

## Inside

### TALKING TO STRANGERS

Last of three parts of a lesson for our time

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### Right-sized budget?

The schools' plea for \$14.9 million more to deal with next year's growth and other needs got cut to \$5 million more in County Manager Harry Jones' recommended budget. With more students, that's a nearly 1% cut in per-pupil county spending. And one budget option would allocate CMS \$5 million less than this year. Excerpts from Jones' presentation, Page 10.

### Children's health

A report card on progress – or lack of it – on issues from infant mortality to being overweight. Page 8.

### And you are invited!

At a breakfast June 5, community members will gather to celebrate the service of all those who have served on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education since city and county schools were consolidated in 1960. All current and former school board members have been invited, and the public is welcome. Seating is limited. Page 2.

# Federal law puts some kids in no-win situation

No Child Left Behind is a blunt instrument that will leave some children ON their ...

That was, after a fashion, one of the messages heard by Charlotte business leaders interested in education policy.

Susan Agruso, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' testing guru, described three kinds of students. The vast majority of students in grades 3-8 were taking paper-and-pencil end-of-grade tests this week. Make-up testing goes on for another fortnight.

Another 1% of students may be given alternate testing. An example would be a profoundly chal-

lenged child whose individual education plan might have as a goal learning how to tie shoelaces.

"We have another group of kids in the middle," Agruso told a CMS Partners for School Reform meeting at the Chamber of Commerce.

"The legislation does not provide an alternative for them right now." This group includes the eight-grader still reading on the fourth-grade level.

"Under the legislation these

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## Questions:

### What people ask when they have super's ear

Superintendents regularly face questions from the media. But last Thursday, Jim Pughsley faced a load of questions from regular citizens after speaking at the Uptown Democratic Forum.

Most questions were friendly, but some were just as pointed as those from the media.

The first inquiry began, "You're doing one hell of a job," and then asked if CMS couldn't get more and better publicity for its drama and academics.

"We could and should have" better publicity, Pughsley responded, but didn't offer any ways to get the media to do so.

"Just visit a school. Talk to our  
Continued on Page 6

## Dropouts:

### Amidst conflicting data, are we getting message?

Don't get discouraged by there being so many ways to count the dropout rate. The important message is this:

Every number should be a wake-up call to parents, children and educators alike.

The "truth" may indeed not lie in a precise number, but in two overall impressions:

– While adults almost universally believe that a high school diploma is a minimal credential for life success, many children aren't acting on that message.

– If there is progress being made in preventing dropouts, it is glacial progress at best. Does high school have the proverbial "right

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THE SWANN FELLOWSHIP  
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO A

# **SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION BREAKFAST**

HONORING THE WORK UNDER FIRE OF  
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# Talking to strangers

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

*In the first part, the author applauded Charlotte for helping to invent a new South, even as it works to overcome interracial distrust. Democratic institutions require that all groups see their interests advanced, even when they are in the minority.*

*In the second part last week, Allen used a biblical story and photos of civil rights figures Dorothy Counts in Charlotte and Elizabeth Eckford in Little Rock to explore how, underneath the “consent of the governed” is another truth of democracy: “Some citizens are always giving things up for others.”*

*Last of three parts*

**BY DANIELLE ALLEN**

Since sacrifice is ubiquitous in democratic life, and the polity often makes decisions with which one disagrees, all citizens must confront the paradox that they have been promised sovereignty and rarely feel it.

Herein lies the single most difficult feature of life in a democracy. Democratic citizens are by definition empowered only to be disempowered.

As a result, democratic citizenship requires rituals to manage the psychological tension that arises from being a nearly powerless sovereign.

For a long time, in this country, the solution to this paradoxical fact that most democratic citizens are, at the end of the day, relatively powerless sovereigns was the two-pronged citizenship of domination and acquiescence.

These old bad habits dealt with the inevitable fact of loss in political life by assigning to one group all the work of being sovereign, and to another group most of the work of accepting the significant

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

losses that kept the polity stable.

This approach to the place of loss in politics is a breeding ground for distrust. The challenge set to us by 1957, then, is to develop healthier habits for handling the problem of loss in politics.

Citizens have a responsibility not merely to see the ordinary everyday sacrifices that some are making for others; they also must acknowledge and honor these sacrifices; and then reciprocate.

To develop citizenship for our new constitution requires the formation of more robust habits of reciprocity than those we currently use in our interactions with strangers.

We need, I think, a citizenship of political friendship.

Now, I know I am talking to a Southern audience – and you are deservedly famous for your courtesy – and so it’s important that I stress that political friendship goes quite a bit beyond politesse.

Long ago Aristotle sought to describe a virtue of citizenship that could hit a midway point between acquiescence and domi-

nation.

To quote him, citizens who exhibit political friendship avoid interacting with strangers either as, on the one hand, acquiescent people who accept everything and “think it a duty to avoid giving pain to those with whom they come in contact” or as, on the other hand, domineering people who “object to everything and do not care in the least what pain they cause” (Nicomachean Ethics 4.6.1-2).

