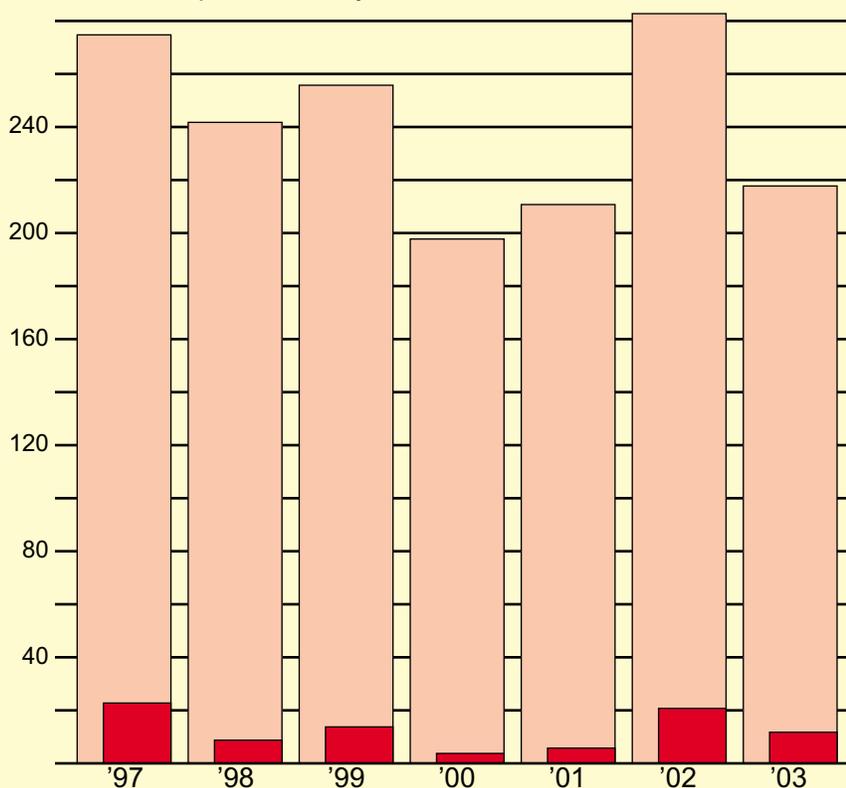


Possession of weapons

School incidents in the past week involving firearms revive public – and CMS – attention to possession of weapons on school campuses. Data collected by the state below indicates, in the wide pink bars, the number of reports of possession of weapons of all types within CMS. The narrower red bars at the bottom represent the number of firearms reported each year.



Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Out with the old...

New school board gets to work, first dismantling old board's assignment deals; is more ahead?

A new six-vote suburban majority quickly took control of CMS school board policy Tuesday night, dismantling votes only two weeks old on controversial assignment issues.

Onlookers prepared for a brief outbreak of unanimity instead were treated to an evening of fireworks involving:

- The repudiation of key compromises worked out with parents who were not notified that their assignment issues would be back on the table this week;
- The rejection of the election's top vote-getter, Kaye McGarry, for any leadership role; and
- A radical departure from historical operating procedures that, worst case, could send the board quickly backward toward the chaos of the '60s.

And as the board adjourned at 9:52 p.m., one of the unanswered questions was whether this was the end, or just the beginning, of major changes for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's public schools.

The assignment decisions reversed by the board affect few children. Handfuls of children in the Chantilly neighborhood won't stay with their Billingsville peers. A few children will be sent from Lansdowne to Elizabeth Lane, and another few will be sent from Lansdowne to Sharon.

All three actions taken Tuesday
Continued on Page 3

No mobiles: 'They're just squeezed in'

A report to the school board from its Bond Oversight Committee rolled the mobile classroom issue into the Board Room Tuesday night.

"You mentioned 20,000 students who are not in bricks and mortar," board member Lee Kindberg said after committee member Norm Gundel made his report. "Now, we have just under 600 mobile units. At roughly 20 kids per unit, that's 12,000 kids. I think I know where those other

kids are. Has the Bond Oversight Committee looked at what's happening at those schools to accommodate those kids?"

