

Low expectations: N.C. test failure cited

A former chairman of the N.C. Board of Education argued Wednesday that failures in Raleigh have damaged the credibility of the state's testing program and give some parents a false sense of their children's academic success. And he urged a citizens advisory group to push Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools for candid conversation about the challenges it faces educating all children.

"Improvements have occurred in this system," said Howard Haworth, who settled in Charlotte after a career in furniture manufacturing. "We ought to always start with the enthusiasm to celebrate gains,

because they're not easy to create."

But Haworth contends that "30% of our students are receiving a good to excellent education, and I think the next 20% are getting a fair to good education."

"I am considerably concerned that ... at least 40% of our students are churning through our system and are not remotely close to receiving what the Constitution of North Carolina requires, which is 'a sound, basic education....'"

The statistics that show that about 20 percent of

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Rembert: Full cost of success to be on table

Amid talk by county commissioners of a per-pupil spending cap on the schools, the school board's chairperson announced Tuesday night what could be a radical shift in the schools' public advocacy for children's needs.

Board chair Wilhelmenia Rembert suggested that, instead of asking for what it thinks it can get – as has often been its pattern – the school board this year will identify what it really needs to educate all children.

The budget would also identify the work with children that won't get done if lower budget figures are set by the Board of County Commissioners.

Rembert, at a televised school board meeting, reported on conversations she had with commissioners chairman Tom Cox last Friday. She said Cox raised a "possible new funding mechanism for the board of education." She gave no details.

"We will assume responsibility as a board," Rembert said Tuesday, "to identify what we

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CMS high school dropout rates

Percent of African-American or all other students, enrolled in each CMS high school, that dropped out in indicated years. Rates that improved are marked in green. More charts, Page 7.

| | African-American | | All others | |
|----------------|------------------|---------|------------|---------|
| | '00-'01 | '01-'02 | '00-'01 | '01-'02 |
| Butler | 9.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.0 |
| East | 7.8 | 8.5 | 4.9 | 4.5 |
| Garinger | 7.4 | 6.7 | 9.0 | 9.7 |
| Harding | 3.6 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 1.8 |
| Hopewell | | 7.4 | | 3.8 |
| Independence | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 2.3 |
| Midwood | 37.0 | 24.2 | 28.3 | 40.4 |
| Myers Park | 5.6 | 6.2 | 2.7 | 3.1 |
| North | 9.6 | 7.4 | 4.6 | 2.7 |
| Northwest | 2.9 | 0.5 | 2.4 | 1.1 |
| Olympic | 8.9 | 4.8 | 10.6 | 4.7 |
| Providence | 12.3 | 10.8 | 3.9 | 2.6 |
| South | 7.5 | 6.0 | 3.7 | 3.0 |
| Tate TAPS | 35.7 | 39.0 | 81.8 | 33.3 |
| E.E. Waddell | | 6.1 | | 11.9 |
| West Charlotte | 9.5 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 5.4 |
| West Meck | 13.8 | 8.3 | 14.4 | 9.7 |
| Vance | 5.7 | 5.0 | 4.4 | 3.1 |

Data sources: N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction, CMS, Advocates for Education

Success of choice plan really depends on community being above selfishness

I was interested to read Richard McElrath's Feb. 6 response to my article ("Maybe Griffin was right about Choice, *Educate!*, Jan. 30). I wish I were surprised at how thoroughly Mr. McElrath missed the point of what I wrote. I'm sure that he wasn't alone, on either side.

Perhaps if Mr. McElrath had looked at my letter through the eyes of someone who wasn't planning to run for office, or who didn't have a personal and political investment in the past, he might have seen that I knew and understood the history and the law of school segregation and desegregation in Charlotte. Perhaps then Mr. McElrath would not have felt the need to strike his instructor's pose, to scold me for ignoring the history I cited or to repeat much of what I had written as if I hadn't. Perhaps, as I said, I was too optimistic a father of the choice plan in 2001; perhaps I'm too discouraged today.

But the history of school segregation and desegregation in Charlotte doesn't determine the future unless we choose to live in that history today and tomorrow. That was the political position in which [former school board chair Arthur] Griffin was and remains wrong. It's an error Mr. McElrath seems to share.

The choice plan acknowledged the continuing legacy of school segregation and of the reluctant, inadequate and incomplete implementation of desegregation. The choice plan acknowledged that some increased segregation by socio-economic status and, by correlation, race would result from its implementation.

So, the choice plan balanced attendance zones by numbers of

students, by location of school and by socioeconomic status to the extent reasonably possible. So, the choice plan provided for protection against overcrowding and against socio-economic and performance isolation, all of which had been demonstrated by educational research to make success less likely.

But the choice plan also acknowledged that 2001 was not 1954 or 1969. The choice plan looked at 2001 and dared to see a way past those on both sides of the issue who would take us back into the past – a way to 2005, 2010 and beyond when the legacy of segregation might disappear from our society and our schools through the good choices of good people standing on the firm foundation bequeathed to them by the civil rights movement.

Why was 2001 not 1954 or 1969? By 2001, the community had already voted to issue the first bonds for equity construction. By 2001, construction was already being completed on the first new schools to open in the central city in many years. By 2001, other equity renovations and additions were in planning, underway and nearing completion in schools located in areas that were either predominantly poor, predominantly black or both.