Crucially, his virtue of political friendship is not an emotion but a practice. One doesn’t have to like one’s fellow citizens; one just has to treat them as one would a friend.

Just as we are concerned to maintain our friends’ trust in us, so too the citizen who acts as a political friend desires to prove herself trustworthy to fellow citizens.

What ordinary techniques of friendship can help citizens to generate trust among themselves? Since my time is short, I will discuss just two techniques.

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## Talking to Strangers, Part III

The first concerns equity.

One might think that equitable behavior means taking only those benefits that are one's due, but actually Aristotle has something stranger in mind.

An equitable person, he writes, is "one who does not stand on his rights unduly, but is content to receive a smaller share although he has the law on his side" (Nicomachean Ethics 5.10.8).

An equitable person is less a fair person than a generous one. In friendships we learn how to negotiate conflicting interests.

For instance, I may want to go to a baseball game when my friend wants to go to a movie. Friends set up systems of reciprocity; they acknowledge who is giving up what for whom and make plans for paying one another back.

In fact, Aristotle writes that the Athenians set up a shrine of the Graces, the goddesses of charitable giving, in a public place, to remind men that it is a duty not only to repay a service done to one, but also to take the initiative in doing a service oneself (Nicomachean Ethics 5.5.6). Equity entails giving in the public sphere, and to this extent, charity does factor into citizenship, crucially.

But now, let's turn to the second technique of friendship that we should bring into the political realm.

Here we must confront the counter-intuitive idea that citizens who give often and generously to other citizens may be distrusted, despite their equitability.

Precisely because they are in a position to give more to other citizens than others give to them, they also often have the power to avoid making themselves vulnerable before strangers.

They may be willing to give money or recognition to other citizens, and may do so frequently, but without giving them real power. They may have laid claim to a moral high ground, on account of their gifts, and to immunity from criticism that in

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**Citizenship thus combines charity with real habits of power sharing and a developed discourse of reciprocity, in which citizens learn how to see, acknowledge, and repay the debts they owe one another.**

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itself provokes distrust.

In contrast, friends share power with each other. Indeed, a friendship cannot survive if one friend insists on controlling all decisions; friendship entails self-exposure.

Citizens can demonstrate to fellow citizens that they are willing to share power in two ways.

To prove oneself trustworthy, Aristotle argues, one has to show that one is willing to let any citizen at all judge and respond to one's political arguments. A citizen who acts as a political friend explicitly invites the response of strangers to his opinions.

And, secondly, citizens who are political friends not only make sacrifices for strangers; they also ask strangers for favors. To quote Aristotle again:

"A friend is one who befriends and is befriended in return, and those who think their relationship is of this character consider themselves friends." (Art of Rhetoric 2.4.7).

Political friendship must be reciprocal. Elizabeth Eckford's sacrifice was at last converted from a symptom of domination into an act of equity when it became clear that her fellow citizens around the country would reciprocate her self-sacrifice by accepting changes to their political regime.

Citizens who act like political friends not only befriend others; they make sure to notice where they have been befriended by others in turn.

They see, acknowledge, and

honor the sacrifices others have made for them, and are willing to ask for further favors.

It's important for us to remember that friends are people to whom we are willing to be in debt and in respect to whom we acknowledge and repay our debts.

Citizenship thus combines charity with real habits of power sharing and a developed discourse of reciprocity, in which citizens learn how to see, acknowledge, and repay the debts they owe one another.

Only when we treat all our fellow citizens as friends, will we at long last be on our way to developing a new citizenship for a new U.S. Here, then, are some ideals for a new citizenship of political friendship.

By way of a conclusion, I'd like to share a few thoughts with you about how these ideals might be turned into realities.

It's hard to imagine a period in the life of this democracy when politicians and citizens are not lamenting the absence of a civic education capable of teaching citizens how to interact in a citizenly fashion. And yet this lament misdiagnoses the situation.

The U.S. does have a vigorous system of civic education. All children have one civic lesson inscribed as deeply as possible into their hearts and minds: "Don't talk to strangers."

This injunction, the substance of yet another childhood ritual, is the central and most powerful tenet of our current civic education, which does just the opposite of what we need; it encourages the growth of distrust. What can counteract this?

I am sure we will always want to teach our kids, especially our young kids, how to be safe in their world, but kids, especially as they draw near the political age of 18, also need to be educated in the political art of cultivating trust.

Even as recently as a century and a half ago, instruction in the art of rhetoric provided this train-

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## Talking to Strangers, Part III

ing. Now the best route to this goal would be to ask adults to set an example for their children, by themselves acting with political friendship.

Adults can do this in two ways.

First, they can consider how well their communities have developed habits for acknowledging mutual gifts, sharing political power, and cultivating reciprocity.

Adults should, for instance, ask whether their city's public documents set a tone of political friendship for the community.

