

“Angel” by Sloane Whaley, Northwest School of the Arts.

# Another choice

## Next week’s tinkering in assignment won’t fix inherently unjust, inequitable and educationally unsound operations

*The article below was first published in this journal July 8, 2001, before the adoption of the current choice assignment plan. With minor exceptions, it is still relevant today as Supt. Jim Pughsley readies proposed changes to the two-year-old plan.*

*In meetings this fall, Pughsley and school board members have said that they won’t use overcrowding and other current complaints as reason to make major changes in the plan. Their stance is a problem.*

*Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s search for a just, equitable, cost-effective, rational approach to educating all children must continue. And it will – when enough citizens signal that they will not tolerate further delay.*

## Going mod

### Mobile unit cost hikes make modular structures a cost-effective option

With costs rising to buy and install single mobile classroom units, students and teachers at overcrowded schools may soon see modular buildings – with interior hallways.

The first CMS use of the instant-school construction method may be at Metro School, where eight units will be installed as swing space during renovation of the downtown school.

Factory-built rooms and bathrooms are hauled in, wired up, a roof built over the pod and, voila!

But parents who love their neighborhoods would be silly to

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## Take a close look at plan – and US!

*First published in Educate! on July 8, 2001.*

By LUCY BUSH

My friends think school board members have lost their noodles. I think our board members are utterly, spectacularly representative of US.

We’re tired of assignment fights. We say harsh things about people across town. We are focused most on our kid and, in discussing the issue, we’re about as mannerly as well, the school board.

We can do better. If we do, the school board will too.

There are lots of small problems with the choice plan brought to the board in June. But I think we need to talk about the big ones.

– The plan starts in a premise

that separate can be equal. We know separate wasn’t equal in the past. And don’t think this is some academic argument. Thousands of Mecklenburg taxpayers were forced to attend deliberately inferior segregated schools – at tremendous cost to us all.

Show me a school system that routinely gives all kids the same chance when it separates them by race or socioeconomics. You can’t.

A few minority schools eke out good test scores, but I’m not persuaded that the educational experience even there is truly equal. I take educators at their word that they’ll teach children wherever they are. But this is not about educators. It is about US, the peo-

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## Poll finds concern over school funding

The September issue of Research Matters from the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality summarized the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll on attitudes toward public schools. Excerpts:

– “A large majority of those surveyed (76%) knew either ‘very little’ or ‘nothing at all’ about [No Child Left Behind], and public school parents were even more likely (78%) to know little or nothing about the legislation. When asked their opinion of the statute, 69% said they don’t know enough to have an opinion.

– “Even so, 66% of adults believe that the current emphasis on standardized testing will cause ‘teaching to the test,’ and 60% say that this is a bad thing.

– “The highest concern about public education is lack of funding, which has grown in concern from 15% to 25% of the public in three years.

– “Americans are clearly feeling the pinch of state budgets nationwide, which is causing concern about funding education with shrinking state funds. They consider this a major local problem for public schools, and they are also saying that more money should be spent to attract quality teachers....

– “The public is further confused by, and wary of, the implications of NCLB. This poll finds that citizens are more likely to trust their local schools and state than the federal government on education issues, and they have more trust in the public school ideal and system than the federal government, preferring fiscal support for failing schools over the right to transfer out of struggling schools.”

[www.teachingquality.org](http://www.teachingquality.org)

## This journal has only 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?

To make a tax-deductible donation, send your check to The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204-2410 or, at [www.networkforgood.org](http://www.networkforgood.org), 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. Leonard R. (Deacon) Jones, Lucy Bush Carter, co-presidents; B.B. DeLaine, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director. Voice: 704-342-4330. E-mail: [swannfello@aol.com](mailto:swannfello@aol.com). Published since September 2000; 6-week average circulation through last issue: 2,977.

Stephanie Southworth 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.

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Data on remaining issues is approximate and will rise or fall with readers’ financial support. Details available on request.

## Opportunity arises for modular units

Continued from Page 1

ask for these contraptions instead of regular schools: Modulares have a 20-year life, the same as mobile units. Parents are right to think that their neighborhood school should be around to serve their grandchildren and beyond.

Modulares won’t be used everywhere: Large flat ground is required, and small installations will still require mobile units.

One factor prompting use of modulares is the rising installation costs for mobile units, their side-walks and – soon – overhead canopies leading to bathroom units.

CMS officials believe they will be able to acquire and install modulares for less than an equivalent number of mobile units. And as enrollment changes require, they say that tearing down a modular building, moving the pieces and rebuilding it at a new site will cost the same as moving and re-installing an equivalent number of mobiles.

