

# **CHOICE DENIED**

**CMS is breaking a public trust. About 9,600 children are involved. The families have lost a school choice promised to them two years ago. They were told they were guaranteed a seat. Now they must move toward the back of the line.**

The choice assignment plan created dozens of high-poverty schools two years ago. Many parents objected, saying such schools would not be good for their children's education. So a majority on the school board directed that all low-income parents assigned to high-poverty schools have a guaranteed way out. At the time, board members said they wanted, by this fall, for interested parents assigned to high-poverty schools to be guaranteed a seat at a low-poverty school. Regardless of crowding. Guaranteed.

Parents now face a Jan. 31 deadline to apply for choice. Many parents

have never heard of the guarantee of a choice out. Application materials mention the program, but the forms don't identify where the program applies. And if parents don't seek placement at the right school, they won't reap the program's benefits.

Further, the guarantee has been diluted into a fourth-ranked priority. And with overcrowding at low-poverty schools, such a low priority isn't likely to get children into most schools nominally open to those parents.

The choice lottery has not been run. There is time to do right, and maintain a public trust. But the time to act is now. Details begin on page 3.

# Readers leave equity committee to write for itself, except...

No Educate! readers offered to help the Equity Committee write its upcoming report (*Educate!*, Jan. 16), so we will leave them to their own good judgment.

But one idea surfaced of perhaps long-range interest to the committee. Reader Bob Knisely writes about how the feds once went outside the normal channels to determine how federal programs were really working.

Knisely writes from Maryland:

"When I was at HEW, before it became HHS, an assistant secretary for planning and evaluation... started something that ran for at least one summer....

"It was called 'Program Evaluation By Summer Interns,' hence PEBSI.

"The PEBSI program, which had kids all over America, used summer interns to get answers, not necessarily to decide which

questions to ask. Of course, there was some of that also. And the communication between the PEBSI folks, always young and often black etc., and the folks

under study, was wonderful....

"You do need to aim the student interns, and yes, they will break some pottery. But they bring back the truth."

## Restricting transfers by teachers will backfire

*This letter refers to Supt. Jim Pughley's plan to narrow transfer options to equalize teacher quality (Educate!, Jan. 16).*

It is my firm belief that this plan will backfire! While students all deserve quality teachers, teachers all deserve a choice in where they work. If a student has "a poor teacher three years in a row," then the problem is not the student, rather it is the teacher. Poor teachers should not be tolerated in any environment. Is it acceptable for any children, regardless of their school's designation, to have poor teachers? I

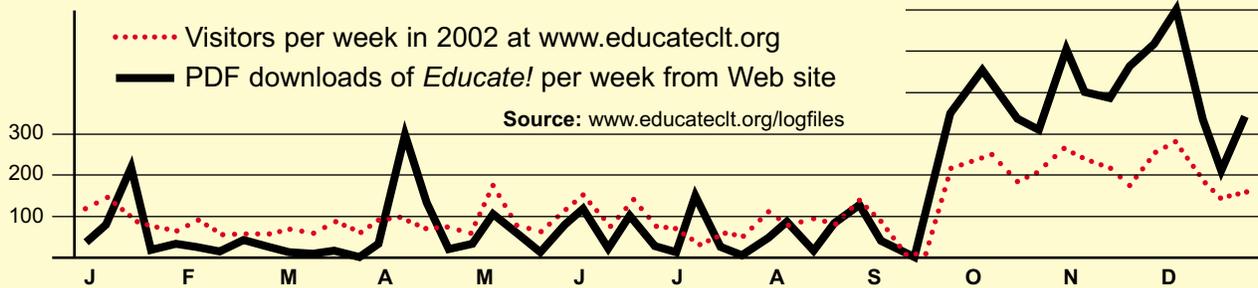
### From Readers

think not!

We are not in an area nor era in which teachers are a dime a dozen. All the teachers with whom I have spoken would leave CMS for another county rather than stay in schools where they are miserable. And if a transfer out is not possible, then a resignation is preferable to staying where they don't want to be.

Talk about low morale....

Katrina Ross



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**27**

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**7%**

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# A door slams shut

## Board's guarantee of choice out of high-poverty schools has disappeared

There was supposed to be a way out for Charlotte-Mecklenburg parents who found their children assigned to high-poverty schools against their will.