By 2001, the County Commission had committed in successive years to raising taxes and dramatically increasing funding of programs and initiatives directed at achieving equity across the system, from Bright Beginnings, to the A+ Program, to incentives for experienced and highly qualified administrators and teachers to transfer to or to remain at the Equity Plus II schools.

By 2001, the Charlotte Chamber and local businesses

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Charlotte must be above selfishness

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were funding and volunteering in a rapidly increasing number of programs directed almost exclusively at supplementing the human and material resources applied to the education of children in the Equity Plus II schools. By 2001, there was a standing committee of citizens reviewing equity in the schools and measuring performance against a scorecard that called for the delivery of more resources to Equity Plus II schools, the improvement of teacher qualification and retention and the reduction of class sizes to increase student-teacher ratios.

By 2001, the system was showing progress against reading deficiencies and racial and socio-economic performance gaps under the leadership of Dr. Smith. By 2001, the Board of Education had adopted policies to take advantage of all of these changes and additional resources by building and improving facilities, supplying and maintaining educational tools, providing experienced and qualified teachers and administrators and implementing new educational programs designed to improve learning among all students, but in particular to improve learning among those children most challenged by personal circumstances – some of which circumstances are the direct legacy of the history to which Mr. McElrath believes I am blind, the history by which he and Mr. Griffin seem so bound.

Against that background and against the background of the legal reality of the “colorblindness” backlash, we negotiated and approved a plan that contained protections against backsliding while looking to the future. But the balance in the plan was delicate.

It depended on the community to continue to support the con-

struction of facilities and the implementation of programs by maintaining adequate funding. It depended on the community to understand the delicacy of the balance and to participate in the plan with the understanding that everyone could not have their first choice.

It depended on the County Commission to continue to propose and issue bonds for construction and to continue to fund operations at a level that would maintain and expand initiatives for equal educational opportunity. It depended on the continuation of citizens’ committees that would monitor progress against the scorecard and encourage support among the community, the County Commission and the Board of Education.

It depended on teachers, administrators and the central office to continue their successful efforts to improve performance among all students, but especially among those who have lagged through no fault of their own. It depended on the Board of Education to follow the adopted policies, to continue construction, to provide needed human and physical resources, and, most importantly, to imple-

ment the plan according to its design.

Then the Board of Education changed back into a divided body, even more rancorous than it had been before my appointment – with the greater share of the divisiveness originating among the majority coalition of Messrs. Griffin and Dunlap, Ms. Woods, Dr. Rembert and Ms. Leake, but with none of the nine blameless.

Then Dr. Smith left in a protracted and unfortunate process. Then the community splintered into a selfish scramble to manipulate the plan to fit their perception of their greatest individual advantage at the expense of the greater good, and the Board of Education compromised the integrity of the plan by failing to enforce some sections and by granting thousands of individual exceptions that increased socioeconomic segregation, racial segregation, overcrowding and underutilization.

Then, in a schizophrenic election, the community voted overwhelmingly to authorize the issuance of more bonds for equity but elected almost equally overwhelmingly a County Commission

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Kids are shaped by what they hear

Author Jim Trelease, from “The Read-Aloud Handbook,” summarizing research conducted by Drs. Betty Hart and Todd Risley at the University of Kansas on parent-child contacts at home:

“The professional child heard 32 compliments an hour, working class averaged 12 affirmations, and the poverty child heard just 5 encouragements in an hour. ... Conversely, the professional child heard the fewest negatives in the space of an hour – 5 compared to 7 for the working-class child and 11 for welfare.... The professional child arrives at the kindergarten door thinking he’s a world-beater, while the at-risk child arrives with a mindset of “can’t do” because people at home have been telling him so for years.”



Trelease

Trelease will conduct a free public session in Charlotte March 3 at 7 p.m. at the Great Aunt Stella Center, 926 Elizabeth Ave., sponsored by Charlotte Reads, Wachovia and Trinity Episcopal School. RSVP: randerson@charlottereads.org.

Charlotte must be above selfishness

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less likely to issue the bonds for construction as planned or to continue providing additional operational funding to achieve equity.

Now the community is faced with a problem that isn't history. It's a current community problem of frightened selfishness in which the vast majority can't see past the end of their own street – whether that street is in a wealthy neighborhood, a poor neighborhood, an urban neighborhood, a suburban neighborhood, a neighborhood predominantly of color, a predominantly white neighborhood or a neighborhood of mixed incomes and colors.

It's a current community problem that's reflected in the selfish rhetoric of elected officials who pander to fear on both sides of the racial and socio-economic divide. It's a current community problem reflected in the selfish failure by those who know better to disown both the extremism that ignores the past and the extremism that lives in the past. It's a current community problem that selfishly says, "If that person gets an exception, I should get an exception too." It's a current community problem that selfishly denies racism – black or white – while accepting the benefit of the racism of others.

