

Educate!

Sept. 11, 2003

A COMMUNITY JOURNAL ON EDUCATION IN CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG, NC

WWW.EDUCATECLT.ORG



IN MEMORIAM

CMS students fold thousands of symbols of peace. Story, Page 3.



"Elvis" by Sloane Whaley, Northwest School of the Arts.

Juvenile nonjustice

Keep troubled kids in county, expert advises

A longtime child advocate Tuesday called on Mecklenburg residents to keep their struggling children out of the N.C. juvenile justice system.

"You have to take ownership of your kids," says Al Singer. "Don't let the state have them."

State legislators are making another move away from rehabilitation to incarceration. They are choosing a system that leads to 80% recidivism rates from training schools. "I think there's a better way," Singer says.

Singer, director of the Child Advocacy Commission in Durham, told the Tuesday Morning

Breakfast Forum Mecklenburg residents should create treatment and other programs and insist that Mecklenburg's share of state juvenile program money go to support them.

The state system is broken, Singer says. He sees youth in his private law practice as they enter the juvenile justice system. He says he sees too many of them again in adult courts.

The path that leads through school suspensions and exclusions to incarceration begins much earlier, Singer says.

"I first see them getting kicked out of day care centers. Therein lies the exclusionary tunnel for a lot of these kids."

Children of color and children of poverty are far more likely to wind up incarcerated, in part because middle-class parents know how to argue against suspensions and assignment to behavior adjustment programs.

The N.C. General Assembly earlier this year approved spending \$90 million on new juvenile jails. "They hoodwinked the legislators," Singer asserts. And Mecklenburg legislator Becky Carney, who was in Tuesday's audience, agreed that discussion of the appropriation focused not on solving kids' problems but on economic development – and which counties in the running for the facilities would get the new jobs.

Singer says the \$90 million for brick and mortar will strip resources away from programs proven to prevent delinquency. And it will put kids in huge facilities where it is nearly impossible

113,616 students and counting: Expectations, tempers rising

Tuesday's school board meeting was among the more bruising sessions in months.

Parents from north Mecklenburg pummeled the board about overcrowded schools. The citizens panel reviewing how CMS constructs schools laced its approval with caveats. A Mountain Island Elementary parent reported that his first-grader was in a class of 40 children. The board split 7-2 over using an in-house nonprofit to raise money. And the routine selection of a new banker was halted amid concerns that the process didn't treat all vendors equitably.

And amidst all that, Supt. Jim Pughsley announced a 15th-day enrollment of 113,616 students, 771 more than planned for.

Hanging over the session –

indeed, over the school district's future – is a confrontation with county politicians determined to use their power of the purse to play school board.

Parents with children at crowded north Mecklenburg schools showed up in force to recount the impact of overcrowding, and to demand immediate relief. No parents, however, volunteered to have their children transported south to classrooms that stand empty.

But several speakers acknowledged fiscal realities when they promised to ask county commissioners to provide the school board with the necessary financing for the campuses planned but not built.

It was a southwest Mecklenburg

Continued on Page 5

Continued on Page 8

Students display ancient peace symbol to mark 9/11 World Trade Center attack

During Wednesday lunch at Myers Park High, students gathered to take each other's pictures against a colorful backdrop of origami cranes.

The ancient Japanese symbols of peace bobbed in a light breeze just feet from the school's memorial garden honoring the victims of the World Trade Center attack.

Myers Park senior Rachel Touchstone said students were drawn to the symbol, and the story of Sadako Sasaki, a Hiroshima leukemia victim who died before completing the legendary task of folding 1,000 cranes to receive her wish for peace and a cure.



Touchstone

Since September, hundreds of students have been folding origami cranes as part of a curriculum focused on peace and health. The project has touched Myers Park, Smith Middle, which is home of the Japanese immersion magnet, and other schools. The 2,000 or so cranes on display Wednesday were just a part of the output. The cranes will ultimately be mailed to Hiroshima.

Activities today marking 9/11 included flagpole ceremonies at Myers Park and Garinger Highs; a silent march at Idlewild; programs at West Meck High and



Stesha Doku (left) and Sam Rose begin folding new cranes.

Smith Academy; a lunch for firefighters and police officers at Tuckaseegee; a bell toll and poetry reading at Sedgefield Elementary and a speech by City Council member Harold Cogdell at Kennedy Middle.

Businesses should lead education reform

I think it is time for industry to take the lead. After all, schools are the source of future workers for industry. The standards are high and everyone should work in some way to promote the education of the children. Perhaps we need e-books and e-mentors too.

Jo Ann Casserly

From Readers

THIS ISSUE OF *EDUCATE!* WAS MADE POSSIBLE
IN PART BY DONATIONS FROM:

J. GARY GLOSTER

BISHOP SUFFRAGAN

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA

This journal has only **8**

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

7%

of people now regularly receiving *Educate!* who have ever helped defray the cost of its publication.

A community journal must have the support of its readers. Are you doing your part? To make a tax-deductible donation, send your check to The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204-2410 or go to www.networkforgood.org and use keyword 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. William U. Harris, president; B.B. DeLaine, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director. Voice: 704-342-4330. E-mail: swannfello@aol.com. Published since September 2000; 6-week average circulation through last issue: 2,730.

