

North Meck group pushes balanced capital investment

Surrounded by lemons, north Mecklenburg parents set up a lemonade stand at the school board Tuesday night, pitching a school construction plan both to receptive board members in the room – and some wary county commissioners who were not.

The Families United for North Mecklenburg (FUME) pitch could also quiet center-city fears that the assertive suburban parent group was just looking out for its own neighborhoods.

The plan, said Rhonda Lennon, “gives us a solution that is flexible, dynamic, reasonable and fiscally responsible, while meeting the needs of our children – countywide.”

The proposal could peg bond-financed school work at \$144 million for the next 12 years, little change from the recent rate but far more than some county commissioners want to raise money for. It would maintain a '90s com-

Continued on Page 5

Equity in practice

School visits help panel see range of issues affecting whether all kids have equal chance

The effort to achieve equitable resources and opportunities for all children across a district as big as CMS is a war on a thousand fronts, a citizen panel has been learning.

In school visits, Equity Committee members have come face to face with adequate and inadequate spaces, impeccable behavior and disruptions, self-assured staffs and fuming staffs.

The committee is preparing a report for the Board of Education, due as the administrative staff releases its annual status report on its stewardship against a range of equity performance standards.

The status report will tell parents a great deal about schools: media center holdings, teacher turnover statistics, technology access and other ratios.

But nothing is quite as compelling as the impressions people get when they make a careful

visit to a schoolhouse.

That's just what the CMS Equity Committee has been doing this fall, and at last Friday's meeting, the group discussed some of their impressions.

Davidson IB

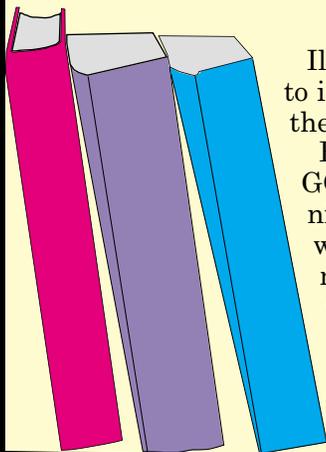
The magnet middle school is way out of racial balance, Rev. George Cook noted. Black “parents do not participate in any PTA functions because it is so far. There's a very low ratio of African American students... they are missing out on a whole lot.”

The building, an old elementary school, will be replaced in four years. The magnet was created with parents' understanding that the facility would be deficient. But members of the equity committee were still appalled:

The principal's secretary's office “is almost like being in a little box.” “The gymnasium is awful.

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For *EVERY* child, a book per month, birth to 5



Illinois' governor believes a great way to improve children's reading is to give them something to read – from birth.

Rod Blagojevich (pronounced bluh-GOYA-vich) said Sunday that, beginning in July, every Illinois newborn will be mailed a new book each month to read and keep. He told the Chicago Tribune, “When you own (books) and they're yours, and they just come as part of your life, all of that will contribute to a sense ...

that books should be part of your life.”

Parents may choose titles. If all take part, it will cost \$26 million annually. Dolly Parton's Imagination Libraries will handle mailing. The nonprofit pioneered the system in 1995. Illinois will be the first state to adopt the program.

In 2003, NAEP found 31% of Illinois fourth-graders proficient in reading. “When I was young, my mother read to me,” Blagojevich said. “Every child should have that same opportunity.”

Calendar

JANUARY

- 20 Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services, 3301 Stafford Dr.
- 20 School board's Policy Committee, 3:15 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 21 State Board of Education Chairman Howard Lee, board members John Tate, Jane Norwood discuss lateral-entry teacher training and teacher recruitment, 8 a.m., Charlotte Chamber.
- 21 Urban League membership campaign planning meeting, 6:30 p.m., 740 W. 5th St. RSVP to sbyoung@urbanleaguecc.org.
- 22 School board's Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room, Education Center.
- 26-28 North Carolina character education conference, Renaissance Suites Hotel, 2800 Coliseum Centre Dr. Download details and forms at www.ncpublic-schools.org/charactereducation.
- 27 School board's Curriculum

- Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room, Education Center.
- 27 School board meeting, 6 p.m., Education Center.
- 28 Joint meeting, School Board and Board of County Commissioners, 1 p.m., Board Room, Education Center.