## Reader response to plea for support of *Educate!*

We couldn’t make this up if we tried: Of our more than 3,000 readers, exactly three heeded last week’s front-page plea for financial support of this publication before its funding runs out and *Educate!* disappears. Can you help? See box to the right for details. And thank you.

# You're invited to event focused on partnering for success

*The writer is director of partnerships and strategic initiatives for the Public School Forum of North Carolina in Raleigh.*

This is your invitation to participate in the first regional convening of private sector advocates for public education in the

Southeast since the release of the first No Child Left Behind report cards. Those report cards clearly reveal what schools and groups need the greatest support to accelerate student academic achievement. In many cases, the new report cards reveal what approaches and programs work – and those that did not fulfill their projected outcomes.

Because of the unique challenges faced by citizen-led faith-based groups working to improve public schools throughout our region, the Public School Forum of North Carolina in cooperation with partners across the Southeast, will host the Meet in the Middle Conference on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 30-31 in Charlotte. The conference will combine the 3rd Southeast Education Symposium with the Business, Faith-based and Civic Partnerships from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The Meet in the Middle Conference is for both private sector and public school leaders committed to accelerating public school student success in their local districts and states.

A number of tracks are available so that organizations that send teams will be able to bring home a comprehensive mix of public policy, capacity building, innovative programming, and public engagement plans. Information on the conference can

be accessed through the following link: [www.ncforum.org/meetinthemiddle.htm](http://www.ncforum.org/meetinthemiddle.htm)

What may be most attractive about the conference is that it is so affordable. Full conference registration and meals are no more than \$240 for both days.

But *Educate!* subscribers who register before Oct. 20 will receive a 50% discount off the price listed on the registration form. All you have to do is write, “*Educate!* subscriber” on your registration form to explain why you are eligible to receive this discount. You can download the registration form at [www.ncforum.org/pdf/MITM/MITMRegistration.pdf](http://www.ncforum.org/pdf/MITM/MITMRegistration.pdf).

The Public School Forum’s N.C. Partners Leadership Council is a statewide body of private sector and public school leadership focused on community and private sector driven reform of public education (a current membership list can be found at [www.ncforum.org/ncpbrd.htm](http://www.ncforum.org/ncpbrd.htm)). The faith community is an historic and important stakeholder in the pub-

lic education coalition, and we would welcome your participation in this unique conference to be held in your city. Of special interest to *Educate!* subscribers will be the three leadership tracks offered on Thursday afternoon.

Please take the time to survey the Meet in the Middle Conference description, schedule and logistical information found in the links above. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me at [pcates@ncforum.org](mailto:pcates@ncforum.org) or 919-781-6833 Ext. 117.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the BellSouth Foundation, SERVE, IBM, Cisco Systems, Time Warner Cable, and GlaxoSmithKline for supporting the regional Meet in the Middle Conference.

We hope you can join us for this groundbreaking regional event focused on accelerating success for all public school students. Let’s Meet in the Middle Oct. 30-31!

Phillip Cates

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## From Readers

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## ‘Meet in the Middle’: A partial schedule

### Thursday, Oct. 30

11 a.m.: Convocation speaker: Sylvan Solutions’ Jeff Cohen.  
 Noon: Speaker: BellSouth’s Krista Tillman; briefing on Mobile Area Education Foundation’s math initiative.  
 1:45-3:30 p.m.: Concurrent sessions (1) keeping community-based alliances effective and sustainable; (2) business and community initiatives that work; (3) school view: how to build partnerships with business and community groups.  
 6:30 p.m.: Educator Ron Clark.  
 9 p.m. Networking at hospitality suite, Holiday Inn Crown Club.

### Friday, Oct. 31

7:30 a.m. Breakfast seated by states to discuss local issues.  
 9 a.m.: All-day session (breaks for lunch) on grant-writing to participate in No Child supplemental services opportunities (e.g., tutoring for children at low-performing schools).  
 10 a.m.: N.C. Supt. Mike Ward, Public School Forum’s John Dornan.  
 Noon: Governor’s Education First Partnership Awards honoring business and community groups for their efforts to improve public education, and an individual who has had a “resounding impact on both their local public schools and their community.”

# Take a close look at schools – and US!

Continued from Page 1

ple who perpetually underfund minority schools, who dispatch only inexperienced staff to teach poor kids, who don't fix the roof leaks, don't provide the same number of computers and library books and so on. The only guarantee against inferior schools is for us all to go to school together.

– The plan's assignment boundaries have an instant impact on home property values. You may think that's OK if the proposed plan puts your home in a "good" school. But how might you feel in three years if your house gets reassigned to the "worst" school in the system just before you have to sell it? Such things HAVE happened. Talk to your friends.