Take, for instance, the history of Charlotte that is available on the website of your Chamber of Commerce.

It celebrates great achievements here and contributions to the growth of your community, but African-Americans appear in the history only in an explicit reference to the founding in 1867 of Biddle University for Blacks, now known as Johnson C. Smith University, and implicitly in the mention of the introduction of district representation in 1977.

But there must be a way to tell a single history of Charlotte that interweaves the perspectives of your many residents and acknowledges the mutual and diverse contributions made to the growth of the city.

For instance, I understand that one of the first prominent white families in Charlotte was the Alexanders; and that the first African-American in city government in Charlotte in the 20th century was also an Alexander.

Now, I may be wrong – after all I don't know your history so well – but it sounds as if there may a connection here.

Is it possible that the story of your city includes the neat historical detail that one early group of settlers, a mix of slave owners and slaves, produced city leaders, both white and black, for two centuries?

A history that is honest about the interrelations between groups and their mutual exchanges and gifts would help establish a framework for trust.

I would be curious to see what sort of historical narrative the city could produce for itself if it had the funds to commission a diverse group of citizens – perhaps history teachers from public and private schools, from schools predominantly black and schools predominantly white – to write a new history of the city.

Such adult endeavors are critical for setting a tone of political friendship in the community, and an example for children.

Adults can also set an example of political friendship for their kids in their daily lives.

Perhaps we will always teach our youngest children not to talk to strangers, but as our kids grow older, we should cultivate in them confidence enough to talk to strangers as friends, regardless of whether those strangers are employers, employees, waiters, tellers, janitors, garbage collectors, teachers, or passers-by.

We should encourage them always to ask themselves two questions about their interactions with strangers:

“Did I look at this person as a potential friend?”

“Would I have treated a friend as I treated this person?”

And we too might ourselves use these questions to judge our own interactions with strangers:

“Would I have treated a friend as I treated this person?”

“Did I look at this person as a potential friend, as someone not only to do favors for but also to ask favors of?”

With questions like these as our guide, we might indeed develop habits more likely to generate trust than those that currently shape our interactions with strangers.

The changes wrought in this country between 1954 and 1964-65 have presented us with the challenge of seeking new habits of citizenship that can dissolve distrust. I have proposed techniques of political friendship to generate trust.

In an important way, I am only

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This journal will continue for  
**13**

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

**8%**

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## Talking to Strangers, Part III

calling you and myself back to the forms of citizenship invented by Southerners during the difficult periods of the 1950s and 1960s, for Southerners, more than Northerners, marshaled the great displays of civil courage during that period that changed our world.

I hold up Elizabeth Eckford and Dorothy Counts as models of political friendship, and your own former mayor Stan Brookshire, who, when he was invited by Rev. George Leake to attend a memorial service for Martin Luther King, Jr., at St. Paul's Baptist Church, on April 8, 1968, went, although neither Leake nor the congregation had expected him to.

But here let me also add a footnote on the relationship between memory and distrust.

The number one thing to remember about distrust is that it is historical. It takes time to build up the kinds of narrative that are

The number one thing to remember about distrust is that it is historical. It takes time to build up the kinds of narrative that are needed to justify it.

needed to justify it.

When distrust comes as a surprise within a city, odds are that the different communities within it have developed pretty separate versions of history without anyone's noticing.

When community memories are out of synch with each other, it is absolutely crucial to weave those memories together. St. Paul's Baptist Church, which was the site of that important memorial service for King in 1968, was closed soon thereafter as part of "slum clearance" or "urban renewal." It is in moments such as

those that the memories of different groups within a community begin to diverge. Again, it is absolutely crucial to weave these memories together.

Maybe some sort of slum clearance or urban renewal was necessary – indeed, it is easy to see benefits to the community as a whole that have resulted from it – but then the sacrifice of those who had to move their church to make it possible should also be acknowledged. In conditions of distrust, a political friend tries hard to weave memories together.

Am I right about the potential of political friendship? Aristotle closes his treatise on rhetoric with words that he presents as the best way to close an argument, and which I will accordingly use: "You've heard me, you understand. Now judge."

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*The full text of Allen's speech is available at [www.ftc.org](http://www.ftc.org)*

## Pughsley answers questions on road

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kids," he offered.

*Q: Under No Child left behind, will North Carolina model itself after the feds?*

Pughsley noted that No Child had been patterned chiefly after Texas and North Carolina, so it was more a matter of the feds modeling their bill after North Carolina.

And CMS had piloted North Carolina efforts to track academic achievement of demographic subgroups. No Child requires academic gains by all subgroups – a key stumbling block in the legislation, but also the key reason why many children aren't succeeding.

*Q: What are the penalties?*

Pughsley mentioned a big one: Districts must pay to bus kids

away from a persistently underperforming school.

*Q: Can we be leveraging the funds we have?*

It's just a three-person department in CMS, but Pughsley said his grant-writers have unearthed millions in federal and foundation dollars to support CMS programs.