Kathleen McClain assisted with this edition.

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

To be removed from distribution, message: imailsrv@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.

Meet candidates McGarry and Holley

Text of introductions presented at an Aug. 14 forum by Kaye McGarry and Nick Holley, two of the 11 candidates in the November election for three at-large seats on the school board.

[Kaye McGarry]

Thank you for inviting me to join you this evening.

Martin Luther King's famous speech started with the words, "I have a dream."

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

It is my dream to help provide a quality, equitable education for all citizens in Charlotte-Mecklenburg by serving on your school board.

As a business owner, author, educator, wife, mother of four children (three Charlotte-Mecklenburg high school grads), counselor, community leader, former public school teacher, and as a member of the Board of Trustees of Central Piedmont Community College for the past 10 years, I have the experience and the credentials to help make a difference in this community by serving on your school board.

Education is the key to making this a better community. When we educate all our residents, we will have a better community.

Education is a gift: When a child is born, a seed is planted. That seed begins to sprout with the dedicated help of teachers, parents, ministers and others who touch the lives of our children.

I love children, all children. My son Derrick, who is with us this evening, has told me that I have inspired him to love and work with all regardless of color, creed or nationality. Derrick tells me he has enjoyed coaching the baseball team at Tuckseegee Park. It makes me proud to watch him coach those 7-year-old boys.

Share with me your concerns, how I can better help the Afro-American community. I do not pretend to have all the answers, but I promise you that I will do my

2003 school board election

homework, I will listen, I will study the issues, and I will vote responsibly.

Give me the opportunity to be the keeper of the public trust for all residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, by voting for me on Nov. 4, Kaye McGarry.

Together we can make a quality and equitable education a dream come true.

My name is Nick Holley. I'm a candidate for the school board at-large, and I'm a glutton for punishment.

I've sat there long enough, watching all the goings-on in the educational system for the last 15 and a half years. The teachers that the school system did not retain I got to work with, because I trained quite a few of them to teach new curriculum. Because for the last 15 years I've been consulting and working with teachers in the non-public school sector.

I don't think we should have to throw out tests because our kids can't pass them. I don't think we should have to "teach to the test." Our kids should be able to pass the test that they're given.

We've got serious problems and we need somebody that has practical solutions and is willing to listen to ideas.

All of us have ideas, things that we need to change. I've got a 12th-grader over at North Meck and I've got a ninth-grader that is just going in this year. And we need to do something with our education system.

We shouldn't be having them listen to, "Well, you're at the bottom of the heap as far as test scores." With all the money that we're putting in, we need to direct it to the right places.

I've got lots of ideas – not enough time to explain them now. But I'm going to ask you for your vote. And I'll tell you exactly what I wrote on my check, when I wrote my check to run: "It's for the kids." Thank you.

Contact information for at-large candidates

Larry Bumgarner, 48; 9201 Morgan Glen Dr., 28227; home: 704-573-3363
e-mail: LBumgarner@LarryBumgarner.com

Kit Cramer, 42; 5606 Silchester Ln., 28215; home: 704-509-6492; fax: 704-509-6492
e-mail: kitcramerforschoolboard@yahoo.com; Website: www.kitcramer.com

George Dunlap, 47; 4728 Garvis Rd., 28269; home: 704-597-5980
fax: 980-343-5075; e-mail: gdunlap@bellsouth.net

Rachel B. Hall, 58; 728 Wingrave Drive, 28270; home: 704-366-8620
fax: 704-599-0651; e-mail: cdlc@bellsouth.net

Nick Holley, 46; 5722 Kinglet Ln., 28269; home: 704-875-0013
fax: 704-875-0013; e-mail: nholley@bellsouth.net

Mike Kasper, 45; 13530 Toka Ct., Huntersville 28078; home: 704-948-7353
fax: 704-948-7353; e-mail: mkasper@bellsouth.net

Fred Marsh, 64; 3700 Chevington Rd., 28226; home: 704-364-0994
e-mail: mchemven@aol.com

Kaye McGarry, 59; 5101 Gorham Dr., 28226; home: 704-366-3519
e-mail: kmcg@carolina.rr.com; Website: www.kayemcgarry.com

Wilhemenia Rembert, 52; 7338 Santorini Ln., 28277; home: 704-543-5454
fax: 704-343-5160; e-mail: wrembert99@hotmail.com

Queen Thompson, 56; 4933 Lawrence Orr Rd., 28212; home: 704-563-7360
fax: 704-536-3290; e-mail: qthom96765@aol.com

Joe White, 68, 7211 Windy Rush Rd., 28226; home: 704-542-2192
fax: 704-540-5768; e-mail: coachjoew@prodigy.net