– Children love to learn from one another, but this plan won't let all of them do that. By effectively segregating most children by socioeconomics, advantaged children will not be in the classroom to help their disadvantaged peers. This is a loss to the advantaged children, and it handicaps our ability to help disadvantaged students learn.

– The proposed plan presumes that we can consistently, reliably, perpetually find teachers to staff schools with high numbers of disadvantaged children. I'm not so sure. Teachers don't like the idea of mandatory assignments to these schools. They're resisting school board efforts to create a policy that would call on the superintendent to assign teachers to those schools.

Instead, the whole thrust now is on incentives: higher pay, free tuition into a master's program,

etc. I'm afraid this is a pipe dream. I worry that no amount of incentives will generate enough teachers. My understanding is that the current incentives are not really working.

So for me, the key problem with the plan is not your attendance zone or mine, or the low utilization numbers.... The problem is what the plan says about us as people, as a community. For me, and I hope for you, it is not a pretty picture.

What can we do? [Below] is something to get you started thinking.

From there, talk amongst yourselves. And keep in mind that we must reckon with what the courts have to say.

But ultimately, it is WE who must be committed to educating all children.

Then the school board will make it so.

# Build one community via student assignment

First published in Educate! on July 8, 2001.

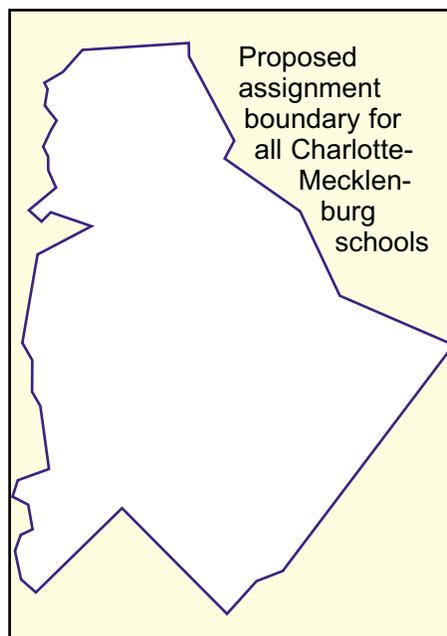
Are you looking for a plan that can lead this community, even this nation, away from segregation, away from isolation of poverty, away from complacency with undereducated children, away from schoolhouse environments that are unstable both for children and for staff?

Begin by erasing all of the lines from your maps. All of them. Drop all the preferences, too. Give everyone real choice, full

**A Proposal**

choice. Common sense tells us that not everyone will get her or his first choice, maybe not even a fifth choice. That's just the way life is. But choice is invaluable. It instills a sense of ownership.

The schools staff should stop thinking that they are called upon to limit parents' choices to a few schools they think are appropriate. Make every school available for every parent's consideration. All parents should have the



opportunity to rank all of the schools in preferred order of interest for their children.

Make every school worth choosing, either for some specific program or for overall general quality. The magnet program was a

first stab at this; now we must finish the job.

Set out clearly, as the plan does, how choice of an elementary school sends a child on to a middle school and on to a high school.

The school system must accept its responsibility to give all children transportation to their choice school, wherever the choice is. Transportation should not be a right just for some children going to some schools.

Citizens of this community want their school system to accept the moral responsibility, even if the courts say it is not their legal responsibility, for assuring a desegregated, economically and racially diverse environment in every classroom in the school system.

Citizens will not accept a turning back to the days of separate and unequal education. For only if we go to school together will we sinful people, over the long haul, share the fruits of this community.

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## Assignment session Monday; public hearing Tuesday

Supt. Jim Pughsley is to make public his recommendations for changes in the assignment plan by Monday at 5 p.m.

The first and possibly only opportunity for public comment on the proposal will be barely 24 hours later.

The school board meets Monday in two work sessions. The 2:30 p.m. session is to hear from a state official about how school buses are allotted.

At 5 p.m., the board will hear a presentation on how Pughsley wants the board to change the assignment plan to deal with overcrowding, underutilized schools and other issues.

Then at Tuesday's regularly scheduled 6 p.m. board meeting, the board will have a period for public comment on Pughsley's proposals. To get on the speaker list, call the board clerk's office at 980-343-5139.

The haste is to allow parents choosing schools in December to know what changes will be made for next fall.

Work sessions, held in the board's meeting room at the Education Center, are open to the public, but generally are not televised. CMS-TV manager Russ Gill said Wednesday he hadn't been told to televise the session.

## Build one community via assignment plan

Continued from Page 4

ty's wealth equally with all children.

Place students by lottery using their priority choices as a guide in such a way that every school – every school – mirrors the community's racial and economic diversity. In doing so, every classroom will be a place where there are children who can teach other children – for teachers cannot do the job alone.