The “choice-out” provision of the 2001 student assignment plan was one building block in a political compromise. It gave to low-income parents an assurance of justice and equity in a program focused on delivering what the middle class demanded: an assigned school nearby, with access to special academic programs at a greater distance.

The choice-out idea was relatively simple: A year into the choice program, after it was clear which schools would serve a predominantly high-poverty clientele, parents should be guaranteed the right to have their children in a school with fewer low-income children.

National studies often show that achievement lags when large numbers of at-risk children are placed together. Indeed the CMS board ignored its own expert, Columbia University Professor of Sociology and Education Gary Natriello, who warned that CMS was not only creating schools where it would be difficult to educate children, but that by isolating at-risk children it was choosing one of the most expensive methods of educating them.

Today, choice is in full swing. This year's choice applications are due Jan. 31. But for low-income parents, choice-out has all but disappeared.

CMS decided not to target qualifying parents with information about the program, so few have asked for it. For parents who do ask for it, huge barriers have been created to its use.

This is not the full story of how CMS sabotaged the program – or why. It's just a tale of the breaking of a public trust.

Last-minute efforts could conceivably reinstate the original mandate to allow parents to choice-out of high-poverty schools. But because schoolhouses, where parents get most of their information, were not involved in promoting the program, the damage is probably done for this year. Perhaps it will be reworked for next year. Or perhaps not.

### Barriers in the way

Since 1999, CMS has, for whatever combination of reasons, acted to create barrier after barrier to choosing out:

- At the schoolhouse level where most parents get their information, no systematic efforts have been made to tell low-income parents who qualify about the choice-out program. Supt. Jim Pughsley has been heard to say that the schools won't provide the information because it's negative. On Jan. 5, the Charlotte Observer published a list of the schools that parents could choose out of. But the paper did not publish the schools the parents could choose into.

A statement of the priorities as now formulated is listed in the CMS Choice Application Guide. But the information is listed under the heading, “After You Apply.”

Again, more than 9,600 children qualify for choice-out. Last week, CMS student placement director Scott McCully said he knew of only one inquiry from a parent. “We're trying to work something out for her,” he said.

- Suppose a low-income parent

at a school in the program does ask for a personalized choice application worksheet. The resulting sheet will include a list of schools to choose from. But the schools at which the parent would be given priority under the choice-out provision will not be identified – not by being in a separate list, not even by being marked with an asterisk that's explained in fine print.

School officials say that counselors should be able to tell parents about the priority and about where the priority would apply. But the parent may have to know to ask.

- The lists of what schools are involved in the program are not posted on the CMS Web site. Assistant Supt. for Planning and Development Eric Becoats said last week that the lists were on the site at one time, but were later removed.

- For this year's lottery, CMS promises to expand capacity “to the extent feasible” for wealthier parents who, under the fifth-ranked priority, want to leave a high-poverty school. For low-income parents trying to leave the same school using the fourth-ranked priority, however, no such promise of expanding space is made.

The low-income parent might still get in as CMS expands capacity at receiving schools, but that's only because that parent also might fall under priority eight, which includes all parents seeking to move within the choice zone. By the time priority eight is reached in the lottery, however, expanding enrollment may no longer be feasible.

Arthur Griffin, who was alone

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## Choice Denied

# Door slams shut for low-income parents

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in declining to vote for the choice plan, calls choice-out “a token without a place to spend it.”

### What board wanted

Lawyer Bob Simmons brought his negotiating skills to the table when he was appointed to fill a District 1 vacancy on the school board in 2001. He became central to talks that led to the April 2001 board decision to commit to a choice plan.

Board members, he said this week, wanted a “functional equivalent of the home-school guarantee” for parents assigned to high-poverty schools. While often called a priority, Simmons remembers board members as wanting the choice-out to be “a right second only to the home-school guarantee.”

On April 3 of that year, the board directed the superintendent to create a plan that “guarantees options for... students of low socioeconomic status who are assigned to home schools with high concentrations of low socioeconomic students, to choose assignment to schools with ... lower concentrations....”

Later in that 2001 board resolution is the language CMS uses in its choice guides: “guarantee the right to choose... placement in another school....”

No one contacted for this article saw any legal distinction between “guarantee... to choose assignment” and “guarantee... to choose... placement.”

Becoats will only say that staff read “guarantee to choose placement” as a guarantee to be able to apply for a seat. He notes, correctly, that the staff identified choice-out as a fourth-ranked priority, not a guarantee, on materials at a board work session in October and again at the board’s November retreat.