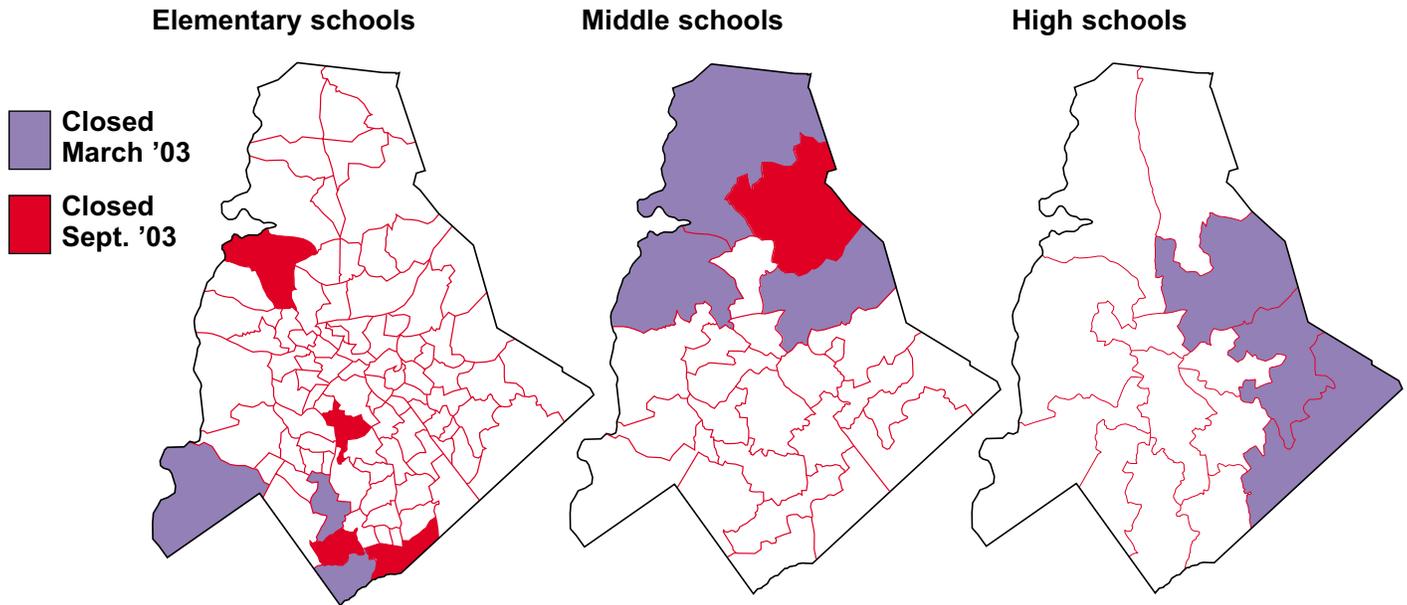
5 more schools closed to transfers, reassignments

CMS last week closed five more schools to transfers and reassignments due to overcrowding, bringing the total to the 14 attendance areas marked on the maps. The

affected schools remain open to parents who move into the attendance area.

Four of the 14 – new Endhaven, Martin Middle and Butler and

Vance highs – are on the list because of site constraints: no land, or zoning restrictions. Vance already has dozens of mobile classrooms on site.



School board hears pleas for classrooms

Continued from Page 2

resident, however, who framed the discussion in larger terms:

“We are watching a train wreck in the making. Children of Charlotte-Mecklenburg are tied to the track.... This community is standing around pointing fingers at the other guy,” said Michael Murdock. “I sincerely believe this Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners are able to come together to avoid this train wreck from happening – if we have the will to do so.

“But this will require... each and every one of us... to set aside our own respective senses of entitlement and privilege.... We have the ability to overcome these challenges, but I’m not at all convinced we have the political and moral will to do it.

“That’s why I’m here to urge you – indeed, to exhort you, if I

may use the biblical phrase: Sit down at the table with county commissioners and figure out what it takes to meet all these vital needs while still living within our means.”

Late Tuesday, school board chair Wilhelmenia Rembert announced that just such a meeting between the two boards will occur in several weeks.

Republicans who control the Board of County Commissioners have said that, to avoid raising taxes, they will refuse to sell school bonds already approved by the voters. In a letter published in *Educate!* last week, District 6 commissioner Bill James went further, asserting that CMS “won’t be able” to proceed with 1997 projects to replace “functional schools just because they don’t meet some new standard.” One of the key standards that Windsor Park and some other aging campuses fail is provision for the safety of students and staff.

The county’s effort to curb total debt load puts at risk a key com-

munity consensus – to balance the investment in new schools handling growth with an equal investment in rebuilding aging facilities in the district.

A citizens advisory task force, chaired by Judge Shirley Fulton, pressed for keeping that commitment as it announced its approval of the 10-year CMS school facilities master plan.

Fulton told the school board Tuesday night that the student projections behind the master plan are based on transit system data that may be revised in six months. The current data ignores the potential impact on schools of the mass transit lines that will be built over the next decade.

Fulton recommended that a successor citizens group review all the data annually to assure that growth assumptions are accurate.

The group urged the board to reassess its commitment to a new high school downtown. And it pressed the board to revise assignment practices to put

Continued on Page 6

If goal is no child left behind, we've got work to do

A look at the ABCs test results for CMS as announced Wednesday. School-by-school results, Page 7

Pct. of students at or above grade level	Schools making high growth	Schools making expected growth	Schools making less than expected growth
100%	1	0	0
90%-99%	22	1	1
80%-89%	36	6	0
60%-79%	35	11	5
50%-59%	3	3	1
Less than 50%	2	2	0

Elementary schools

Median percentage of students at or above grade level:

83.9%

Middle schools

Median percentage of students at or above grade level:

79.4%

High schools

Median percentage of students at or above grade level:

62.5%

School board hears pleas for classrooms

Continued from Page 5

empty seats to use.