Every classroom will more likely be under the eyes of watchful, well-connected parents. These parents are the only true guarantee that resources will go to every classroom. In doing all this, the school system will help build a community of "we," not of "us" and "them."

Some members of the school board may worry that their assignment plan decisions might lead to their defeat at the polls in November. They are absolutely right.

If they cave in to injustice, if they vote to create a school assignment plan so byzantine that few people can understand it, if they underutilize schools in poor neighborhoods in a capitulation to the forces of racial and

economic segregation, there is no doubt that they have every reason to be worried.

Every citizen, every board member, every staff member has an opportunity to be a peacemaker. And to pursue justice.

But the heaviest burden falls on

members of the school board, who have been granted extraordinary powers and responsibility by the people to educate all the children of this community.

All of the children – of this one community.

## Getting results

*Harvard lecturer Roland Ferguson, in an interview with the National Staff Development Council:*

"When we asked students about the most important reasons they worked hard in school, there was usually little or no racial or ethnic difference in the percentage of students identifying any particular reason. There was a difference, however, for teacher encouragement contrasted with demands.

"Roughly 30% of white students said they worked hard because their teachers encouraged them and roughly 30% said they did so because their teachers demanded it.

"However, for black students, 46% said they worked hard because their teachers encouraged them and only 16% indicated they did so because their teachers demanded it. That constitutes a 3-to-1 emphasis on encouragement compared to demand for black students, compared to a roughly 1-to-1 ratio for whites. Latinos were in the middle with about a 2-to-1 ratio. For Asians, it was a ratio of about 1.5-to-1.

"These data call attention to the importance of teacher-student relationships and the quality of communication in affecting student effort and intellectual engagement in the classroom....

"I see demands, especially in the absence of encouragement, as power plays. They're assertions by teachers that students should do particular things because teachers say so, and if students don't, there will be consequences. There is a threat in the demand, not an offer of assistance. Encouragement is about caring and assistance, not power."

– www.nsd.org

# It all adds up

## Addressing school needs countywide requires ongoing public financial support

Wake County voters on Tuesday approved a \$450 million bond referendum that will build 13 new schools, renovate 16 more and finance roof and other repairs at 61 others.

Wake officials said before the vote that they would not need to raise taxes to cover the debt costs. But they said they might have to raise taxes to pay operating expenses as the new schools open. The voters said OK, 64% to 36%.

Back in Mecklenburg, where county commissioners kept a school bond issue off this fall's ballots, CMS is laboring just to get access to the money voters have already approved. Talks toward that end are continuing.

In explaining their money needs to county commissioners last

week, CMS officials used the information below. For readers of this journal, the data may help illuminate these issues:

- Over the period covered, CMS construction activity will touch all areas of the county.

- As in Wake County, the board is juggling two imperatives: find new seats for a growing population; and upgrade old buildings to support today's curriculum. The data here doesn't show details, but CMS is responding to growth not just by building new schools: Many older schools being renovated will get additional classrooms to accommodate nearby growth.

- Dates along the left column show that projects tend to be completed in as few as two years after funding is approved, or in as

many as 10 years. This means that some parents and communities will have been waiting a decade by the time projects are completed. If CMS can't get access to voter-approved bonds, the decade-long wait will just become longer.

The school projects now scheduled are listed below in five categories. Slices of the bars in the charts on the right side of this and successive pages show annual costs from each category of work.

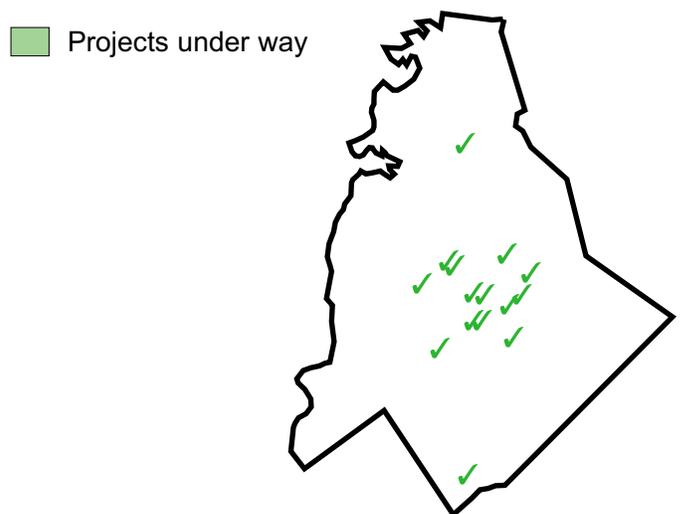
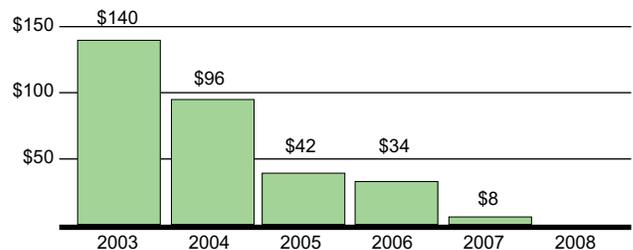
No district can complete all its construction chores at once. And in a very literal way, the cost of the work adds up. And it also adds up to this - a need for sustained public support for a construction program serving all children in all areas of the county.

