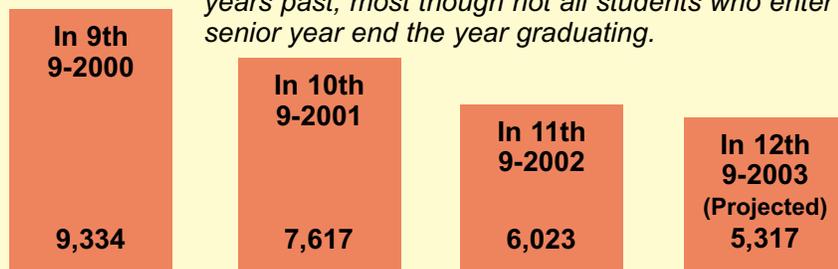


Highest-cost item in school budget

The most expensive thing Charlotte-Mecklenburg does in public education is to accept a dropout rate that consumes more than 40% of all CMS ninth-graders. A look at the vanishing Class of 2004. In years past, most though not all students who enter senior year end the year graduating.



Source: CMS superintendent's proposed budget, March 11

How much for kids?

CMS pushes for budget that boosts teaching force, holds ground on promise of quality education for all

Board members of the Charlotte Chamber huddle next week, fully aware that if they embrace the proposed CMS school budget before them, they will be telling county commissioners to approve a small property tax increase.

A committee of business leaders appointed in part by county commissioners is writing a forthcoming report on the budget. That report will likely assert that the \$14.9 million county fund increase sought by CMS for next year is really just a small fraction of the schools' needs as more children that are expensive to educate are attracted to the community.

And as *Educate!* reported last week, the millions of dollars to make good on promises of equitable facilities, programs and services are not even in the budget proposals under review.

Amid the Iraq crisis and fear of attacks against Americans everywhere, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is opening a school funding discussion that is both critically important and difficult.

CMS Supt. Jim Pughsley, addressing a Charlotte Chamber group Wednesday morning, continued to say he felt "somewhat in the crossfire" between a slumping economy and his students' needs. He suggested looking at his budget as "an investment as opposed to an expense." While achievement is

UNCC students hear practitioners, lawyers disagree over school law

After a clash between practitioners and lawyers Monday night, the status of the law on school desegregation was never muddier.

But a wide-ranging discussion at UNCC's College of Education made clear that educators and lawyers alike are grappling with how to sustain the school district, a traditional public institution that's about to be dealt a body blow by No Child Left Behind.

Before an audience of students, most of whom are already teaching, the practitioners said school districts are forbidden from using race as they assign students.

The lawyers suggested that the courts' message is not so absolute. The message seemed to be that if practitioners are resegregating their districts, maybe that has more to do with public opinion than with courts' interpretation of the Constitution.

"I'm not certain that we have been operating with the correct law" recently, said Julius

Chambers, former director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. Chambers' firm filed the Swann vs. Mecklenburg suit in the 1960s that led to court-ordered busing to end school segregation in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and districts nationwide.

Jack Boger, deputy director of the Center for Civil Rights at UNC Chapel Hill, called decisions by the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals "a tragedy," but acknowledged that court involvement in school assignment issues "is coming to an end."

Walt Sherlin, associate superintendent of Wake County Public Schools, told the students that his district believes there are "good reasons for racial integration, but we don't believe the courts will allow us to use race" as a factor in student assignment.

CMS assistant superintendent for planning and development Eric Becoats agreed. "We can't use race."

Continued on Page 3

Continued on Page 4

AVID helps kids fill in the blanks

He may be the perfect tutor for struggling kids: He had a lousy fourth grade. He's got an educational disability but his parents wouldn't allow him to use it as an excuse. And today he's playing college hoops and is well on his way to graduating from college.

Every child might be inspired by having a mentor like that.

But enough about the tutor. Here's how the tutor describes the middle-schooler under his wing:

"He's six feet, slim, fashionably dressed, witty, cunning. He's accepted by everybody. He deals with things very well.

"And yet he's a kid on the fence." When he pays attention, he achieves. But he backslides when he hangs with the wrong crowd – "the kids who sleep in class and don't do their work."

If this middle-schooler is going to make it in life, "he needs someone looking out for him."

Enter AVID, an acronym for the program Advancement Via Individual Determination. Now at 43 CMS middle and high schools and projected to grow to 44 next year, this program aimed at the middle of the academic pack is designed to push kids with untapped potential.