Pughsley

*If today's academic tracking had been in force in my time, said the son of a maid and a railroad employee, I would have been an academic failure.*

"It would have happened to me as well," said Pughsley. "Unfortunately it became part of the culture."

*The same questioner asked that CMS "stop denegrating lateral-entry teachers.*

"I am trying to become affiliated with Teach for America... within the next year," Pughsley

replied, making a bit of news.

Teach for America has just over 100 college-graduate recruits working off two-year gigs in Eastern North Carolina. Like lateral entry recruits, they bypass education classes and mostly learn on the job.

*Conversation returned to whether subsidized lunch should be used to categorize kids.*

"There is a stigma" to the label, Pughsley asserted. "We do things for the convenience of adults, and not for kids."

"Culturally deprived" is another label. "Every kid has a culture," Pughsley said. "We just have to be careful" how labels impact students' own interest in pursuing challenging courses.

*The parent of an autistic child said he was pleased with elementary and middle-school programs, but "there's really no program in place" for high schools.*

Agreed, said Pughsley, but change is on the way. "Just hang in there with us, if you would."

# Dropouts: Are we discerning the key message?

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stuff’ and are kids prepared to work at learning it?

Here’s a look at a much broader field of inquiry:

## One-year-at-a-time approach

North Carolina calculates dropouts as a percent of annual enrollment. Rates are calculated for all children in grades 7-12, and also for grades 9-12. The rates for Charlotte-Mecklenburg and N.C. are:

	'98-'99	'99-'00	'00-'01	'01-'02
Meck 7-12	5.50%	4.76%	4.11%	3.47%
N.C. 7-12	4.60%	4.34%	3.86%	3.52%
Meck 9-12	7.72%	6.82%	5.77%	4.77%
N.C. 9-12	6.78%	6.43%	5.72%	5.25%

The data shows that CMS, on both measures, now surpasses the state average.

But this method of counting dropouts vastly understates the problem. So what if only 3% or 4% of kids from seventh grade on drop out? With attendance mandatory until 16 (and why isn't it 18?), the bulk of seventh-graders can't possibly drop out.

## The 4-year dance

Another rough-and-ready approach is to count the number of ninth-graders, wait four years, then count the number of graduates. This approach was adopted by the N.C. Child Advocacy Institute when it compiled its N.C. Children's Index 2002, "a profile of leading indicators on the health and well-being of North Carolina's children."

Using a state estimate for 2000-2001 of the percentage of students who completed high school within four years, the institute compiled numbers for the state and all 100 counties: A sampling:

County	Pct.	County	Pct.	County	Pct.
Forsyth	66.3	Cumb'land	57.8	N. Hanover	56.8
Wake	65.7	Guilford	57.8	Buncombe	56.6
Union	62.0	Gaston	57.1	<b>Meck.</b>	<b>56.6</b>
Cabarrus	57.8	<b>N.C.</b>	<b>57.1</b>	Durham	47.4

"This is not a true graduation rate," the institute acknowledges. Children leaving the state, and dropouts, are treated the same way in the statistics.

"As a cumulative number," however, "this gives a better picture of the large percent of our youth who are not successful in completing our public schools than the annual dropout rate."

## Here today, gone by graduation

Another similar blunt instrument was published earlier in Educate! This method counts the size of each class on the 20th day of school. The grim look at the Class of 2004:

Date	Stage	Total	Pct of 2000
Fall 2000	As 9th-graders	9,334	100%
Fall 2001	As 10th-graders	7,617	82%
Fall 2002	As 11th-graders	6,023	65%
Fall 2003	As 12th-graders	5,317	57%

In general, most students who make it into 12th grade do graduate – close, that is, to the 57% figure.

## The class act

The seeds of an excellent approach are to be found in local school districts looking at their own records for individual children, then accounting for their ninth-graders after four years.

The latest CMS accounting is for the Class of 2002. It is based on students' status two months after the 2002 graduation. The accounting:

- 54% graduated;
- 3% were still students;
- 16% had left CMS;
- 27% dropped out.

And while the overall dropout rate was, in this accounting, 27%, the rate was higher for some demographic groups, lower for others:

Group	Rate	Group	Rate
Female	21.0%	Blacks	37.7%
Male	32.3%	Whites	16.7%
		Other	24.0%
Subsidized lunch	39.8%		
Paid lunch	18.8%		

It's not immediately apparent where CMS places young people who left CMS for Central Piedmont Community College's GED certificate program.

The state requires districts to report GED enrollees as dropouts. The U.S. Department of Education, however, does not count GED enrollees as dropouts. That's why North Carolina does not appear in some studies of national dropout rates.

## Latest – but not last – word

Last week, the Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies produced a new report, this time for the Business Roundtable, a trade group of CEOs of large companies.

"Our best estimates," said authors Andrew Sum and Paul Harrington, "indicate that somewhere between 25 and 30 percent of America's teenagers, including recent immigrants, fail to graduate with a

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# Dropouts: Do we get message?