So the “right second only to the

home-school guarantee” had disappeared. There was no discussion of the change at either board meeting in October or November.

School board chair Wilhelmenia Rembert declined this week to discuss the matter with *Educate!* until she had discussed the issue with Supt. Jim Pughsley.

But one school board member says the staff’s reading of the guarantee is as a right to apply is absurd: Every parent has a right to apply.

### The irony of it all

The choice plan, at best, was a balancing of interests, and CMS has abandoned those who fought for a way out of high-poverty schools for parents who believed that a high-poverty school would not be successful learning environment for their children.

The situation is at least ironic because, the next time this issue is confronted, it will be the feds who will be evaluating the district’s stewardship, and millions of dollars in federal aid will be at stake.

The No Child Left Behind law, for example, will begin this spring labeling some schools as failing to make adequate annual progress toward having all children on grade level in math and reading by 2013-2014.

State Supt. Mike Ward says he expects 60% of N.C. schools to be labeled failing. When asked at a Education Budget Advisory Committee meeting Wednesday morning whether the CMS percentage would be higher or lower than Ward’s prediction, Supt. Pughsley would only say he thought CMS was “a little better off than some districts.”

If a school is failing for two years running, No Child says a school district will be required to provide transportation to a successful school, and offer tutoring to students who remain behind. Schools that fail to turn around could be closed.

CMS board members, to their credit, were wrestling with how to make all schools successful sever-

al years before No Child came along. And as early as 1999 they were talking about ways to give parents a choice out.

The talk may end in action under No Child.

### Elementary level

Choice-out mostly affects parents of elementary schoolchildren. That’s because the program uses participation in the subsidized lunch program as a guideline.

Because subsidized lunch is a voluntary program, and older children feel stigmatized by it, participation rates fall in high school to about half the rate seen in elementaries.

When it was decided that schools qualifying for choice-out would have to be 30 percentage points above the systemwide average of 42%, no high schools qualified, and only six middle schools qualified. The program is available at 26 elementaries.

On page 6 is information on how the choice-out program will work. The chart works more or less vertically. Parents in a choice zone should look inside their zone for choices. The chart was set up that way because of an assumption that low-income parents will depend on the school bus for transportation. Transportation is provided only within one’s choice zone.

For a parent willing to do the transportation, additional school possibilities are listed under “The options” in adjoining vertical columns.

The chart also assumes that if you’re in the fourth group in line for a seat, there’s not much point in applying to a school that is already full this year. That’s why we’ve printed, for each school, the utilization rate as of the 20th day of school this fall, and listed them in ascending order of being full. For parents with only three choices trying to choose among schools at which they would have some priority for placement, it’s vital to know whether there might be any seats. This information will not be

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on a parent's choice application form.

The chart also lists schools in the choice zone at which parents will not be able to exercise the choice-out priority. Becoats notes that the choice form parents receive will list all schools for which they may apply. The schools at which the priority will not apply are not marked.

## Middle, high schools

As designed, the choice-out program also covered middle and high schools.