This particular child, the tutor believes, "could take half honors courses, half regular courses and get a 3.0 to 3.5."

As there is a push toward doing what we should have been succeeding at for centuries – namely, educating every child to her or his full potential – it is imperative that these children, who did not choose their parents by the way, find the support they need to pursue excellence.

Education advocates dance around this issue of parental support. As the dance goes on, the tragedies continue among kids who don't have that support.

Schools want to encourage parents to be part of their child's education. They have few ways to



Steve Johnston

insist on it. They work by indirection. The AVID program is an example for this middle-schooler.

Through AVID he finds someone who sees his potential to go far in school. Through AVID he learns study skills the parent may never have learned. Through AVID he is exposed to the value of planning out-of-school time, and getting homework done.

"Education has to start in the home first," the tutor says about the children AVID targets. "When they enter kindergarten they're already behind. The gap just continues to widen. It's just a tremendous problem."

AVID "does as much as you can without stepping on toes."

There are no magic solutions. But what AVID attempts is part of the answer.

Want to help tutor? Call the AVID staff at 704-444-2795.

And tell 'em a college hoops player sent you.

Take a moment to thank those in military

Please visit the Department of Defense Web page and sign in thanking the men and women of the U.S. military services for defending our freedom.

The compiled list of names will be sent out to our soldiers at the end of the month. So far, there are only about 1.2 million names. What a shame! It's on the Web at www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html

**From
Readers**

Dottie Walker

This journal will continue for
23

more issues, based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month. We offer our thanks to the

7%

of people now regularly receiving *Educate!* who have ever helped defray the cost of its publication, and for contributions totaling \$420 during February toward the \$3,850 monthly expense budget. A community journal must have the support of its readers. Are you doing your part?

Supporting *Educate!* is easy online

To make tax-deductible donations to support *Educate!*, just go to www.networkforgood.org, and type in the keywords Swann Fellowship.

Educate! is a journal on public education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg financed by individual and corporate donors and a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen interested in the welfare of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. *Educate!* is published by The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204. Lucy Bush, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director. Voice and fax: 704-342-4330. E-mail: sjohnston@educateclt.org. Published since September 2000; 6-week average circulation through last issue: 2,599.

Kathleen McClain assisted with this edition.

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

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Practitioner-lawyer rift appears over race

Continued from Page 1

Surlin's district is currently focused on a dissident group he describes as "16 people" who may test in court Wake County's assignment plan. That plan sets academic achievement and socioeconomic levels for schools, and moves students when schools get out of balance. The plan's critics argue that the plan's standards are a surrogate for race.

Surlin argued that preventing concentrations of low-income and low-achieving students raises achievement. He cited achievement gaps between blacks and whites that are narrowing.

UNCC sociology professor Roslyn Mickelson argued that diversity is associated with high student achievement. Not only are students better prepared to operate in a democratic society – what she called a soft skill – but they also learn more "hard" skills like reading and math "in settings that include people different from themselves."

When the discussion turned to housing, Mickelson said, "We can't wait for housing to become desegregated.

"It is very hard if not impossible to sustain quality equal education where [the bulk of students] are poor and are ethnic or racial minorities." She said her research showed that Wake had done a better job than Charlotte-Mecklenburg with overcoming racial gaps.

Lawyer Chambers has been investigating if schools follow federal standards for addressing children's exceptional needs. Some families "are completely ignored," he said. "CMS hasn't appreciated the requirements of the statute," he said.

Steve Johnston, who wrote this story, moderated a question-and-answer session after the panelists spoke.

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TUESDAY MORNING BREAKFAST FORUM

Citizens huddle over school budget details

A self-selected panel from the Education Budget Advisory Committee Friday met to chew on Supt. Jim Pughsley's proposed CMS budget. Some notes:

- The Pughsley document, with its \$15 million request for new county money, understates CMS's needs, several members agreed. Until the real number is put on the table, the community will waste time on what retired executive Howard Haworth called a "narrow little exercise" debating the wrong numbers.

- Based on the advice now available from Raleigh, Pughsley assumed a 6.5% hike from a state that, in one member's words, "is bleeding every which way," with a projected budget about \$2 billion out of balance.

- A key to meeting No Child's academic challenges is getting all pre-kindergartners prepared for school. About 1,000 low-income students are not yet served by the Bright Beginnings program.