### 1: Projects under construction

*At Piedmont Middle, roof beams are being installed. Interior renovations continue behind the construction fence at Eastover Elementary. Lambeth Drive began hosting Eastway students last week. The list below is of school construction now in progress. At right are the amounts of bonds being sold each year to finance these projects. The bond sales generally occur each January.*

Funding dates	School	Completion date
'00	Lambeth Drive Middle (new)	'03
'97	Alexander Middle	'04
'96, '99	Ashley Park	'04
'97	Harding High	'04
'97	Independence High	'04
'97	McClintock Middle	'04
'96, '99	Oaklawn	'04
'97, '00	Piedmont Middle	'04
'00	Billingsville	'05
'00	Comm. House Rd. Middle (new)	'05
'02	Devonshire	'05
'97, '00	Eastover	'05
'02	Eastway Middle	'05
'00	Northwest Arts	'05
'96, '97, '02	Pinewood	'05
'96, '97, '02	Windsor Park	'05

Bond sales (in millions) to finance work

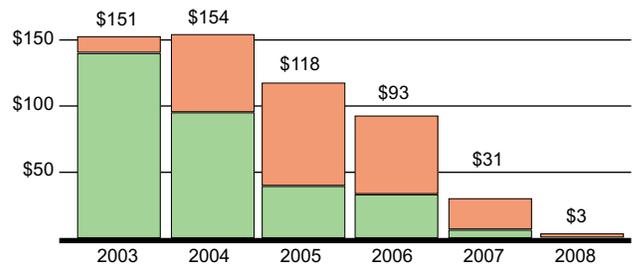


## 2: Funded but not begun

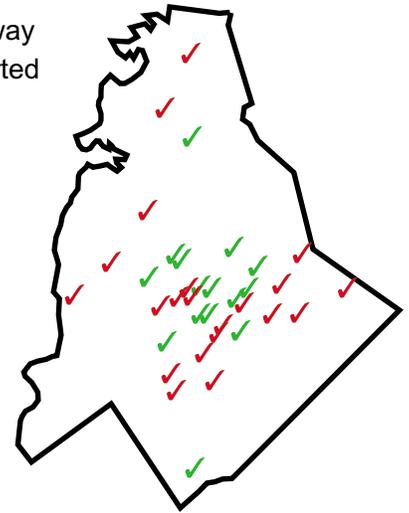
Money has been approved for the following projects, and in some cases planning is well underway. CMS and the neighborhood have been discussing the Dilworth project for months, for example.

Funding dates	School	Completion date
'02	Albemarle Road Elem.	'06
'97, '02	Berryhill	'06
'96, '97, '02	Carmel Middle	'07
'97, '02	Clear Creek	'06
'97, '02	Cotswold	'06
'97, '02	Dilworth	'08
'97, '02	Hickory Grove	'05
'97, '02	Huntingtowne Farms	'06
'00	Marie G. Davis Middle	'06
'00	Metro School	'06
'97, '00	Morgan Alternative	'08
'02	North Middle (new)	'06
'97, '02	Northeast Middle	'08
'02	Oakdale	'06
'97, '02	Quail Hollow Middle	'08
'97, '02	Randolph Middle	'07
'00	Ranson Road (new)	'05
'97, '02	Reedy Creek	'06
'97, '02	Sharon	'07
'97, '02	Tuckaseegee	'07
'02	Winterfield	'07