The point of the plan was not to reinstate segregation or to accept a separate and inherently unequal legacy from that history. But neither was the point of the plan to continue a system of forced transportation for desegregation that was faltering under the weight of social and demographic changes, producing its own inevitable and destructive segregation. The point of the plan was to avoid falling back into the pattern of that failed, separate and unequal past, caused either by the growing weight of changes in size, distance and location or

The 'intangible' factors in teacher deployment

An Education Week review of how districts attract teachers to high-needs schools quotes CMS human resources director Barbara Jenkins as saying, "Incentives are critical, but purely doing financial incentives is never going to be enough. There has to be something done around working conditions." The article noted: "The problem is that much of what good teachers value is intangible. While it's relatively easy to tinker with such features as class size, salaries, and funding, it's harder to get a handle on how a school is managed and how well its staff members work together. But those factors play a huge role in teachers' career decisions."

www.edweek.org

by the conscious direction of those who look for the future in the past.

The point of the plan is not lost. It's still there. Under the selfishness and the rhetoric there is still time and room for compromise that produces progress for all. There is still a place for the Board of Education to come together past their politics and egos for the benefit of the students. Most of the current Board has been there as recently as 2001 – first 6 to 3 and then 8 to 1. Most of the current Board even saw votes of 9-0 on matters of equity in policies and programs. The Board can get back to that place if they choose.

The loss of Dr. Smith was unfortunate, but the immediate presence of Dr. Pughsley as his replacement was a blessing. I believe that Dr. Pughsley may be even better able than Dr. Smith would have been to recover the point of the plan and to move the community and the schools past the selfishness we see today.

Perhaps Dr. Pughsley can restore the momentum of 2001 so we can move forward more united again.

Maybe we reached too far too fast in 2001, and progress that was superficial then may become institutional now. But we'll have to trust each other, and we'll have to carry through in good faith despite doubts.

While Mr. McElrath is correct that we must neither forget history nor ignore the continuing legacy of that history among us today, he is incorrect that we must see

today and tomorrow through the eyes of yesterday. If we are to move forward, we cannot afford to limit our vision in a way that forces us to live in history and in the distrust of old and festering wounds.

We must dare to break out of the old patterns; we must dare to hold out a hand and trust that it will be taken in cooperation and with compassion. Otherwise, history wins, and, if that's true, then there truly is no point in this or any other plan.

If fathers and mothers followed the advice of Mr. McElrath and looked at their children only through the eyes of history, they would see much of disease, war, hardship, failure, repression and pain that would discourage them from providing their children's needs for growth.

Fortunately, most mothers and fathers look forward to a future of health, peace, progress, improvement, freedom, justice and opportunity for their children, so they strive to make it so. Despite discouragement and difficulty, they have no interest in failure, so they pursue success.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves as a community: Is there anybody who has an interest that will be promoted by the failure of the choice plan? We may not like the answer, but at least we will know that, as Pogo said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Bob Simmons

State ABCs program assessed

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each class doesn't graduate are "a tragedy because we're going to see those children again in various venues that are extremely expensive, a whole lot more expensive than it would have been to educate them, wrap a good solid family around them and send them on their way with a sound, basic education."

Haworth told fellow members of the Education Budget Advisory Committee, which is appointed jointly by county commissioners and the school board, that he had no quibbles with commissioners chairman Tom Cox who, at an earlier meeting, said parents and citizens in general should hold the schools accountable.

"But I would submit to you... that the citizens in general and even parents do not have adequate information in a form that is simple and candid enough to make a clear judgment as to how secure their children are with regard to academic progress.

"The system, by the way, ought to hold the citizens accountable to provide adequate resources in order for them to have a prayer of getting the job done..."

The academic challenges CMS faces did not show up overnight, Haworth said, and earlier superintendents have struggled with them, including the "particularly onerous" outcomes in the high schools (chart on CMS results, Page 7). "The concern is the degree and speed with which they are being answered."

Haworth praised Supt. Jim Pughsley's announced policy changes aimed at increasing staff experience levels and cutting turnover. Reducing the teacher turnover rate by half, Haworth said, would save \$6 million to \$8 million a year that is now spent on hiring and training new teachers.

But he said CMS must be more candid about both its successes and its challenges.

He called for "clear disclosure of not just the exciting part of the trip that we're taking, but there needs to be far more dialogue, simple dialogue, clarity, definition with regard to what's happening to these children who are not getting the sound basic education.

"If they fail to address it, there's going to be a time out there in the not to distant future where it's going to very difficult to get the citizens to stay put with regard too providing the adequate funding that this system needs."

At the September school board meeting at which

ABCs test results were announced, "no question the celebratory was attended to in great detail.

"There was next to nothing said... regarding the unsatisfactory areas of progress and the definition that ought to have gone with those. And that's got to change....

Big factors in cost

"We are a uniquely expensive urban school system," Haworth said. Among the factors, he said, is the family choice plan.

"I believe there will have to be some fairly significant changes ... if we're going to get it smoothed out – not so much for choice but for delivery of an opportunity for a well-rounded education for all of our children.

"I'm not at all happy personally that we have 29 of our schools with over 70% free and reduced lunch children in them. A number of those schools are over 90% minority or ESL students. All research that any of us have ever seen makes it very clear that that is an environment that is extremely difficult in which to deliver, as effectively as we would like to, educational outcomes that we desire...."