If Pughsley's recommendation "isn't enough, we need to tell (county commissioners) that, and we need to be sure we are real clear," said Time Warner executive Sue Breckinridge. Added Haworth, "There are much bigger numbers needed and coming."

While many EBAC members praised Pughsley's strategy of cutting about \$10 million from this year's non-classroom expenses, Haze Moore said items in the cuts are "taking away teacher support.... A relief valve that teachers had is being taken out."

The administration may also have damaged its credibility in how it has handled bus purchases. The Charlotte Observer reported that CMS hasn't identified the cost of buses ordered last fall. But it HAS said that those funds were neither in the current-year budget approved in October nor in the proposed budget for next fiscal year.

From within EBAC, there have

been calls for identifying the additional costs of choice. Accountant Betty Hunter, for example, asked Pughsley last week, "Is there any way we can tell the community what choice is costing us...?"

Pughsley seemed reluctant, and for good reason. Additional busing costs are just the tip of the "choice" iceberg. Choice created the high-poverty schools, where signing bonuses, paid graduate school tuition and annual teacher bonuses are being used to entice teachers to serve.

And there is no road map for settling how choice has affected other costs. An example:

By segregating students of poverty, choice allows CMS to deliver more efficiently some services these children need but that previously were not adequately provided. Examples include psychologists, nurses, counselors and

supplemental curriculum. If choice had not segregated them, would these children be receiving the same level of services they are today? Yet those costs aren't a function of choice but what's necessary to educate all children.

Meanwhile, members are wary of commissioners Chairman Tom Cox's inclination to discuss school needs in terms of per-pupil costs. Other county leaders would like to set a per-pupil county contribution to CMS, then raise the number only for additional students.

CMS revenue from the state varies from year to year. And CMS has a growing number of children who are costly to educate. And, committee members say, locking in county financing to current services plus growth presumes that current services are satisfactorily meeting all children's needs.

Budget talk is brisk even amid Iraq crisis

Continued from Page 1

improving, 60% or more of CMS schools will be labeled failing under the federal No Child Left Behind act.

"There are going to be some surprises," he predicted. "Schools where you would not expect that to be the case" will fail. "We are gearing up... to meet those criteria, but we need a lot of support."

Possibly eroding that support lately has been Pughsley's candor about the family choice plan.

"I have indicated that one of the impacts of the choice program has to do with resegregation of the schools. I have used that terminology not to cause a vocal reaction... but straightforwardly to describe what I see happening in the schools."

Budgetwise, all local educational institutions are under stress.

CPCC's student census grew

10% last school year and 5% this year. President Tony Zeiss says his system is strapped by state formulas that don't fully fund CPCC's satellite campuses now serving thousands of students.

And an earlier pact with the county to hold off for four years on bond fund requests has come back to bite CPCC. Zeiss says commissioners chairman Tom Cox has warned him not to ask for new bonds this year. Such a bond issue would boost the county's annual interest payments. "I guess no good deed goes unpunished," he quipped Wednesday.

UNCC is also hurting, gaining money in some pots but losing money in others, said Ed Kizer, an assistant to the chancellor. UNCC received approval for expansion to doctoral degree status in 2001, but still has not received funding appropriate for university systems at that level.

The school board's next budget workshop is Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the Education Center. Its next meeting is Tuesday at 6.



Myers Park High students hear Valdez Kuri describe Benshi art form.

Theater students look at unusual way to explain film across cultural divides

For theater students, Monday's presentation by a Mexican director was a fine lesson in how art can shape something new out of materials drawn from both present and past.

For a larger audience, it was a reminder that intentional efforts to speak across cultural divides can be both effective and fun.

Myers Park High School officials say they intend that their theater season next year will abandon the usual plays. Instead, the staff wants to display silent or other films in a way that can help students figure out how to make them speak across cultures.

Mexican film director Claudio Valdes Kuri was brought from Duke University to introduce the students to the Benshis, Japanese narrators, translators and commentators on silent films during the early 20th century.

In Japan, where American silent films were shown, the Benshi would sit on stage but keep the audience's focus on the

film. Valdez Kuri said the Benshi would translate, voice any number of parts, offer commentary, and explain the action. Audiences would often come to see a movie more than once just to hear the commentary of different Benshis.

While the Benshis were driven out by the "talkies," their art showed the possibilities of linking



Valdez Kuri

film (something unchanging from the past) with theater (something in the present that is subject to improvisation).

"The joining of those things is very interesting," Valdez Kuri said. "Each night will be completely different, based on the mood of the actor... All of you could be Benshis without the help of anyone."