"They're squeezed in everywhere," replied Gundel, who represents the north on the oversight panel and managed Kindberg's election campaign. "The schools that you see that are shown as at 120% over capacity: That's over the capacity including the mobiles. Roughly 12,000 in the

Continued on Page 2

No mobiles: 'They're just squeezed in'

Continued from Page 1

mobiles, roughly 8,000 squeezed in."

"There are those of us who would like to see every kid in a seat inside of a building," said board member George Dunlap. "For a community as wealthy as this community, there is no reason why that ought not happen."

"That particular matter came up at our most recent meeting," replied Gundel.

"The question was what sort of difference was seen by teachers who were in mobile classrooms, as opposed to permanent buildings.

"And we really ended up with a third point, which is the teachers or the children who don't even have mobile classrooms. They're the ones squeezed in.

"If we were able to just magically drop 8,000 seats into the district right now, 400 classrooms, we wouldn't retire any mobiles, because just those 8,000 who were squeezed in would fill those classrooms."

"That makes the point why we need to go ahead with the bond referendum," Dunlap said.

The oversight committee was formed in 1997 in an effort to have a group of outside experts verify the need for the bond referendum before the voters that year. Highlights from Gundel's report on the group's activities:

– **Contractor payments.**

Cutting delays in payments will entice more contractors to work for CMS, Gundel said. CMS and county administrators are trying to streamline paperwork. The board also this fall approved the superintendent signing contracts up to \$100,000 without board approval. The board has already approved the projects involved.

– **Code inspection.** Summers often have found inspections at multiple school projects bottlenecked behind a single building inspection team that specialized

in education projects. Now all commercial building inspectors are available to inspect CMS projects, hastening the work.

– **Contracting.** Initial experience with a switch to contracting with a single general contractor to run each project has led to fewer additional costs and better quality. The panel also has reacted favorably to initial experience with the more controversial design/build process, in which money and time are saved by beginning construction before all design work is complete.

– **Funding.** "The committee has concerns about the adequacy of the continuing funding of CMS capital projects. We see a need for ongoing funding of both same-year growth, which was 4,000 students this year, and also our legacy facilities problems.

"These legacy problems include both our ongoing efforts to bring our older facilities up to the baseline standards of our newest facilities, and also our need to build new seats for the 20,000 current students who now lack a seat in a brick-and-mortar school."

No Child: A primer in one little detail

One of No Child Left Behind's costliest provisions on a per-child basis is a mandate to provide homeless children transportation to school, even if the homeless family roams across county or state lines.

And CMS has its first such child, Supt. Jim Pughsley said last week.

The child was first enrolled in a CMS school, Pughsley said. Then the family found temporary housing in Gaston County.

"We are charged with providing transportation from Gaston back to this child's school in Mecklenburg. That's a federal mandate. We don't have any choice in that."

Pughsley did not give further details, including the form of transport or the mileage involved.

School districts are under federal requirements to protect the privacy of children receiving such services.

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Out with the old, in with the new board

Continued from Page 1

had originally been recommended by Supt. Jim Pughsley, and he reiterated his support for the proposals before the board voted.

The majority, new members Kit Cramer, Kaye McGarry and Joe White joined by District 1's Larry Gauvreau, District 5's Molly Griffin and District 6's Lee Kindberg, cited the superintendent's support in explaining the reversals.

But Tuesday also brought to an end an unusual deal-making period when nine politicians agree privately on a chairperson and a vice chairperson. If the assignment votes Tuesday night were playing out any deals made during those private talks, no one was owning up to it.

