

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education
2002-2003 Budget Amendments
November - December 2002

Revenue Increase (Decrease) Expense Increase (Decrease)

Buying buses

A look at a history of nondisclosure, and why we should avoid such nonsense in the future

5100-500	Equipment - Regular Instructional Programs	(360)
6600-200	Purchased Services - Central Support Services	360
17)	Reallocate funds to the Transportation department to purchase buses.	
5900-200	Employee Benefits - Other Support Programs	(2,505,440)
6500-500	Equipment - Business Support Services	2,505,440
18)	Reallocate funds in the Safety department for supplies.	
6300-300	Purchased Services - Maintenance Support Services	(8,282)
5100-400	Supplies and Materials - Regular Instructional Programs	5,282
6500-400	Supplies and Materials - Business Support Services	3,000

Putting tax dollars into yellow school buses has long been controversial. For decades, the yellow vehicles were, for some citizens, the visible symbol of a hated desegregation effort imposed by the courts. And yet for others, the buses carried a silent cargo of hope that opportunities would be realized for children long denied an equal opportunity.

This spring's wrangling over how much CMS paid for buses last fall, and with what money, seriously damaged the system's commitment to openness, and to providing leaders and citizens alike a budget that transparently reflects true educational costs.

The episode should not be repeated. But there are few indications yet that it won't be.

What's at stake is clear: It is the district's credibility. And the district needs all the credibility it can muster as it tries to find the money it needs for success.

Pressure is mounting for a well-educated work force. More high-cost children – limited-English learners, high-achievers, children with medical needs or other problems – are among the children of county taxpayers. And while the feds aren't sending much money, they certainly are insisting that none of these children be left behind.

School board reallocates funds

On Jan. 28 and without debate or dissent, the CMS school board unanimously approved 16 pages of budget amendments for November and December.

Among the "transfers among functions" using county money

Continued on Page 4

'Only half the trip has been taken'

Schools have expensive unmet needs, county told

A bipartisan citizens panel dominated by business executives made its case to county commissioners Tuesday that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools will need major additional support to educate all children.

"Only half the trip has been taken," said Howard Haworth, one of the presenters from the Education Budget Advisory Committee.

About 40% of CMS students "are churning through the educational system... not receiving a sound basic education.

"And demographics are running against us" with more exceptional children, more poor children, more limited-English children – groups that tend to require costly services to bring them to grade level.

Flight from the district, he asserted, is "not based on race but on academic security" – uncertainties that schools can provide excellent educational opportunities.

The cost of doing so, Haworth said, "is going to be substantial."

EBAC is led by Republican insurance executive and former Charlotte mayor Ken Harris. Member Ernie Dehnert, a banker and head of the Chamber of Commerce's education efforts, presented EBAC's recommendation that the county fund Supt. Jim Pughsley's annual budget, which asks of the county a \$14.9 million

Continued on Page 3

2 comments on Foluke's vision for CMS

Comments on Educate!'s April 17 article reporting Gyasi Foluke's request to the school board to teach teachers African-American history and to acknowledge that black children "have gone through a collective historical experience, from the slave trade to slavery to segregation, and major damage has occurred as a result of that cumulative experience."

I really enjoyed the comments made by Dr. Gyasi Foluke. Our kids are falling behind; anyone can see that.... I've always believed that most teachers are not prepared to teach African-American children, some because they do not wish to teach them, and also because of ignorance.

Do people really want the problem solved?

Nelda Anderson Tatum

If Mr. Foluke believes black

From Readers

children need a different educational system than other children, does he by this tell us that black children are mentally different than white children and should be educated in segregated schools?

And further, since it is a eurocentric society we live in, and "successful" people are judged by their successes in same, but black children are "different" should we set up a separate, but equal, place for them so they won't have to be eurocentric?

Small wonder Mr. Foluke is not so well accepted.

I do agree with his point about who is in prison. What is the cause and what is the remedy? School is not the only or, in my opinion, the primary issue.

Lewis Guignard

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Kathleen McClain assisted with this edition.

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Schools have unmet needs, county told

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increase over last year's \$265 million county contribution. The Republican majority on the county board is eyeing major cuts in order to maintain last year's campaign promise not to raise taxes.

Haworth ticked off a list of major issues facing the schools:

- The new choice assignment plan has created high-poverty schools "that are not learning-friendly" and more expensive to operate. CMS will see achievement gains at a few of those schools, but will be unable to make all such schools succeed. "I think dramatic changes are going to have to be made" in the assignment plan, Haworth said.

- About \$20 million already pledged to provision all schools equally is not in the school board's budget. He recalled how the school board debated whether the cost of equity was \$20 million or \$16 million. With half of high school students below grade level, "I'm going to tell you they don't know what the number is," but that it is far higher.

