments.

II. The working definition of equity grows out of earlier reports, and goes beyond quantifiables like textbooks and computers and square footage. There has been discussion that test scores or other indicators of academic achievement must play a role in defining whether equity has been achieved.

III. "How" and "who" should monitor and verify that the schools are working toward equity? The committee began with the notion that it should simply review documents provided by CMS staff. But members have begun talking about the value of on-site visits, to understand what equity does and doesn't look like, what it will take to achieve equity, and to shine a public spotlight on the issue.

IV. Measuring equity has to do with the discussion of, among other things, the "dashboard" of numbers that has long been sought (story, page 1). The committee is in the earliest stages of this work.

V. The final section may become a grab bag of praise for accomplishments and reminders of work left to be done.

Committee vice chair Paulette Higgins, an organizer with Helping Empower Local People, says what she writes for the final section will be based on HELP's school audits, which were undertaken at a couple dozen schools last spring.

"Most of my comments will

The Outline

- I. Recognize the steps toward equity already taken by CMS.
- II. Establish a working definition of the term "equity" and advise that committee may revise the definition in the course of future work.
- III. Monitoring and verifying the provision of equity in CMS. "How" and "Who?"
- IV. Measuring the provision of equity? What is the aim? How will it be measured?
- V. Preliminary observations on school board's directive that if committee "determines that certain students are not being provided with such opportunities [and committee agrees they aren't], recommendations on how to ensure that all students are provided such opportunities."

probably be based on the changes I've seen where equity is working, the expansions, the new books – and what I've seen lacking, technology particularly.

"When I go to East Meck and the library periodicals are 10 years old... they say every library needs so many books – but are those books updated, or are they all from when I was in high school?"

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Teacher transfer options to narrow

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“the alternative is forced placement.”

The public at large should be drawn to “the reasonableness and necessity” of the proposal, Carnes said. Getting quality teachers in front of all children is an urgent issue, she added.

Districts nationwide may seek to level out teacher experience at all schools to meet the achievement mandates of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Defending the need for action, Pughsley cited research that has found that if a student has a poor teacher for three years in a row, “that student will have a very difficult time recovering from that experience.

“We don’t have any choice. We must have a quality teacher in each and every classroom on each

and every day.”

Current policies create incentives for teachers agreeing to teach in the challenging environments of Equity Plus II schools. The incentives include tuition assistance for master’s degrees and a \$2,500 salary increment.

But those incentives do nothing to retain quality teachers at mid-dling schools.

“We didn’t get where we are overnight,” Pughsley told the group. “It’s going to take some time to turn around. My position is we’re not moving fast enough.”

Teacher turnover peaked two years ago at 21.77% at an estimated replacement cost of \$10,000 per teacher. Last year’s turnover was 19.3%.

The new rules on transfers won’t affect how teachers are hired at new schools, Pughsley said. Traditionally, principals of new schools have hand-picked their staffs from CMS applicants. The results are predictable: New schools open with experienced,

enthusiastic teachers in all classrooms, at the expense of students in older schools.

At the end of the meeting, several CMS employees who are members of the Chamber’s CMS Partners for School Reform handed in their copies of Pughsley’s proposal, laughing as they did so that they weren’t about to be accused of showing the information to people outside of the room before the information had been shared through official channels.

Comments welcome

Educate! did not solicit reaction to Pughsley’s plans because it was apparent Wednesday that few people in or outside of CMS have been privy to the details, or had time to consider their merits.

For Jan. 23, we welcome comments from parents, teachers and the academic researchers among our readers who closely follow the issues involved. Please message swannfello@aol.com by Tuesday.

Teacher retention: Highlights of Pughsley’s plans

Using a 13-page document Wednesday, Supt. Jim Pughsley and Barbara Jenkins, assistant superintendent for human resources, outlined proposals to reform CMS’s policies and incentives relating to recruitment, retention and deployment of teachers. Unlike the teacher transfer changes discussed above, which could be implemented by the superintendent’s action, many of the proposals below would take board or state action. Cost estimates are included where they were available. The highlights:

Retention

– Pilot at Equity Plus schools a program for differentiated pay based on levels of expertise. Pilot would include professional development, and be based on the Milken Foundation’s Teacher Advancement Program. Cost for

the pilot: \$1,458,624.

– Add 37 full-time mentors at Equity Plus schools. Cost: \$972,570.

– Hire case managers who would assist teachers in achieving licensure. (Licensure deficiencies are now the prime cause of CMS separations, bumping “family move” as a reason for departure.) Cost: \$110,628.

– Subsidize cost of taking PRAXIS teacher exams if completed in first semester of employment. Cost for estimated 855 teachers: \$128,330.

– Provide principals and assistant principals ongoing training in retention issues.

– Survey teachers on their reasons for remaining at CMS. Cost: \$12,800.

– Assist Charlotte Advocates for Education with survey of those Equity Plus principals who have

achieved low teacher turnover.

– Refine training program for new teachers to help them with instructional and student management skills.