Fulton also suggested that meetings to obtain citizen comment on the plan had been ill-timed and suggested new efforts to promote public discussion before the planned Sept. 23 vote on its adoption. A number of north Mecklenburg residents pressed the board to shelve the plan until the student projections are revised in six months or so.

On the vote on a public education foundation, board member Molly Griffin worried that CMS would be in competition with Communities in Schools, Charlotte Advocates for Education

and other community groups for charitable dollars.

Pughsley said the foundation would allow donations by companies whose internal policies restrict donations to 501(c)(3) nonprofits. He said donations would not replace local county dollars, but could seed pilot projects to prove their worth.

The bank selection was among the more bizarre discussions this year. Pughsley recommended that CCB be awarded the relationship for three years. That bank has had the board's primary banking relationship for at least 14 years.

But board member John Lassiter suggested that Wachovia get the work. He cited the value of Wachovia's volunteer and other efforts on behalf of the schools. Pughsley called his initial recommendation a "business decision"

and reversed himself.

In discussion generated by member George Dunlap, it became clear that, while Wachovia's volunteer efforts were well known to the board, other vendors may not have been given an opportunity to give evidence of the value of their volunteer efforts within CMS. Under counsel Maurice Green's gentle prodding, the board decided to table the issue until more information was available.

The decision to table meant that CMS must extend its current bank contract with CCB past its current Sept. 30 end date. Finance officer Sheila Shirley told the board she did not know what it would cost to do so, but said CMS would do whatever necessary to be sure that payroll checks were issued on time.

The ABCs: School scores for 2002, 2003

Elementary schools

	2002				2003			
	Slipped in '03	On grade level	Exp. grow	Hi grow	On grade level	Exp. grow	Hi grow	
Chantilly	●●	78.2	N	N	55.7	Y	Y	
Ashley Park	●●	64.0	Y	N	59.6	Y	Y	
Westerly Hills		57.8	N	N	60.0	Y	Y	
Bruns Avenue	●●	82.6	N	N	63.9	Y	Y	
Oaklawn	●●	78.1	Y	N	63.9	Y	Y	
Shamrock Gardens		61.3	Y	Y	66.0	Y	Y	
Byers					66.3	Y	Y	
Druid Hills	●●	69.3	N	N	67.1	Y	Y	
Devonshire		62.8	Y	Y	69.0	Y	Y	
Reid Park	●●	82.6	N	N	69.1	Y	Y	
Briarwood		60.0	N	N	70.0	Y	Y	
Sterling		68.9	Y	Y	71.1	Y	Y	
Hidden Valley		67.7	Y	N	73.5	Y	Y	
Highland Ren.	●●	78.8	Y	Y	73.6	Y	Y	
Allenbrook		62.5	N	N	73.7	Y	Y	
Berryhill		65.7	Y	Y	74.5	Y	Y	
Oakdale		71.0	N	N	74.8	Y	Y	
Winterfield		68.5	Y	Y	75.2	Y	Y	
Thomasboro		62.5	Y	N	75.4	Y	Y	
Irwin Ave. Open		73.2	Y	N	75.5	Y	Y	
University Park		73.4	Y	N	75.5	Y	Y	
Montclair		73.5	Y	Y	76.5	Y	Y	
Merry Oaks		69.5	Y	Y	77.1	Y	Y	
Windsor Park		62.1	N	N	77.5	Y	Y	
Newell	●●	81.2	Y	Y	78.2	Y	Y	
Rama Road		68.7	Y	N	78.6	Y	Y	
Sedgefield		65.3	Y	N	78.6	Y	Y	
Hornets Nest	●●	79.6	Y	N	78.8	Y	Y	
Lincoln Heights		67.0	Y	N	79.1	Y	Y	
Cotswold		67.3	Y	N	79.3	Y	Y	
Pawtucket		68.0	Y	Y	79.6	Y	Y	
Hickory Grove		74.1	N	N	79.8	Y	Y	
Albemarle Road	●●	82.0	Y	Y	80.0	Y	Y	
Idlewild		76.0	Y	Y	80.3	Y	Y	
Nath. Alexander		79.9	Y	Y	80.3	Y	Y	
Eastover	●●	85.0	Y	Y	80.5	Y	Y	
Smithfield	●●	81.9	Y	Y	81.0	Y	Y	
Univ. Meadows		76.4	Y	Y	82.2	Y	Y	
Lebanon Road		78.5	Y	Y	82.3	Y	Y	
Dilworth		66.8	Y	N	82.6	Y	Y	
Greenway Park		75.2	Y	Y	82.6	Y	Y	
First Ward	●●	85.4	Y	Y	83.1	Y	Y	
Pinewood		77.7	Y	Y	83.1	Y	Y	
Nations Ford		83.5	Y	Y	83.7	Y	Y	
Barringer	●●	91.7	Y	Y	84.2	Y	N	
Huntingtowne		83.3	Y	N	84.3	Y	Y	
Statesville Road		73.6	Y	Y	84.3	Y	Y	
J.H. Gunn		70.5	N	N	84.4	Y	Y	
Long Creek		74.2	Y	N	84.8	Y	N	
Steele Creek		80.0	Y	Y	84.9	Y	Y	
Oakhurst		78.0	N	N	85.0	Y	Y	
Pineville		79.4	Y	N	85.0	Y	Y	
Piney Grove		83.5	Y	Y	85.8	Y	Y	
Reedy Creek		80.5	Y	N	86.0	Y	Y	
Paw Creek		73.2	Y	N	86.7	Y	Y	
Myers Park Trad.		85.7	Y	N	87.2	Y	Y	
Park Road		72.1	Y	N	87.4	Y	N	
David Cox Road	●●	90.6	Y	N	87.6	Y	Y	
Morehead		69.6	Y	Y	88.0	Y	Y	
Mallard Creek		85.3	Y	N	88.1	Y	Y	
Sharon		75.9	Y	N	88.2	Y	Y	
Winding Springs		75.1	Y	N	88.2	Y	Y	
Tuckaseegee		71.2	Y	N	89.0	Y	Y	
Blythe		80.2	Y	N	89.1	Y	Y	
Lansdowne		79.1	Y	N	89.7	Y	Y	
Highland Mill Mont.					90.2	Y	Y	
Beverly Woods		80.0	Y	Y	90.3	Y	Y	
Lake Wylie		80.5	Y	N	91.1	Y	Y	