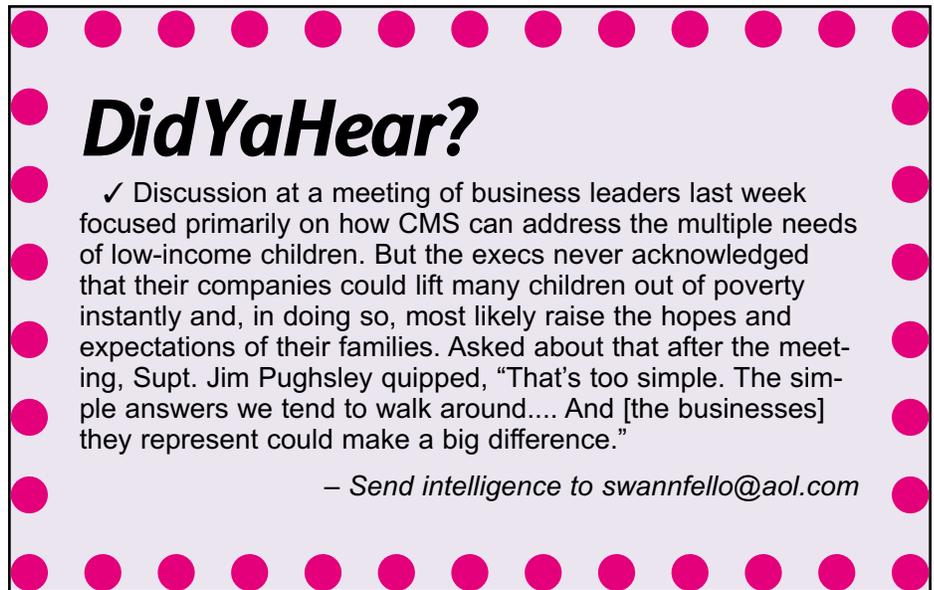
The decisions themselves have controversial consequences. Lansdowne is left with a rising percentage of minority and high-poverty students. Indeed, Dunlap asserted that the decision would acquiesce in white flight.

The Chantilly/Billingsville decision scrambles feeder patterns, sending elementary school friends to three different high schools, according to school board members. These are the so-called "splits" that parents hate and board members try to avoid.

For District 4's Louise Woods, who was stripped of her vice chairpersonship and relegated to a voting minority, the decisions would erode public trust in the board. The board's earlier compromises reversed Tuesday, she said, had been worked out with parents, but now those parents were not allowed to be part of the discussion as the board reopened the issues.

New leadership

The new board opened its first meeting at about 6 p.m. after a swearing-in ceremony and speeches by departing members Arthur



Griffin, John Lassiter and Wilhelmenia Rembert.

Newcomer Joe White was named chairperson. Newcomer Kit Cramer was elected vice chairperson. Molly Griffin's motion to elect them as a slate appeared to take Pughsley by surprise, and was "very unusual," according to one longtime CMS watcher.

The vote, with District 2's Vilma Leake absent while recuperating from surgery, was 7 in favor with one abstention. District 3's George Dunlap, citing in advance the controversial assignment decisions he knew were coming, abstained.

The leadership decision left McGarry scowling on the dais most of the evening.

Agenda by whim?

Tuesday's meeting may be longest remembered for the board's decision to abandon its policy of tightly controlling the agenda.

Joe White said during his campaign that the board needed to be able to talk about issues that even a single member of the school board wanted to talk about.

Former chairperson Rembert's decision this fall to deny Gauvreau's request to reconsider the assignment votes set the stage for Tuesday's policy change.

Gauvreau exercised his right to

appeal directly to the board, and made three successive motions to add assignment items to the agenda. Each request was approved 6-2, and each assignment decision was later approved in a separate vote but by the same margin.

Board policy on setting the agenda dates from 1968, with at least seven amendments having been made since that time. The policy Rembert followed placed final authority over the agenda in the hands of the chair and the superintendent.

That policy is still on paper. But the decisions to add agenda items on the fly Tuesday night meant that, as Woods pleaded, a contrary precedent was being set.

Longtime residents knowledgeable of board meetings in the '60s will recall boisterous nights when not just board members but citizens would yell out items they wanted to add to the agenda.

An earlier era's renegade, Bill Booe, "fought frequently" in the '70s to add items to the agenda. "There's a long history here," one observer said Wednesday.

White and Cramer, and the suburban-dominated majority they lead, are now in control. The legacy of committing equal resources to suburban growth and central city renewal – a policy that has brought relative peace to the community – is in their hands.