Bond sales (in millions) to finance work



█ Projects under way  
█ Funded, not started

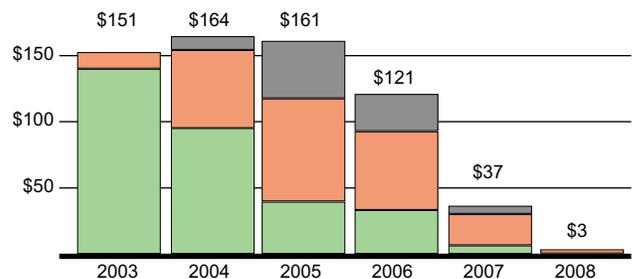


## 3: New high schools

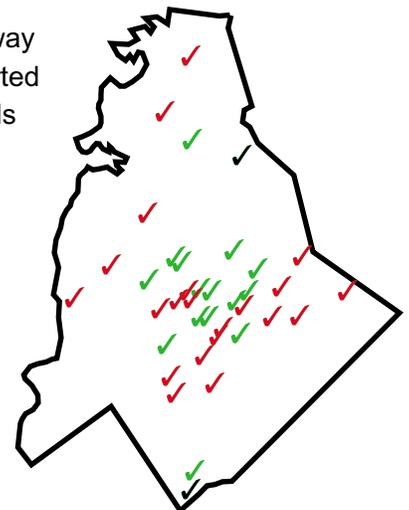
Two new high schools are in a separate category in part because of the funding method – COPs, or certificates of participation that county commissioners can issue. CMS is in desperate need for high school seats. As school board member Lee Kindberg noted at a recent meeting, both schools would be full today if they were open.

Funding dates	School	Completion date
'03	Ardrey Kell Road High (new)	'06
'03	Mallard Creek Park High (new)	'07

Bond sales (in millions) to finance work



█ Projects under way  
█ Funded, not started  
█ New high schools

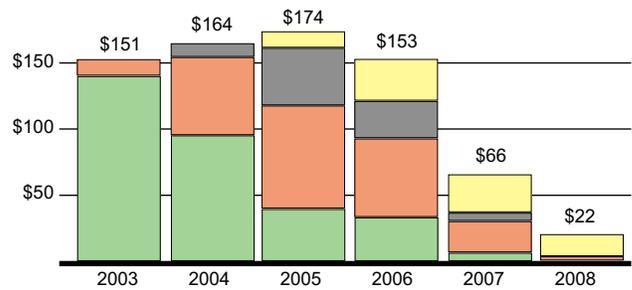


## 4: Designs funded

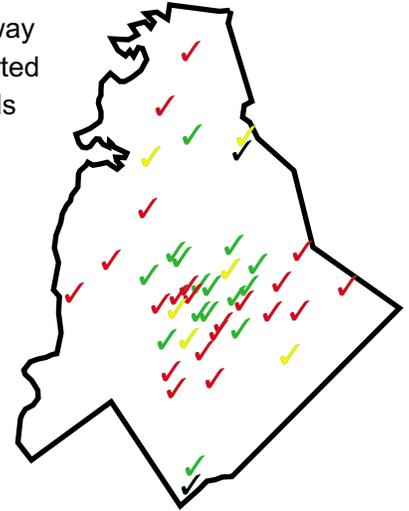
*CMS was under pressure even in 2002 to scale back its bond requests. A compromise was reached: The 2002 bond referendum would include money to begin design work on the projects below, but construction money would have to be approved later. The 2002 bonds were approved 63% to 37%, with 45% voter turnout. As now conceived, voters will be asked next fall to OK money to build these projects.*

Funding dates	School	Completion date
'02, '04	Alexander Middle	'09
'02, '04	Alexander Graham Middle	'08
'02, '04	Cochrane Middle	'09
'02, '04	Garinger High	'09
'02, '04	Highland Creek (new)	'06
'02, '04	Long Creek	'07
'02, '04	Mint Hill (new)	'06
'02, '04	North Meck High	'10
'02, '04	Sedgefield Middle	'08

Bond sales (in millions) to finance work



- █ Projects under way
- █ Funded, not started
- █ New high schools
- █ Design funded

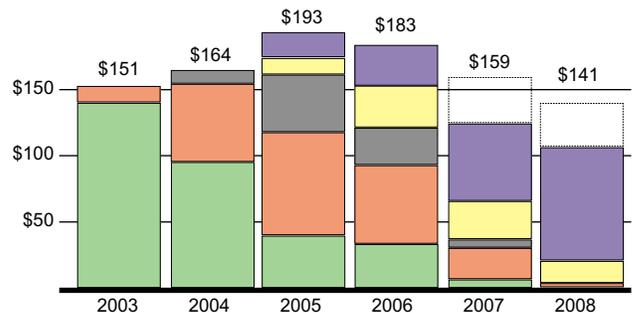


## 5: Planned but not funded

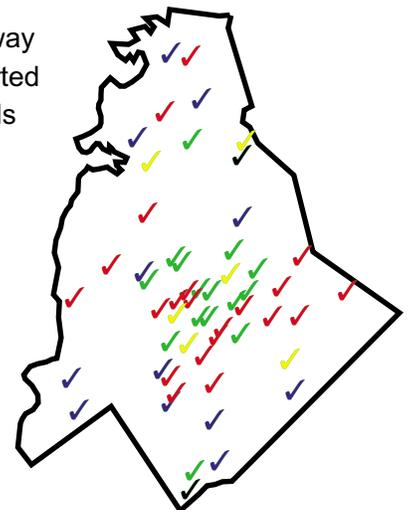
*Wake County's bond issue this week will finance 11 new elementaries. Plans for a 2004 bond issue in Mecklenburg currently include the seven new elementaries below. (Wake and Mecklenburg are growing at similar rates; Wake tends to build smaller schools.) Neither system has new middle schools planned.*

