



"Missy E" by Sloane Whaley, Northwest School of the Arts.

Assignment review

Quick or money-saving fixes may dominate; high-poverty school challenge may remain

By STEVE JOHNSTON

The search is on for how to fix CMS student assignment.

But this will not be the year of the big fix.

Small changes will save some money in a tight money year.

Magnets that haven't drawn interest will be trashed to make room for, perhaps, entire grades sardined in overcrowded schools.

And on a separate but exceedingly related track, construction money likely will be redirected to address growth needs, breaking promises made to communities all over the county.

But at a school board workshop Monday night, there was no evidence of leadership – from the top down or from the bottom up – on the key academic achievement dilemma facing the community:

Choice has created schools that don't work well for children, or staff, or neighborhoods – or the soul of the community.

The predicted lope toward racial and socioeconomic segregation has turned into a gallop. School officials fear that the 20th-day enrollments will show that more schools have become high-minority and high-poverty institutions that few parents will choose.

CMS acknowledged this week that poor students do not test as well at such schools as poor students do at low-poverty schools (Page 2). It was, at the minimum, an admission by a public institution that it has failed to achieve equal results for all students, irrespective of where they live or the baggage they bring to school.

Lawyers may or may not pursue

Inside

Effects of isolation

Data confirms that CMS is experiencing the phenomenon well-studied nationally: Poor children assigned to high-poverty schools consistently do less well academically than poor children assigned elsewhere. Page 2.

N.C. race gap narrows

Two N.C. educators comment on statewide test gains. Chart shows trend in white-black test score gap. Page 5.

'Power of an Illusion'

You could be among those who, next week, will begin watching last spring's PBS series on race, and then exploring the issues with others. Page 11.

Growth projection off 31%

CMS announced its 20th-day count of students was 113,859, with growth since last fall of 4,254, 31% more than the projected 3,240. State dollars to hire new teachers should be in the offing. Adding classrooms will be a longer-term proposition.

the issue as a failure to provide equal protection of the laws.

But the news clearly challenged Supt. Jim Pughsley's June 2002 pledge that CMS would be "moving from equal opportunity to

Group considers adding initiative on parent leadership

A Charlotte group is looking at starting a project to encourage parent leadership at CMS schools. The model is a Kentucky institute that claims success building links between the home and the school.

Bev Raimondo addressed at least two groups of Charlotteans last week on her program, which offers six days of free training to about 200 Kentuckians annually.

The program empowers parents to be active partners in education. It educates parents about state testing issues. But its prime focus is on anointing already-active parents to tackle its real goal, which is to cajole the uninvolved or disaffected out of their homes and into the schoolhouse.

Raimondo says Kentucky's program draws two parents from any

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Test results at highest-poverty schools

CMS this week released a study that shows poor students assigned to highest-poverty schools doing consistently less well than poor students at lower-poverty schools.

The consistency of the findings raises educators' concerns that high-poverty schools are educationally unsound. CMS critics blame nonschoolhouse factors.

The study was carried out when the Charlotte Observer requested verification of its own finding. Those findings headlined the

paper's Sunday edition.

Excerpts from the CMS report are below. Most percentages below involve only students on the free- or reduced-price lunch programs, a commonly used indicator of family poverty.

For schools in four categories of percentage of children on FRL, CMS reported the percentage of children that, last spring, were on or above grade level in the indicated subject. Districtwide averages include all tested students, poor and nonpoor alike.

K-2 Reading		3-5 Math		Biology		Geometry	
0-25%	69.6%	0-25%	88.4%	0-25%	30.3%	0-25%	33.5%
26-50%	67.3%	26-50%	84.6%	26-50%	30.2%	26-50%	32.0%
51-75%	66.4%	51-75%	86.0%	51-75%	21.0%	51-75%	23.9%
76-100%	64.8%	76-100%	82.7%	District	54.0%	District	56.9%
District	75.0%	District	91.5%	Chemistry		Physical Science	
3-5 Reading		6-8 Math		0-25%	43.3%	0-25%	34.7%
0-25%	76.3%	0-25%	74.9%	26-50%	35.3%	26-50%	0%
26-50%	73.5%	26-50%	75.9%	51-75%	8.6%	District	44.5%
51-75%	72.7%	51-75%	70.9%	District	56.8%	Physics	
76-100%	68.6%	76-100%	71.1%	ELPS*		0-25%	57.9%
District	83.7%	District	84.0%	0-25%	36.2%	26-50%	56.8%
6-8 Reading		Algebra I		26-50%	35.8%	51-75%	11.1%
0-25%	71.6%	0-25%	35.0%	51-75%	35.3%	District	77.5%
26-50%	67.9%	26-50%	42.3%	District	60.3%	U.S. History	
51-75%	65.6%	51-75%	37.9%	English I		0-25%	31.0%
76-100%	62.8%	District	64.9%	0-25%	56.9%	26-50%	30.4%
District	80.8%	Algebra II		26-50%	60.5%	51-75%	16.9%
K-2 Math		0-25%	50.2%	51-75%	58.7%	District	55.7%
0-25%	80.3%	26-50%	51.5%	District	77.2%		
26-50%	78.6%	51-75%	41.8%				
51-75%	78.9%	District	66.4%				
76-100%	77.7%						
District	82.9%						

Notes: ELPS = Economic, Legal and Political Systems. CMS has no high schools in the 76-100% FRL category.