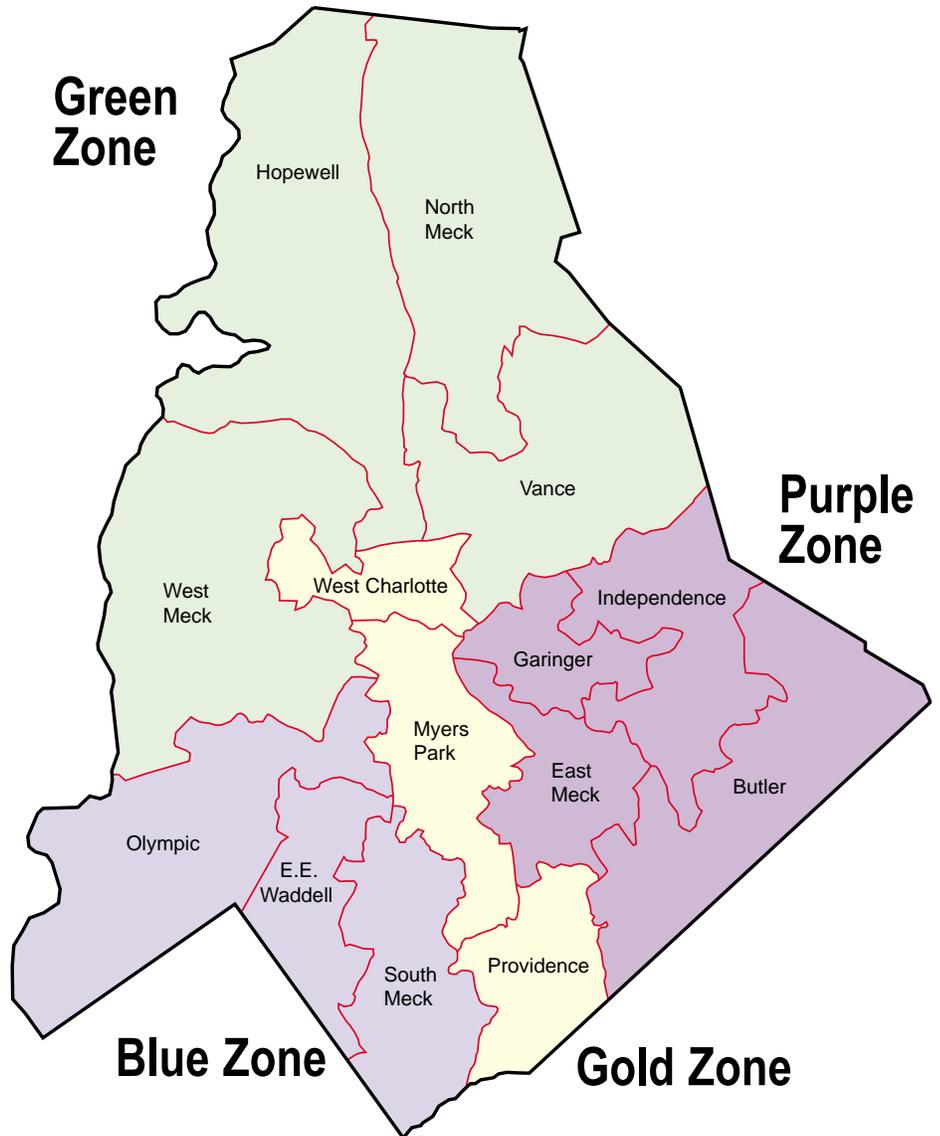
For high schools, the 30 percentage point standard was set too high. No high schools qualify.

Six middle schools qualify. But parents looking for seats with transportation will be stymied: Virtually all the middle schools for which they could apply are already full.

In the purple zone, for example, parents are offered a priority to leave Cochrane and Eastway. But the only places they could look are Crestdale, at 104% of capacity this year, and Northeast, at 101% of capacity.

Pughsley has said he will ask the board to cap enrollment at all schools where choice threatens overcrowding.

That policy change, if the board



implements it, should not affect the choice-out programs. That's because the capping would take place after the first lottery. It is in

the first lottery that low-income parents have a fourth-rated chance at a seat.

– Steve Johnston



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# The eligibles

A program beginning this fall was supposed to create a “choice out” for low-income parents assigned to schools with

a heavy concentration of low-income children.

Parents who know to apply for choice seats under the program must do so by Jan. 31. CMS will provide transportation only within the

child’s zone.

Below the names of the zones are the elementary schools at which the program is available. At left of the school’s name is the percentage of children on

subsidized lunch. The number to right is the number of children eligible to participate.

In all four zones, about 9,649 children were eligible, as of the 20th day of school.

## Blue Zone

FRL	School	Eligible kids
80	Montclair	345
81	Nations Ford	309
76	Pinewood	272
85	Sedgefield	375
84	Sterling	359

## Gold Zone

FRL	School	Eligible kids
81	Allenbrook	246
91	W.G. Byers	288
89	Druid Hills	449
81	First Ward	599
74	Irwin Avenue	445
93	Oaklawn/Bruns	341
92	Thomasboro	341

## Purple Zone

FRL	School	Eligible kids
85	Briarwood	457
87	Chantilly/Bil’ville	305
88	Devonshire	444
73	Idlewild	415
86	Merry Oaks	435
89	Shamrock Grdns.	449
74	Windsor Park	330
82	Winterfield	416

## Green Zone

FRL	School	Eligible kids
89	Ashley Park	262
81	Berryhill	237
91	Hidden Valley	490
92	Highland Ren.	380
92	Reid Park	349
86	Westerly Hills	311

# The options

Schools where parents could apply with transportation. School board sought to guarantee parents at high-poverty

schools a seat elsewhere. Instead, they are “guaranteed the right to choose placement,” which puts them fourth in the regular priority order, behind students living in the home-school

area, students at the school who’ve moved but not left the choice zone, and siblings of current students living in the choice zone. Will there be even a single seat for low-income families after

that? Chances are best at schools under capacity this year. In each column, the number to the right of a school name is its utilization percentage as of September.

