

TALKING TO STRANGERS

A lesson for our time

Page 3

2 drawn together to accomplish the 'highly unexpected'

On April 1, CMS school board chairperson Wilhelmenia Rembert addressed an audience of Johnson C. Smith University students about education leadership and the battle against segregation. At that event she said one of her college mentors was Shirley Brice Heath, a white professor who had shown her, as Rembert put it, "that there were people like me doing very important work."

We tracked down Heath and asked if she could help the students "understand the stuff of which Wilhelmenia Rembert is made." Heath's reply:

By SHIRLEY BRICE HEATH

Life has a way of bringing those who are undertaking high-risk and daring moves in their life together.

In the early 1970s, Wilhelmenia Rembert and I were both at Winthrop College in Rock Hill. I was there as a just-minted Ph.D. in anthropology and linguistics from Columbia University; Rembert was there as a new student in a women's college just recently made co-educational and desegregated.

My research was on how language is learned in very different family situations, and I was living then part of the time in an all-

Continued on Page 5

NOW IS TIME TO

COMMISSIONERS

Whatever your views on school money needs, this is the key moment for your voice to be heard as county board finishes up its budget

North Carolina law gives elected school boards responsibility for maintaining existing schools and building new ones for a growing population.

But the state's elected county commissioners generally control local taxation.

The resulting turf wars are legion, and relations between the two bodies in Mecklenburg are headed for a new low.

Differences between the two boards focus on two areas: the annual operating budget, and sales of construction bonds approved by the voters.

On the operating side, the school board's approved budget seeks \$14.9 million more from the county for next year, chiefly to cover 3,000 more students and to curb one of the state's worst teacher turnover rates. A minimum of another \$18.6 million is needed to fulfill the promise to make parents' assignment choices of relatively

equal quality, but that's not even in the budget.

In the face of a need of \$14.9 million – really \$33.5 million – there's talk of no increase, or at most \$6 million.

For construction, CMS has an oft-studied need for \$160 million annually. The week saw commissioners move to cut that to \$90 million starting in 2005.

Why? Is there any reason other than that a majority won't tax this prosperous county enough to give parents the schools they seek for all kids?

If that's the problem, then it's easily solved, for Mecklenburg officeholders are splendidly sensitive to constituent desires.

County commissioners' contact information is on Page 6. Your message will be most effective with officeholders you already know, and with those for whom you personally vote.

Whatever your views on the schools' money needs, now is the time to make them heard.

– Steve Johnston

Commentary

Dropouts identifiable by first grade? What's that say about intervention?

A Charlotte day-care operator this week asserted that top-rated day cares disenroll misbehaving youngsters. Are those children pushed into a track that leads to educational failure?

That is a prospect possibly supported by a two-year-old study of Baltimore dropouts, which found that performance as early as first grade was an extraordinarily effective predictor of dropping out in the teen years.

The study, by Karl Alexander and Doris Entwisle of Johns Hopkins University and former Hopkins student Nader Kabbani, focused on what children did, not their attitudes.

But parents' attitudes, the researchers wrote, play a key role in shaping their children's behavior. Students with parents holding a favorable attitude toward school and their children's abilities were almost twice as likely to stay in school as those with negative attitudes toward school or their children's abilities.

The study found some of the predictable statistics among the 800 students tracked since 1982:

- 60% of first-graders averaging D-F on report cards ultimately dropped out, compared to 19% of the A-B students. (Parents' predic-

tions of whether their children would drop out were remarkably accurate, and the predictions were made BEFORE the children's first report card in first grade.)

- 58% of first-grade low test-scorers dropped out, compared with 22% of the high test-scorers.

- 67% of students held back in first grade dropped out.

- 89% held back at middle school dropped out.

- Overall, 71% of students held back once dropped out; 80% held back twice dropped out; and 94% held back at both elementary and middle school levels dropped out.

A copy of the study is at www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=10825

A summary of the 2001 study is at www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/researchbrief/index.html

Action group?