Parents could choose schools with open seats

I have always been told be careful for what you ask for. Maybe the parents in northern Mecklenburg County should have done some research before they pushed for "neighborhood" schools and the choice plan.

Just about every report or study I read reported that the school system would be overcrowded in the northern part of the county if this plan was approved. But the parents listened to Jim Puckett and Larry Gauvreau and their rhetoric instead of facts and figures.

I sympathize with these parents because I would not want my child in these conditions but if they would get over their prejudices, there are some great schools very near them that have seats to be filled.

**From
Readers**

Gray Newman

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7

more issues to publish, based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month. A community journal must have the support of its readers. Can you help?

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Meet candidates Cramer and White

Text of introductions presented at an Aug. 14 forum by Kit Cramer and Joe White, two of the 11 candidates in the November election for three at-large seats on the school board.

My name is Kit Cramer and I'm running for school board. I appreciate this opportunity to be here this evening.

I choose to run for the school board because I believe in public education, and I believe it's critically important to the future of this community.

And because I have a son – raise your hand Mac, we'll embarrass him a little bit – at Piedmont Open Middle School this year as an eighth-grader.

I also choose to run because I know schools and I understand many of the issues that we are facing in public education.

And I have a literal history with schools. My mother was a teacher – she's retired now, and she actually, you know, I grew up in Florida. She did her student teaching at the original Harding High School right here in Charlotte.

I have a grandmother, two aunts, cousins, sister-in-law, even my godfather was a principal of a school, so I have a little history.

And although you would think, surrounded by all those people with a gift for teaching, that I would possess it, I don't possess it. I do believe teaching is a gift. But I was fortunate enough to be taught by people who helped me develop my own gifts, that of being a leader and a motivator and a catalyst for change.

And I've been using those skills. I've worked for two school systems, one in Florida, and one year here in CMS when I moved to Charlotte. But also, for the last five years, for a school reform effort, and I want to tell you about a couple of things we've done related to that, because I'm

2003 school board election

very proud of the work that we've done.

We spearheaded the creation of Classroom Central, a free store for teachers, which provides kids in this community, the most impoverished children, with school supplies, so that teachers don't have to spend money out of their own pockets. And it's right over on Wilkinson Boulevard. I commend it to you. We need volunteers and we need support.

I've run the last two bond campaigns, for school bonds, that have provided critically needed dollars for growth and equity, which is so very important in this community.

I've brought "best practices" conferences to this community to look at methods of teaching that really work for all kids, at every level of the spectrum, and I'm committed to continuing doing that.

I've had a wonderful opportuni-

ty to work with a broad cross-section of people, and I would welcome the opportunity to continue that focus.

One of the things I think is critically important is to reduce teacher turnover, and to provide a teaching and learning environment that can really allow all kids to achieve. And we've been doing that on the ground. We've had a pilot project that is focused on reducing teacher turnover at two Equity Plus schools [Paw Creek, Pawtucket].

I also think we need to really tighten our operations as much as possible so we can drive dollars for use in the classroom.

And I believe so much, I want you to look at my Web site, kitcramer.com. There's a bookmark over here. I would welcome your vote, would welcome your input and your questions. Thank you very much.

I'm Joe White. Most of you know me as "Coach." Right now I

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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: nhholley@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: kbmcg@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

Meet board hopefuls Cramer and White

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represent you on your City Council because, as I look around this room, because of the hard work of a great many of you in this room. But I chose not to run for City Council again.

I was the original head football coach and athletic director at Olympic High School in 1956. That's before most of you, as I look around, most of you weren't even born.

What I'd like to suggest to you, and it would be dangerous for me to go through what and where I've been in this community because of time. I would suggest to you that I certainly understand the workings of city government, that I understand this community very well, and I've spent well over 35 years working with and for the students and the parents of this community.

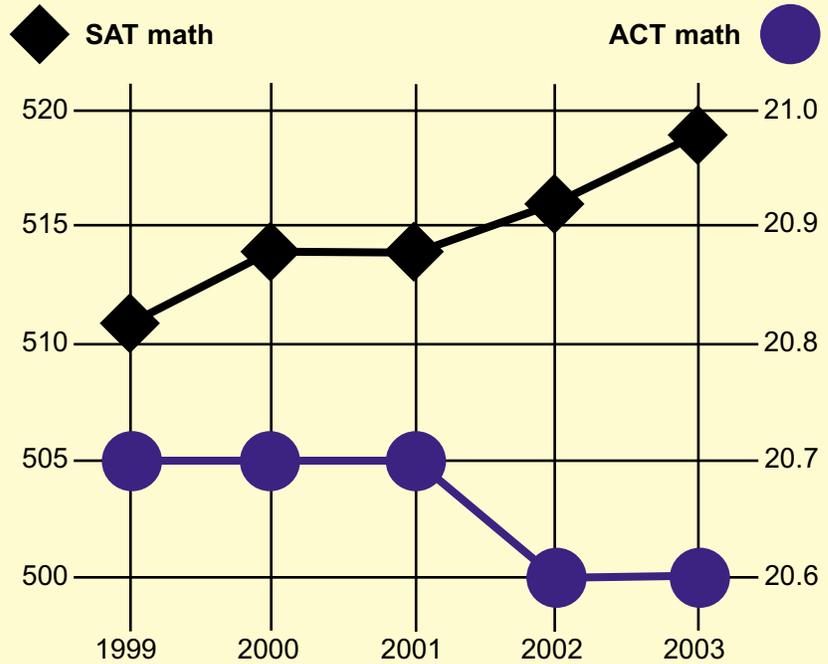
Right now my oldest son is the head football coach at West Mecklenburg High School. I have five grandchildren at one high school in this system. I shared with a couple just the other day that if I still worked for the system and had five of Bobbie White's grandchildren coming to my school I'd leave town. Most of you know [my wife] Bobbie White.