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regular high school diploma and that the incidence of such dropout problems has *not* diminished over the past 20 years.”

Further, they assert that “some of the more widely-cited official government measures... substantially underestimate” the numbers.

They call the situation “a hidden dropout crisis... the time for action is now!”

The Northeastern study offers yet another way to look for dropouts, by examining graduation rates that cover both public and private schools.

The study takes the number of diplomas awarded in a state each year, and divides by the 18-year-old population. The authors grant that some graduates are 17, but they say that dividing by one year or the other yields “nearly identical estimates.” Here is the data for the states, based on 18-year-olds:

Rank	Pct.	Rank	Pct.		
1	Vermont	92.1	27	Indiana	73.2
2	Connecticut	87.6	28	Washington	73.0
3	Nebraska	85.9	29	Michigan	72.9
4	Minnesota	85.3	30	Virginia	72.5
5	N. Dakota	85.1	31	Hawaii	72.2
6	New Hampshire	84.8	32	Idaho	72.1
7	Iowa	83.6		<b>United States</b>	<b>71.3</b>
8	Pennsylvania	83.1	33	New York	70.5
9	Maine	82.6	34	Kentucky	70.0
10	Massachusetts	81.7	35	Dist. of Col.	69.3
11	Maryland	81.3	36	California	68.1
12	Wisconsin	80.4	37	Texas	67.4
13	West Virginia	80.0	38	New Mexico	66.9
14	New Jersey	79.1	39	Colorado	65.1
15	Montana	78.8	40	Alaska	65.1
16	Rhode Island	77.4	<b>41</b>	<b>N. Carolina</b>	<b>64.7</b>
17	Ohio	77.0	42	Oregon	64.7
18	Utah	75.7	43	Nevada	64.7
19	Illinois	75.5	44	Florida	63.3
20	Delaware	75.5	45	Alabama	62.8
21	Wyoming	74.4	46	Tennessee	62.5
22	Arkansas	74.3	47	Louisiana	62.5
23	Missouri	74.1	48	Mississippi	60.4
24	Oklahoma	73.8	49	S. Carolina	60.1
25	Kansas	73.4	50	Georgia	58.5
26	South Dakota	73.3	51	Arizona	55.8

And what accounts for such wide variations in the success rate of the states?

That question seems beyond the scope of the study, but the authors point to a lack of information particularly on the much higher rates among urban males.

“Unfortunately, our knowledge base on the types of school programs that succeed in keeping young men in high school, especially in the nation’s large central cities, is as thin as gruel.”

– Steve Johnston

## Report card on child health

*Excerpts from eighth report by the N.C. Child Advocacy Institute and N.C. Institute of Medicine. Citing governor’s goal of being “First in America” in education, the report says “there is no way to achieve that goal if our children are nowhere near first in measures of health and safety.”*

**Trend, grade**      **Topic**      **2001 change since base year; base year varies by statistic**

### Insurance coverage

**B** Children 0-18 uninsured      -11.9%

### Infant mortality

**B** White deaths/1,000 live births      -14%

**D** Nonwhite deaths/1,000 live births      +3%

### Low birth-weight infants

**D** White births 5.5 lbs. or less      +7%

**F** Nonwhite births 5.5 lbs. or less      -2%

### Immunization rates

**A** Immunized by age 2      +10%

**A** Immunized at school entry      +1%

### Communicable diseases

**B** Congenital syphilis      -39%

**A** Perinatal HIV/AIDS      -90%

**C** Tuberculosis, age 0-19      -8%

### Dental health for Medicaid-eligible

**D** Children 1-5 receiving services      +151%

**F** Children 6-14 receiving services      -15%

**F** Children 15-20 receiving services      -8%

### Child abuse and neglect

**F** Substantiated as victims      +14%

### Deaths, children 0-18, due to injury

**C** Motor vehicle related      -6%

**C** Drowning      -29%

**A** Fire/burn      -79%

**A** Bicycle      -56%

**D** Suicide      -22%

**F** Homicide      -38%

**F** Firearm      -47%

### Use in last 30 days, grades 9-12

**D** Cigarettes      -11%

**C** Smokeless tobacco      -3%

**F** Marijuana      -4%

**F** Alcohol (beer)      -4%

**F** Cocaine      +23%

### Overweight

**F** Ages 5-11      +28%

**D** Ages 12-18      +7%

*The full report is at [www.ncchild.org](http://www.ncchild.org)*

## Some children in No Child no-win situation

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children are held to their grade-level standard... We have outstanding programs for those children... but they can't perform on that level yet. We're concerned about those schools."

Under No Child, all students are expected to be on grade level by 2013-2014. That means that only today's pre-kindergartners through first-graders will actually be involved when the 100% rule takes effect.

But in the meantime, as Agruso explained to the businesspeople, the legislation calls for annual yearly progress, or AYP, among all demographic groups.