Funding dates	School	Completion date
'04	Mobile classrooms	'05
'04	North Middle (extra wings)	'06
'04	Butler High	'08
'04	Hopewell High	'08
'04	Elementary (new)	'08
'04	Elementary (new)	'08
'04	Elementary (new)	'08
'04	High (new)	'08
'04	Vance High	'08
'04	Harding	'09
'04	Elementary (new)	'09
'04	Starmount Pre-K	'09
'04	Independence High	'10
'04	McClintock Middle	'10
'04	Myers Park High	'10
'04	South Meck High	'10

Bond sales (in millions) to finance work



- █ Projects under way
- █ Funded, not started
- █ New high schools
- █ Design funded
- █ Unfunded
- CIP\*



\*The Capital Improvement Plan covering 2006 and 2007 has not been written, but when it is, it likely will add around \$35 million to those years.

## Briefs

**Reading goal:** The Louisville, Ky., school district has set a goal of having every student reading at grade level within four years, the Courier-Journal reported. The community goal, pushed by the area chamber of commerce, is backed by a business sector commitment to raise \$2 million during each of the four years of the project. The Jefferson County schools will redirect staff and money to teach reading, expand pre-K programs, test for reading competency more often, and place more emphasis on reading in all coursework. State tests showed 21% of fourth-graders reading below grade level last year.

[www.courier-journal.com](http://www.courier-journal.com)

**Raising the bar:** Utah's adjustments to No Child Left Behind include raising the number of units required for high school graduation from 15 to 18, the Salt Lake Tribune reported. CMS already requires 28.

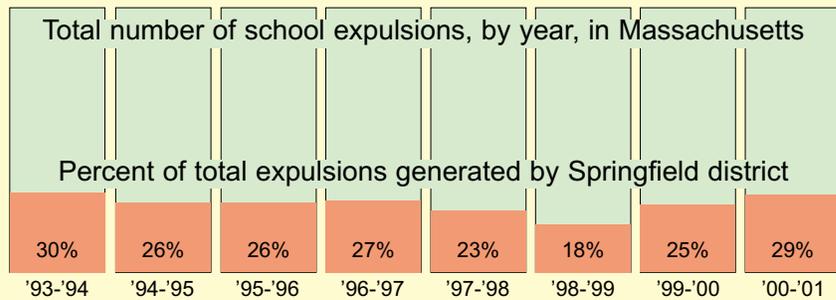
[www.sltribune.com](http://www.sltribune.com)

**Forever behind:** An S.C. court heard testimony that low-wealth counties can't pay high salaries for teachers, so they get the less-prepared recruits, the Manning Item reported. The lawsuit challenges how the state finances public education. It is being heard in the Clarendon County Courthouse, where a suit that became part of the 1954 Brown vs. Board case was tried.

[www.theitem.com](http://www.theitem.com)

**Gender split:** A Columbia, S.C., area school district may be the first in decades to split middle school students by gender, The State reported. A proposal to be voted on later this month in the Richland 2 school district would install a countywide magnet for separate boys and girls classes, and phase in smaller programs at two other middle schools. A recent

## Bellwether or bad apple?: A Mass. tale



The Springfield, Massachusetts school district, one of more than 200 in that state, has about about 2% of the state's school-age population, but routinely accounts for more than a quarter of the state's expulsions, Boston College researcher Anne Wheelock reports. Statewide, expulsions rose 22% in the 1998-99 to 2000-2001 period. "Improving school holding power for vulnerable students is as worthy a goal of education reform as improving test scores," Wheelock writes. As for Springfield, a southwestern Massachusetts city, "this state-district-community should identify school policies and practices that contribute to exclusions, and develop school-based alternatives designed to realize a permanent reduction in exclusions.... Research over many years... reports that students excluded from school are placed at higher risk for later dropping out."

— Wheelock's research is at [www.massparents.org/news/2003/student\\_exclusions.htm](http://www.massparents.org/news/2003/student_exclusions.htm)

survey found half of the district's fifth-grade parents might be interested in the programs. Interest ran slightly higher among parents of girls than among parents of boys.