FRL	School	% full
25	Beverly Woods	76
4	Endhaven Lane	82
7	Hawk Ridge	99
11	McAlpine	97
25	Lake Wylie	104

FRL	School	% full
2	Providence Spring	78
32	Park Road	83
34	Eastover	86
34	Elizabeth	85
23	Sharon	85
4	Elizabeth Lane	96
11	McAlpine	97
10	Olde Providence	97
4	McKee	98
24	Villa Heights	104
18	Selwyn	106
31	Myers Park	110

FRL	School	% full
35	Lansdowne	86
14	Bain	87
32	Reedy Creek	96
16	Matthews	98
32	Clear Creek	100
NA	New Grier	NA

FRL	School	% full
23	Mountain Island	91
23	Long Creek	95
13	Huntersville	98
26	Mallard Creek	98
12	Cornelius	99
10	Davidson	99
22	Blythe	102
26	David Cox Rd.	106

# Off limits

Schools with 38% or more students on subsidized are excluded, even

if the school isn’t full. That’s to prevent creating additional schools

with high concentrations of low-income children.

FRL	School	% full
39	Pineville	98
46	Smithfield	90
48	Steele Creek	104
56	H’towne Farms	94
70	Collinswood	75

FRL	School	% full
54	Cotswold	90
55	Dilworth	109
55	University Park	90
71	Lincoln Hts.	71

FRL	School	% full
42	Crown Point	92
48	Rama Road	88
49	Greenway Park	97
49	Lebanon Road	89
52	Hickory Grove	99
53	Piney Grove	88
55	J.H. Gunn	97
57	Oakhurst	85
70	Albemarle Road	79

FRL	School	% full
42	Paw Creek	94
49	Morehead	90
50	Winding Springs	56
52	Nath. Alexander	92
52	Highland Montes.	72
53	Hornets Nest	93
58	Univ. Meadows	97
59	Newell	98
65	Oakdale	61
65	Tuckaseegee	76
67	Pawtuckett	81
70	Statesville Rd.	74

# Study traces resegregation of nation's schools

Excerpts from the executive summary of "A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream," published Sunday by the Harvard University Civil Rights Project. The entire report is at [www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, American public schools are now twelve years into the process of continuous resegregation. The desegregation of black students, which increased continuously from the 1950s to the late 1980s, has now receded to levels not seen in three decades.

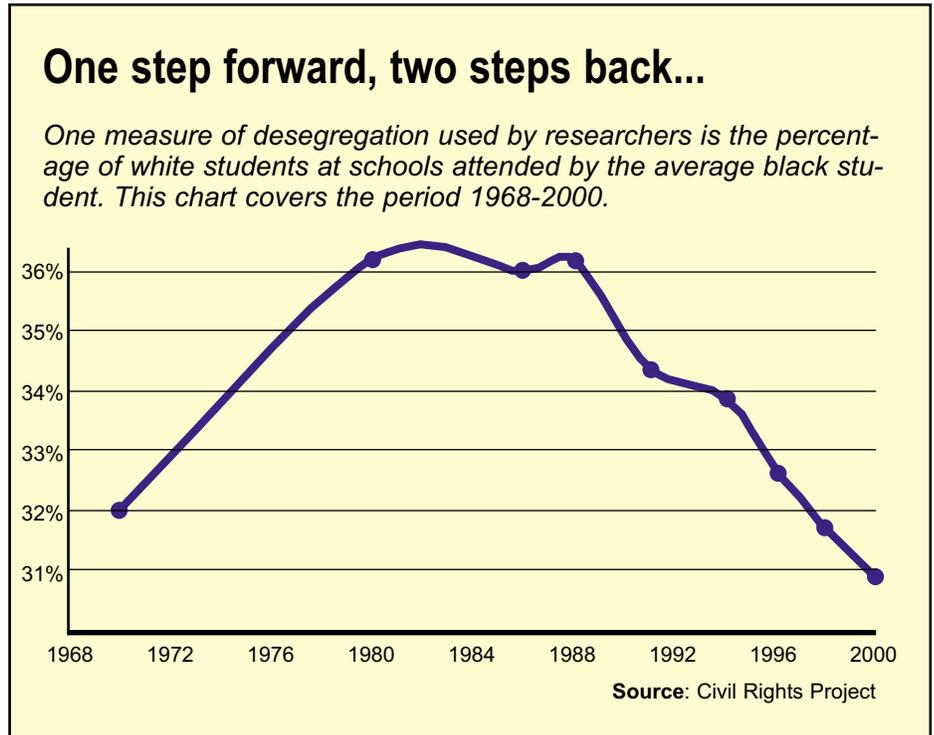
Although the South remains the nation's most integrated region for both blacks and whites, it is the region that is most rapidly going backwards as the courts terminate many major and successful desegregation orders....