And in North Carolina the bar has been initially set at 68.9% on grade level in reading, and 74.6% in math. The bar rises every three years in equal steps.

Some schools this year will be well ahead of the initial standards. Some, Agruso said, may report average test percentages in the low 50s.

And that's schoolwide, the traditional way North Carolina has measured academic progress.

But No Child requires progress by all children. "We have to make sure all groups are making progress," Agruso said. "So you can't hide anymore" behind a rosy "average."

Every school must achieve the expected AYP with all 10 subgroups identified by No Child. The state has decided that if a school has 40 children in a category, it must report results for that subgroup and be subject to sanctions if the subgroups doesn't make AYP.

One subgroup is the entire school. There are six demographic groups: White, African-American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and multiracial. The other three subgroups are children on subsidized lunch, children with Limited English proficiency

## What's ahead on testing, No child

**June 10:** CMS expects to release initial data on end-of-grade tests being taken this week in grades 3-8.

**Late June:** N.C. State Board identifies schools to be labeled "persistently dangerous" under No Child. Parents must be given other options.

**Early July:** CMS and other local districts will release test scores, identify schools that made Annual Yearly Progress.

**July:** CMS to release academic data on Bright Beginnings alumni who are now taking end-of-grade tests. The reporting is designed to help assess the value of one of CMS's most expensive initiatives, which was designed to eliminate deficiencies in academic preparation of at-risk 4-year-olds.

**Sept. 11:** State Board is scheduled to approve bonuses, awards under state's ABCs accountability program.

**Dec. 5:** State is to release its report cards on each N.C. school district and school.

Sources: CMS, N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction

or LEP, and exceptional children.

Agruso said each group has a reading goal, a math goal, must have a 95% test-taking rate and meet an attendance standard. Ten groups times four goals equals 40 potential hurdles.

In CMS, according to Agruso, some schools face as many as 37 hurdles. In others, there may be only five.

If a school misses one hurdle, it will be labeled "needs improvement."

Asked about penalties, Agruso said the penalty the first year is "being in the newspaper." Framers of No Child were counting on such public shame to motivate change, but more than 60% of N.C. schools are expected to be in the newspaper this year. The response may simply be a yawn.

In the second year, federal funds now being spent elsewhere must be put into allowing parents to move their children to a better school. In the third year, parents must be given access to tutoring services. More stringent penalties follow in later years if the school does not improve.

"The legislation is very much in

line with our philosophy," Agruso said. "We do believe that we will actually make it."

Asked if themes emerged from schools seeing academic progress, Agruso cited two commonalities: They "set high expectations, and they have a really strong principal and teachers who understand (the curriculum), teach well, and can move kids forward."

The weight of testing and the consequences of children's failure has put teachers under immense pressure, Agruso said. The district also has narrowed what's taught to focus on what's tested.

"We need to be sure that we don't take away those other things children need," she said. "We're not there yet but we will get that balance back."

Agruso made a plea for not thinking that a school missing AYP is a failing school. "Our challenge for next year is to put support mechanisms in place."

And what about the blizzard of test results coming soon? Agruso asked for patience. "We're going to have percentages flying all over the place that mean different things."

# Right-sized county budget?

**Manager Harry Jones seeks budget that has ‘the funding needed to make progress towards the Board’s vision for this community’**

*Excerpts from County Manager Harry Jones’ budget presentation Tuesday night to the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners.*

*The excerpts focus on the budget options the board may consider, and their effect on education.*

*But excerpts give greater detail on the broader impact of the “full rollback” option, which would cut property taxes to offset revenues from a new half-cent sales tax.*

Mecklenburg County is a growing and diverse community of more than 700,000 people, and therefore has needs that vary widely.

As the Board is well aware, counties in North Carolina are required to provide certain services, such as buildings for jails, schools and state-operated courts; local match for aid payments such as Medicaid; some funding for school operations; and health and human services.

The fastest growing demands on the county’s tax base are debt service and education. More than half of the FY04 projected county revenues is allocated to these services....

At your January Strategic Planning Conference, you instructed me to develop four budget options:

– Current Service: A budget at our current level of service that includes full funding for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and CPCC.

– Rollback 1: A Revenue Neutral budget related to the recent property revaluation...One that excludes consideration of increased revenues from normal growth in the tax base.