Olde Providence	●●	94.0	Y	Y	91.1	Y	Y	
Crown Point		83.7	Y	N	91.3	Y	Y	
McAlpine	●●	95.9	Y	Y	92.6	Y	Y	
Selwyn		78.9	Y	N	93.2	Y	Y	
Mountain Island					94.1	Y	Y	
Clear Creek		78.6	Y	N	94.3	Y	Y	
Huntersville		81.5	Y	Y	94.5	Y	Y	
Elizabeth Trad.		92.0	Y	N	94.7	Y	Y	
Collinswood		79.3	Y	Y	94.8	Y	Y	
Bain		91.5	Y	Y	94.9	Y	Y	
Cornelius		92.5	Y	Y	95.7	Y	Y	
Matthews		93.4	Y	Y	95.8	Y	Y	
McKee Road	●●	98.1	Y	Y	97.3	Y	Y	
Hawk Ridge		97.6	Y	Y	98.2	Y	Y	
Davidson		96.6	Y	Y	98.8	Y	Y	
Elizabeth Lane		97.7	Y	Y	99.3	Y	Y	
Providence Spring					99.5	Y	Y	
Villa Heights		100.0	Y	Y	100.0	Y	Y	

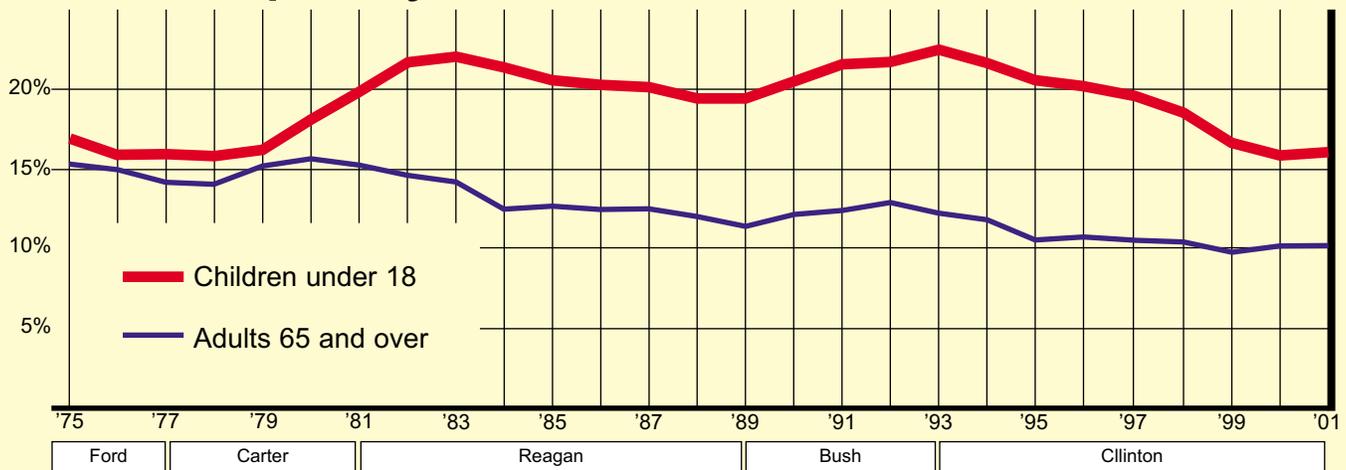
Middle schools

	2002				2003			
	Slipped in '03	On grade level	Exp. grow	Hi grow	On grade level	Exp. grow	Hi grow	
Spaugh	●●	83.1	Y	Y	58.8	Y	Y	
Marie G. Davis	●●	94.2	Y	Y	60.1	Y	Y	
Cochrane		56.2	N	N	65.8	N	N	
Eastway		61.7	Y	N	65.8	Y	Y	
Wilson		60.6	Y	N	67.5	Y	N	
J.T. Williams	●●	89.5	Y	Y	68.2	Y	Y	
Sedgefield	●●	70.7	Y	Y	68.5	N	N	
Martin	●●	76.4	Y	N	68.9	N	N	
Coulwood		68.0	Y	N	72.4	Y	N	
Albemarle Road		67.7	N	N	73.3	Y	N	
Northridge		76.7	Y	Y	77.8	Y	Y	
McClintock	●●	80.7	Y	Y	78.3	Y	Y	
Ranson		65.8	N	N	78.9	Y	Y	
Robert F. Kennedy	●●	82.4	Y	Y	79.0	N	N	
Quail Hollow		77.2	Y	Y	79.7	Y	N	
Carmel		83.5	Y	Y	85.3	Y	Y	
Randolph		73.4	Y	Y	86.3	Y	Y	
J.M. Alexander		84.7	Y	Y	86.4	Y	Y	
Smith		77.5	Y	Y	87.1	Y	N	
Piedmont Open		81.2	Y	Y	88.1	Y	Y	
Northeast		84.2	Y	Y	89.3	Y	Y	
Alexander Graham		85.4	Y	Y	89.5	Y	Y	
Bradley		78.3	N	N	89.6	Y	N	
Crestdale	●●	95.1	Y	Y	92.0	Y	N	
Robinson					97.1	Y	Y	
South Charlotte		95.1	Y	Y	97.1	Y	Y	
Davidson IB	●●	99.4	Y	Y	98.9	N	N	

High schools

	2002				2003			
	Slipped in '03	On grade level	Exp. grow	Hi grow	On grade level	Exp. grow	Hi grow	
West Charlotte	●●	31.2	Y	N	25.5	Y	Y	
Garinger		36.7	Y	N	39.0	Y	Y	
E.E. Waddell		40.2	Y	N	42.4	Y	N	
West Meck	●●	48.1	Y	Y	44.0	Y	N	
Berry					50.3	N	N	
Vance	●●	57.8	Y	N	50.4	Y	N	
Olympic		49.8	Y	N	57.0	Y	N	
Independence	●●	60.7	Y	N	57.5	Y	N	
Harding	●●	64.9	Y	N	62.4	Y	N	
East Meck		64.9	Y	N	62.6	Y	N	
Northwest		65.8	N	N	67.1	N	N	
Hopewell		65.9	Y	N	69.0	Y	N	
North Meck		66.0	Y	N	70.7	Y	N	
South Meck		66.6	Y	N	71.9	Y	N	
Butler		64.7	Y	Y	72.7	Y	N	
Myers Park		70.4	Y	N	73.4	Y	N	
Providence		78.9	Y	N	83.8	Y	N	

Children in poverty:



Data source: National Center for Children in Poverty

The child poverty rate peaked in 1993, but the decline stalled in 2001, the National Center for Children in Poverty reported this summer.

In 2001, 16% of American children lived in poverty, little changed from about 1979.

In 2001, a two-parent family of four counted as being in poverty only if their income was \$17,960. As income rises above that, child-care subsidies and health-care benefits phase out. NCCP says “it