- State achievement standards, against which CMS doesn't perform particularly well, contain a "mediocrity of the thresholds" that suggests that rigorous education is rarely being achieved. Eighth-graders can be on grade level after correctly answering only 34% of the answers on some tests. "It is absolutely necessary that we talk about the tough parts as we celebrate the accomplishments."

- While it should be up to citizens to hold schools accountable, "almost no citizens have adequate data to make an educated decision about their child.... Disclosure has got to be better."

- Dropout rates have improved, but it is still true that "20% of the students who arrive as ninth-graders don't graduate."

EBAC has discussed with

Superintendent annual review process begins

Tuesday night, the first step was taken toward reviewing the first year of Jim Pughsley's superintendency.

School board member John Lassiter announced late in the meeting that the board's Personnel Policy Committee would meet May 6 at 7:30 a.m. to review documents to be used in the annual evaluations of the superintendent and general counsel Mo Green, "in anticipation of those reviews later this year."

Pughsley was hired last June on a two-year contract. That document allows but does not require the board to extend the initial two-year term. It also allows but does not require the board to begin a search for a new superintendent at any time.

The June 11, 2002 document says that, at the time of signing, the board "does not currently plan to initiate a search for a Superintendent before Dr. Pughsley has completed the first year of his appointment as Superintendent" and says Pughsley "will be considered one of the finalists under consideration in any such search."

Since it was signed, the full text of Pughsley's contract has been posted at www.educateclt.org at the bottom of the "Contact Us" page.

Pughsley the idea of adding to CMS's top administration an operations officer with a background of running large private-sector businesses. Haworth told commissioners that CMS needs such a person to "take all the business areas (of CMS) and manage them just as aggressively as they are in the private sector."

Haworth said EBAC also endorsed Pughsley's effort to create a three-year budget forecast, which would be based not on economic conditions, but on the district's needs. "There needs to be... a larger period to see what the projected needs are," he said.

In response to a question from commissioner Parks Helms, Haworth said the three-year budgeting would create a better "sense of understanding at the community level.... We do it hit-and-run now...."

More public understanding of the schools' needs, he said, would "create the updraft that will be necessary to take the trip."

Commissioner Norman Mitchell said businesses had pressed for parent choice assignments, and for the commissioners to make school choices equal. "Now it is time to pay up," he said.

Haworth replied that there might be "a less expensive way to

do it and a happier way to do it." Pressed for details by commissioners chairman Tom Cox, Haworth said a new assignment plan would have to include "some moving out and some dispersal and some re-creation of diversity." He offered no details but endorsed a review of where schools are being built, asserting that some parents can't escape low-income school assignments, even with three choices.

"We've still got time" to review the assignment plan, "but we don't have much longer."

Haworth, who was close to former Supt. Eric Smith, said the choice plan "came to a vote when the pressure became too intense to avoid it.... It wasn't based on how good a plan it was. I pleaded with Eric not to pull the trigger, based on some of the things that were in the plan."

Haworth credited Pughsley with doing a "creative job of rassing with it," but said the plan's inherent flaws should be addressed. He said he was distressed that the number of high-poverty schools had increased as a result of the second lottery in January.

"We shouldn't be letting it drift until it's no longer retrievable.... But maybe we want to do what we're doing."

Buying more buses: Credibility damaged

Continued from Page 1

was the one displayed in the box on Page 1:

“17) Reallocate funds to the Transportation department to purchase buses.”

The \$2,505,440 was moved to account 6500-500 for equipment in Business Support Services.

The money came from account 5900-200, “Employee Benefits - Other Support Programs.”

In an April 1 memo issued only after citizen committee requests and media coverage, Supt. Jim Pughsley said the money was “funds redirected from health insurance benefits” and that the money had been available “due to a planned increase in premium that did not materialize.”

In other words, money was not included in the school budget approved last spring to buy the 40 buses ordered in November.

This despite the fact that 30 of the buses would be acquired to transport a much-discussed 3,000 additional students.

The other 10 buses, officials said, would go to replace spares pressed into service to travel new routes created to accommodate parent choice under the new student assignment plan, and to accommodate children “grandfathered” as the choice plan went into effect (an issue discussed in a CMS analysis of bus costs beginning on Page 5).

As reported by the Charlotte Observer in April, purchases of 20 to 26 buses in each of the last several years had not been explicitly included in annual budgets, but had been paid for during the year via fund transfers.

Some of the recent transfers to cover new buses are quite reasonable: An “opening of schools” account paid for buses in 2001-2002. And in a year when the new 4-year-old program Bright Beginnings was expanding, bus purchases were paid out of the

Bright Beginnings account to transport the new children to school.

This January’s funds transfer was not reported at the time either by *Educate!* or by the Observer. The transfer was part of the board’s “consent agenda” on a night filled with news about the choice plan, assignment boundaries and the annual report on equity funding.