Briefs

Equity suit: The Kansas system of school finance was ruled unconstitutional and the legislature was given seven months to rectify the problem, the Topeka Capital Journal reported. Per-pupil spending by districts ranges from \$5,656 to \$16,968, violating the Kansas Constitution's requirement for uniform school opportunities statewide, and equal protection of the laws, District Judge Terry Bullock ruled. A 1999 lawsuit challenged both the state's level of funding for K-12 education, as well as the inequitable distribution of the money across the state's districts.

www.cjonline.com

Vouchers: Measured by total vouchers issued, Louisville's private program claims to be one of the nation's largest, the Lexington Herald-Leader reported. About 200 vouchers are given annually, and 1,100 have been given since 1998. Applicants must be eligible for subsidized lunch, and the vouchers pay up to 60% of tuition or a maximum of \$1,000 per year for three years. State law bans public money from Kentucky voucher programs.

www.kentucky.com

Double-dip: More than half the retired educators rehired under a Maryland law designed to help struggling districts hire for hard-to-fill positions are not teaching in priority subjects like math and special education, and are employed in wealthy districts, the Baltimore Sun reported. The law is up for review this summer.

www.sunspot.net

Hispanic scores: In Massachusetts, Hispanic students are the largest school minority group at 11% of the population, the Boston Globe reported. Hispanics' scores on the state test

Continued on Page 5

Brown v Board: A calendar of commemorations

The following events have been scheduled to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1954 Brown ruling ending school segregation. Listings compiled by UNCC College of Education. Details will be added as they become available.

JANUARY

- 17-19** Annual NCCJ civil rights youth conference for area high school students, focusing on how civil rights issues affect access to classroom instruction, coursework and other issues. Students will participate in King march and get a preview of upcoming Levine Museum exhibit "Courage." \$100 fee, scholarships available for residential program at Four Points Sheraton. For information: NCCJ, 704-535-7277.
- 31** Opening of "Courage: The Carolina Story that Changed America," Museum of the New South. Through Aug. 15.

FEBRUARY

- 1** Exhibit, "Impact of School Desegregation on the Charlotte Area," Atkins Library, UNCC. Through May.
- 11** Book discussion, "Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision" by Peter Irons, led by Louise Allen, 5 p.m., UNCC Library.
- 13** Professional development conference for CMS teachers, "Teaching about Brown v Board and Issues Related to School Desegregation," 8:30-3:30, Myers Park High.
- 23-27** UNCC Africa and Its Diaspora Week.
- 23** Lecture, "Issues facing African Diaspora and Education," Harvard's Prudence Carter, UNCC.
- 26** Lecture by Mary Dillard, Sarah Lawrence College, "Issues Facing African Diaspora and Education," UNCC.
- 27** Lecture by Anani Dzidzienyo, Brown University, "Issues Facing African Diaspora and Education," UNCC.

MARCH

- 2** Film, "The Intolerable Burden" about school desegregation in Drew, Miss., presented by filmmaker Constance Curry, Queens University.
- 3** Panel discussion, "Why Celebrate the Decision?" 7 p.m., Moore Hall, UNCC.

- 18** Book discussion, "Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary" by Juan Williams, led by UNCC's Ann McColl, noon-2 p.m., Cone Center Room 101, UNCC.
- 25** Book discussion, "Brown v Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy" by James T. Patterson, led by UNCC's James Lyons, 5-7 p.m., UNCC library.
- 31** Lecture and reception for the Brown sisters, Linda Brown Thompson and Cheryl Brown Henderson, 7 p.m., UNCC Cone Center.

APRIL

- 9-11, 17-18** "Pass the Peas," a play based on the story of Clarendon County, S.C., performed by the Afro-American Children's Theater, time and place TBA.
- 14** Book discussion, "Mixed Emotions: As Racial Barriers Fell, a University President Remembers" by former UNCC Chancellor Dean Colvard, led by UNCC's Cynthia Jackson-Hammond, 4-6 p.m., UNCC Library.
- 20** Panel of photojournalists James Peeler, Bruce Roberts, Don Sturkey and Cecil Williams explaining their work in "Focus on Justice: Carolina Photographers and the Civil Rights Movement," Levine Museum.