Other cost factors Haworth cited were teacher turnover; high percentages of poor children, minority children and English as a Second Language children; and the size of the system, which Haworth believes warrants creation of a chief operating officer to run the nonacademic affairs of the district.

As for student achievement, Haworth said it not only made educational sense but also economic sense to intervene early with high-needs children. An erosion of support for the Bright Beginnings program for 4-year-olds "would be a huge tragedy.

"You can't take a seventh-grader who is lost academically. The cost to rescue that seventh-grader is dramatically higher and not very successful usually."

Mistake with the ABCs

At the heart of Haworth's critique is a challenge to how the state has handled the developing ABCs testing program, which was initiated in the mid-1990s. He has already delivered the critique to the State Board of Education, which Haworth chaired about a decade ago.

"After the early design of the ABCs program... we all agreed that the bar [for being on grade level] would be set at a fairly low level for two reasons. One, we wanted to not have a situation where large numbers of children failed immediately, and two, we wanted a buy-in from the teachers. It was very criti-

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% |

Source: Education Week

State ABCs program assessed

Continued from Page 5

cal to have the teachers have a sense of ownership, that the accountability system was positive. We got that.

“The thing that was not done and that was strongly a part of the original decision was that every couple of years you’d bump the thresholds up, so you’d ratchet up the rigor of what it took to achieve on-grade-level....

Not only has the bar not been raised, but 4,100 children in CMS didn’t pass tests at the “gateway” third, fifth and eighth grades. About 2,700 were promoted anyway last year.

“We’ll see those children again. They will be in the dropout numbers, they’ll be manning our rehab programs, they’ll be heavily involved over at Social Security and, God forbid, a number of them, being unable to behave responsibly, will be in prison....

“My original concern was the 2,700 we promoted. The longer I thought about it, I’m just as concerned about the 1,400 we held back. They’re stigmatized. They left their normal peer group. But most importantly, I seriously doubt if we have the resources to have as much one-on-one and one-on-four type of intensity to catch those students back up.”

In addition to the 2,700 and 1,400, thousands more children were not on grade level at non-“gateway” grades. Haworth said he had no numbers.

What the cut-offs look like

“Look at the eighth-grade level 3,” says Haworth (see chart above). “Thirty-four percent. We’re accord- ing a level 3 if you can get to that threshold.

“We’ve got another crowd of kids that are short of these thresholds by two to four points and they, if they get into the standard deviation “band,” they get moved forward as level 3s.” Testing experts agree that these children are on shaky ground, but they are “being included in our ‘progress.’”

“My issue is not to take those kids and recategorize them,” but CMS’s testing expert says many of the children in this “band” drop back to level 2 in later years.

“The real issue is that the approach is not to circumvent the system and design it to make some numbers better than they really are. The assignment is to educate children. I’m not interested in the numbers. I’m interested in whether the child is getting a sound, well-rounded, basic education....

“Research shows kids will will meet the bar. They didn’t raise the bar.

“Why didn’t they raise the bar? Politics pure and simple. They didn’t want to look at a year that might be a little less exciting that the year before. Well, that’s all a part of making progress. Any of us who’ve run a corporation, it ain’t a straight line to

On grade level for the ABCs

Number of questions asked, and percentage of correct answers required to be on grade level (level 3) on the N.C. ABCs tests, by grade.

| Grade | Questions | Pct. Needed |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 3 Reading | 56 | 51% |
| Math | 80 | 60% |
| 4 Reading | 65 | 54% |
| Math | 80 | 45% |
| 5 Reading | 65 | 54% |
| Math | 80 | 40% |
| 6 Reading | 65 | 56% |
| Math | 80 | 40% |
| 7 Reading | 66 | 59% |
| Math | 80 | 39% |
| 8 Reading | 68 | 51% |
| Math | 80 | 34% |

Data source: Howard Haworth

the mountaintop. You’ve got down years, and they’re not much fun, because everyone wants to know what happened....

“We’re incentivizing people at all levels to worry way too much about how the numbers look and too little about how the kids look....

“Do we go home, pull down the blinds and turn the lights out? Not so at all. This trip can be taken.

“But in order to take the trip the system has got to be openly accountable from the toughest outcome child-wise to the best, and we celebrate as we rise, and we worry in certain areas, but we’re candid with one another, constructively candid....

“I think it’s possible to put together an outstanding group of leaders in this community, corporate leaders, parents and others who will create an environment of support for the administration and the board so these children who are not able to take this trip as we are now going about it, can take this trip and that we can talk about these subjects that are not exciting, candidly, as opposed to be concerned about even talking about them.

“I’ve never seen a problem solved that you couldn’t start with candor about what it really was....

“I’ve been doing this 20 years, and [with reference to] the least exciting aspects of public education we’ve been down all kinds of alleys, we’ve dodged, we’ve bobbed, we’ve weaved, we’ve but done everything but say, ‘Hey, this is what it is. Do we want to do this or don’t we?...’

“I worry about this country’s ability to continue to let the public education bottom 40% in this nation operate as it is, and overwhelm us with the negative

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State ABCs program assessed

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revenue costs that are coming at us from all directions. Many of them are coming in tax form and other forms, because of that part of the population that we have to take care of for 60 or 70 years because we didn't prepare them to take care of themselves."