EBAC reports

Tuesday afternoon, the Education Budget Advisory Committee advised the county commissioners to approve Pughsley’s budget. Committee member Ernie Dehnert read a letter penned earlier by the committee (*Educate!*, March 27).

In a follow-up presentation, member Howard Haworth immediately turned to longer-term matters, including equity and revisions to the student assignment plan (story, Page 1). The commissioners, meeting as a committee of the whole, seemed to be enjoying an opportunity to explore school issues they normally are constrained not to discuss because of the separately elected Board of Education.

But bus purchases returned to the table as a two-member minority of EBAC presented its own report (excerpts, Page 5).

Karen Bentley and Debbie Ware cited the bus funding issue in a report that recommended a zero budget increase, instead of Pughsley’s \$14.9 million request that had been supported by the school board.

There said “very few questions regarding the integrity of the budget have been met with open and honest answers from CMS administrators.” Dehnert told commissioners the EBAC majority had worked with Pughsley and finance officer Sheila Shirley and that “most of our questions that could be answered” were.

In defense of their no-increase position, Bentley and Ware asserted that taxpayers, facing property and sales tax increases

and a sluggish economy, “will not tolerate another tax increase to support the budget increases desired by various county agencies, CMS prime among them.”

Can we do better?

Pughsley has said the 2003-2004 budget contains no money for bus purchases.

And yet, once again, the schools have budgeted for the additional staff to teach around 3,000 additional students. Won’t the district need something on the order of another 30 buses next fall?

As explained in material released by CMS that begins on Page 6, local funds buy new buses that are required by growth or redistricting. The state then replaces them on a routine schedule, and pays for drivers, fuel and maintenance.

That general system has been in place since the 1970s, when CMS was ordered to desegregate, and use buses if necessary to get the job done.

Today, the bulk of new bus equipment is devoted to transporting newly arrived children to their schools. And yet the budgeting process still shrouds the real costs – now, not the costs of desegregation, but the costs of growth.

One insider says transportation costs will always be controversial, because they represent dollars not spent on classroom instruction.

The same mentality leads CMS to avoid paying for equitable facilities, to postpone maintenance, to put off technology upgrades needed for nonclassroom tasks, and to delay creating the workspace needed by central staff of a billion-dollar business.

Every one of those habits has a long pedigree. Every one contributes to CMS being a struggling school system. Every one should be on the agenda of the people who are arguing that the CMS budget should be transparent, and represent the true costs of doing the community’s education business.

– Steve Johnston

EBAC minority calls for zero budget increase

Following are excerpts from a minority report to the Board of County Commissioners by Karen Bentley and Debbie Ware, the two members of the Education Budget Advisory Committee who voted against its recommendation supporting Supt. Jim Pughsley's request for a \$14.9 million budget increase from the county.

...Our charge at EBAC is to investigate, analyze and prioritize spending as presented in the CMS budget. Very few questions regarding the integrity of the budget have been met with open and honest answers from CMS administrators. And substantive questions remain about the finances of CMS. Following are examples of why we question the integrity of the CMS budget:

1. Questions regarding the number of buses purchased in the last year and how they were expensed. Only after considerable prodding by a member of EBAC did CMS administration provide answers to this question. The information provided by CMS to EBAC, the press, the Chamber, the Board of Education and elected officials as a result of this questioning is troubling and relates directly to the integrity of the budget. This information provided by CMS indicates monies budgeted for Bright Beginnings and employee benefits/insurance premiums (which have increased 70% over six years) were used to purchase buses without transparency to the taxpayer. On one hand CMS uses teacher pay and Bright Beginnings as emotional leverage during the budget process yet on the other hand, monies received based on these emotional arguments is easily redirected to cover expenses CMS should have explicitly noted in the budget. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the public to trust that the monies allocated to CMS will indeed be spent in the man-

ner presented.

2. State sales tax reimbursements used to purchase items outside the view of taxpayers. For example, when a teacher purchases \$100 worth of classroom materials, instead of paying \$100 the teacher pays \$107.50 with the state reimbursement of \$7.50 being used by CMS outside the view of the taxpayer.

3. Questions remain about the number of empty seats by school.

4. "One time" book money reappears in the budget.

5. Questions remain about lapsed teacher salaries and how this is handled in the budget....

CMS student enrollment has increased from 99,427 in 1998-99 to a projected 115,500 for the 2003-04 school year – a 16% increase.... Total CMS budget expenditures have increased 37% since 1998-99. Therefore, total CMS expenditures have increased more than double that of student enrollment. Looking at several measurements of student achievement we see single digit growth, and almost flat growth, in the majority of measures used by CMS....

Although the majority of the members of EBAC are not proponents of a per pupil funding method, it does provide an objective measure for budget analysis. Annual per pupil spending has increased \$1,000/pupil from 1998-99 to 2002-03. Now, with capital costs included, per pupil spending is projected to be \$8,559 per student....