MAY

- 13** Film, "With All Deliberate Speed: The Legacy of Brown v Board of Education," 6 p.m., Levine Museum.
- 16** Drama, dance, music and art related to "Courage" exhibit, by Northwest School of the Arts students, Levine Museum.
- 17** Anniversary of Brown decision. Levine Museum open.

JUNE

- 10** Conference, "Through the Eyes of the Law": Lawyers and historians examine case's impact on education and civil rights, all day, Levine Museum.

Briefs *continued*

used for No Child assessment rose about 6 points, but lag all other demographic groups with score averages of 46.7 points out of 100 in math and 63.7 points in English.

www.boston.com

New market: An Oregon district plans to launch a “virtual” school as a charter and market it to 15,000 homeschooling parents statewide, the Oregonian reported. Advantages to the home-schoolers include access to a diploma rather than a GED, and free access to the online courses that cost individual parents \$1,200 a year. An Oregon law will expire in January that forced districts to fill 80% of their charter school seats with students from within the district.

www.oregonlive.com

Intern focus: New Orleans officials are working on a nonprofit’s plan to run a 400-student middle-high school in office space at the Superdome, the Times-Picayune reported. The unusual location would match the academic program, which would have no academic entry requirements and would focus students’ time not in class but on internships.

www.nola.com

What would Maria do?: A threat by Montessori parents to keep their children out of required state testing because of what it is doing to their Montessori program has Fort Lauderdale officials worried, the Miami Herald reported. Absences by only 25 students during testing could deprive a school of thousands in teacher bonuses.

www.miami.com

AP Chinese: The College Board announced it would develop an Advanced Placement course in Chinese. The decision follows a

A musical middle-school manifesto

Lyrics written and performed by Monte Selby marking the 30th anniversary of the the National Middle School Association and the publication of the trade group’s third edition of its “This We Believe” document:

I Will Believe

Chorus

I will believe – every child I teach
Is a flame of hope – burning brilliantly
A strong heart and mind – seeking out my hand
It’s within my reach – this I believe.

Verse 1

In the middle of each town – In the heart of every school
Behind a desk in a classroom – Is a single child for whom
This moment is the difference – Where the road is mapped and planned.

As childhood waves goodbye – Almost a woman or a man

Verse 2

I am here by choice – Right where I want to be.
The challenge is great – To inspire and lead
But how proudly they achieve – How profoundly they understand
How their laughing spirit soars – And I promise again...

– www.monteselby.com/selby_lyrics.txt. For sound file, www.monteselby.com/nmsaLIVE.swf

June announcement of upcoming courses in Italian, Japanese and Russian.

Single-sex classes: Colorado’s Sheridan Middle School reports initial successes with a voluntary single-sex track in core subjects, the Rocky Mountain News reported. Teachers report more students are participating in class. And boys want and get more hands-on instruction, while girls want and get more detailed explanations. At the pilot school, 69% of the students are on subsidized lunch and more than half are Hispanic. National research has suggested that minority and poor students may have the most to gain from single-sex instruction.

www.insidedenver.com

Calendar

For events commemorating the Brown v Board case, see Page 4.

DECEMBER

- 16** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services, 3301 Stafford Dr. off Wilkinson Blvd.
- 16** Policy Committee, 3:15 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 17** Education Budget Advisory Committee joins CMS Partners for School Reform, 8 a.m., Charlotte Chamber, 330 S. Tryon St., for program on KIPP academies.
- 18** Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, Board Conference Room.

JANUARY

- 26-28** North Carolina character education conference, Renaissance Suites Hotel, 2800 Coliseum Centre Dr. Download details and registration forms from pink box at www.ncpublicschools.org/charactereducation.

FEBRUARY

- 29** H.E.L.P. (Helping Empower Local People) town meeting on education for 2,500 people, time and place to be determined.