Last year, Valdez Kuri directed a retelling of "The Grey Automobile," a 1915 Mexican silent film about a gang of thieves

created by Enrique Rosas. From Valdez Kuri the students learned two key things about how a director adapts art forms to serve his material.

First, Valdez Kuri noted that "The Grey Automobile" was originally a 5.5-hour flick. The revisions that cut it to less than two hours had destroyed the plot, however, and viewers would be lost if they did not know the story. The Benshi tradition of being on stage to interpret the movie was a good solution for modern audiences.

Second, Valdez Kuri borrowed not from the Japanese Benshi tradition but from Mexican silent film traditions when he added dancing and other material. He reminded students accustomed to six-hour VCR tapes that silent films were shown using multiple reels, and that between reels, vaudevillians would entertain the audience.

The Benshi tradition is known well by most American students, though not by that name.

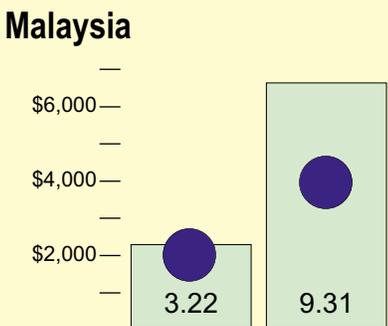
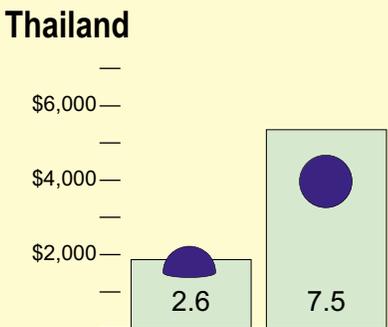
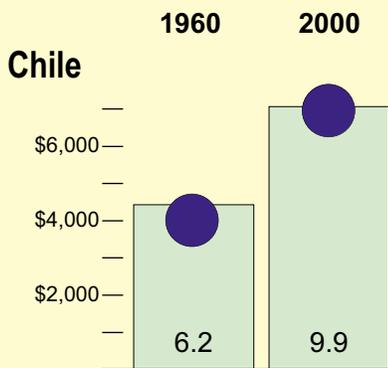
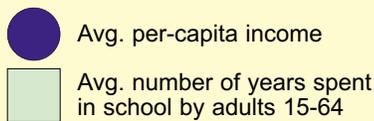
Students know that their best teachers are narrators, interpreters, explainers. Every day, teachers stand in front children who, because of their youth or their foreign birth, are no more familiar with the curriculum than Japanese audiences were with the English subtitles and laugh lines in American silent movies.

CMS and all other school systems are desperately seeking ways to connect with students so they can prepare them with the knowledge of the world they need for success.

Perhaps Valdez Kuri's retelling of "The Grey Automobile," with its active interpretation of meanings and words and period history, is a model to bring into the classroom. It would certainly engage a raft of student Benshis in active learning.

Invest in education

Every job-seeker, from dropout to Ph.D. candidate, finds that, for the most part, more education brings a bigger salary. The latest evidence of this truth comes from a study of developing nations. As levels of education rose since 1960, per-capita gross national income in constant dollars rose as well.



Source: UNESCO/OECD study, "Financing Education – Investments and Returns"; summary available at www.oecd.org/els/education/statistics

Choice reassignment forms must be postmarked by Friday

The lottery results went to parents earlier this month and some *Educate!* readers couldn't believe they didn't get any of their choices for next fall.

Thousands of parents didn't (story below).

The next step in the assignment process is a request for reassignment.

And the forms requesting reassignment must either be turned in or postmarked by Friday.

The grounds the administration must use to decide on reassignments are narrow:

- Teachers may seek reassignment of their children to their own work site.
- Children may be reassigned to meet medical needs. A separate medical form is required, as listed on the reassignment request form.
- The third category is "extreme hardship," which is not otherwise defined in board policy.

But note that the three narrow definitions apply only to administrative decisions on reassignment. An administrative decision based on those narrow grounds may be appealed to the school board.

In other words, parents with an issue short of "extreme hardship" should feel free to use the reassignment process. The letters announcing administrative rejection of a reassignment request will outline the process for appeal.

The board's Policy JFAC says the board or the small panels of board members that review such appeals may make decisions based on broader issues: "the best interests of the child; the orderly and efficient administration of the public schools; the proper administration of the school to which reassignment is requested; the effect on students in an existing Wait Pool for the school to which reassignment is requested; and the instruction, health and safety

of the pupils there enrolled."