FEBRUARY

- 19 Tony Habit, head of N.C. High School Project funded by Gates Foundation, 8 a.m., Charlotte Chamber.
- 26 Public School Forum of N.C. head John Dornan on impact of No Child Left Behind, 7 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 200 W. Trade St. Sponsor: League of Women Voters.
- 29 H.E.L.P. (Helping Empower Local People) concurrent meetings to hear parents' education concerns. Times and places to be announced.

MARCH

- 5 Urban League Annual Whitney M. Young Jr. Award Dinner, 6 p.m., Adam's Mark Hotel, \$125 for league members, \$150 for non-members. Call Robin Brown at 704-373-2256 ext. 203 for tickets or order online at www.urbanleaguecc.org.

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WWW.EDUCATECLT.ORG

Equity committee prepares its report

Continued from Page 1

They don't know it smells until they leave and then come back." The lost and found is on stairwell steps for lack of space.

The staff has asked for a storage unit. Supt. Jim Pughsley, who was listening to all this said, "We're going to do better than that. We're going to build them a new school."

But members raised more immediate, substantive management issues. Martin said the current principal isn't being allowed to help design the new building. The IB program will share a building with a regular middle school program.

And while new PCs are on the way to replace old Apple Macintoshes, there's no money to buy software, and the Apple software is not transferrable.

The library has no theft problem, and few books, said Rev. John Walker. Money was available for a security system, but not for books. So now the few books are "secure," but staff "would have preferred to use that money in a more amenable way."

East Meck High

Internally, the east Charlotte high school has "lots of great stuff going on," committee chair Julian Wright said.

There's the Feathers Restaurant run by the culinary arts classes. The school has "incredibly well-behaved kids and I think that flows down from the administration." The majority-minority school mirrors CMS demographics, but outpaces CMS and the state in SAT scores. A day with the school's student leaders left Wright saying, "Would that my daughters were that articulate when they are 17 or 18."

But externally, East has a problem. The school has a "perception issue that may be hard to deal

with," Wright said.

Students report that their friends at other schools believe that East is not safe, that it's a ghetto school. The building, first opened in the '50s, is surrounded by suburban housing and apartments off Monroe Road.

Faculty are concerned, he said, that East is losing the younger siblings of current students "because the parents who ought to know better are worried that East will not be the place they want" it to be by the time the younger children are ready for high school. The parents are creating "a self-fulfilling prophesy," Wright mused.

As for materials, Wright said faculty "feel incredibly nicked

and dimed" as the administration holds down photocopying to stay on budget.

Olympic High

Committee member Ellen Martin said both Olympic and First Ward Elementary seemed to be "getting what we say they should be getting.... They feel supported. We put our money where our mouth was, and it is coming down to the school level."

The principal traded in a teaching position to gain a person who could train all teachers in classroom routines that would keep potentially disruptive students on task. "Maybe CMS might need to look at" similar arrangements "for

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Mentoring 1st-year teachers makes difference

"In a separate multivariate analysis of the 1999-2000 SASS data, we explored the impact of mentoring and induction programs on the turnover of new teachers.

"After controlling for the background characteristics of teachers and schools, we found ...that the predicted probability of turnover of first year, newly hired, inexperienced teachers who did not participate in any induction and mentoring programs was 40%.

"In contrast... the turnover probability of beginning teachers who received what I labeled as 'some' induction (had a helpful mentor from their same field; had common planning time with other teachers in their subject area; and had regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers on issues of instruction) was 28%. Twenty-two percent of beginning teachers received just these three components.