Let me close by saying it's one thing to get elected. It's another thing to be able to be effective once you get on that board. Simply having five votes on the school board won't get it done. You've got to understand somebody who understands the political process, who knows the people

Math trends: Tests take different tacks

Scores for seniors were up on the SAT this spring. They held even on the ACT. The Detroit News reported that the two testing firms offered different explanations. Iowa-based ACT said its surveys indicated that only 40% of test-takers were prepared for college-level math. The College Board, which produces the SAT, said scores were rising because more students were taking rigorous courses.

— www.detnews.com



throughout this entire community, that's already had enough trust of those people throughout this entire community to be elected and re-elected, and I suggest to you, I hope you, decide that Joe White is that person to help us to move forward in educating every child in this community. Thank you very much.

—

Rachel B. Hall did not speak at the forum at which these introductions were made. Sponsors of the Aug. 14 candidate forum included the Metrolina Minority

Contractors Association, Black Political Caucus and the local branch of the NAACP.

The candidates and the issue of Educate! in which their introductions were published: Larry Bumgarner, Aug. 21; Kit Cramer, Sept. 18; George Dunlap, Sept. 4; Nick Holley, Sept. 11; Mike Kasper, Aug. 28; Fred Marsh, Aug. 28; Kaye McGarry, Sept. 11; Wilhelmenia Rembert, Sept. 4; Queen Thompson, Aug. 21; Joe White, Sept. 18.

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Momentum 'is on our side'

Excerpts from a column written by, respectively, the chairman of the State Board of Education and State Superintendent.

**By HOWARD LEE
and MIKE WARD**

North Carolina public schools have had an unprecedented year of good news, culminating this month with the latest ABCs of Public Education results which showed that achievement gaps have narrowed, a record percentage of students are performing at grade level or above and nearly three-fourths of all schools outperformed expectations and posted high growth rates in academic achievement....

North Carolina students are performing at the highest level ever and 61% of all schools earned recognition as Schools of Excellence or Schools of Distinction – the state’s highest recognition categories.

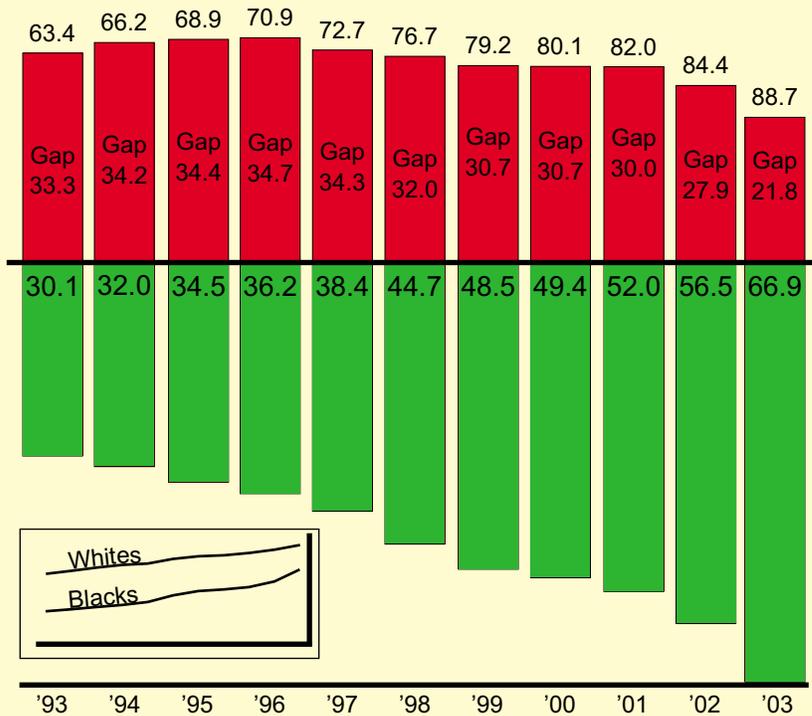
Achievement gaps among different ethnic or racial groups also narrowed for every group this year. This is the first year that educators and parents can see definitive, across-the-board signs that the achievement gaps that have plagued schools and students nationwide may one day come to an end.

Black students and American Indian students gained approximately 10 percentage points each between 2001-02 and 2002-03. While the achievement gap between white and black students remains the largest one, this gap has been reduced to 21.9 points, down from 34.3 points in 1996-97, the first year of the state’s accountability program....

In addition to this news, North Carolina public schools have shown very strong performances this year on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also called the Nation’s Report Card....

Racial achievement gap continues to decline

The achievement gap between white students and black students has not disappeared, but it has narrowed, according to state testing data released last week. The gap has fallen from a high of 34.7 points to this year’s low of 21.8 points. White scores have steadily increased over the period (chart inset, lower left), but black scores have risen more rapidly – more than doubling since 1993 and rising particularly rapidly in the last two years. In the chart below, red bars above the line show the white-black achievement gap, in percentage points. Green bars below the line show the black scores, which are listed below the line. The number at the top of each bar is the statewide average for white students.