[www.thestate.com](http://www.thestate.com)

**Skills or cost-cutting?:** After parents complained, a Vancouver, Wash. school district has stopped assigning special education students to clean-up duties that including sorting recyclables out of the garbage, the Seattle Times reported. District officials said it was an effort to give students job skills. Parents said the garbage detail was also given nonspecial-ed students as punishment.

<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com>

**Threads:** Denver Public Schools opened Threads, an unused classroom stocked with donated clothing. Middle and high school homeless students shop free by appointment. Threads is

part of a \$250,000 annual homeless program in the schools funded through donations. An AmeriCorps volunteer staffs the store.

[www.insidedenver.com](http://www.insidedenver.com)

**Not girls:** A new international study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development shows boys lagging girls academically, the Seattle Times reported. OECD official Barry McGaw said, "Working-class boys define themselves as 'not girls'... if the girls value education, that's what boys don't do."

<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com>

**Few takers:** In Chicago, where 133,000 parents could have chosen free tutoring for their kids under No Child Left Behind, only 11% took the opportunity, the Sun-Times said. Schools chief Arne Duncan said the leftover \$20 million would be used inside

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## Briefs *continued*

the schools to boost reading. Some parents said they refused the tutoring because no transportation was provided to the off-campus tutoring sites.

[www.suntimes.com](http://www.suntimes.com)

**Case closed:** In Kansas City, the last appeal of a unitary status ruling was voluntarily withdrawn on Sept. 26, ending a 26-year legal battle to desegregate the city's schools, the Star reported. The case brought the state of Missouri in, and over time \$2 billion was spent upgrading schools and instruction and using magnets to draw whites back from suburban districts. Ultimately, the schools became more segregated.

[www.kansascity.com](http://www.kansascity.com)

**Teaming, common planning:** In the September issue of *Middle School Journal*, research by Steven Mertens and Nancy Flowers indicates that a culture of teamwork among teachers across disciplines, along with regular common planning time, can lead to higher achievement.

"In this analysis we examined the combined effects of all factors – teaming/common planning time level, income level of student families, continuity of teaming/common planning time, and levels of classroom practices.

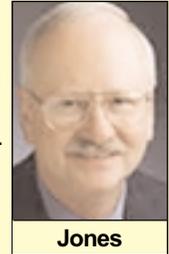
"Here we see that classroom practices can be linked to positive results in student achievement for schools that have been teaming consistently with common planning time for a few years. Among these schools, those with higher levels of classroom practices had higher achievement than those with lower levels of classroom practices.

"While these results were true for the more affluent schools, it was not true for the high-poverty schools. A possible explanation for this would be that the effects of

## A parent guide to school room layout

"When you watch natural teachers, you typically see students working while the teacher strolls among them in a most unremarkable fashion. Only after you watch a lot of classrooms and note the differences between effective and ineffective teachers does the importance of this strolling become clear.

"The most basic factor that governs the likelihood of students goofing off in your classroom is their physical distance from your body.... Natural teachers instinctively work the crowd. They use proximity as an instrument of management. They know that either you work the crowd, or the crowd works you.... Only when you watch previously well-behaved students in the classroom of a teacher who does not exploit proximity, do you come to appreciate the importance of working the crowd.



Jones

"Arrange the furniture to make working the crowd as easy as possible.... The objective of room arrangement is to create walkways. You want to be able to get from any student to any other student with the fewest steps possible."

– Fred Jones, author of *Tools for Teaching*,  
[www.educationworld.com](http://www.educationworld.com)

teaming/common planning time in schools with these high percentages of low-income students take longer to be observed in student achievement scores."

[www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org)

## Calendar

### OCTOBER

- 9 Equity Committee, 6 p.m., Board Room.
- 13 Board work session on transportation, 2:30 p.m., Board Room. Work session on assignment plan changes, 5 p.m., Board Room.
- 14 School board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room. Public forum section of this meeting may be only time for public comment on student assignment changes.
- 15 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., Chamber of Commerce, 330 S. Tryon St.
- 16 Charlotte Advocates for Education annual meeting, 7-9 a.m., Hilton uptown, 222 E. 3rd St., Piedmont Ballroom. Speaker: Dr. Michael D. Usdan, senior fellow, Institute for

Educational Leadership, on "Re-Thinking School Board Governance," followed by moderated panel with school board candidates. Cost: \$25. For reservations, call 704-335-0100 ext. 14 or message [annualmeeting@advocatesfored.org](mailto:annualmeeting@advocatesfored.org).

- 16 Finance, Capital & Facilities committee of the board, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 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 improving reading.

### NOVEMBER

- 8 Education Fair, exhibits by area nonpublic, charter and public schools, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Merchandise Mart. Free admission. Sponsor: Bessire & Associates.