"Finally, a very small number (less than 1% of beginning teachers in 1999-00) experienced what I label as a 'full' induction experience that included the above three components, plus five more: participated in a general induction program; participated in a seminar for beginning teachers; had regular or supportive communication with their principal, other administrators, or department chair; participated in an external network; and had a reduced number of course preparations. Participation in these activities, collectively, had a very large and statistically significant impact – the probability of a departure at the end of their first year for those getting this package was less than half of those who participated in no induction activities."

– Richard M. Ingersoll in *"Is There Really A Teacher Shortage?"* research co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy and The Consortium for Policy Research in Education, September 2003. Download at www.ctpweb.org



Ingersoll

Equity committee prepares its report

Continued from Page 3

schools that have that problem,” Walker said.

“The discipline issue is a baseline equity issue,” Wright said. “Every child deserves an environment where they feel safe and the teachers can do their job.”

Selwyn

The \$11.7 million replacement building opened last fall on the Myers Park neighborhood campus and the facility is “wonderful,” said committee member Jose Hernandez-Paris. The PTA raised \$30,000 in its latest fund-raiser, he said, and a community project is beautifying the campus shared with Alexander Graham Middle and Myers Park High.

A reputation for academic excellence, however, has led to crowding. Space for children needing special assistance is at a premium; an emergency shower area is being used for storage. “The staff fears that if they get too big they will lose what they have achieved.”

A recent teacher transfer came from an Equity Plus II school, Hernandez-Paris said. “The teacher was resentful that the situation in the Equity Plus school drove her to come to Selwyn.... She was almost in tears. She blamed it on administrators not being supportive enough to make changes in the school.”

Hernandez-Paris said he met a black parent with a good job who drives her child to Selwyn to avoid high-poverty Tuckaseegee. “She has a choice. But her choice is not necessarily open to everyone.... The parents that don’t have that ability are stuck.” And the parents who can move their children via choice leave behind a PTA that is less able to support the parents “that don’t have an ability to move to other schools,” Hernandez-Paris said.

Thomasboro

The newly refurbished and expanded westside elementary is “fantastic,” and discipline problems “are nonexistent,” said Wright. “There wouldn’t be [any discipline problems] at my house if we all had to deal with Mildred Wright,” he quipped.

But Thomasboro is one of the schools that the assignment plan resegregated. CMS staffer Rahman Kahn pointed out that Wright was probably the only white male of any age in the building during his visit. Wright said that was possible.

Academically, however, Thomasboro is succeeding. “Can we duplicate that in other places with enough resources and enough Mildred Wrights? Yeah, I think we can.” He did not express an opinion on whether the community should.

Wilson

The visitors were impressed. Not with the building, which still needs work, but with the academic strides teachers have achieved. “I could only imagine the improvements possible if the atmosphere were improved,” said Hernandez-Paris.

Most recent teacher turnover was 30%, down from 48% the previous year. Still “teacher rotation has negatively affected children tremendously.”

Teacher concerns revolve not around the facility but discipline. Both teachers and the principal said they did not want to use traditional CMS discipline policies, which lead to 10-day suspensions that disrupt learning.

Students who are suspended and then return rarely catch up and are lost academically for the rest of the year, teachers told the visitors.

Teachers and administrators would both prefer the staffing to create a school-within-a-school, where the few children that might be disrupting each class could be sent for counseling and assistance.

“Some of the teachers even offered to use their own time to help the children overcome their problems,” Hernandez-Paris said.

Teachers facing disruptions by students can call security and have a student removed from the class. Few teachers use that option. Why? Because, according to Hernandez-Paris, teachers told him that “when a teacher calls too many times it reflects badly on the teacher, so they are hesitant to use the system.... It’s very awkward.”

CMS is providing the promised materials. Teachers reported “getting all the resources they need.” But the PTA is run by teachers because so few parents are involved in the school.

And the system may not have at the school the personnel to meet the school’s basic needs.

At all lunch shifts, Hernandez-Paris said he was told, there are only two cashiers. “Children literally eat in line because they don’t have time to sit down.... By the time they get to the cashier they have eaten most of their food.

“It happens at all shifts... it is really bad for those kids.”