Data source: N.C. Forum

Just a few weeks ago, North Carolina’s SAT results were released for 2003, showing that our state passed the 1,000 mark for the first time and is above the Southeast average....

The state’s dropout rate declined in 2001-02, the latest year of dropout statistics. This is the third consecutive year that dropout rates have decreased, and it occurred at a time when standards and requirements for student have increased.

All of this is good news, but not accidental. Since 1995, North Carolina has been focused intently on improving schools and on

improving student achievement. The good news of 2003 is that the tremendous efforts of students, teachers and principals are paying off. The General Assembly has provided unparalleled support for our schools, and schools have responded by doing the right things....

Are we where we need to be? No, we are not. Our schools need to continue these very positive trends.... The momentum to do these things is on our side, and our students and schools have shown what happens when they reach for high goals. They meet them.

Money-saving fixes on table

Continued from Page 1

equal success. Now the agenda is equal results.”

On Monday, Pughsley offered board members a collection of ideas to address various parts of the assignment puzzle. He said they came from staff, board members and the public. He said he had not used any consultants. (District 1 board member Larry Gauvreau has pressured Pughsley to bring in some “outside eyes.”

The decision timetable is tight.

In three weeks, on Oct. 7 or Oct. 8, he will be back with a draft plan. The board will take public comment on the plan at that meeting, and a week later. The board must decide on the plan by Oct. 28 in order to rewrite its official policies by Thanksgiving. Parents’ time for making choices for fall 2004 begins within days thereafter.

Another factor pushing a quick decision: Sitting board members want the issue resolved by current board members so that assignment does not get politicized during the current school board election.

Confronted with data showing marred academic performance at high-poverty schools, board members sought additional research to understand the reasons. John Lassiter wanted to track individual students over time, not just schools. George Dunlap sought a threshold that it would be “morally wrong” to allow high-poverty schools to exceed. Louise Woods asked for research on whether mother’s educational level was a primary factor in the achievement gaps, not just poverty. She asked for a growth index that would determine if some schools were doing a better job than others of moving poor children toward grade-level work. Dunlap also wanted to know if a language barrier was a major factor, not poverty. Board chair Wilhelmenia Rembert wondered if variations in teacher quality might explain the results.

Gauvreau called the achievement differences “insignificant,” but testing chief Susan Agruso disagreed. “There is something real in this data. They do need to be considered as you look at student assignment.”

Later in the meeting, Arthur Griffin said, “We’re not talking about busing and moving a whole bunch of kids.

“Diversity is part and parcel of a quality education,” Griffin asserted. Board members should be using their “bully pulpit” to “be impacting on housing policies of Mecklenburg County so we could get some of that diversity without moving kids over great distances.”

Below is the full text of the proposals put before the board Monday night.

“These are strategies,” Pughsley explained. “The mechanics still have to be addressed. I don’t think that at this sitting we can do that.”

The CMS text, unedited except for typos, is in serif type, while notes and comments about them appear in this regular typeface.

Contact information for senior CMS officials and for board members is on the CMS Web site at www.cms.k12.nc.us.

Magnet Programs

Objective: To strengthen the magnet programs through theme development, program consolidation, student retention, student attraction, academic achievement and diversity.

Strategy 1: Enhance foreign language at each elementary global leadership magnet school (Spanish per FLES and/or after-school program).

Rationale: To strengthen magnet programs at Winding Springs and Beverly Woods by providing access to foreign language and develop an appreciation and ability for cross-cultural communication.

Impact: Strengthen the Winding Springs and Beverly Woods programs with emphasis on foreign language.

Strategy 2: Establish new foreign language (French and German) immersion program at Oaklawn Elementary.

Rationale: To provide additional seating capacity in high demand programs with waiting lists.

Impact: Expand capacity for current language immersion program by providing seats at Oaklawn. Relieve overcrowding at Smith Academy of Languages.

Pughsley said the proposal would take nothing away from Smith.

Strategy 3: Establish a professional development magnet school (Waddell).

Rationale: To provide an attractive program that will strengthen the current academic program offerings at the school.

Impact: Strengthen the current academic program at the school through the establishment of the Professional Development magnet. The school will have partnership opportunities with local colleges and universities.

Several board members questioned whether this program would sway parents to consider choosing Waddell, a 1,400-seat school with only 1,054 students this fall.

Louise Woods suggested expanding the model to Garinger, West Charlotte and West Meck.

Strategy 4: Decrease the number of IB elementary school programs. Maintain programs at Irwin, Huntingtowne Farms, Lansdowne, and Statesville Road.

Rationale: To strengthen the IB elementary programs throughout the district. The current demand for seats

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does not warrant the number of IB elementary programs currently in existence.

Impact: Consolidate and strengthen the remaining programs throughout the district.

The proposal would close IB magnets at Cotswold and Paw Creek. Molly Griffin warned against tinkering with Cotswold's success.

Strategy 5: To strengthen the LI/TD magnet programs by increasing the number of seats for students in grades 3-5 and continuing countywide geographic access. Eliminate program at Lincoln Heights.

Rationale: Villa Heights would become a TD magnet for students in grades 3-5 serving a region of the county. The remaining (Barringer, Tuckaseegee and Idlewild) TD magnets would serve other regions of the county.

Impact: Will provide additional seating capacity for TD students in grades 3-5 and strengthen the program.