is not until a two-parent family of four reaches roughly \$36,000 a year in income that parents can provide the basic necessities for their children. That’s double the federal poverty level.”

NCCP counts 34% of white children, 57% of black children and 64% of Latino children as living in low-income households.

www.nccp.org

Key to helping kids is a link to an adult

Continued from Page 2

to help them.

Singer’s solutions are not new. They don’t win the battle for state dollars because building prisons is far less complex and because it appeals to the public’s interest in safety, he says.

“The public thinks, well, if only we treat these kids as adults.... The logic is, if we put these kids away for eight years, we will be safer.”

But for every 16-year-old entering the prison system for eight years, there’s a 24-year-old coming out, “having been caged for eight years, not educated, and with all his problems not being dealt with, without a job, without any skills.” Immediately, the public is in fact less safe.

Singer acknowledged that some

youth must be excluded from the free population. “It’s how we exclude them that is important,” he says.

The Stonewall Jackson training school in Concord is not just in disrepair, he says. “It’s the model that’s in horrible shape.”



Singer

Research-proven alternatives include small group homes and wilderness camps, he said. But for the community, there is no one, simple solution.

Instead, Singer pushes a lengthy agenda:

- Reviewing poverty and its effects on children.
- Better mental health intervention.
- Additional resources to education. “We’ve got all the laws we need. We just don’t implement them.” Referring to school boards, “you’ve got to keep their toes with a fire under them.”

– Sex education to discourage early pregnancy. “I see them in my office, the 15-year-olds with two kids, and no earthly idea how to raise them.”

– “Sticking with a kid more.” Schools exclude children at the first sign of a gang symbol, for smoking marijuana once or for fighting. Kids smoke pot because they’re bored in school, Singer asserts. “It’s never how the school needs to adjust to the school, it’s how the kids needs to adjust to the school.”

– Focus on making human connections, rather than new prisons. The first question he asks new juvenile clients, he says, is, “Where is your father?” The second question is, “Do the bad behaviors occur only at school?”

“The kid doesn’t feel he’s going to be a success, so he acts out.” Developing a mentoring relationship is critical. “It may be a janitor, it might be a volunteer, it

Continued on Page 9

Across U.S., districts accused of hiding dropout rate reality

Dropout issues popped up this summer all over the nation.