– Steve Johnston

Museum seeks help for its ‘Courage’ exhibit

The Museum of the New South is seeking volunteer tour guides for “Courage: The Carolina Story that Changed America.”

“Our greatest need is for tour guides Monday-Friday mornings,” says the museum’s Robin Morris. The exhibit opens Jan. 31. The museum will train all volunteers.

The exhibit tells the story of the DeLaine family and the citizens of Clarendon County, S.C., who brought the first case challenging school segregation.

Contact Morris at 704-333-1998 ext. 238 or rmorris@museumofthenewsouth.org for more information.

North Meck group seeks a balance

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... pact to spend roughly equal amounts on constructing new schools to serve suburban growth, and bringing to today's standards the older buildings serving older neighborhoods.

"We must," said FUME's Norm Gundel, "build enough new brick-and-mortar seats every year to meet that year's expected growth. We are currently in the hole on capacity – we have 20,000 students today without a seat in a brick and mortar classroom – and we cannot allow that hole to become deeper.

"Second, we must build out of our facilities backlog over a fixed period of years. By facilities backlog, we mean two things: One is our baseline standards backlog. Although we have made much progress, we still have great deficits in the educational function of our unrenovated older buildings. Let us be plain: FUME fully supports the baseline standards renovation of every occupied seat.

"Our other facilities backlog is our brick-and-mortar undercapacity. We now have 12,000 students in mobiles plus 8,000 more students just squeezed in everywhere. This 20,000 number will grow by 3,000 more students in August when we open classes without a single new school. Even if we need to retain 200 mobiles for flexibility, which is 4,000 seats, we will still be 19,000 brick-and-mortar seats short."

Lennon said the plan, summarized in the box above, "meets our annual growth – countywide.

"It eliminates our baseline standards backlog, while renovating or replacing buildings that do not meet the standards – countywide.

"It eliminates the undercapacity backlog, getting 19,000 students out of mobiles, off of stages and auditoriums, out of art rooms, storage rooms and tutoring

FUME's capital spending plan proposal

Priorities:

- 1. New growth** **\$57 million annually**
Build brick-and-mortar classrooms for anticipated 3,000 new students annually. (No new schools open this August.)
- 2. Renovations** **\$685 million over period**
Bring up to "baseline standards" all schools throughout the county.
- 3. Playing catch-up** **\$361 million over period**
Build brick-and-mortar classrooms for 8,000 of the 12,000 students now in mobile units, the 3,000 expected in August, and the 8,000 now in auditoriums, storage rooms and hallways all over the county.

How fast should this be done?

FUME wants the board to decide. Of its three options, it recommended the 12-year plan, saying 15 years was too long to wait and that adults were accustomed to 12-year cycles in education.

Annual spending	10-Year Plan	12-Year Plan	15-Year Plan
Growth @ 3,000/year	\$57,000,000	\$57,000,000	\$57,000,000
Renovations	68,500,000	57,083,333	45,666,667
Playing catch-up	36,100,000	30,083,333	24,066,667
TOTAL ANNUALLY	\$161,600,000	\$144,166,666	\$126,733,334
Total new seats added (Renovated seats not included)	49,000	55,000	64,000

Source: Families United for North Mecklenburg Education

Notes: FUME says it estimated annual growth using year-to-year growth from 20th-day enrollments between 1989 and 2003. It estimated construction for new growth at \$19,000 per seat. It estimated undercapacity using existing figures of 12,000 seats in mobile units, plus 8,000 children squeezed into nonclassroom spaces, plus 3,000 new students expected this August for which no new classrooms will be added, minus 4,000 seats in mobile units to remain to adjust for annual enrollment shifts.

rooms, and into brick-and-mortar classrooms – countywide...."

Board members did not immediately respond to the proposal – a tradition designed to prevent angry debates during a section of the meeting devoted to "Requests From The Public."

— — —

New principals: Seven new principals were named Tuesday. All were already principals, except as noted:

- **Edward Ellis Jr.**, to Waddell High from Crestdale Middle, replacing Michael Faulkner, who resigned.
- **Priscilla Graham** to Druid

Hills, from assistant principal at Paw Creek, succeeding Joan Dunn, who retired.