A 'train wreck' called No Child

"If you think we're in some degree of difficulty with what I've just said to you about ABCs," Haworth told EBAC members, "when [No Child Left Behind] comes down the track, and it's coming with very little resources to put it on the playing field, it is going to add to the train wreck."

Haworth was particularly critical of a state decision to apply No Child's sanctions only to schools receiving federal Title I money. That would exempt half the state's schools. He and Pughsley agreed that federal officials are unlikely to approve such an end run around the legislation. But the decision, Haworth said, fits the pattern set by the state's refusal to raise the bar for ABCs testing.

"The pattern's there. And the pattern is a disastrous one. No Child gives us the chance to tee it up. It won't be easy. ABCs was an early chance to tee it up. We chose to, you know, kinda hide the dark side of the moon.... We're getting ready to hide the dark side of the moon again, and guess what part of the dark side of moon we're getting ready to hide – the kids who need us the most, the uniquely challenged youngsters, some minority, many of them not minority, English Second Language kids.

"Are we really going to take this trip? We keep saying it rhetorically, and we keep doing things like [the No Child exemption]."

"I think we ought to go ahead and face the music. I don't mean that critically. I'm talking about the

'On grade level' defined

The N.C. ABCs testing program reports results in four categories, identified by numbers. Levels 1 and 2 are designated as below grade level. Level 3 is on grade level. Level 4 is above grade level. State data that reports students "at or above grade level" includes scores at both levels 3 and 4. The definitions below are for the grades 3-8 end-of-grade tests. Nearly identical wording is used for the 9-12 end-of-course tests.

Level 1: Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area to be successful at the next grade level

Level 2: Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.

Level 3: Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.

Level 4: Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level.

www.ncpublicschools.org/vol2/rsds2002/terms.html

communities wrapping around their school systems and let's take the trip. Let's go ahead and face more rigor... and provide the resources.

"If North Carolina can circumvent the spirit and goals of No Child, Haworth said, "then I would say to you we're getting real close to losing our public education system in the sense of reaching the 40% that need us the most."

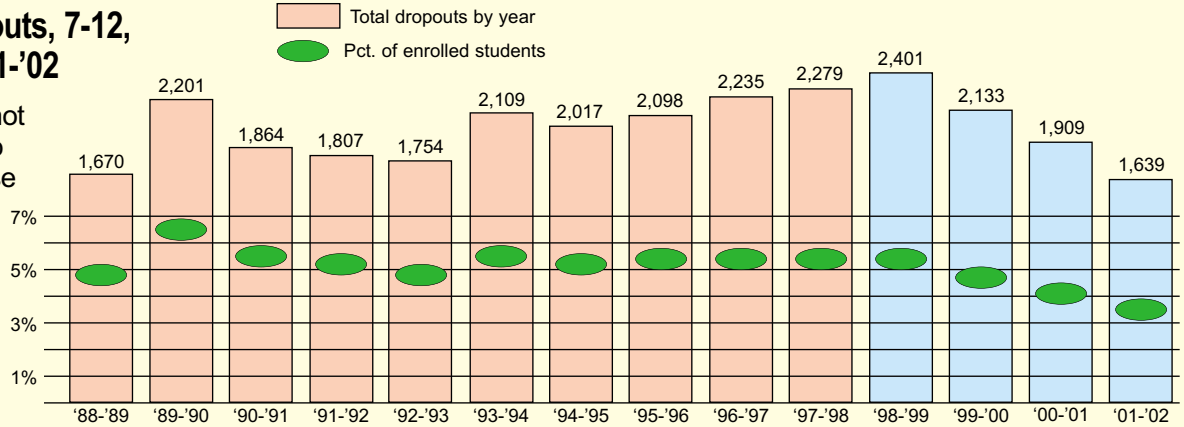
CMS high school students at or above grade level

| Course | '00 | '01 | '02 | Goal 2005 |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|
| English I | 68% | 67% | 68% | 90% |
| ELPS* | 61% | 63% | 60% | 90% |
| U.S. History | 48% | 53% | 52% | 90% |
| Algebra I | 53% | 55% | 64% | 90% |
| Geometry | 53% | 52% | 50% | 90% |
| Algebra II | 61% | 65% | 65% | 90% |
| Biology | 59% | 58% | 65% | 90% |
| Chemistry | 53% | 54% | 54% | 90% |
| Physics | 68% | 70% | 80% | 90% |

*Economic, Legal & Political Systems

CMS: Dropouts, 7-12, '88-'89 to '01-'02

Last 4 years not comparable to earlier because transfers to community colleges are included.