The Houston Chronicle said a months-long investigation turned up accusations that more than 100 boxes of student records were ordered shredded. Cumulative records of students who had been misidentified as dropouts may have been in the boxes, the paper said.

A Texas Education Agency audit of a handful of Houston's schools found nearly 3,000 potential dropouts miscoded in 2000-2001. Agency staff recommended lowering its ratings for 16 Houston high schools and middle schools. The district is appealing, but it was a black eye for a district at the forefront of education reform, and the launching pad for the federal career of President Bush's Secretary of Education Rod Paige.

The New York Times reported that central to the scandal is the way in which students' departures were coded in a computer. Schools could avoid having the departures count as dropouts if students were coded as having the intent to enroll in a high school equivalency program or an alternative school. Individual records would be coded "on little more than a statement by a school principal," the Times reported.

Sharpstown High School, where the scandal broke, did not count a single student as a dropout in 2001-2002, the Times said.

In New York City this summer, officials were dealing with their own controversy, this one suggesting that youth in jeopardy of never passing the tough Regents exit exam are pushed out of school so they won't count against a school's Regents success rate.

The Times reported that, for the 2000-2001 school year, 21,000 of the 55,000 students leaving the system did not graduate. Of the

Dropout rates by graduating class

An appalling number of youth drop out between 9th grade and graduation. Numbers below for each group represent the percentage of entering ninth-graders that dropped out. The numbers do not include those who remained students or who had transferred to other districts.

Class of	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02
Districtwide	26.6	28.0	28.3	29.0	27.0
Black	38.2	38.1	38.1	37.7	37.7
White	18.3	19.6	20.6	19.5	16.7
Other	19.5	25.1	24.1	26.6	24.0
FRL	44.8	43.6	43.6	44.4	39.8
Non-FRL	18.3	20.3	23.3	20.1	18.8

Source: CMS

21,000, about 40% or 8,400 were coded as "transferred to another educational setting," a vague "category that can hide the pushouts," the Times said.

Even if students were pushed toward a GED, few complete the program, and those that do find that the jobs available to them are lower-paying than if they had a regular high school diploma.

Washington Post columnist Jay Mathews celebrated graduations in June with a column headlined, "Is Dropping Out of High School Always Bad?" In a later column, he wrote about adults who wrote saying how dropping out had been the right choice for them.

Mathews quoted Australian special needs educator Phillip Foster,

who said "early school leavers are significantly less likely to achieve durable employment, are significantly more likely to be involved in justice systems, and are more likely to be involved in cycles of inter-generational poverty."

Mathews also quoted a dropout who is now on track to finish a Ph.D. "Dropping out of high school gave me control over a life that I thought I had no control over," said Dennis Rickards.

"I know too many people that continue on with high school because that is what they are supposed to do, then go to college, and then go get a job that they hate. Now they are scared to change their job, because they are scared of the unknown."

Key to helping kids is a link to an adult

Continued from Page 8

might be anybody."

The Durham lawyer says the most effective drug rehabilitation programs for juveniles in his city focus on getting them out of town and living with a caring adult, "getting them with a connection that will turn them around."

— All teachers should have acting training. "These teachers are competing with television, with Nintendo games.... All school

boards should have youth advisers."

Singer, who has worked on such issues since the 1970s, says juvenile justice reformers used to have 50 allies in the legislature. "Now there are just a handful.... We have to do a public education job. We're electing people who look good on television."

Nonetheless, Singer claims he's hopeful.

"People will eventually get fed up with the yuppie mentality that runs this country....

"I grew up thinking that government's job was to take care of people who need it."

Briefs

Boston resegregation: Thirty years after busing for desegregation, Boston has resegregated, as “nearly half of the white children in the city attend private schools and most minority children remain walled off from suburban school advantages,” the Globe reported. A report from SUNY Albany says the region’s under-18 population is 75% white, 10% Hispanic, 8.1% black, and 5.2% Asian. In Boston, 13.6% of public school children are white, and 44% of white children in the city, concentrated in predominantly white enclaves, attend private schools. And while 40% of suburban kids are black nationally, only 21% of Boston-area suburban kids are black. “Income is not the primary driver of the system here,” said John Logan, an author of the study. “There is very good evidence of discrimination in the housing market, and there is the historic legacy of a color line people hesitate to cross. It’s asking a lot of a black family to be the only black family in a community.”

www.boston.com

More guides: Supt. Eric Smith has given to his Anne Arundel County, Md., teachers curriculum guides for every course and every grade, the Baltimore Sun reported. Teacher reaction has run the same gamut as it did in CMS: Some teachers are delighted for the advice on how to get the entire curriculum covered. Others pine for yesterday’s freedom, and the time to do activities that had worked for them in the past.

www.sunspot.net.