Educate! would like to convene a group focused on breaking the cycle that leads parents with poor attitudes toward education to raise children who are destined to drop out. If interested, call Steve Johnston at 704-342-4330 or message swannfello@aol.com.

Underwrite an edition of *Educate!*

Educate! depends on underwriters for operating support. In gratitude for this support, we will publish small notices acknowledging this philanthropy. For all the rule, consult the "You Can Help" page at www.educateclt.org. Or contact Steve Johnston at The Swann Fellowship at 704-342-4330 or at sjohnston@educateclt.org

This journal will continue for
15

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

8%

of people now regularly receiving *Educate!* who have ever helped defray the cost of its publication, and for contributions totaling \$625 during April 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: 2,593.

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.

To be removed from distribution, message: imailsv@educateclt.org. In body of the message, type: unsubscribe swann yourname@domain.etc. To be added, subscribe at www.educateclt.org.

Data on remaining issues and percentage of regular readers who have been donors is approximate and will rise or fall with readers' financial support. Details available on request.

Talking to strangers

Healthy democracy demands trust and sacrifice that is only built over time

First of three parts

BY DANIELLE ALLEN

The lovely Carolinas and their queen city Charlotte have stood for some time now at the forefront of an effort to invent a New South.

You have recognized what most of your countrymen have not: that this country was reconstituted between 1954, with *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, and 1964-65 with the Voting Rights and Civil Rights Acts.

You have recognized and accepted the challenge of imagining a new world for yourselves, your families, your businesses, and your communities. You have already shouldered the big burden of being founders, and your endeavor is of national consequence.

You are inventing not a new South, merely, but a new United States, for the importance of Southern understandings of citizenship to the country as a whole cannot be underestimated. Over and over again the South has yielded up the most articulate expounders of American identity: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln (remember, he was born and raised for the first part of his life in Kentucky), Mark Twain, Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, and Ralph Ellison.

I could digress at length on the national significance of Southern contributions to American identity, but I'll spare you that particular lecture and say, simply, that I am honored to contribute today in some small way to your project of reconstitution.

My subject this afternoon will be citizenship and talking to strangers, but I will begin by dis-

Dr. Danielle Allen is an associate professor in the University of Chicago's Departments of Classics and Political Science and its Committee on Social Thought. This speech, delivered Feb. 18 at the 45th annual meeting of the Foundation for the Carolinas, is reprinted with permission and is based on a forthcoming book to be published by the University of Chicago Press entitled, "Talking to Strangers: On Little Rock and Political Friendship."

Allen, 31, grew up in Claremont, Calif., the daughter of a political scientist and a rare-books librarian. She earned two PhDs and received a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" in 2001. Her degrees are from Princeton in 1993, King's College Cambridge in 1994 and 1996, and Harvard University in 1998 and 2001.



Allen

cussing the idea of reconstitution, since this is the project you have adopted.

Does my claim that the U.S. was reconstituted between 1954 and 1964 sound overblown? After all, the Constitution itself was not rewritten. Here is where the ancient historian's expertise comes in very handy.

When historians study ancient civilizations like Athens and Rome, they need to explain how political power was organized in them, but neither Athens nor Rome had a written constitution. Instead historians analyze the combination of laws and cultural habits that determined who got to attend the assembly, who got to speak once there, and who got to play a decisive role in the public sphere.

It's crucial to recognize that customary habits of citizenship – unspoken norms for interaction that constrain who can speak where in public and how – help route the basic circuitry of political power. They are part of any polity's constitution, which is to say, its basic plan for living.

Reconstitution requires not only changing laws, but also inventing new forms of citizenship to guide our interactions with strangers.

To say you seek a "new South" is to proclaim such a project of reconstitution, much as did those who sought a *novus ordo seclorum* in 1776 and 1787.

In this regard you have pulled well ahead of the rest of the country in your understanding of what politics currently demands of us. But do we modern day citizens of the U.S. in fact understand constituting well enough to bootstrap ourselves into a new era? The suggestion that perhaps we don't may give pause.

After all, here in Charlotte the success of the New South is already everywhere in evidence. Having attracted a broad array of national and international capital, your city has become the second-largest in banking in the country. Your downtown is gorgeous and fine universities ring your city.