Key findings of the study include:

- The statistics from the 2000-2001 school year show that whites are the most segregated group in the nation's public schools; they attend schools, on average, where 80 percent of the student body is white. The two regions where white students are more likely to attend substantially interracial schools are the South and West. Whites attending private schools are even more segregated than their public school counterparts.

- Our schools are becoming steadily more nonwhite, as the minority student enrollment approaches 40% of all U.S. public school students, nearly twice the share of minority school students during the 1960s. In the West and the South, almost half of all public school students are nonwhite.

- The most dramatic growth is seen in the increase of Latino and Asian students. Latino students are the most segregated minority group, with steadily rising segregation since federal data were first collected a third of a century ago. Latinos are segregated both



by race and poverty, and a pattern of linguistic segregation is also developing. Latinos have by far the highest high school dropout rates.

- Conversely, at the aggregate level, Asians live in the nation's most integrated communities, are the most integrated in schools, and experience less linguistic segregation than Latinos. Asians are the nation's most highly educated racial group; the rate of college graduation for Asians is almost double the national average and four times larger than Latinos.

- The data show the emergence of a substantial group of American schools that are virtually all non-white, which we call apartheid schools. These schools educate one-sixth of the nation's black students and one-fourth of black students in the Northeast and Midwest. These are often schools where enormous poverty, limited resources, and social and health problems of many types are concentrated. One ninth of Latino students attend schools where 99%-100% of the student

body is composed of minority students....

- In 1967 the nation's largest suburban systems were virtually all white. Despite a huge increase in minority students in suburban school districts, serious patterns of segregation have emerged in some sectors of suburbia as this transition takes place. Many of the most rapidly resegregating school systems since the mid-1980s are suburban. Clearly segregation and desegregation are no longer merely urban concerns, but wider metropolitan issues.

- The largest countywide school districts that contain both city and suburban schools are mostly concentrated in Southern states. These districts, with about half the enrollment of the big cities, had far more extensive and long-lasting desegregation and far more opportunity for minority students to cross both race and class barriers for their education.

- Many of the nation's most successful plans are being dismantled by federal court decisions as

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## Resegregation of schools traced

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the courts have been changed from being on the leading edge of desegregation activity to being its greatest obstacle. Since the Supreme Court changed desegregation law in three major decisions between 1991 and 1995, the momentum of desegregation for black students has clearly reversed in the South, where the movement had by far its greatest success.

– During the 1990s, the proportion of black students in majority white schools has decreased by 13 percentage points, to a level lower than any year since 1968.

Desegregation has been a substantial accomplishment and is linked to important gains for both minority and white students. Just as more and more convincing evidence of those gains is accumulating, school systems are actually being ordered to end successful desegregation plans they would prefer to continue. This is not driven by public opinion, which has become more supportive of desegregated schools (most of which have been achieved through choice mechanisms in the past two decades). The persisting high levels of residential segregation for blacks and increasing levels for Latinos reported in the 2000 Census indicate that desegregated education will not happen without plans that make it happen. We recommend a set of policies that would slow and eventually reverse the trends reported here.