Universal failure: Every St. Louis-area school district failed to pass muster under No Child Left Behind, the Post Dispatch reported. Either parents understand that the complex rules are difficult to meet or, as one official put it, the message “just hasn’t

soaked in yet.”

www.stltoday.com

Limits of competence: In a critique of home schooling, UCal educator Dennis Evans argues that children could pay a price. “While some parents may be competent to teach very young children, that competence will wane in more advanced grades as the content and complexity increases.”

www.usatoday.com

Retention’s impact: The Richmond Times Dispatch cited a 2001 survey of sixth-graders by the National Association for School Psychologists. Asked about stressful events in their lives, the students put grade retention at the top of the list. Retention has been linked to eventual dropping out of high school. The Petersburg school board altered its promotion policy to eliminate reading as a must-

pass course. They left the requirement that students pass four of five core subjects (reading, mathematics, social studies, language arts and science) each year to be promoted.

www.timesdispatch.com

Genes overwhelmed: New studies of low-income identical and fraternal twins suggest that genetic advantages that in wealthy families might lead one twin to score better on IQ tests than another are not enough to lift low-income children above the corrosive impact of an unstimulating environment, the Washington Post reported. Experts said University of Virginia researcher Eric Turkheimer’s work suggests the value of programs like Head Start that aim to improve environmental factors for low-income children.

www.washingtonpost.com

DidYaHear?

Reports from Educate! readers:

● Out at the candidate forums, says one concerned parent, nobody’s asking school board candidates the tough issues. And the candidates who believe sex education should be stripped from the schools, or that prayer should be added, aren’t volunteering their positions.

● What helps make one school more equal than another? Why, it’s the high-pressure fund-raiser, as one startled resident with a youngster at A.G. Middle found out recently. The letter that came home said every household in the school was expected to donate \$80. That would raise \$40,000 for the PTA budget in one step, and they wouldn’t bother anybody again for a whole year.

● Does high school open vistas or narrow possibilities? Listen as a senior in International Baccalaureate ruminates: “In school we are put into the boxes of being either a “math/science” or a “history/English” person way too much. Grades shape our view so much because it is what we are judged by and we tend to like what we are good at.”

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

Briefs *continued*

Testing errors: The proliferation of testing under No Child has increased the number of errors reported nationally, the New York Times reported. Stuart Kahl at testing company Measured Progress was quoted as saying to state clients, "They want faster, better and cheaper – and we often tell them, pick two out of the three, because you can't have all three."

www.nytimes.com

Comparing incentives: A Dallas News story chronicling ways Chattanooga/Hamilton County has drawn quality teachers into its challenging inner-city schools includes many of the programs in place in Charlotte-Mecklenburg: higher pay, tuition assistance, extra support. The Hamilton program adds forgivable loans for purchase of homes near the schools if teachers stay five years. But it also seems more deliberate in changing public attitudes toward teachers who take on the task. The nine schools involved are not called low-performing, but "high priority." The mayor opens his home to celebratory gatherings. The Education Trust's Kati Haycock told the News, "What seems different about Chattanooga is that issue of honor.... You need to celebrate these people, make a big deal about what they're doing."

www.dallasnews.com

Fewer dropouts: The 2000 Census recorded 40,000 fewer dropouts, the Washington Times reported. In 2000, 1.57 million or 9.8% of youth aged 16 to 19 were neither in school nor graduated from high school. That was down from 1.61 million in 1990.

www.washingtontimes.com

True deterrence

A Maryland school district has under preparation a student code of conduct that includes, for disrupting class, a punishment of having a parent shadow their teen for a whole school day.

"That sounds horrible," an Annapolis High student told the Washington Post. She called being seen with her parents by her friends "definitely up in the top five' worst things imaginable."

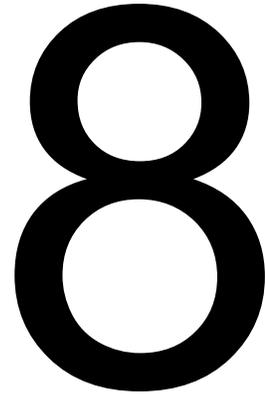
The code is under review, and committee members said they had not yet confronted practical problems like how they would enforce compliance by parents.

www.washingtonpost.com

Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- 12** Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 12** Grand opening of City West Commons, West Boulevard and Remount Road, 5-8 p.m. A collaborative effort involving city, chamber and community development corporations.
- 13** District 4 parent leaders meeting, 9 a.m., Oakhurst Elementary media center, 4511 Monroe Rd.
- 15** School board work session on student assignment, 5 p.m., Board Room. Not televised.
- 16** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services, 3301 Stafford Drive.
- 16** Joint lunch forum of Mecklenburg elected leaders, Noon, Government Center, room 267.
- 16** Board Policy Committee, 3:15 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 18** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 23** Board Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room.



Based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month, this journal will be able to publish just eight more issues.

A community journal must have the support of its readers. Are you doing your part?

To make a tax-deductible donation, send your check to The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204-2410.

Or if you prefer to donate online or anonymously, go to www.networkforgood.org. Use keyword Swann Fellowship.

Thank you

- 23** School board meets 6 p.m., Board Room.

OCTOBER

- 25** "Do Children/Youth Need Our Time?" sponsored by Parents on the Move, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., UNCC Cone Center. Information, Blanche Penn, 704-890-4101.
- 31, 1, 2** Faith and Literacy Weekend, a project of the Charlotte Reads Literacy Coalition to encourage faith groups to partner with schools in improving reading.

NOVEMBER

- 8** Education Fair, exhibits by area nonpublic, charter and public schools, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Merchandise Mart.