The rest of the country looks to you as an example of how best to

Continued on Page 4

Talking to Strangers, Part I

approach tough issues like affordable housing. You have opted for an end to busing and so have wisely decided to separate educational from social policy; and I hope you are also preparing to develop fresh commitments in each area. Your new and impressive Levine Museum of the New South has scheduled an intellectually ambitious series of lectures on what the Old South was, what the New South should be, and how to get from one to the other. And this Foundation itself commissioned the important Social Capital Survey for the Charlotte region.

The city as a whole, then, is making exemplary use of intellectual resources to help bring about the world your hearts desire.

But for all these accomplishments, a shadow hangs over Charlotte still, as you know better than I.

Although the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region ranks second in the nation in charitable giving and volunteerism and fourth in faith-based engagement, it also ranks 39th out of 40 in its levels of interracial trust. My own beloved but beleaguered Chicago ranks higher.

This is quite reasonably a matter of concern to you. What to do about it, then? How can a project of reconstitution deal not only with economics and education, but also with the relations among citizens?

First, we need to understand the relationship between distrust and democratic citizenship. Citizens of the South know intimately that perduring distrust carries significant social costs. Citizens who try to do business or conduct politics against a backdrop of distrust inevitably expend financial and psychic resources in maintaining protections against those in whom they have no faith. And when distrust fossilizes into settled patterns of division, it can become the basis for serious civil unrest.

Members of a political unit will not remain within it if they cease

Indeed, majority rule is nonsensical ... unless conducted such that minorities have reasons to remain attached ... democratic politics is held together only by trust.

to trust its ability eventually to serve their interests, unless they are compelled by force or terror to remain. Emigrants flee impossible economic circumstances at home to join, even if unofficially, a political unit that they expect will better serve their interests.

Theorists of this “exit” phenomenon too often speak of it as something that individuals do. But congealed boundaries of distrust convert dissatisfied individuals who might leave their polities into groups that, unless restrained by force, eventually secede or start a civil war.

Of course, these can amount to the same thing as when the Southern states ceased to trust that continued collaboration with the North was compatible with its interests, and constituted the Confederacy.

And distrust blighted Southern life throughout the 20th century too. In the nineteen-teens, African-Americans citizens of the South gave up on the governments and economies of their local states in great numbers and migrated to northern cities; thus arose “The Great Migration.”

And with the Civil Rights movement, African-Americans who had remained in the South after others had gone North rose up instead of departing and, with acts of rebellion like sit-ins and protests, began a second series of civil wars within the former Confederate states.

The tense stand-offs surrounding school desegregation acquired nicknames like “The Battle of Little Rock”: and citizens on both sides of the Southern racial divide prudently armed themselves against fellow citizens.

The lesson in all such cases is

that minorities, of whatever stripe, who lose out from public decisions, have no reason to remain in the polity if they do not trust that the majority has also their interests at heart.

Would any of you join a club if you knew that all its policies would go against your own interests? No. But would you join if you knew that every vote would find you in the minority? You might, provided that you trusted that the majority decisions, despite your dissent, would still generally advance your own interests.

Similarly, democratic politics will always be exceptionally unstable unless those in the political minority have a reason to trust those in the majority.

Indeed, majority rule is nonsensical as a principle of fairness unless conducted such that minorities have reasons to remain attached to the polity. In this regard, democratic politics is held together only by trust.

The central challenge for democratic institutions is to develop methods for making majority decisions that, despite their partiality, also somehow incorporate the reasonable interests of those who have voted against them; and the central goal of democratic citizenship is the production of trust. Since the durability of democratic political forms requires that minorities trust majorities, majorities must be trustworthy.

This is not to say that all the responsibility for trust lies with the powerful. No. Majorities everywhere find it hard to be trustworthy if they do not themselves trust the minority.

Democracies need to cultivate throughout their citizenries a culture that values trust production, and that educates all citizens in its techniques.