– **Patricia Johanson** to Myers Park Traditional, from assistant principal at Endhaven, succeeding Lois Lee, who retired.

– **Kendra March**, to Crestdale from Elizabeth Traditional, replacing Ellis.

– **Charmaine Marshall** to Oaklawn, from assistant principal at David Cox Road.

– **Thomas Wood** to Elizabeth Traditional, from Pocopson Elementary in West Chester, Pa.

– **Diana Zellner** to Highland Mill Montessori, from assistant at that school, succeeding Nancy Gaillard, who retired.

Give new assignments a chance to work

By SHARON STARKS

I am continually disappointed by the negative, and often belligerent, attitude I find expressed on the pages of *Educate!* each week. Last week's column by Richard McElrath is a case in point.

Mr. McElrath asserts that CMS has been failing black students for 50 years. Presumably this means that during our 30 years of court ordered desegregation black children were not being properly educated.

Yet Mr. McElrath is quick to label those who support our new method of assignment as "selfish," even though there is no denying that educational progress is now being made throughout our city.

Yes, we still have a long way to go. But I believe that providing academic excellence for all children has become a major goal of our community. This was certainly not the case when my family moved to Charlotte 10 years ago.

We came to Charlotte from Kansas City, which has outstanding suburban school districts but a miserably failing inner city school system. I grew up in Cincinnati, which likewise had wonderful suburban schools but a troubled city system. And I taught school in suburban Chicago, an area that followed exactly the same pattern as Cincinnati and Kansas City.

I will admit that when we first moved to Charlotte and were introduced to our "urban" system I was appalled. Not only did my son have an 11-mile bus ride to attend his elementary school, but also the school he attended was poorly maintained and often did not have adequate supplies.

Three fourths of the children attending this uptown school were bused in from far southeast Charlotte, and had been for many years, so I did not believe its inadequacies were the result of its location in a low-income neighbor-

hood. There appeared to be little civic support for education itself anywhere in Charlotte but much pride in the fact that our children were bused.

My first impression of Charlotte's school situation was that we needed suburban school districts. I saw no advantage in being part of a "major urban school district," a label that



Starks

seemed to be a point of pride here in Charlotte.

I found it extremely disingenuous that many civic and business leaders touted our desegregation efforts yet sent their

children to private schools. And I found the racial tensions that seemed to be constantly in play extremely counter-productive to the educational process.

I also was amazed how little credit was given to the suburban and urban parents who were providing the district with extraordinary volunteer efforts.

However, as the years passed and I became more involved in CMS and my son's education here, I gradually came to the conclusion that without suburban schools and parents, our system could easily become like those of

Kansas City, Cincinnati, or Chicago.

Our suburban parents have not deserted the system, as did many upper-class Charlotteans during the busing years. They have demanded educational excellence and have used their skills to improve not just their nearby schools but schools throughout the city.

They have volunteered generously, they have voted in favor of bond issues, and as taxpayers and citizens they have rightfully expressed their views of what our city's educational priorities should be. It is difficult to understand how Mr. McElrath can cast them as "selfish" or "just us" people.

Mr. McElrath's comments could lead one to believe that he would prefer to see our system purged of suburban parents (and thus become another failing urban system) rather than give our new assignment system a chance. Name-calling and divisive language are not going to solve our educational problems.

How refreshing it would be to see Mr. McElrath and like-minded individuals put their efforts into supporting our community's efforts rather than tearing them down.

A push to maximize number ready to graduate

Dropout season is fast approaching, and a school board member sought Tuesday night to press CMS to assist second-semester seniors as they face graduation deadlines.

"This is the term where our children have 28 credits they have to make," said District 4 member Louise Woods. "If they don't see a way to graduate in the springtime or fairly close to that, we could have a pretty good number of dropouts very quickly."