The North Carolina Education Alliance has produced a report called "Grading Our Schools 2002".... This report offers a different lens for studying test results and other performance data.... "Grading Our Schools 2002" uses a letter grading approach because it is familiar to everyone and employs a benchmark that unambiguously represents excellence.

Two of the state's largest districts, Wake and Mecklenburg, retained their 2001 grades in 2002. Wake remains a B- district and Mecklenburg remains a D+ district. To balance the arguments of those that would say CMS is uniquely expensive due to high numbers of FRL students (including a significant number of ESL students)... Cherokee, Mitchell and Yancey all performed with at least 84% on grade level while having county incomes less than 90% of the state average and having a higher percentage of needy students than the North Carolina average.

Cost-effectiveness rankings are also a part of the report. Using a 5-year average of operating and capital spending per pupil, this rank indicates the percentage of the state-average dollar amount per grade point spent by each school district in 2002. Mecklenburg's 2002 cost-effectiveness ranking was 105 out of 118 (state average of 100% ranks between 41 and 42)....

The county is facing a significant budget shortfall. County taxpayers have been faced with a property tax increase, a sales tax increase that is unlikely to go away, and a property revaluation. Couple that with a sluggish economy and taxpayers will not tolerate another tax increase to support the budget increases desired by various county agencies, CMS prime among them.

Linking these facts with the analysis outlining the serious questions about the integrity of the CMS budget, the fact that total budget expenditures have grown at more than double the rate of student enrollment while academic achievement measures increase only slightly, and the disappointing performance relative to other North Carolina school systems, we recommend a zero budget increase for CMS for the 2003-04 budget year.

CMS information on costs of buying new buses

The following material is taken from two sources: a CMS public information department release on a cost analysis of transportation, which was released April 1, and the analysis itself. The tabular material is taken directly from the analysis.

Based on a recent transportation analysis... CMS is projected to operate more than 1,100 buses this year, which travel more than 114,000 miles per day.

For the 2002-2003 school year, transportation costs are projected to total \$42,447,413....

Since 1999-2000, actual transportation costs in CMS have increased from \$38,021,371 to a projected cost of \$42,447,413 for 2002-2003.

In addition, the average number of buses has increased from 965 in 1999-2000 to 1,131 projected in 2002-2003.

The average number of daily miles driven increased from 86,402 in 1999-2000 to 114,899 projected in 2002-2003.

Description of fleet

Capital replacement vehicles: In accordance with the defined state vehicle replacement schedule and guidelines, the State will replace LEA owned transportation vehicles based on the following criteria:

- Age of vehicles
- Mileage of vehicles
- Type of bus engine

- Condition of bus
- Availability of state appropriations
- Unique circumstances about a given bus

These vehicles can include buses and service vehicles in support of K-12 transportation. Once a vehicle is replaced, the state "owns" the vehicle and, in the case of buses, the bus is typically placed on the LEA's spare bus line. CMS maintains approximately 10% of the total fleet as spare operating buses.

Capital outlay vehicles: A LEA may purchase vehicles and increase the size of the fleet that provides school transportation. The need for this action is generally the result of growth, opening/closing of schools or redistricting. A LEA is given this authority under Statute 115C-249(a). The purchase order request for such additions is reviewed by N.C. Department of Public Instruction

(DPI) Transportation Services. The purchase of capital outlay buses and other vehicles to support student transportation is locally funded.

Loaner buses: A loaner bus is one loaned to the LEA and one that has already been replaced by the state (referred to above as a spare bus) with a new bus. These buses are authorized by DPI for temporary operation as a regular route bus, above current inventory levels due to the LEA's additional transportation needs. Authorization is contingent on a commitment by the LEA to purchase a capital outlay bus or eliminate the need for an additional bus route within a defined period of time.

Historically, CMS has requested the use of loaner buses for the opening of schools. For 2002-03, CMS Transportation requested the use of 80 loaners, however, as

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Estimated cost of choice

Expenditures	Actual 2001-02	Estimated 2002-03 (without choice)	Projected 2002-03 (with choice)	Difference = cost of choice
Salaries, benefits	\$28,556,120	\$28,322,884	\$30,019,366	\$1,696,482
Purchased services (3)	2,633,176	3,315,537	3,345,935	30,398
Supplies, materials (4)	4,209,315	4,503,788	6,244,194	1,740,406
Furniture, equip. (5)	1,219,971	2,164,390 (1)	2,790,750 (2)	**626,360
Other (6)	18,213	47,168	47,168	0
Total	\$36,636,795	\$38,353,767	\$42,447,413 (7)	\$4,093,646

Notes:

- ** Assumes that 30 of the buses purchased were for growth and opening of new schools and the remaining 10 were to support the choice plan.
- (1) Includes \$1,879,080 for the cost of 30 additional buses (needed for growth) purchased with funds transferred into transportation budget. See "Changes in bus fleet." Page 8.
- (2) Includes \$2,505,420 for the cost of 40 additional buses (30 for growth noted above plus 10 to support choice) purchased with funds transferred into the transportation budget. See "Changes in bus fleet." Page 8.
- (3) Purchases services includes expenditures such as contracted pupil transportation, contracted repair and maintenance, mileage, telephone, and field trips/afterschool expenses.
- (4) Supplies and materials include expenditures such as parts, tires/tubes, gas, and oil.
- (5) Furniture and equipment includes expenditures such as equipment, computer hardware, and vehicles.
- (6) Other includes expenditures such as license and title fees.
- (7) Special fuel allotments of approximately \$325,000 are anticipated from the state to help offset increase in fuel costs.