– Offer voluntary summer “boot camp” to incoming lateral entry teachers. Cost: \$10,000.

– Offer an employee wellness program and annual wellness fair. Cost: \$9,700.

Recruitment

– Expand signing bonuses to all critical needs teachers (math, science, foreign language, some other specialties) hired throughout year. Cost: \$582,177.

– Create a Teacher Cadets scholarship program for high school students who agree to teach in CMS after college. Cost for five scholarships a year, \$40,000.

Continued on Page 4

Put multicultural issues on management agenda, board told

Work to implement the school board's policy favoring multicultural education is spotty at the school level, the school board was told Tuesday night.

Programs to teach students about cultures other than their own "are being implemented randomly," said Curt Bradley, a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee.

Bradley has appeared twice thus far during the board's public forum sessions to raise the board's awareness of how the 1993 policy is or is not being carried out.

"The comprehensiveness of the programs vary widely from school to school," Bradley asserted. "For example, among the 16 county high schools, one school reports no multicultural activity, three schools devote only one day per year and two other schools condense their multiculturalism into a single week."

Bradley said his data was taken from a spring 2002 report based

on a school survey conducted by Supt. Jim Pughsley's coordinator for diversity, Rahman Khan.

"On the other hand," Bradley told the board, "other schools appear to have multifaceted programs that target a wide range of students within their community, and that is the cause for optimism."

"There clearly are many substantive possibilities for promoting multiculturalism at the student level already in practice in CMS. Our goal has to be to insure that all schools take advantage of these programs so that all students are given the opportunity to experience and appreciate the many diverse cultures within our community."

Bradley suggested that the board beef up its oversight of the policy's implementation.

"The Multicultural Policy can be and must be promoted through a number of different avenues. Staff training presently is the only mechanism that is evaluated in CMS's Balanced Scorecard, but we know that more is required for a successful multicultural education. Obviously personnel policies, specifically who is hired and placed in what positions, and the content of curriculum are also essential, and we hope that the success of these two measures will be reflected in the Balanced Scorecard in the foreseeable future."

Highlights of plans to revamp CMS HR

Continued from Page 3

- Expand use of hotel and restaurant certificates offered by area businesses through the Chamber, that are used by prospective teachers during the application process.

- Extend signing bonuses for Equity Plus schools to hires during the year. Bonus not specified. Cost: \$605,000.

- Hire a director of recruitment. Cost to CMS: \$72,333.

- Permanently reorganize HR staff into teams grouped by school level. Cost: \$78,007.

- Offer HR employment and licensure teams (21 people) up to \$1,000 performance bonuses, half based on quantity, half on quality targets. Total cost to CMS, \$23,226.

The case of the missing reading test: Fall scores may arrive in February

In the first weeks of the semester this fall, schools gave children pre-tests in reading and math. It's an annual ritual.

In short order, the math test results came back from Raleigh.

The reading results still haven't come back.

The delay had one longtime principal wondering last week if they would ever arrive.

Not to worry, says N.C. testing head Lou Fabrizio. All is on schedule.

Fabrizio acknowledges that schools tend to use pre-test data to figure out what to teach. But, strictly speaking, that's not the point of the tests.

"They're not supposed to use it as a diagnostic tool."

CMS schools use quarterly tests and, at some sites, biweekly tests to assess student learning and direct teaching efforts.

The pre-test is designed to create the measure of whether a year's academic process has been made by each student, and



whether the student's work is below, on or above grade level.

Some schools may be quite accustomed to waiting for some scores to return. Every year for the last three, for example, one or another of the state's major tests was being revised. Two years ago it was math, last year's was science, and this year it was the reading test.

To become a baseline for achievement growth over a year's time, a new pre-test's scores must be fashioned in light of results when the same test questions were given at the end of a year.

In the case of this year's new reading pre-test, statisticians used results from field testing of the questions done last spring. The work is nearly done, Fabrizio said, and schools may see results of the pre-test next month.

Yo! parents choosing: Some schools to be in temporary quarters next year

During the upcoming choice school year, seven schools will be in temporary quarters during construction.

Two more will stay in their regular locations while crews complete planned renovations. A final decision about a third hasn't been made.

Here's a rundown on the details. All projects are of course subject to construction delays. Schools are elementaries unless noted.

Ashley Park: Teachers and children moved during winter break to the old Barringer building at 1500 Walton Road off West Boulevard. They should return to 2401 Belfast Drive in August 2004.

Billingsville: The school moved in with Chantilly on Briar Creek Road in August 2001 in part because of low choice enrollment at both schools. Renovations at 124 Skyland Ave. should be ready in August 2004.

Dilworth: No firm start date has been established as discussions continue with groups that will use the future joint-use site. No off-site swing space is available next year. The project may proceed while children remain at the 405 E. Park Ave. site. The completion date is uncertain.

Eastover: Teachers and children will move shortly to the old Selwyn building at 1900 Runnymede Lane. They should return to 500 Cherokee Road in August 2004.