– Rollback 2: A Revenue Neutral budget that includes increased

<b>Impact of plans on county budget</b>			
<i>Partial details on the impact of proposed budget alternatives. Further details are in adjoining excerpts. Impact of the “Rollback 1” option was not specified in the text and is not in other budget documents. For full text of Manager Harry Jones’ budget presentation and other information, see <a href="http://www.4citizenhelp.com">www.4citizenhelp.com</a></i>			
<i>In the chart below, zero means no additions from current budget. Cuts are marked in (parentheses).</i>			
	<u>Maintain current service</u>	<u>Manager’s plan</u>	<u>Full rollback</u>
CMS	\$14,946,001	5,000,000	(4,900,000)
CPCC	1,402,607	500,000	(250,000)
Social services	0	(8,036,008)	(9,388,092)
Health Dept.	0	(337,055)	(543,436)
Mental health	2,897,677	(1,691,616)	(1,693,132)
Sheriff’s office	1,640,592	(4,878,181)	(5,953,069)
Public library	2,349,622	(1,843,370)	(3,136,709)
Parks and Rec.	0	(1,437,214)	(2,295,922)
Land use	0	(765,012)	(1,141,412)
WTVI	0	(554,000)	(1,159,764)
Arts & Science	0	(540,631)	(1,200,000)
Comm. Devt.	0	(294,654)	(377,000)
Landmarks	0	(2,500)	(1,544,000)
Veterans	0	0	(409,837)
Women’s Comm.	0	(37,207)	(352,968)

**Data source:** Manager’s budget recommendation

revenue for normal growth in the tax base; and

– Full Rollback: A Revenue Neutral budget that includes growth but also rolls back the property tax rate equal to the amount of money the County is expected to take in from the half-cent sales tax levied in January 2003....

## Sales tax issue

In making this recommendation, I am mindful of the commitments some of you have made regarding your support for a rollback of the property tax to offset the revenue generated by the half-cent sales tax levied begin-

ning January 2003. Several weeks ago, I asked you to keep an open mind regarding that option.

Again, tonight, I ask the same consideration.

I do not believe that this option assists the Board or this community in advancing toward the goals and vision you have set....

The half-cent sales tax option was provided to counties by the N.C. General Assembly to replace reimbursements revenue the state withheld from counties. Because the amount of state reimbursements (\$24.7 million) was eliminated from the FY03 County budget, the revenue from the half-

**Continued on Page 11**

cent sales tax will allow the County revenue to return to the level it was prior to the withholding of the state reimbursements.

Originally, the General Assembly intended to repeal a half-cent statewide sales tax, effective July 2003 to ensure taxpayers would "break even" on the sales tax cost. While it appears the General Assembly is reconsidering this repeal, Mecklenburg County should not be held responsible for the actions of the state. Therefore, rolling back the property tax to offset the revenue of the half-cent sales tax essentially negates the General Assembly's intent to hold counties (and municipalities) harmless for having reimbursements withheld....

If the Board approves the recommended budget, the typical residential property owner – someone who owns a house valued at \$150,000 – would pay \$46.65 more in annual property tax than if the Board were to approve the Full Rollback budget option. It is my judgment that this difference is a reasonable and affordable price to maintain the \$25 million in services that would otherwise need to be eliminated.

Again, this judgment is based on the funding needed to make progress towards the Board's vision for this community....

**Current service option**

Current Service Level would require a tax rate increase of 3.03 cents from the recommended tax rate of 76.85. In addition to restoring reductions identified in the recommended budget, notable funding increases at this level would include:

- \$9,946,001 to fund CMS at full request (\$279.9 million).
- \$1,402,607 to fund CPCC at full request (\$17.9 million).
- \$2,349,622 for full operations at two new libraries (Freedom Regional and Sugar Creek) plus part-year funding to open the new Steele Creek library.
- \$1,640,592 to restore holiday pay for Sheriff's Office employees and to provide special events

**CMS in the county's budget, at a glance**

	Actual 2000	Actual 2001	Actual 2002	Amend. 2003	Rec. 2004
County \$/student	\$2,758	\$2,893	\$3,264	\$3,211	\$3,182
Increase	7.0%	4.9%	12.8%	-1.6%	-0.9%
Total enrollment	100,368	103,144	106,192	109,605	112,845
Increase	1.9%	2.8%	3.0%	3.2%	3.0%
All support (millions)	276.8	298.4	346.6	351.9	359.1
increase	9.0%	7.8%	16.1%	1.5%	2.0%

Data source: Manager's budget recommendation

security/support.

- \$1 million to restore funding in Area Mental Health for child and adolescent residential treatment.

- \$1,897,677 to restore funding in Area Mental Health for adult substance abuse treatment contracts and other adult services.

- \$207,019 for 1 FTE forensic pathologist and other additional support needed in the Medical Examiner's Office.

- \$605,764 to restore Arts & Science Council funding.

- \$542,439 to restore WTVI funding.

**Manager's option**

Total cost for Education Services in the recommended budget is \$385,359,664. This service category includes Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) and Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) operations and debt service.

CMS and CPCC debt service will be \$76.98 million, an increase of \$8.15 million from FY03, of which nearly \$7 million (\$6.97 million) is for CMS debt. Approximately \$67.2 million of the \$76.98 million total is for CMS.

A total of \$286,112,176 is for CMS and CPCC operating funding, a \$5.5 million increase over the FY03 amended budget. This represents 37.89 percent of the net county funding in the recom-

mended budget. CMS operating funding would be \$269,988,951, a \$5 million increase, and CPCC funding would be \$16,123,225, a \$500,000 increase.