Forms are on the CMS Web site at www.cms.k12.nc.us/news/stories/843a.asp

Reassignment forms that aren't mailed should be returned to the Family Application Center at Billingsville School, 124 Skyland Ave., off Randolph Road.

Reassignment requests that are received after the deadline will be processed later as transfer requests. More info on that anon.

PR on choice plan misstated the results

A Power Point slide not updated with new numbers helped create a too-rosy report on school choice Feb. 25, the Charlotte Observer reported.

About 74% of parents received their first choice for next fall, not the 78% reported to the school board. Similarly, the total receiving their first or second choice was 85%, not the 93% announced earlier.

The Observer said it asked about the discrepancy between the original report and an update on the lottery results prepared for school board member George Dunlap.

The errors discussed in the Sunday story involved reporting of the results. There has been no information from CMS about possible errors in the running of the lottery itself.

The lottery results, as reported by the Observer, as a percentage of the 25,131 students receiving their first, second or third choices, or none of them:

	1st	2nd	3rd	None
White	75	11	4	10
Black	70	11	5	13
Hisp.	87	6	2	5
Total	74	11	4	11

Briefs

Bigger classes: San Diego teachers were expecting classes of 40 to 60 as a first round of layoffs from California's budget crisis begin, the Times Union reported.

Better candidates: The Journal-Constitution reported that the 11 Atlanta-area school systems are finding it easier to hold on to teachers or to find replacements as job opportunities in other economic sectors wither. School district recruiters have targeted hard-hit states like Tennessee and New York.

More teachers needed: Florida's constitutional amendment mandating lower class sizes means schools will need 5,000 more teachers, the Lakeland, Fla., Ledger reported. That's on top of 15,000 needed for a growing population. The state's education schools produce 4,000 graduates annually, but about 500 of those leave the state each year.
www.theledger.com

Business backing: Alabama business leaders in Birmingham and Mobile are pushing to increase schools for public education, the Birmingham News reported. Chambers of commerce say, in exchange for more money, they will ask schools to be more accountable to deliver the educated workers their businesses need. A state budget crisis may cut \$200 million from the schools next fall.

Afterschool cuts: The Bush administration's budget cuts federal assistance for afterschool programs by 40%, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported. The programs reach about a half-million students.

No Child 'stinks': Maine Education Association president Rob Walker says that the more

Calendar

- 20 Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 25 Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 25 School Board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 26 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., Government Center, 11th floor conference room.
- 26 School Board budget session, 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 29 Parents on the Move, parent conference, UNCC, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For information: Blanche Penn, 704-890-4101.

his colleagues learn about No Child Left Behind, "the worse it gets.... In the Lewiston Middle School where I teach there are 10 severely disabled students who are non-readers. We can give them the Maine Educational Assessment test for eighth-graders and include their grades with the other 103 students and watch our average test score plummet to failing levels, or we can humanely excuse them and fail for not having 95% of the students taking the test. Under ESEA rules my school is guaranteed to fail."

www.maine.nea.org

Effects of welfare's end: A new study shows that children of adults who have left the welfare rolls have not been psychologically harmed, the New York Times reported. Household income nearly doubled, and young mothers facing longer work hours cut their own social and educational time rather than time with their children.

www.nytimes.com

\$100,000 teacher: A Glendale, Calif. teacher's new book argues

that quality teachers should be paid \$100,000, the Boston Globe reported. English teacher Brian Crosby would divert either Title 1 money (federal assistance for low-income children) or the money now spent on computers and wiring.

www.sunspot.net

Alternative Child: The Washington Post asked educators to design alternatives to the federal No Child Left Behind act. From Washington-area educator Ken Bernstein they received this: "Give students books they can own. And read aloud with them. Let them write about things that interest them. Then show them how to improve their writing, using their own work. Devote enough resources to give children more attention and help on their writing, which can't happen in classrooms with 35 kids."

NYC choice: About 53% of rising high school students were turned away by all their choice schools and must stay in their troubled neighborhood schools, the New York Times reported. That's up from the usual 45%.

www.nytimes.com

More exclusions: The numbers of student exclusions in Massachusetts have risen to a six-year high, the Boston Globe reported. For 2000-2001, there were 1,621 removals, up 15% from the previous year.

www.boston.com

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