Woods acknowledged staff efforts to schedule students into classes they need. But she encouraged Supt. Jim Pughsley to expand services at Midwood High and Morningside at Graham, two alternative schools, "to be sure that what we do at the individual schools will actually meet the needs of all the students who could pass [graduate] except for one or two courses that they might have failed."

N.C. education group issues '10 to watch in 2004' list

In the December issue of "The Forum Report," the Raleigh-based Public School Forum of N.C. issued its annual "10 to watch in 2004" list. Excerpts:

- 1 Uncertain School Funding.** "Instead of massive infusions of new dollars into K-12 education, 2004 is likely to be another 'hold the line' year where lawmakers will attempt to spare K-12 the heavy-handed cuts already experienced in other sectors."
- 2 Election Year Madness.** "...the real race may be for control of the N.C. House."
- 3 Governance of K-12 Schools Will Be Under Scrutiny.** "In the nineties, friction between the state superintendent and the State Board became so aggravated that the two entities ended up in court...."
- 4 Consequences of NCLB Will Be Felt.** "The wide gap between the ABCs definition of 'at grade level' and 'proficient' rates on NAEP or NCLB's plans [is] sure to spark a debate."
- 5 NCLB Will Be a National Election Issue.** "State legislators, school board members and county commissioners are quickly realizing that for schools to meet NCLB targets it will require a massive infusion of new dollars."
- 6 The Search for Close-the-Gap Strategies Will Intensify.** "It appears that the state is going to have to devise recruiting strategies that will level the playing field between the state's poorest and wealthiest systems, both now locked in a [high-quality teacher] recruiting battle."
- 7 Teacher Training Institutions Will Come Under Fire.** "Those who cling to the tradition of three-credit courses offered only on campus at the convenience of teacher training institutions may find themselves irrele-

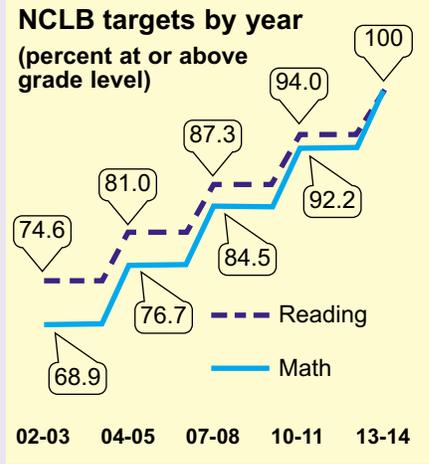
DidYaHear?

✓ Cynics guffawed about "Profiles in Courage" after members of the State Board of Education refused to raise the bar for the N.C. testing program at their meeting last week. The bar was set very low in the mid-'90s. The architects didn't want to flunk so many children the first year that legislators would kill the testing program. They also wanted enough teachers to be rewarded for success that all teachers would see value in cooperating with the program. The plan was to raise the bar incrementally every year. That's never happened.

One reason state officials didn't want to raise the bar this year is that the federal No Child Left Behind will raise ITS bar next spring. To avoid the bad publicity and sanctions under No Child, schools must have 81% of its children in each of its testable subgroups reading at or above grade level and 76.7% doing math at or above grade level. To drive home just how big a jump in achievement that represents, state officials may show each school whether they would have made Adequate Yearly Progress last spring if the higher bar had been in effect. No word on just how ugly the results were.

✓ Don't ever say CMS can't figure ways to save money. Why, its Jan. 13 board meeting agenda was printed on letterhead that names Wilhelmenia Rembert as Chairperson and Arthur Griffin and John Lassiter as members. That trio left the board Dec. 9.

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com



vant."