Board members questioned making Villa Heights a 3-5 school, treating it specially. Lee Kindberg asked for a TD school south of Fairview Road to ease commute times. And Louise Woods warned that eliminating the TD magnet at Lincoln Heights would eliminate the school's diversity.

Strategy 6: Establish a new Montessori program at Chantilly Elementary. This program would be phased in beginning with grades PK, K and 1.

Rationale: To provide additional seating capacity for students interested in the Montessori program. The program has historically had students in the waiting pool.

Impact: To provide additional seating capacity for students interested in the Montessori program.

Strategy 7: Eliminate the Traditional program at Druid Hills Elementary and eliminate the Traditional middle school program.

Rationale: The program does not attract students.

Impact: Consolidate and eliminate programs.

The proposal eliminates traditional middle school programs at Sedgefield and Wilson. The only remnants of the district's second magnet program from the '70s would be at Myers Park Elementary and Elizabeth, two schools just reopened this fall after extensive renovations and expansions.

Strategy 8: Eliminate the Communication Arts program at Garinger High School.

Rationale: There are no unique content-specific Communication Arts courses offered at Garinger.

Impact: Consolidation of program would allow Garinger to strengthen its focus on the implementation of the Accelerated Academy and the Center for Leadership and Global Economics.

Arthur Griffin said the communication arts program, as conceived, called for links to UNCC that were never developed. In that way, he said, the program to be closed is much like the professional development program now proposed for Waddell.

Strategy 9: Eliminate the Open program as a magnet.

Rationale: There are no unique content-specific Open courses offered at the schools.

Impact: Phase out Open program and allow current students to remain. Phase out Montessori continuation to Open.

This would eliminate the district's first magnet program, which opened at Irwin Avenue in the early 1970s. "Our phones are going to be ringing when we get home," Molly Griffin quipped.

Parents have complained that benign neglect accounted for the lack of open-program content that is now cited as the reason for shuttering the programs. Irwin Avenue has a large neighborhood base area now. And Piedmont Open Middle will keep its pre-International Baccalaureate and pre-Advanced Placement magnets.

Strategy 10: Re-evaluate the magnet feeder pattern for all magnet programs.

Rationale: To provide clean feeder patterns for each magnet program.

Impact: A clean feeder pattern could serve as an attractor for families.

Strategy 11: Develop a full Accelerated Learning magnet program at First Ward Elementary.

Rationale: To strengthen the current program at the school through student retention and attraction.

Impact: A strengthened magnet program with additional seating capacity for students interested in the magnet program.

Overcrowded, underutilized schools

Objective: To reduce the number of overcrowded schools and reduce the number of underutilized schools.

Strategy 1: Where appropriate, pair underutilized schools and overutilized schools (in close proximity) in order to accommodate growth.

Rationale: To align the number of students with the capacity of schools.

Impact: Reduce overcrowding and increase utilization at underutilized schools.

Molly Griffin said using the word "pairing" was "incendiary," given CMS history of paired schools for

desegregation, with grades 1-3 from two segregated neighborhoods attending school usually in the white neighborhood, and grades 4-6 attending the school in the black neighborhood.

And Pughsley's comments made clear that "pairing" was an inaccurate phrase. His idea, he said, is having "one school that takes the overflow from another school."

How "overflow" gets defined is critically important. Busing out a geographic piece of an overcrowded attendance area will be instantly controversial. So will any attempt to bus children out who arrive after a certain date, or live in a newly built subdivision.

But moving an entire grade out of an overcrowded school might win grudging acceptance, because it keeps peers together, is narrowly tailored to address the capacity problem, and does not vaporize the assignment plan's general commitment to nearby-school assignments.

But in her sternest voice, Kindberg declared, "I cannot countenance anything that would not support the home-school guarantee."

Strategy 2: Establish "caps" based on capacity of school and 20% via mobile units, if needed.

Overcrowded schools – students are given priority in lottery for placement out if they are seeking via Choice to get out.

Rationale: To align the number of students in the home school area with the capacity of schools and to manage student growth.

Impact: Reduce overcrowding and increase utilization at underutilized schools.

"I've always been negative to maintaining overcrowded schools," commented Vilma Leake, saying about caps: "I don't know why it's such a problem for us."

Strategy 3: Redefine home school areas for schools that are severely overcrowded or underutilized.

Rationale: To align the number of students in the home school area with the capacity of schools and to manage student growth.

Impact: Reduce overcrowding and increase utilization at underutilized schools.

Kindberg asked whether it was possible to redraw lines on such short notice in a way that parents would accept.

Choice zone, Magnet program priorities

Objective: To review and revise the current priorities based upon the impact of implementation for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years.

Strategy 1: Fifth-, eighth- and 11th-graders should have "stay put" option.

Rationale: Provides stability for students and families.

Impact: Has the potential of increasing transportation costs and overcrowding schools.

Strategy 2: Sibling priority should continue only if older sibling continues in same school.

Rationale: Provides stability for students in current school.

Impact: Has the potential of increasing transportation costs and overcrowding schools.

Strategy 3: Simplify priorities. Establish priorities that will address academic achievement and socioeconomic status.

Rationale: Reduce or combine the current number of priorities for ease of programming and communication.

Impact: Decreases the complexity of developing programming logic for the lottery. The community will have a better understanding of how the lottery process operates.

Strategy 4: Revise 1/3 mile magnet priority for full magnets.

Rationale: Change the priority to allow students living in priority area to fill up to 10% of the available seats.