— — —

Next week: What a photo from the civil rights era illustrates both about public rituals, and the role sacrifice plays in democracy.

The full text of Allen’s speech is available at www.ffc.org

Preparing to achieve the unexpected

Continued from Page 1

black working-class community and a nearby all-white community of textile mill workers. My own children were young, and I was doing research and teaching part-time at Winthrop.

Rembert and I bonded in a mutually supportive way. We were both set apart from our peers at Winthrop, for we were both doing the highly unexpected.

But in my courses exploring language and culture, Rembert joined me and other students in exploring all the many ways in which cultural differences and similarities across black and white socialization situations needed to be noted and understood.

Our classes were mini-laboratories in which we explored data, talked freely and openly. An example:

We talked about the ways that white families tended to ask their

children questions to which they already knew the answer.

Black working-class families almost never asked such questions; instead, their children were constantly immersed within the talk of adults and older children, and when they were ready to talk, they entered into ongoing conversations.

We talked about eye contact, levels of loudness in talk within groups, patterns of dating, and ideas about where furniture was placed in homes.

Rembert and I spent many hours together in my office or on the lawn at Winthrop having conversations about her observations as a newcomer to a formerly all-white school. She had a keen sense of observation and powers of comparative analysis that helped me immensely in my



Rembert at Dec. 3 meeting during which she was elected chair.

own thinking and writing.

Since her graduation and my departure from Winthrop to the University of Pennsylvania and then to Stanford as a professor, we have not been in touch.

But when recently asked for my recollections of her as a student, loads of memories flooded back.

The warm feelings of true collaboration between student and professor occur all too rarely. Being a colleague of Rembert's in the adventures of learning back in the very earliest days of

desegregation has been a learning experience that has remained with me.

I thank her for her support, and I know students at JCSU appreciate the continued wisdom and selflessness of this wonderful woman.

Diversity advocate reflects on her CMS role

Reprinted from the April 3 edition of Educate!:

In a Johnson C. Smith University auditorium Tuesday, CMS chairperson Wilhelmenia Rembert tried to explain how her life and the battle for desegregation had become entwined.

She grew up a few miles from Scotts Branch School, the Clarendon County, S.C. all-black school out of which came the first of the school lawsuits that took the name *Brown vs. Board*.

She graduated from a segregated high school in 1969, the year Judge James B. McMillan ordered Charlotte-Mecklenburg to use busing if necessary to "make good on the Brown decision of 1954."

Rembert's father left school as a 15-year-old still in third grade.

She entered college a year after the first black student entered what is now Winthrop University, where she teaches today. Mentors at Winthrop showed her "that there were people like me doing very important work...."

"I believe very firmly in the value of diversity in public education," she told the Smith students, and added that it was important that "I am sitting at the table. In my parents' day, they weren't at the table. And not too long ago there were not enough of us at the table."

Yet Rembert made the motion that led to a choice plan that has reseggregated many CMS schools.

"We didn't have the backing where we needed it ... to continue the desegregation efforts we

would like to have provided," Rembert told the students. Blacks were among "the vast majority" of parents who chose nearby over distant schools last year, decisions that have led many schools to mirror the economic and racial separation of the county's neighborhoods.

Earlier, black children had "borne the brunt" of desegregation's long-distance busing because their parents knew that the resources would be placed where the white students went to schools.

But now, "many African Americans felt, 'Enough already. We value diversity but not at that cost.'"

It is "extremely unfortunate," she said, that "when our nation is becoming increasingly diverse that we would educate our students in isolated environments."