CMS material on buying new buses

Continued from Page 6

of March 2003 only 36 remain on regular routes.

Student enrollment since 1999-2000 has increased from 100,368 students to more than 109,000 students in 2002-2003....

In 2002-2003, the district experienced an approximate increase of 6,500 additional students eligible for transportation services as compared to the previous year.

The increase in the number of students eligible for transportation services is primarily due to the size of the choice zone in which a student is eligible for transportation and transportation privileges for "grandfathered" students continuing in their 2001-2002 assigned school.

This growth required additional miles traveled and additional buses, which included loaner buses from the state. The average increase in students eligible for transportation in previous years has been 2,500 to 3,000 students.

In addition, family choices and lottery selections have provided opportunities for students to attend various schools even if students live in the same neighborhood or community. More buses traveling to pick up fewer students at one time creates more miles traveled and increases required equipment.

In accordance with the defined state vehicle replacement schedule and guidelines, the State will replace Local Education Agency (LEA) owned transportation vehicles based on the age, mileage, type of bus engine, condition of bus, availability of state appropriations and unique circumstances. A school district may also determine to locally purchase additional buses based on the result of growth, opening/closing of schools or redistricting.

At times, the state will provide loaner buses to districts. This authorization is contingent on a

Historical cost comparisons

TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT COSTS

Actual 1999-00	Actual 2000-01	Actual 2001-02	Projected 2002-03
\$38,021,371	\$43,482,531	\$36,636,795	\$42,447,413

Note: These amounts include the state capital replacement and any capital outlay expenditures recorded in the transportation department, which results in annual fluctuations. See IV below.

BUSES OPERATED MORE THAN 90 DAYS

Actual 1999-00	Actual 2000-01	Actual 2001-02	Projected 2002-03
965	997	1,023	1,131

AVERAGE MILES DRIVEN

Actual 1999-00	Actual 2000-01	Actual 2001-02	Projected 2002-03
86,402	97,011	93,921	114,899

Note: The decline in 01-02 is primarily due to efficiencies gained by boundary and site adjustments for the Bright Beginnings program, managing miles driven with staging sites, and the sunset of transportation privileges approved by the Board of Education for "grandfathered" students.

commitment by the LEA to purchase a capital outlay bus or eliminate the need for an additional bus route within a defined period of time.

Historically, CMS has requested the use of loaner buses from the state for the opening of schools. For 2002-2003, CMS transportation requested the use of 80 loaners; however, as of March 2003, only 36 remain on regular routes.

History of purchases

In 1999-2000, the state purchased 74 buses and service vehicles for CMS, and in 2000-2001, 203 buses and service vehicles were purchased by the state. However, in 2001-2002, only 14 buses were purchased by the state.

CMS purchased 26 buses locally in 1999-2000 primarily from sales tax revenue and interest income. Then in 2000-2001, 22 buses were purchased locally from Opening of Schools funds and Bright Beginnings funds. Twenty buses were purchased locally in 2001-2002 from Opening of Schools funds and 40 buses were purchased in 2002-2003 to support growth and choice. Funding for the buses in 2002-2003 came from monies redirected from health

insurance benefits (money available due to a planned increase in the premium that did not materialize)....

Efficiency issues

The operation of school buses in North Carolina, to provide safe transportation for K-12 students to and from school, is funded primarily through state appropriations.

DPI Transportation Services allots funds from the state appropriations for transportation operations to each LEA using a funding formula based, in part, on a measure of efficiency of the operation. To determine efficiency, each LEA is evaluated with respect to the number of buses operated, number of students transported and total eligible expenditures.

In addition, data is gathered to "level the playing field," which allows for an equitable county-by-county comparison. Such data includes average distance of students to school, elevation and pupil density.

An efficiency and budget rating is calculated based on the funding formula for each LEA. A block grant allotment for transportation

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CMS material on buying new buses

Continued from Page 7

is then generated based on the budget rating and the prior year's expenditures for pupil transportation.