Race matters strongly and segregation is a failed educational policy. Any policy framework must explicitly recognize the importance of integrated education not only as a basic education goal but also as a compelling societal interest. Specific policies to address this include:

– Continuing desegregation plans;

### Whites as percent in public schools, '67-'00

	1967	1976	1980	1986	2000
<b>LARGE CENTRAL CITIES</b>					
New York	48	30	26	22	15
Los Angeles	55	37	24	18	10
Chicago	41	25	19	14	10
Miami-Dade	64	41	32	24	11
Houston	54	34	25	17	10
Philadelphia	40	32	29	25	17
Detroit	41	19	12	9	4
Dallas	63	38	30	21	8
San Diego	76	66	56	44	27
Memphis	48	29	24	24	12
Baltimore	36	24	21	19	11
Milwaukee	73	56	45	36	19
Albuquerque	61	52	53	55	40
Fort Worth	69	51	44	37	21
Fesno	70	62	54	42	20
Austin	81	na	53	47	34
New Orleans	34	16	12	8	4
<b>COUNTYWIDE METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS</b>					
Broward, Fla.	74	75	72	65	41
Clark, Nev.	84	na	77	73	50
Tampa, Fla.	80	76	75	69	52
Palm Beach, Fla.	71	64	63	62	50
Orange Co., Fla.	83	na	72	67	44
Duval, Fla.	72	65	63	60	50
Charlotte-Meck	71	64	60	58	47
Wake, N.C.	na	na	na	71	63
Jefferson, Ky.	96	75	72	69	62
Nashville, Tenn.	76	69	65	63	48
<b>SUBURBAN DISTRICTS</b>					
Fairfax, Va.	97	na	86	78	61
Montgomery, Md.	96	na	78	69	49
Gwinnett, Ga.	na	na	na	95	64
DeKalb, Ga.	95	na	66	49	13
Long Beach, Cal.	86	68	53	38	18
Jefferson Co., Colo.	na	na	na	91	62
Anne Arundel, Md.	86	na	84	83	75

Source: Civil Rights Project

– Amending transfer policies in the federal No Child Left Behind Act to give students a real choice of better integrated schools;

– Encouraging educational choice plans that diminish segregation;

– Linking housing mobility programs with educational counseling; and

– Increasing city-suburban transfer options in metropolitan

areas.

A great deal of long-lasting progress was achieved when this issue was last seriously addressed, a third of a century ago. If we are not to lose those gains and if we are to be ready for a profoundly multiracial society with no racial majority, we must begin to face the trends documented here and devise solutions that will work now.

## Briefs

**Basis for reading:** A Houston project scanning brain activity of accomplished and poor readers holds promise for retraining youngsters whose brains are not wired for reading, the Seattle Times reported. Scans find heavy use by accomplished readers of a left brain area called the angular gyrus, where sounds are connected with meanings. Struggling readers' brain activity is scanned, then scanned again after phonics-based instruction, in hopes of finding programs that activate

the angular gyrus.  
www.seattletimes.nwsourc.com

**More Open Court:** Anne Arundel Schools Supt. Eric Smith will seek \$7.7 million for materials and \$740,000 for training to expand Open Court from K-5 classes in 14 struggling schools to all 77, the Baltimore Sun reported.  
www.sunspot.net

**Outdoor science lab:** Students at Wilton, Conn., High School took their science work out to the nearby Norwalk River and discovered high bacteria levels that led state officials to order a cleanup at a nearby wastewater treatment plant that was dis-

charging sewage into the river, the Hartford Courant reported. State science consultant Steven Weinberg calls the Wilton work an example of "hands-on, minds-on science."

www.ctnow.com

**White teacher flight:** A Georgia State University study concluded that in 1999-2000, 31% of white teachers in predominantly black Georgia public schools left their jobs, up from 18% five years earlier, the Journal Constitution reported. The researchers found no similar increase in turnover among black teachers.

www.accessatlanta.com

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## Indicators of academic challenge: Calculus

*Sonia Nieto, "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.... "This situation has serious implications for reforming such policies as rigid tracking, scheduling, and counseling services. Access to high-level... courses has a long-term and dramatic effect in terms of college attendance and subsequent quality of life."  
www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlede/0212/nieto.html