How to contact county commissioners

The following information is from the county's Web site:

| | | | | | |
|--|----------|---|------------|--|------------|
| Tom Cox W: 704-374-1750 Fax: 704-374-9082 tomcox@tomcox.net | At-large | Jim Puckett H: 704-596-1145 Fax: 704-588-3188 jhpucket@bellsouth.net | District 1 | Dumont Clarke H: 704-333-1922 O: 704-336-2472 dumontclarke@mvalaw.com | District 4 |
| Parks Helms H: 704-336-9509 Fax: 704-332-0585 PHelms@helmshenderson.com | At-large | Norman Mitchell H: 704-399-3061 Fax: 704-391-1045 normanam@aol.com | District 2 | Ruth Samuelson H: 704-366-8748 rsamuelson@vnet.net | District 5 |
| Dan Ramirez W: 704-889-5816 danramireznova@aol.com | At-large | Valerie Woodard H: 704-336-4419 2woodard@bellsouth.net | District 3 | Bill James 704-846-6538 wjames@carolina.rr.com | District 6 |

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 |
| Eastway | 704-343-6410 | Linda Bolen | linda.bolen@ | 8:45-11:15 |
| Kennedy | 704-343-5540 | Catherine Eldridge | catherine.eldridge@ | 8:30-11:30 |
| Martin | 704-343-5382 | Gwen Nachman | gwen.nachman@ | 8:30-11:30 |
| Northeast | 704-343-6920 | Tamara Stark | tamara.stark@ | 8:00-12:00 |
| Northridge | 704-343-5015 | Judy Overhultz | judy.overhultz@ | 9:00-11:00 |
| Piedmont Open | 704-343-5435 | Tammy Broadaway | 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 |
| Smith Academy | 704-343-5815 | Heather Beck | h.beck@ | 8:00-12:00 |
| 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

Student-parent conferences:

To rebuild relationships with parents and to ease kids' worries about what's said behind their backs, a Seattle-area school district of 22,500 students has replaced its parent-teacher conferences with student-parent conferences held at the schoolhouse, the Times reported. Parent participation rose from 60% to 85% and students present the results of a portfolio-based review of the year's work. Interpreters keep the communication flowing with the district's parents, who speak 80 languages. CMS has 83 languages being spoken at its students' homes.

<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com>

Waiting too long:

In the April Educational Leadership, Sally Shaywitz, a pediatrician who co-directs the Yale Center for the Study of Learning and Attention, says "most children in the United States are identified as having a reading problem in third grade or later. That's unconscionable. We can identify problems much earlier and we can even prevent reading problems. Of course, we can help older children, too, but by then, we really put a burden on them to catch up with their peers and make rapid progress."

www.ascd.org

Tests and academics:

Two new studies suggest that, at the minimum, black students' achievement rises in states using high-stakes testing, the New York Times reported. Similar gains for Hispanics were not observed. And while the tests did not increase dropouts – a common fear – they also did not increase graduation rates.

www.nytimes.com

More than testing:

Public Agenda, in a review of survey data, says support is broad for

Sign of our values

From a Legislative Update from Charlotte Advocates for Education:

"A bill was introduced to raise the compulsory attendance age to 17 years of age. However, fiscal considerations will probably prohibit this from occurring."

achievement testing, but the public's interests run far deeper in the nation's schools. Teachers "believe in higher standards but often feel they can't count on students to make the effort or parents and administrators to back them up. Meanwhile, employers and professors still have major complaints about youngsters' writing and basic math skills."

www.publicagenda.org

Beyond tolerance:

Wake County guidance counselors and nurses have been trained to help students who identify themselves as gay or lesbian to deal both with their feelings and with those around them, the News and Observer. But parents of the teens involved think school administrators have more responsibility to foster an accepting environment. In a comment with echoes from a day when racial prejudice was acceptable, one parent says school officials have told her gay son "he needs to hang out 'with his own kind.'"

www.newsobserver.com

Boston choice upheld:

In a case that white parents vow to appeal, a U.S. district judge has upheld Boston's current choice assignment plan, the Globe reported. Reserving half the seats for students outside a white parents' neighborhood does block some white students from attending that nearest school, the ruling says, but does not unconstitutionally discriminate against those students.

www.boston.com

Software that shares:

Compliance work has begun for the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF), a standard computer protocol designed to allow K-12 software from different suppliers and operating on different computers to share a common set of data about a school's students, so that data won't be constantly rekeyboarded, eSchoolNews reported. The standard may one day ease educators' burdens a byte or two.

www.eschoolnews.com

Building trust:

Denver's 4,000 teachers are reviewing a plan that would financially reward good teaching, rather than just seniority, the Rocky Mountain News reported. Pay increases would be tied to evaluations. Union leaders have cooperated in the planning, but said acceptance will require a change in culture, and an increase in trust.

www.rockymountainnews.com

Algebra 2 gateway:

Completing a math course beyond high school Algebra 2 doubles the likelihood that a student will graduate from college, Education Week quoted researcher Clifford Adelman as saying. Added Anthony Carnevale at the Educational Testing Service, "It's really clear, if you had to put it on a bumper stick, that Algebra 2 is the new civil right. It's the threshold course."

www.edweek.org

Baton, please!

The Cape Cod Orchestra has just performed a 6.5-minute symphony created by area music students, the Times reported. A computer was used to orchestrate the melodies the kids created to put a dream to music. Said one 11-year-old, "I thought it would be about making up notes. But you have to come up with the story first."

www.capecodtimes.com

Window on No Child:

Chicago-area schools forced to

Continued on Page 8

Briefs *continued*

accept children transferring from underperforming school have had a challenging year, and most don't want to repeat the experience but probably will, the Sun Times reported. Teachers have been retrained to deal with extraordinary behavior problems among the kids frustrated that they are so far behind. And officials say most of the children are making progress. One school kept the transfer students together under one teacher and sent them to afterschool programs.

www.suntimes.com

Class sizes growing: Facing tough budgets, dozens of California school systems are considering boosting primary-grade classrooms to 32 students, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Schools first: USA Today shared with its readers an Education Week/Public Education Network poll showing twice as many voters concerned about cuts in services than about tax increases. Support for tax increases to create money for schools crosses lines of party, age, race and gender, USAToday reported.

Right to fire: Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney has suggested that principals be given the right to fire up to 10% of their teachers, the Boston Globe reported.

www.boston.com

Online tests: Loudoun County, Virginia, schools will move 1,800 students this month to an online version of the state's English test, the Washington Post reported. The state says about 125,000 copies of its tests are taken online this year, and by next year it hopes to have participation at 400,000. Online tests prevent some mistakes, such as filling in the wrong column of bubbles.

www.washingtonpost.com

States graded on testing their own curricula

The Princeton Review, a test-preparation company with no connection to the university, Tuesday released a 50-state study of the testing programs so central to No Child Left Behind. While North Carolina was ranked No. 4 among the states overall and got an "A" for test quality, it fell lower in the pack on the question of "alignment" – whether the tests actually measure the curriculum in the state's standard course of study. The state's grades on alignment:

| | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| A | Nevada Virginia | Tennessee Texas Utah Washington |
| B+ | California Mississippi New York Pennsylvania | C+ Iowa |
| B- | Arkansas Arizona Colorado Connecticut Florida Georgia Idaho Illinois Kentucky Louisiana Massachusetts Maine Minnesota North Carolina New Jersey Nevada Oklahoma Oregon South Carolina South Dakota | C District of Columbia Ohio |
| | | C- Alabama Delaware Hawaii Michigan Missouri North Dakota New Hampshire Rhode Island Vermont Wisconsin |
| | | D Arizona Indiana Kansas Maryland New Mexico West Virginia |
| | | F Montana Wyoming |

– Full details at www.princetonreview.com

Alternative to hate: Los Angeles public officials, religious leaders and rights groups have launched a series of forums designed to promote tolerance, the Times reported. Sessions on "Confronting Hate Crimes and Hate Language" are aimed at high school, but officials said middle schools have become training grounds for both hate language and violence.

www.latimes.com

Calendar

MAY

10 Walk Day for National Alliance for Autism Research, 8:30 a.m. check-in, Lowes Motor Speedway. Volunteers needed: 704-

333-0051 or thenewman@comporium.net

- 11** Mother's Day brunch to benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation of Central and Western North Carolina; music by Dr. Thomas Moore; reservations to Rheinland Haus, 704-376-3836; 11:30-2:30, 2418 Park Road.
- 13** School board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 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** Board policy committee, 3 p.m., Room 414, Education Ctr.