Eastway: Teachers and students will move to a new middle school on Lambeth Drive off North Tryon Street during renovations. The move could occur in August 2003, but Lambeth is not finished yet. The move back to 3333 Biscayne Blvd. off Eastway Drive is scheduled for December 2004.

Elizabeth: Teachers and children packed up in January 2002



New meets old at Elizabeth.

for the old Druid Hills building at 2801 Lucena St. They should be back in their 1601 Park Drive building in August 2004.

Myers Park: Teachers and students moved to the old Sedgefield building at 700 Marsh Road in August 2002. They will return to 2132 Radcliffe Ave. in August 2003.

Oaklawn: The school moved in with Bruns Avenue in August 2001, in part because of low choice enrollment at both schools. The move back to 1810 Oaklawn Ave. is officially scheduled for December 2003.

Piedmont Middle: Piedmont moved to the old Hawthorne Lane Middle at 1411 Hawthorne Lane in August 2002. It should return to 1241 E. 10th St. in August 2004.

Pinewood: A new school will be built on adjacent land, beginning in late fall 2003 for completion in August 2005. Teachers and students will not move off-site.

Windsor Park: A new school will be built on adjacent land, beginning in late fall 2003 for completion in August 2005. Teachers and students will not move off-site.

This journal will continue for

28

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Briefs

Setting benchmarks: Virginia has set its No Child Left Behind baseline: This spring, 61% of students in each demographic category must pass reading tests, and 59% must pass math tests, or the school will be labeled failing, the Washington Post reported. In two years, the bar rises to 70% for both tests. A schoolwide average of 70% is now sufficient for state accreditation.

www.washingtonpost.com

Backpack safety: In a study in the journal *Pediatrics* of emergency room treatment of children using backpacks, researchers said back injuries accounted for just 6% of the visits, though that percentage did not include 19 shoulder injuries, CNN reported. About 28% of the injuries were blamed on tripping over the backpack; 13% were blamed on wearing one or being hit by one. The study's authors noted that injuries dealt with in physicians' offices were not reflected in the results.

www.cnn.com

Teacher turnover: A British survey of teachers found 34% saying they would leave the profession within five years, the BBC reported. Half of those leaving, however, would be retiring. Education officials said the 5.9% of teachers leaving for other professions is similar to turnover rates in other professions.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Verifying free lunch: President Bush's budget may include a requirement for verification of income levels from family participation in the federal subsidized lunch program, the Contra Costa Times reported. The program now only requires a family statement of eligibility. Other federal programs like food stamps already require proof. A test of requiring verification found that

program use dropped 21% when families were required to show proof of eligibility. A 1980s study said six eligible children would be removed for every ineligible child because of parents' reluctance to show proof or other reasons.

www.bayarea.com

Choosing education: Newly elected Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki made good on his campaign promise to drop all entry fees at public schools, the New York Times reported. The schools were overwhelmed with new students whose parents could not afford the old fees. Some students were turned away with only a promise to be considered for entrance in a year.

www.nytimes.com



Ritalin's impact: In a review of information about children with attention deficit disorder, a study headed by Harvard psychiatrist Timothy Wilens suggests that children taking stimulants for the condition are not more likely later to use illegal drugs, the Chicago Tribune reported. Most of the information suggested that children were less likely to use illegal drugs than untreated children with ADHD. But stimulants were no magic cure: The treated children's later drug use was simply in the range of drug use in the general population.

www.chicagotribune.com

Making money: National Heritage Academies is the first big charter school operator to make money, the Detroit Free Press reported. The private company does not release profit figures. Critics say it's profitable because it focuses on middle-class students from two-parent families. The Free Press said that, in Michigan, its schools have fewer than the statewide average number of students on subsidized lunch or in the more expensive special education programs. Said

David Plank, who heads Michigan State's Education Policy Center, "If we continue to fund every student the same, and it does not reflect cost, you will end up with some schools left with the kids who are hardest to educate and the least resources." National Heritage operates charters in four states, including N.C. in Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh and Winston-Salem, and it opened Queen's Grant Community School, a K-5 in Mint Hill, last August.

www.freep.com

Assessing software: An upcoming National Science Foundation study will conclude that the computer-based math and science tutorials and simulations that, so far, are proven most effective are those with the simplest approaches, eSchoolNews reported. A report on the study said evidence was mixed on the utility of computer-based science simulations, such as a virtual dissection of a frog. One educator said that the simulation packages allowed instructors to tailor work to individuals' needs, and should not be evaluated solely on their impact on overall test scores.

www.eschoolnews.com

Wake grading: Wake County will expand its elementary school pilot program of replacing A-to-F grades with a 4-to-1 system that matches state testing results, the News and Observer reported. But already, the district has added a fifth category: a 3-star, to denote above-average work from just-passing work.

www.newsobserver.com

Sticking to goal: California has kept its definition of school proficiency, even though its own projections say 98% of California schools will fail the test in 2014, the Los Angeles Times reported. While billions in federal assistance could be forfeited, educators said they'd rather have the goal than water it down.

www.latimes.com