CMS Transportation has acquired the following budget ratings:

1999-00	100%
2000-01	100%
2001-02	100%
2002-03	99.5%

Effect of choice zones

The 2002-03 four defined and significantly larger choice zones "replaced" individual school attendance zones (with the exception of full county magnets) as it relates to the determination of transportation eligibility for CMS students. Estimated geographic size of each choice zone for travel purposes is as follows:

- Green – 260 square miles
- Purple – 117 square miles
- Gold – 62 square miles
- Blue – 106 square miles

In 2002-03 the district experienced an approximate increase of 6,500 additional students eligible for transportation services as compared to the previous year.

This increase is primarily due to the size of the choice zones (noted above) in which a child is eligible for transportation and transportation privileges for "grandfathered" students continuing in their 2001-02 assigned school.

This growth required additional miles traveled and additional buses, to include loaner buses. The average increase in previous years has been 2,500 to 3,000 students.

Family choices and lottery selections have provided opportunities for students to attend various schools even if you live in the same neighborhood or community.

This has created the requirement for increased number of buses to travel along the same

Changes in bus fleet

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
State's capital replacement program				
Buses	67	192	14	38
Trucks	7	11		
Total	74	203	14	38
Cost	\$3,289,934	\$9,439,397	\$832,860	TBD by NC
CMS-funded capital outlay buses				
Buses	26	22	20	40
Cost	(1) 1,619,269	(2) 1,222,422	(3) 1,209,660	(4) 2,505,420
Cost/unit(5)	62,280	55,565	60,483	62,636
Loaner buses				
(beginning of year)	24	1	12	80
(as of 3-4-03)				36

Cost: (The only purchase cost associated with loaner buses is when a capital outlay bus must be purchased to replace the loaner when used in excess of the state allowable period of 18 months.)

Notes:

- (1) Purchased with funds transferred to the Transportation Department from sales tax revenue and interest income (\$1,400,000) as well as other redirects within the Transportation Department (\$200,000).
- (2) Purchased with funds transferred to the Transportation Department from Opening of Schools budgeted funds (\$750,000), and Bright Beginnings budgeted funds (\$470,000).
- (3) Purchased with Opening of Schools budgeted funds (funds were not transferred into the Transportation Department budget)
- (4) Purchased with funds redirected from health insurance benefits budgeted funds (available due to a planned increase in premium that did not materialize). Funds were transferred into the Transportation Department. The amount indicated is the Purchase Order amount.
- (5) Purchase price varies based on state contract pricing.

streets, perhaps picking up fewer numbers of students at common stop locations and delivering them to multiple schools.

More buses traveling to pick up fewer students at one time creates more miles and increases required equipment.

Low ridership

Transporting students for an individual school is often referred to as a bus run. A bus route typically incorporates more than one bus run, thus serving more than one school in the morning and afternoon.

Bell tiers provide efficiency for the district in the regard that a bus can serve students for several schools in the morning and the afternoon.

Otherwise, CMS would have to immediately purchase an estimated 800 buses that are serving

double or triple tiered routes at an estimated cost in excess of \$49.6 million.

Historically, CMS has experienced scheduled bus runs with less than full bus capacity. There are occasions that bus runs may have scheduled low assigned ridership due to special needs and equipment restrictions, time limitations, distance requirements, or program specificity. The district has committed to providing transportation services to ALL eligible students.

Of the current total of 2,256 morning bus runs (as of the end of January 2003), approximately 225 bus runs have 10 or less assigned students. The breakdown is as follows:

- 36% serve students attending full or partial magnet schools.
- 28% serve dedicated EC stu-

CMS material on buying new buses

Continued from Page 8

dent populations.

– 36% serve students attending non-magnet schools (home or choice).

These assignments and schedules are subject to change daily due to movement of students and run adjustments.

Some of the bus runs with 10 or less assigned students are the result of transporting “grandfathered” or “choice” students who do not live in close proximity to

their school of choice.

In addition, bus runs were generated to relieve overcrowded buses or to accommodate students in sparsely populated areas.

State service levels

North Carolina General Statute 115C-242 (4) states that a local board of education which elects to operate a school bus transportation system shall not be required to provide transportation for any school employee.

Nor shall such board be required to provide transportation for pupils living within 1.5 miles of the school in which such pupil is enrolled. This area is commonly

referred to as the “walk zone” for the school.

Effective beginning in the 2001-02 school year, CMS administration elected to provide transportation services for any eligible student who resides within an approximate travel distance of one half mile of the attending school. As indicated above, this exceeds the state’s guideline.

This has resulted in increased assigned eligible students and ridership; however, the primary reason for the reduction in walk zone distance is safety and security of our students in the district.

Volunteer for a May day

CMS needs volunteers to proctor end-of-grade tests on May 19, May 20 and May 21. Why? Because each classroom used during testing must have both a teacher and another adult present. Not all schools need help; some already have all slots covered either by volunteers or school staff.

Proctors’ morning session will begin with a training session on testing ethics, testing procedures and school procedures. School staff will be with the volunteer at all times.