Impact: To provide additional seating capacity for students interested in full magnet programs.

Transportation

Objective: To reduce the travel distance and time of transporting students to schools within the district.

Strategy 1: Increase number of choice zones resulting in reduced geographic territory and number of school choices in each respective zone. (Redesign zones to be smaller, 6 to 8, not 4.)

Rationale: To reduce the average time and distance traveled for students.

Impact: Reduction in the use of transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

George Dunlap predicted that increasing zones would "end up disenfranchising people. Then it becomes more difficult to provide choice."

Strategy 2: The current .2 mile for walk distance to bus stops from the student's home may be increased up to .4 or .5 mile for secondary students.

Rationale: To potentially save transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

Impact: Reduction in the use of transportation resources (equipment and personnel) and more students walking to schools.

This is going to be a hot potato. Clearly aimed at lowering transportation costs, parents of high school students may be incredulous. George Dunlap said

his unscientific surveys convinced him that parents will say, “I don’t care if my kid is the only kid on the bus, he deserves transportation.”

No one talked about charging parents if they want to let their children avoid the longer walk.

Rembert said the board should not sacrifice safety to cut transportation costs.

Strategy 3: Review the transportation service options for countywide magnet programs. Establish transportation cluster stops as an option.

Rationale: To potentially save transportation resources (equipment and personnel). This has the potential to eliminate extremely early pick up times for countywide magnet and choice students.

Impact: Reduction in the use of transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

Strategy 4: Later start time for high school (pilot).

Rationale: Could be utilized as an attractor for some schools.

Impact: May result in the use of more resources (equipment and personnel). Funding will need to be provided in order to support this pilot.

There is great interest from board members in experimenting with later high school opening times.

Strategy 5: Consider a “no transportation zone” for high school students residing within a mile and a half surrounding all schools, which is allowable by N.C. General Statutes.

Rationale: To potentially save transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

Impact: A decrease in the number of transportation eligible students.

Strategy 6: Refine bell schedule tiers; must be open to wider bell schedule ranges with growth of program offerings.

Rationale: To improve operating efficiencies and to ensure on time arrival of students to schools.

Impact: Reduction in the use of transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

Strategy 7: Eliminate transportation services for grandfathered students as a result of future reassignment plans.

Rationale: To potentially save transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

Impact: Reduction in the use of transportation resources (equipment and personnel).

Diversity

Objective: To increase the number of schools within the district that represent the district wide socioeconomic percentages.

Strategy 1: Establish new foreign language (French

and German) immersion program at Oaklawn Elementary.

Rationale: To expand the language immersion program capacity and to reduce the number of high poverty schools.

Impact: More seating capacity in the language immersion program and a diverse school environment.

Strategy 2: Simplify priorities. Establish priorities that will address academic achievement and socioeconomic status.

Rationale: Develop priorities that will support increasing diversity within each school.

Impact: A diverse school environment.

Strategy 3: For students residing outside of the City Within a City Area (CWAC) provide free before/after school care if those students choose a high free & reduced lunch school inside the CWAC.

Rationale: Develop priorities that will support increasing diversity within each school.

Impact: A diverse school environment.

Feeder Patterns/Choice Zones

Objective: To increase the number of elementary schools that feed one middle and one high school.

Strategy 1: Students living in rezoned area should be allowed to remain in current school until terminal grade is completed. If now receiving transportation, same should continue if in keeping with current or revised transportation policies/regulations.

Rationale: Provides stability for students.

Impact: Maintains feeder patterns for families who currently attend the school.

Strategy 2: Reduce the number of splits.

Rationale: To increase the number of clean feeder patterns.

Impact: Increases the number of schools feeding into one middle and one high school.

Communication

- Program priorities
- Transportation
- Choice information
- NCLB/AYP
- Ride times vs. start times
- Choice has consequences

Miscellaneous

- Phase in new approaches strategically to avoid disruptions.
- Consolidation around middle ring.

Parent education model under study

Continued from Page 1

given community so the two can support one another after they are trained. She recruits at schools, but also in churches and neighborhood groups.

Raimondo says she has “only good memories of school,” but acknowledges that many parents had bad experiences, and can’t or won’t go to school or be directly involved in their own children’s education.

In hopes of reaching those parents, Raimondo says her group recruits parents “who were ready and willing” to assist schoolhouse leaders. The strategy: Have parents, not educators, extend the olive branch.

“There is no magic bus,” Raimondo said after the session with Charlotte leaders. “The most effective way is to talk one-on-one with parents. That’s what teachers are not doing,” mostly because of lack of time, she said.

Added Charlotte Advocates for Education Managing Director Margaret Carnes later, “We’re not going to turn student performance around overnight because of this.”

Overcoming barriers is hard work and expectations should remain reasonable, Raimondo advised. “You can’t expect that your school suddenly is going to have 25 parents” volunteering every day.

And “getting dads involved is still a huge challenge.”

Represented at Raimondo’s Friday briefing were the PTA Council, CMS, a parent educator, Leadership Charlotte and others. Among the hurdles discussed:

- Lots of groups are already working on these issues.
- Educators may see the training program as another fad that will wither quickly.



Raimondo

Supporting families – beginning early

“Educators in the study sites are cognizant of their mission – to educate children – but also aware that if they are to succeed, they need to address the children’s academic and non-academic needs as well as provide support services to the entire family.