### CMS Calculus Enrollment, Fall 2001, for black students and all others combined

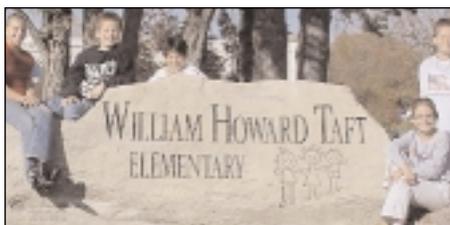
Course number Title	2409 Calc BC AP		2420 Calculus		2421 Calc AB AP		2428 Calc. III		Tot. Calculus Enrollment	Pct. of total enrollment in... Calculus School				
	B	O	B	O	B	O	B	O		B	O	B	O	
Butler	0	9			0	7			0	16	0	100	0	1
East Meck	0	17			5	56			5	73	6	94	1	5
Garinger					8	13			8	13	38	62	1	2
Harding	2	20			9	32			11	52	17	83	1	8
Hopewell	0	3			5	28			5	31	14	86	1	3
Independence	2	5			2	15			4	20	17	83	0	1
Midwood					0	2			0	2	0	100	0	4
Myers Park	0	10			2	49			2	59	3	97	0	3
North Meck	0	13			0	37			0	50	0	100	0	4
Northwest	0	2	0	6	4	7			4	15	21	79	1	2
Olympic					4	38			4	38	10	90	1	6
Providence	0	1			1	113	0	20	1	134	1	99	0	6
South Meck	0	8	2	25	1	21			3	54	5	95	1	4
E.E.Waddell					0	10			0	10	0	100	0	2
West Charlotte	4	0	8	1	1	2			13	3	81	19	1	1
West Meck					12	12			12	12	50	50	1	2
Vance	0	7	38	83	6	47			44	137	24	76	4	11
<b>CMS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

Data source: CMS

## Briefs *continued*

**Slow to change:** Education Secretary Rod Paige has said some teacher training courses in college are a waste of time, but colleges of education don't see it that way, the Washington Post reported. At a consortium of state education schools, when asked if they were dropping courses, officials said they are deepening, not eliminating methodology courses. "The nature of university professors is to be a little rebellious," said Roxana Della Vecchia, an assistant dean at Towson University's college of education. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

**No triangles:** A Chicago-area school district removed multicolored triangles from teachers' doors, the Tribune reported. The symbols, put up at the suggestion of a multicultural committee, signaled students that those teachers were comfortable talking about gay and lesbian issues. The Rich Township school board, after hearing parent protests, said the symbols might send the signal that teachers without triangles on their doors would not be protective of all students. [www.chicagotribune.com](http://www.chicagotribune.com)



[www.sd01.k12.id.us/schools/taft/](http://www.sd01.k12.id.us/schools/taft/)

**Small class, big steps:** A turnaround at Taft Elementary in Boise began with a new principal and led not just to a new sign on a rock out front but a change in culture, the Idaho Statesman reported. Principal Susan Williams got discipline under control, repainted, softened the interior of the 1960s building, then went to work on curriculum.

## A superintendent relearns how to teach

*Larry Ballwahn retired as Horicon, Wis., superintendent and took up teaching at-risk teens at Juneau County Charter School. He wrote in the January issue of School Administrator of students with "abysmal" knowledge, no interest in tests and a mindset conditioned by a daily struggle just to stay alive:*

"I found I needed to forget the idea of covering the subject matter and simply work at providing learning experiences that piqued the most interest and student camaraderie.

"Projects that used television broadcasts, the Internet, newspapers, the public library and other elements of their current environment worked best. E-mail and instant messaging did more to foster active reading, writing and communication skills than most assignments. An interactive computer-based program in reading and math led to individual skill building."

[www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2003\\_01/colBallwahn.htm](http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2003_01/colBallwahn.htm)

Along the way children were sorted by educational need, and some classes dropped to 10 students, while others grew. Kindergarten teacher Anne Anderson, who had one of the small classes, told the Statesman she spent more time with each child. "You have to keep at them, and by January or February, the light goes on." [www.idahostatesman.com](http://www.idahostatesman.com)

**Back to court:** Kentucky faces a new lawsuit over per-pupil funding disparities among school districts, the Lexington Herald-Leader reported. An education group not involved in the litigation said disparities that stood at \$1,390 per student were cut to \$466 after reform efforts, but have now increased again to \$860. [www.kentucky.com](http://www.kentucky.com)

**'Work tank':** Buffalo schools have created a nonprofit group to research solutions to district problems, Education Week reported. The superintendent heads the board, and controls the issues, but having the work done independently avoids school district red tape. The education school dean at the local State University of New York campus leads a staff of four. The project is funded by a state grant and by private donations. [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

## Calendar

- 24 Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 28 Curriculum Committee, 3:30 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 28 School board meeting, 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 31 Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 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

- 10 CMS legislative breakfast, Berry Academy multipurpose room.
- 20 "Character Development and Work Ethic: Are They Linked?", 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Westin hotel downtown. Free, but for reservation, message [kramer@charlottechamber.com](mailto:kramer@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.