The following schools have asked for assistance:

	Phone	Contact name	E-mail (@cms.k12.nc.us)	Time slot
Elementaries				
Albemarle Road	704-343-6414	Monique Gardner	monique.gardner@	8:15-10:45
Nathaniel Alexander	704-343-5268	Beth Blackwelder	b.blackwelder@	7:00-10:00
Crown Point	704-343-6535	Elizabeth Redder	e.redder@	8:30-11:30
Reid Park	704-343-5035	Clare Endres	clare.endres@	9:00-11:30
Smithfield	704-343-6550	Kathy Trotter	katherine.trotter@	8:00-11:30
Statesville Road	704-343-6815	Darnell Ivory	darnell.ivory@	9:00-12:00
Middle				
Albemarle Road	704-343-6420	Peggy Johnson	peggye.johnson@	8:15-11:30
Carmel	704-343-6705	Tammy Costello	tamalia.costello@	8:30-10:30
Cochrane	704-343-6460	Helen Giles	helen.giles@	8:15-11:30
Coulwood	704-343-6090	Dawn Smith	dawn.smith@	8:30-11:00
Martin	704-343-5382	Gwen Nachman	gwen.nachman@	8:30-11:30
Northeast	704-343-6920	Tamara Stark	tamara.stark@	8:00-12:00
Piedmont Open	704-343-5435	Tammy Broadway	tammy.broadaway@	8:30-11:30
Sedgefield	704-343-5840	Renee Flash	r.flash@	7:30-12:00
South Charlotte	704-343-3670	Kimberlee Nash-Zeitvogel	kimberlee.zeitvogel@	8:00-11:30
Wilson	704-343-6070	Mike Mann	michael.mann@	9:00-12:00

Questions: Contact Pat Robson at p.robson@cms.k12.nc.us or at 704-343-6245.

Briefs

No to tax hikes: In New Jersey, where school districts have as few as 500 students and township voters must approve districts' budgets, about half the budget proposals were recently defeated, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported. Tax hikes per family were in the \$70 to \$250 range per district.

Voucher study: In the largest study to date comparing achievement of students on vouchers with their public-school peers, Indiana University researchers found that students in Cleveland's public schools, having entered first grade behind their voucher peers, caught up and surpassed the voucher children in reading and math achievement, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported. Experts said the results were insufficiently strong to draw any conclusions about Cleveland's voucher program. Black and poor children are underrepresented in Cleveland's voucher population. www.cleveland.com

Summer school: Minneapolis will cut 14,000 seats from its summer sessions because of budget cuts, the St. Paul Pioneer-Press reported. www.twincities.com

Principal shortage: A new study finds plenty of applicants for principalships, but fewer applicants at secondary schools, those in the Sunbelt, and those in low-income areas, Education Week reported. The Center on Reinventing Public Education study suggested higher pay for positions lagging in applicants. www.edweek.org

State responsibility: In a case that echoes some of the issues in North Carolina's pending *Leandro* lawsuit, California is being sued to establish the principle that the

state is responsible for disparities in local schools, according to a story in the New York Times. State officials argue that local school boards should monitor and overcome deficiencies at local schools. The suit has not gone to trial, but no settlement has been reached. The state was sued by civil rights and other organizations.

www.nytimes.com

Charters doubled: Illinois has doubled, to 30, the number of charter schools that will operate in Chicago, the Tribune reported. Possible themes among the applicants may be high schools focused on Native American culture, on construction and labor management, and another limited to boys; a boarding school; and a school associated with a zoo.

www.chicagotribune.com

Gender-specific: Struggling Southern Middle School in Louisville is hoping for small academic gains after separating boys and girls in the classroom, the Courier-Journal reported. Discipline problems are down and a variety of reforms have improved the environment, teachers report. Thus far, however, parent involvement has not substantially risen. Southern has been among Kentucky's lowest-performing schools for more than a decade.

www.courier-journal.com

Participation: At a Redmond, Washington, middle school, students have a direct voice in setting dress codes and other policies, the Seattle Times reported. The kids don't always get what they want, but they learn every time – even that young, inattentive teens can be, well, difficult. "I could not handle it," said one student about his experience surveying other students on the issues. If he were a teacher, he said, "I would be out there strangling them."

<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com>

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A global perspective on 4th-grade reading

The following is from the 2001 International Reading Literacy Study, which found that U.S. fourth-graders perform above the international average and outperform peers in 23 of 34 countries – but lag English, Dutch and Swedish peers.

A policy question: Are the bad U.S. results below necessary?