“All four schools provide support services, not only during the school-age years, but also during preschool, with Head Start, child care and various health and other services.

“The benefits of this dual approach – provision of academic and non-academic support beginning even before the children enter school – are evident in numerous studies that show that all children, but especially those who are at risk for educational failure, come to school more ready to learn if they participate in such programs.

“The schools also created opportunities for involvement in ways that are meaningful to the parents and, in turn, parents play a more active role in their children’s education.

“This happens by way of school-based English classes for parents, the provision of social services or the appointment of a family liaison, where a staff member is dedicated to keeping in touch with parents and ensuring that their needs are met.

“By showing that they care not only about academic achievement, but also about where and how the family lives and whether the children and family have enough to eat and access to health care, these schools have earned the trust of parents and have succeeded in making them a more integral part of the education process.”

– From “Portraits of Four Schools: Meeting the Needs of Immigrant Students and Their Families,” a new study available from the Yale University Center in Child Development Center and Social Policy at www.yale.edu/21c/report.html

– Some will see the program as run by meddling do-gooders.

– Elementary parents are engaged. The work needs to focus on middle and high schools.

– Some adults couldn’t commit to three two-day training sessions. Raimondo’s group, which draws from all over Kentucky, puts trainees up in a hotel.

Carnes, who invited Raimondo to Charlotte, made clear that she’s looking for collaboration from groups already doing work in parent leadership. Any new program “needs to fit into everybody’s goals, or it certainly is not going to work in this community,” she said Friday.

Raimondo says the work is difficult. Just 60% of the program’s trainees complete the back-home projects they design during training. And Raimondo estimates that only 20% to 30% of trainees con-

tinue their parent activism after their two-year commitments are satisfied.

But there may be longer-term community benefits, Raimondo says. Some program graduates report going back to school themselves, and some say they use their newly honed leadership skills in the workplace.

Raimondo’s group is Lexington-based Parent Leadership Associates. Its parent is the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. The group’s Web site is www.plassociates.org.

Carnes suggested that, if it can find funding, Advocates might start a small pilot program in the West Mecklenburg feeder area with up to 30 parents and, later, a program within a workplace.

For further information, contact Carnes at 704-335-0100 or mcarnes@advocatesfored.org

Groups to host talks on PBS series on race

Last spring's PBS series on race will be aired beginning next week in a venue designed to encourage discussion of the lines that divide us.

"We believe the series... will have a powerful, positive impact on those who view the films and are part of the discussion," says Ledger Morrisette of the city-county Community Relations Commission.

"Scientists tell us that believing in biological races is no more sound than believing the sun revolves around the earth," the CRC said in a statement. "So if race is a biological myth, where did the idea come from? And why should it matter today?"

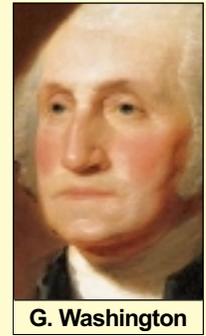
"Race – The Power of an Illusion" was first aired on PBS in April and May. Each part stands alone, and those who want to watch next week don't need to commit to all three showings. But watching all three "can be a huge powerful experience," says the

Birth of the term 'Caucasian', 1776

"Johann Blumenbach, one of many 18th-century naturalists, lays out the scientific template for race in 'On the Natural Varieties of Mankind.'

"Although he opposes slavery, he maps a hierarchical pyramid of five human types, placing 'Caucasians' at the top because he believes a skull found in the Caucasus Mountains is the 'most beautiful form... from which... the others diverge.'

"This model is widely embraced, and Blumenbach inadvertently paves the way for scientific claims about white supremacy."



G. Washington

– From a timeline on race, part of the PBS Web site exploration of issues that come up in the series "Race – The Power of an Illusion."
www.pbs.org/race

CRC's Stephanie Jennings.

A facilitated discussion will follow the screening of each of the three parts. There is no admission charge. The subjects:

Sept. 25: "The Difference Between Us."

Oct. 2: "The Story We Tell."

Oct. 9: "The House We Live In."

All screenings will be held at the Light Factory at Spirit Square, 345 N. College St., from 7-9 p.m.

Sponsors also include Mecklenburg Ministries, Bahá'í

Community of Charlotte, Community Building Initiative, Interactive Knowledge Inc., National Conference for Community and Justice, POCIS of Trinity Episcopal School, Providence United Methodist Church Peace and Justice Work Area, United Religions Initiative, United Way of the Central Carolinas, Urban League of Central Carolinas and WTVI.

For information, message Jennings at sjennings@ci.charlotte.nc.us.

Did Ya Hear?

Schools should always buy the cheapest product, right? WRONG! Look up in just about any classroom and, alas, you may be staring at a health problem waiting to happen.

Turns out that most of the district's suspended ceilings have been fitted with tiles made in a single locale. The air there reportedly has a high content of mold spores. Since the spores are in the air, they are manufactured right into the product. Add water and, instantly, the spores begin to grow. And the district is full of 40-year-old buildings with leak-prone roofs.

CMS is looking closely at switching to a mold-inhibiting product. Of course, it costs more. But it's part of an ongoing effort to rethink how buildings are built, and with what materials, in part to control health issues and limit liabilities.

Does something smell funny at your school? CMS tries to initiate same-day investigation of reports of possible mold infestation.

So don't just gossip about a smell. Pick up the phone. The number at Building Services is 980-343-5156. Or message safety@cms.k12.nc.us.