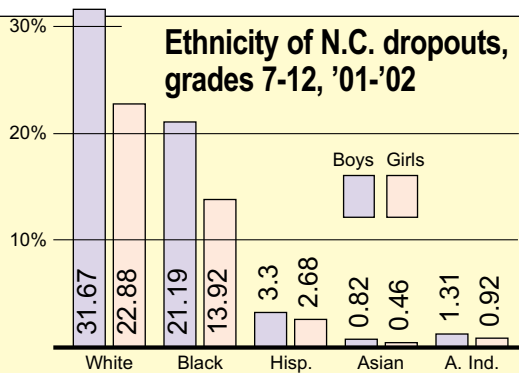


CMS dropouts, '01-'02, by school

State data on dropouts is based on available records. That means that a child who moves away without notice and becomes untraceable becomes a "dropout." University Meadows Elementary, for example, had 10 "dropouts" in 2001-2002. They probably did not quit school, but could not be found after they did not return to University Meadows. Children who drop out, return, then drop out again, are counted twice. Below is a list of the high schools and alternative schools where CMS focuses its dropout prevention efforts. In the list below, schools where numbers are dropping are marked in green (lighter gray on right side).

| | Wh | BI | Ind | His | As | O | M | F | Tot | | Wh | BI | Ind | His | As | O | M | F | Tot | |
|------------|----------------|----|-----|-----|----|---|----|----|-----|------------|----------------|-----|-----|-----|----|---|-----|----|-----|----|
| Butler | '02 42 | 33 | | 7 | 2 | | 54 | 30 | 84 | North Meck | '02 31 | 29 | | 1 | 3 | | 40 | 24 | 64 | |
| | '01 50 | 60 | | 6 | 2 | | 83 | 35 | 118 | | '01 74 | 59 | 3 | 5 | 4 | | 80 | 65 | 145 | |
| East Meck | '02 56 | 60 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 73 | 52 | 125 | Northwest | '02 7 | 3 | | | | | 5 | 5 | 10 | |
| | '01 46 | 50 | 1 | 11 | 6 | | 72 | 42 | 114 | | '01 15 | 14 | | 2 | | | 20 | 11 | 31 | |
| Garinger | '02 21 | 71 | | 22 | 16 | 1 | 84 | 47 | 131 | Olympic | '02 16 | 24 | | 5 | 9 | | 37 | 17 | 54 | |
| | '01 27 | 71 | 1 | 15 | 8 | 1 | 65 | 58 | 123 | | '01 43 | 61 | | 26 | 10 | 1 | 78 | 63 | 141 | |
| Harding | '02 11 | 20 | | | | | 18 | 13 | 31 | Providence | '02 52 | 43 | | 1 | 3 | 1 | 62 | 38 | 100 | |
| | '01 8 | 24 | | | | | 24 | 8 | 32 | | '01 65 | 49 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 81 | 44 | 125 | |
| Hopewell | '02 29 | 26 | | 3 | 3 | | 37 | 24 | 61 | South Meck | '02 41 | 26 | 1 | 3 | | | 49 | 22 | 71 | |
| | '01 (not open) | | | | | | | | | | '01 51 | 46 | 1 | 2 | 5 | | 68 | 37 | 105 | |
| Independ. | '02 20 | 17 | | 9 | 1 | 1 | 28 | 20 | 48 | Tate TAPS | '02 3 | 30 | | 1 | | | | | 34 | 34 |
| | '01 17 | 13 | | 4 | 2 | 1 | 22 | 15 | 37 | | '01 7 | 35 | | 1 | 1 | | 0 | 44 | 44 | |
| Mgmt. | '02 7 | 6 | | | | | 11 | 2 | 13 | Waddell | '02 22 | 32 | 3 | 30 | 5 | 1 | 54 | 39 | 93 | |
| | '01 2 | 14 | | | | 1 | 10 | 7 | 17 | | '01 (not open) | | | | | | | | | |
| Midwood | '02 20 | 32 | | 1 | | | 32 | 21 | 53 | West Char. | '02 8 | 68 | 1 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 49 | 44 | 93 | |
| | '01 26 | 44 | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 37 | 37 | 74 | | '01 10 | 121 | 1 | 11 | 8 | | 90 | 61 | 151 | |
| Morgan | '02 2 | 9 | | | | | 8 | 3 | 11 | West Meck | '02 45 | 84 | 3 | 3 | 16 | | 94 | 57 | 151 | |
| | '01 2 | 16 | | | | | 13 | 5 | 18 | | '01 65 | 119 | 4 | 7 | 20 | | 125 | 90 | 215 | |
| Myers Park | '02 44 | 49 | 1 | 6 | 6 | | 70 | 36 | 106 | Vance | '02 27 | 54 | | 3 | 9 | | 54 | 39 | 93 | |
| | '01 43 | 47 | | 2 | 1 | | 54 | 39 | 93 | | '01 38 | 47 | | 1 | 9 | 2 | 63 | 34 | 97 | |

Ethnicity of N.C. dropouts, grades 7-12, '01-'02



N.C. dropouts as percent of ethnic membership in schools

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| American Indian | 2.50% |
| Hispanic | 2.09% |
| Black | 1.89% |
| White | 1.49% |
| Asian | 1.20% |

Data sources for charts on this page: CMS, N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction

Running of lottery to give choice-out even lower priority

A Plaza-Midwood parent has unearthed another barrier to opting out of high-poverty schools:

Low-income parents assigned to high-poverty schools are given what in school system literature is described as a fourth-ranked priority to choose out of a high-poverty school “as long as the receiving school was five percentage points or more below the average for free and reduced lunch (transportation is provided only if the chosen school is within the choice zone.”