As you know, the Board of Education has requested approximately a \$15 million increase to meet growth needs and to address equity. The CMS budget request also identifies \$10 million in cost savings within the current CMS budget. When combined with this \$10 million in savings, my recommended increase of \$5 million provides CMS with adequate funding to meet its growth needs.

The recommended increase for CPCC would allow the college an opportunity to address, in part, its growth needs as well.

Nonetheless, my recommendation for education represents a clear funding increase.

**Rollback 1 option**

Rollback 1 – revenue neutral without growth – would require additional reduction of \$17 million from the recommended budget. This budget option would be funded by \$737,424,111 in county dollars and require a property tax rate of 74.73 cents per \$100 valuation, a 9.24 cents reduction from the FY03 tax rate and a 2.12 cents reduction from the recommended budget. This reduction would equate to a \$31.80 total savings for property owners of a

\$150,000 home from the recommended budget.

If the Board selects this budget option, it may select \$17 million in cuts from the list of reductions mentioned above or may opt for other reductions using the Choice Matrix on in the back of the budget document, or using a method of its choice....

**Full rollback option**

Full Rollback to offset the half-cent sales tax would require additional reductions of \$25 million from the recommended budget. This budget option would be funded by \$730,502,886 in county dollars and require a property tax rate of 73.74 cents per \$100 valuation, a 10.23 cents reduction from the FY03 tax rate and a 3.11 cents reduction from the recommended budget.

This tax rate would equate to a \$46.65 annual savings for property owners of a \$150,000 home from the recommended budget.

Service reductions required to fund this budget option include the \$21.9 million in efficiencies and reductions previously mentioned within the recommended budget plus an additional \$25 million in reductions. This additional reduction includes the elimination of 330 additional positions – 104 full-time; 3 part-time; and 223 temporary positions – including 93 filled full-time and 3 filled part-time positions.

As a result, if the Board were to adopt this budget option, the cumulative impact would be \$46.9 million in service reductions, including the elimination of 450 positions – 196 full-time; 7 part-time; and 247 temporary positions, of which 95 full-time and 3 part-time positions are filled. The net reduction from FY03 would be 416 positions – 156 full-time; 4 part-time; and 256 temporary positions.

Notable among the full list of additional reductions are:

- Instead of the \$5 million increase for CMS in the recommended budget, the Full Rollback budget would cut CMS funding

**Impact of budget options on taxpayers**

*Estimated annual impact on the property taxes paid by the owner of a \$150,000 home.*

Maintain current service	Manager's plan	Full rollback
<b>+\$45.45</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-\$46.65</b>

**Data source:** Manager's budget recommendation

\$4.9 million from the current FY03 level.

- Instead of a \$500,000 increase for CPCC in the recommended budget, the Full Rollback budget would cut CPCC funding by \$250,000 from the current FY03 level.

There would be \$14.4 million in additional reductions to County Services including:

- \$1.5 million in Area Mental Health that would cut, in residential placement of children or adolescents; emergency after-hours call center; adult client housing; and adult substance abuse services.

- The federal legislative contract with the Ferguson Group would be eliminated.

- A \$100,000 cut would eliminate courthouse day care for jurors.

- A \$140,000 cut to Elections would prevent the expansion of Early Voting to additional locations.

- All funding for Historic Landmarks is eliminated, saving \$54,000. In addition, ceasing this activity frees \$1,500,000 in bond proceeds that can be applied toward general debt service.

- \$500,000 in funding for economic development

- Virtually all grants to Outside Agencies (corporate and departmental) are eliminated....

- Park & Recreation cuts of \$858,708 would eliminate all general summer day camp programs, special needs summer day camps programs, and the Greenville Pool; eliminate summer seasonal inner city neighborhood service contracts; and eliminate 32

Rayfest events, the summer jazz series, and the Asian and Latin-Caribbean cultural festivals.

- The Health Department's Project HOPE program, an abstinence-based pregnancy prevention program for at-risk teens, would be eliminated.

- Five branch libraries would be closed, saving nearly \$1.3 million and would allow the sale of property that could be used in the future to fund other capital projects, perhaps to emphasize regional libraries rather than neighborhood libraries. This reduction closes the following branch libraries: Myers Park; Cornelius; Belmont Center; Carmel; North Park; and Hickory Grove.

- Sheriff's Office cuts of \$1,074,888 would, among other cuts, close the Gatling Juvenile Detention Facility and Unit 2 of the Work Release & Restitution Center Unit 2.

- Social Services reduction of nearly \$1.4 million would eliminate all funding for YMCA Strengthening Families Grant; close the Senior Nutrition kitchens and outsource all food preparation; and reduce General Assistance offered through Crisis Assistance Ministries, among other reductions.

- The Veterans Services Department would be eliminated.

- Women's Commission programs would be reduced by approximately \$353,000 including a reduction in positions.

- WTVI's funding would be eliminated with the exception of funding to maintain the digital equipment and the facility....