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

Briefs

Playing with numbers, I: Massachusetts' new mandatory high school exit exam is having an interesting effect, the Springfield Republican noted. State officials say the dropout rate is stable, but there are reports of a big increase in eighth-graders dropping out in fear of the test. And eighth-graders leaving school don't count as dropouts.
www.masslive.com

Wired: Philadelphia and Microsoft announced that the software giant would pay for a \$49 million, 700-seat, grades 9-12 high school, the Inquirer reported. Each student will be armed with a tablet PC and a PDA (personal digital assistant) and will have 24/7 access to library resources.
www.philly.com

Homeless access: The Chicago Tribune reported that suburban high schools, experiencing for the first time homeless children showing up on their doorstep, are breaking federal law by refusing to enroll them until they have documentation that they are homeless. Some of the newly homeless have abandoned Chicago neighborhoods where schools were labeled failing by No Child Left Behind.
www.chicagotribune.com

Playing with numbers, II: No Child's category of "persistently dangerous" schools has led Colorado officials to define "fights/assaults" more narrowly, the Rocky Mountain News reported. Officials decided that only incidents leading to serious injury would be counted. In years past, a momentary scuffle in the hallway would be reported in the "fights/assaults" category, leaving 20 schools in danger of being labeled "persistently dangerous." A minor scuffle is now reported as a violation of the code of conduct.

Finding ways to connect with veteran teachers

"Perhaps the greatest challenge facing school-based staff developers is working with veteran teachers who may need to improve their teaching but seem satisfied to do things the way they've always done them. 'I received a lot of resistance from our traditional teachers,' says a staff developer in Mississippi. 'I was even asked if I was from the state department there to investigate. I had to find my way.'

"Although most staff developers say they have no formal role in teacher evaluation, some admit they talk privately with principals and others about teachers' performance. Even when they don't, teachers who have been conditioned to believe that 'observation equals evaluation' are often suspicious. 'Some were afraid to have someone come in and say, "OK, can we work through this together? What is it that you would like to improve on?,"' says one Long Beach coach.

"While new teachers are often eager for help, says another coach, veterans can be defensive and reluctant to take suggestions. Most on-site coaches and staff developers agree they need more upfront training, as one coach put it, in 'how you talk to teachers about different issues. What are the best ways to get them to listen to you and get the most out of what you're trying to tell them?'"

— From *"Making Our Own Road: The emergence of school-based staff developers in America's public schools,"* by Alan Richard for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Full report at www.emcf.org/programs/student/student_pub.htm#TMtag35

Plug for teachers: First Lady Laura Bush knows states are strapped for funds, but she's still speaking out against teacher pay cuts, USA Today reported. "It is sadly a fact of life," Bush said, that "teachers are ... not paid what they deserve."
www.usatoday.com

Playing with numbers, III: Minnesota did well under No Child, with 92% of its schools making their goals. Education Week, after surveying state results, noted one reason Minnesota did so well: They increase from 20 to 40 the number of special education students a school had to have in order to report special ed children as a separate category. Many schools were freed of the category, and thus had an easier time meeting standards.
www.edweek.org

Universal preschool: Under pressure to meet No Child standards, Connecticut is considering

funding universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, the Hartford Courant reported. Parents might be asked to pay for the service based on a sliding scale. Education officials designing the program got mixed responses from state board members. No cost estimates have been released.
www.ctnow.com

Scaling back: Iowa may scrap an \$300 million teacher pay-performance plan for lack of funds, Education Week reported.
www.edweek.org

Parents online: More than 100 of Kentucky's 1,300 schools have placed student grades and other information on Web sites, the Herald-Leader reported. Parents are issued access codes, and cannot alter any of the information. Parents reportedly love the system. High school students were reported less enthusiastic.
www.kentucky.com

Briefs *continued*

Cleaning up: Over objections from classroom-focused critics, California's governor signed a bill ordering schools to give top maintenance priority to keeping bathrooms clean, the Mercury News reported. The legislative bill appeared designed to address a three-year-old ACLU lawsuit claiming that schools were providing unequal facilities to low-income students. The author of the legislation acknowledged that the bill had no enforcement provision

www.bayarea.com

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More, not less: A poll by the Washington-based Committee for Education Funding found that 85% of respondents think 5% of the federal budget should go to education. That would be up from the current 2.8%.

www.cef.org

Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- 18** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 23** Board Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 23** School board meets 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 27** International Festival (the 28th annual), 10 a.m.-6 p.m., UNCC Barnhardt Student Activity Center. Volunteers needed on Thursday- Saturday: Call 704-687-2521 or e-mail mswalsh@email.uncc.edu. Full schedule at www.uncc.edu/ifest

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, Nov. 1, 2** Faith and Literacy Weekend, a project of the Charlotte Reads Literacy Coalition to encourage faith groups to partner with schools in

Holding power

"Providing extra help in students' correct grade, not in the grade behind their classmates, is more effective than holding students back, which both fails to improve achievement and exacerbates truancy problems. Mediation, not exclusion, for disciplinary problems, including tardiness, boosts school 'holding power' and communicates to students that school attendance is both desirable and desired."

— Anne Wheelock, co-author of "Before It's Too Late: Dropout Prevention in the Middle Grades," in *The Standard-Times*, www.southcoasttoday.com

improving reading.

NOVEMBER

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

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Based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month, this journal will be able to publish just seven 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