Jane Elizabeth Huff, education committee chair of the Plaza-Midwood Neighborhood Association, has neighbors using the fifth priority – for wealthier parents also seeking to leave high-poverty schools.

“Although it appears in this guideline that these children have

Choice Denied

priority outside the choice zone, that is not how it is going to be administered,” Huff told the school board Tuesday night. “And I would assert to you that that is not how the priority appears, and is described on these pages....

“The only conclusion one can draw from reading this is that one would have priority outside the choice zone.... We would appreciate clarification on this point.”

Huff says she was told by Eric Becoats, assistant superintendent for planning and development, that the lottery would be run first inside the choice zone, then outside. With seats in high demand, that decision further erodes the

priorities, she says. “It’s all about priority and capacity.... I think they’re creating Brahman schools and untouchable schools.”

Some Plaza-Midwood parents assigned to high-poverty Shamrock Gardens in the purple choice zone, says Huff, used their top choice to request Eastover, in the gold choice zone. She says they read the documents as meaning that they would be in line ahead of parents in the gold zone who live outside the Eastover attendance area.

Not so, says Becoats. Seats will first be filled with people from a school’s choice zone. Seats left over will go to applicants outside the zone.

That would leave parents choosing out of high-poverty schools slightly ahead other parents from outside the choice zone.

Schools may spell out cost of success

Continued from Page 1

believe are the needs of our district to support the goals that we have established for the school district, including but not limited to the top goal of student achievement – how we can go about supporting student achievement in the district, along with the other goals.

“I’m not letting up on the other goals, but please understand that I indicated that we would seek the funding necessary to support our goals.”

After an earlier meeting Tuesday, Rembert said that she wants a budget that will state very clearly what will not be accomplished with children if the county’s funding is less than requested. She suggested that as many as three lower budget numbers might be mentioned, and that programs to be dropped at each step would be identified.

“We must be sensitive to the economic conditions,” she said, but added that board members want to give taxpayers the information they need about school operations so they can, through their county commissioners, make an informed decision.”



Rembert

Rembert’s statement comes amid efforts, led chiefly by Charlotte-Mecklenburg business executives, to assure that all children are being prepared for life.

The push comes out of concern over, among other things, high incarceration costs and low skill levels among job applicants. A variety of initiatives are involved, from identifying efficiencies to increasing teacher stability to remaking curriculum.

But behind all the efforts is an awareness that the schools have a growing number of high-cost students – among them low-achievers, exceptional children, immigrants with limited English profi-

ciency.

Rembert’s meeting with Cox is one part of another effort – to increase communication between the two elected bodies.

Rembert announced that Arthur Griffin and John Lassiter would join her on an expanded liaison committee with the county commissioners. Rembert said Cox told her that the county board members would be Cox, former school board member Jim Puckett and possibly Dumont Clark.

Rembert said Cox had been impressed by the board’s capital improvement plan, and had suggested that the school board send it to all commissioners. Rembert asked Supt. Jim Pughsley to forward the CIP to the commissioners “for their information and perhaps their endorsement – not their approval, because that is not required.”

Rembert said Cox might invite the board to make a presentation on overall budget issues during the county board’s strategic budget meetings in late February or March.

Southeast needs to focus on teacher training, center says

Education Week captured lots of headlines last month with its Quality Counts report (*Educate!*, Jan. 9), which included grading the states' education efforts. In a new study based on some of the same data, the Chapel Hill-based Southeast Center for Teaching Quality offers good news and bad news, as typified by this from the report's conclusion:

Teachers in the Southeast are more likely to make use of standardized test data, but most do not. They are more likely to have frequent talks with principals about instructional practice, but most do not. They are more likely to get support to teach students with special needs, but most do not. They are more likely to be recognized for a job well done, but most are not.

Following is the report's "Finding #5: Teachers need more high quality professional development if we expect them to serve all students."

Percent of N.C. teachers who taught children with special needs:

84.9%

Percent with training for it:

32.3%

"Teachers in our region are less likely to believe they have the necessary supports to teach students with special needs. In no southeastern state do more than one-fourth of the teachers strongly agree

they are provided with the necessary assistance to work with students who have serious learning challenges. These numbers are disheartening, given the growing consequences attached to the tests these students must pass.

"Other survey results reveal that large percentages of teachers across the nation and in the Southeast are teaching students with limited English proficiency (LEP) or other special needs, i.e., those who require an individualized education plan (IEP). Most have had minimal pre-service preparation or professional development to

help them teach these students.

"For example... 80 percent of the region's teachers taught special needs students in their classrooms in 1999-2000, but only 30 percent had eight or more hours of training in this area in the previous three years. In the Southeast, South Carolina had the most extreme discrepancy: 77 percent of its teachers teach special needs children, but only 17 percent have had the minimum training described in the SASS survey item.

"The status of teachers' preparation to work with language-diverse students is even bleaker. Twenty-nine percent of the region's teachers taught LEP students in their classrooms in 1999-2000, but only 6 percent had eight or more hours of training in this area in the previous three years.

"Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia serve growing numbers of LEP students, but very few of their teachers have been given the much-needed preparation.