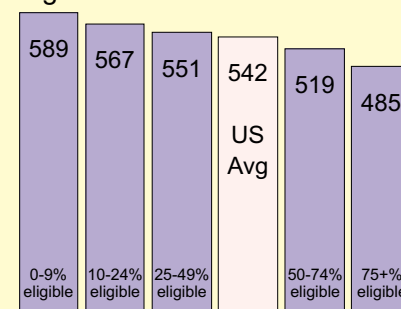
Reading for fun

Percentage of fourth-graders who read for fun outside of school, by frequency:

	U.S.	Intl.
Never/almost never	32%	18%
Once, twice/month	12%	12%
Once, twice/week	22%	29%
Daily/almost daily	35%	40%

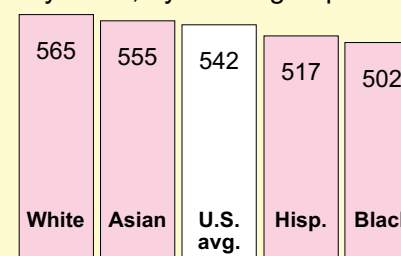
Reading and poverty

Average U.S. result on combined reading literacy score, by percentage of school enrollment eligible for subsidized lunch:



Reading and race

U.S. fourth-graders' average score on combined reading literacy scale, by ethnic group:



The full report is at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003073>

Briefs *continued*

Laptop success: The decision by Maine in 2000 to begin issuing laptop computers to all seventh-graders is now seen as a success even by many of its early critics, the New York Times reported. The program costs about \$300 per student per year, and has been tied to higher attention and fewer detentions.

www.nytimes.com

Summer school: Miami-Dade County worked toward a compromise on summer school funding so that more than 80,000 students who are at risk of being held back or of failing in future years will get some help, the Miami Herald reported. But the \$20.5 million is a big cut from last year, when \$46 million was spent on 135,000 students. The compromise gives second- and third-graders only a half day, and their teachers only half the regular salary.

www.miami.com

Persistently labeled: Atlanta-area educators warned this week that Georgia should be careful when it labels schools “persistently dangerous” under the federal

Removing obstacles to achievement

An excerpt from a National League of Cities issues paper designed to encourage municipalities – even ones that don’t directly run schools – to “to make children, youth and family issues a community-wide priority.”

“Address health and social service needs: Children’s ability to learn and achieve their full potential is inevitably diminished when medical, personal, or family problems take center stage. By locating health, nutrition, and other child and family services in or near schools, city officials can help ensure that these needs are addressed.

“Collaborations with public schools give service providers additional ways to reach disadvantaged populations, offer teachers and school administrators a valuable resource when dealing with nonacademic concerns, and may even produce cost savings for municipal agencies.”

– Institute for Youth, Education and Families, “Improving Public Schools Action Kit for Municipal Leaders,” available at www.nlc.org/nlc_org/site/programs/institute_for_youth_education_and_families/institute_programs.cfm

No Child Left Behind law, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. Georgia hasn’t yet defined the term.

www.accessatlanta.com

Calendar

MAY

- 2 CMS Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 3 District 6 parent leader meeting, 9 a.m., Matthews Presbyterian Hospital.
- 6 School board personnel policy

committee, 7:30 a.m.

- 10 Walk Day for National Alliance for Autism Research, 8:30 a.m. check-in, 9:30 a.m. start time, Lowes Motor Speedway. Volunteers needed: 704-333-0051 or thenewman@comprium.net
- 13 School board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room, Education Center.
- 14 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., Government Center, 11th floor conference room.
- 15 CMS school board finance, capital & facilities committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room, Education Center.
- 20 CMS board policy committee, 3 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 20 Mecklenburg elected leaders forum, noon, Government Center Room 267.
- 20 Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services.
- 27 School board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 27 CMS board curriculum committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room, Education Center.
- 28 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., Government Center, 11th floor conference room.

Diplomaed adults

Percentage of population 25 years and older that has completed high school, by state:

Source: U.S. Census

Alaska	92.2	Conn.	88.0	Michigan	86.5	N. Mexico	81.6
Minn.	92.2	Hawaii	87.9	Penn.	86.1	Arkansas	81
Wyoming	91.6	Oregon	87.7	Illinois	85.9	Kentucky	80.8
Utah	91.0	Colorado	87.6	N. Jersey	85.9	California	80.2
Wash.	90.4	Kansas	87.5	Nevada	85.8	S.C.	80.2
N.H.	90.2	Maryland	87.5	Indiana	85.3	N.C.	80.1
Nebraska	89.8	Maine	87.4	Oklahoma	85.1	Rhode Is.	80.1
Montana	89.7	Vermont	87.4	Arizona	84.6	Tenn.	80.1
S. Dakota	89.2	Ohio	87.3	U.S.	84.1	Miss.	79.1
N. Dakota	89.0	Idaho	86.8	New York	83.7	Alabama	78.9
Delaware	88.5	Wisconsin	86.8	D.C.	83.5	Louisiana	78.8
Iowa	88.3	Virginia	86.7	Florida	83.3	West Va.	78.5
Missouri	88.1	Mass.	86.5	Georgia	82.9	Texas	78.1