"For example, almost 47 percent of North Carolina's teachers teach LEP, but only 6 percent had eight or more hours of training this area. Florida has done better on this score; over one-third of its LEP teachers have been trained as described in the SASS item."

The report is at www.teaching-quality.org/resources/SECTQpublications/SASSbrief.htm

Boston assignment case in court

Hearings were being held this week in Boston in a suit brought by white parents against their school system.

The 10 white families assert that they were bounced out of their walk-zone school by regulations that reserve half a school's seats for children outside the neighborhood. Neither in this set of regulations nor in those of the 1970s that initially desegregated the schools is race mentioned. But the lawsuit hinges on the claim that race is behind the 50% rule.

Tuesday night, school board member Larry Gauvreau encouraged his colleagues to pay attention

"Parents that are challenging the school district this go-round are doing it based upon the choice plan they've implemented and the capping of schools, so to speak – walk zones – and I think we need to watch those, because this is very similar to what some of those moms, on both sides of the aisle tonight, were complaining about.

It's the policies themselves that are under attack... I think [the Boston suit] is going to be one of many and it may even happen here. It's a problem."

Parents from a neighborhood reassigned for the fall from Hawk Ridge Elementary Tuesday announced formation of a watchdog group, Parents for Education in CMS, to "increase the school board's responsiveness," push the board to focus on neighborhood schools, and make sure the "board is held accountable for its actions and that these actions are consistent from year to year."

Boston began court-ordered desegregation after Charlotte began busing students in the early 1970s. While Charlotte's first years were not without violent incidents, Boston's reaction was even more contentious. At one point, Charlotte high school students traveled to Boston, hoping to show their peers how to move toward peace and racial understanding.

Briefs

Preschool bullies: In a story about destructive children, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune said experts cite four possible causes of violent behavior among the youngest children: mental or emotional illnesses in the children, stress at home, parenting problems, and lead paint or other environmental poisons.

www.startribune.com

No Child Money: The Bush administration proposed budget falls short of spending levels agreed to during negotiations over the No Child Left Behind bill, the New York Times reported.

Spending at the poorest schools would be up \$1 billion from this year, but \$6 billion below agreed-on levels. The \$1 billion increase in special education was achieved in part by ending \$1.5 billion in programs dealing with dropout prevention, rural education and other matters. The proposal cuts money for teacher training, but includes \$75 million for sending children from “failing” schools to private schools.

www.nytimes.com

Lead in water: A determined parent’s school-by-school audit has found Baltimore schools letting children drink from water fountains turned off in 1992 because of lead contamination, the Baltimore Sun reported. School officials said principals assigned to those schools after 1992 may not have known of the lead notices, and had the water turned back on. In some cases, bottled water coolers meant to serve the kids were installed in faculty lounges instead. The parent, James Williams Jr., has a child who suffered from lead-paint poisoning in the 1990s.

www.sunspot.com

No Child lawsuits: The first lawsuits claiming noncompliance

10 commandments to end education fights

Writing in the Phi Delta Kappan, former school administrator David Ackerman, CEO of Ohio-based The Learning Navigator, surveys the strife between educational traditionalists and progressives. Skirmishes in this century-old war have names like Phonics vs. Whole Language; History vs. Social Studies; and “Fuzzy Math” vs. Basic Skills.

Ackerman wants a truce, to “break the philosophical logjam that has been obstructing us as a profession.” He offers 10 commandments, the first five from the traditionalists, the second five from the progressives:

- “1. Thou shalt teach that which is of deepest value.
- “2. Thou shalt teach with rigor.
- “3. Thou shalt uphold standards of excellence.
- “4. Thou shalt not kill time... effectiveness cannot be gauged without considering the time required to achieve the results.
- “5. Remember the disciplines and keep them holy (even though they are partial).
- “6. Remember that children are whole people, not deficient adults.
- “7. Thou shalt not try to make one standard fit all.
- “8. Thou shalt not treat the mind of a child as though it were a receptacle.
- “9. Honor what children bring to the text.
- “10. Thou shalt honor the student’s search for holistic knowledge.... It is narrow-minded and spiritually stingy to absolve the school from its responsibility to assist students in the elusive challenge of knowledge integration, for it is the school’s job to help translate the cacophonous and fragmented disciplinary babel into a versatile and ultimately harmonious and coherent set of lenses on the world.”

Ackerman’s meditation, “Taproots for a New Century: Tapping the Best of Traditional and Progressive Education,” can be read at www.pdkintl.org.

with No Child Left Behind have been filed, Education Week reported. In New York, parents claimed that Albany and New York City have not allowed children to transfer from failing schools or receive supplemental services. A California case challenges that state’s definition of “highly qualified” teacher. One of the first questions to be determined by the courts is whether parents have a right to sue. The law does not address the issue directly, and experts say the Supreme Court is moving away from accepting so-called “implied rights of action.”

www.edweek.org

Calendar

- 18 Personnel committee, 7:30 a.m., Board Conference Room.
- 18 Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services.
- 18 Elected Leaders Quarterly Forum, noon, Government Center Room 267.
- 20 Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference 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 kcramer@charlottechamber.com.