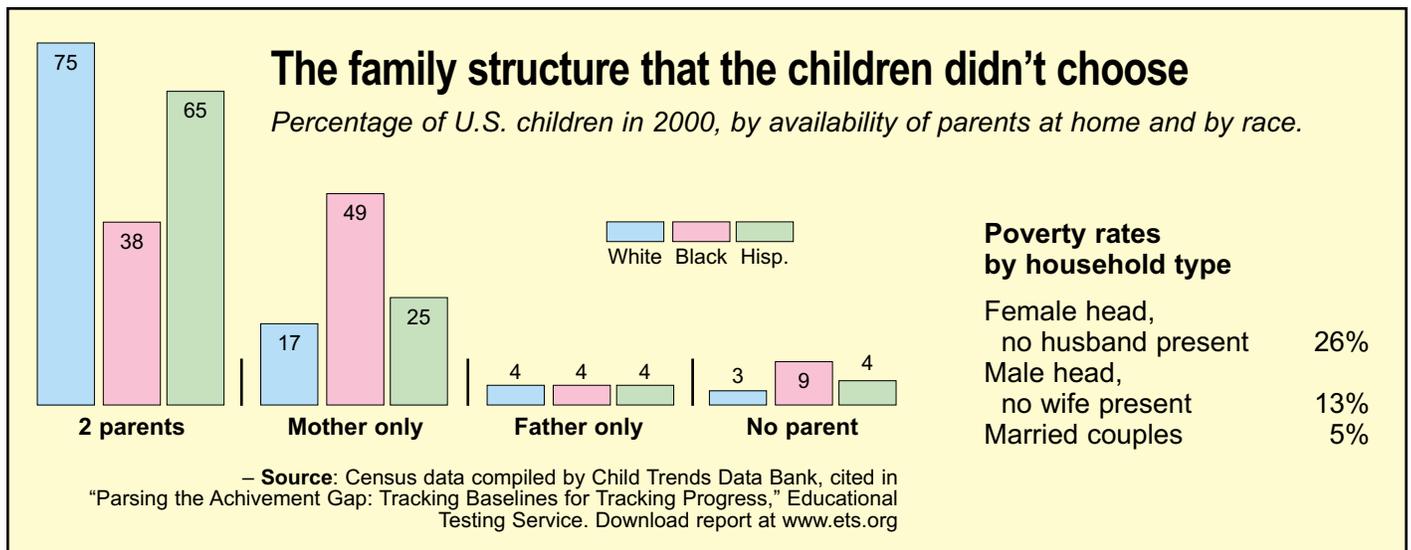
8 DPI Will Be Under Pressure to Deliver. Additional tasks under No Child are falling on a department downsized from 1,200 to less than 500. "In an era of cutting government, making the case for a more muscular DPI will be a difficult task."

9 High School Reform Movement Will Gain Momentum. "Fewer than half of the employees who found themselves unemployed when Pillowtex closed hold high school diplomas... without a major turnaround within our state's high

schools, they will be joined by thousands more each year."

10 Leandro Case Will Resurface. "Judge Manning who has stridently criticized the state for its failure to meet its constitutional obligation [to provide educationa opportunity for all its young people] may very well become a driving educational force in 2004." [The N.C. Supreme Court may rule in the case Feb. 6.]

– The Forum Report is not available online. For information, see www.ncforum.org



Poverty rates by household type

Female head, no husband present	26%
Male head, no wife present	13%
Married couples	5%

Briefly...

... in the Carolinas

No Child tweaks: North Carolina will adopt a statistical method for annual testing that, if it had been in use last year, would have allowed 57% instead of 47% of N.C. schools meet No Child standards, the Charlotte Observer reported.

www.charlotte.com

Making a deal: When Wake County's school system sold excess land near a high school to developers, one of the conditions was that the development include affordable housing for teachers, The News & Observer reported.

www.newsobserver.com

Teacher training: At the S.C. trial over adequacy of state education funding, a trainer of teachers said the state failed to train staff how to be successful with at-risk students, The State reported. "It's puzzled me in education how a teacher must receive training to teach advanced classes...but for at-risk students they just put anybody in the classroom," Kim Tiedemann testified.

www.thestate.com

Sex ed policy: The November election brought change to Wake County's school board, and has led to removal of comprehensive

sex education content from a high school health elective, The News & Observer reported. The county will revert to the state's policy that promotes abstinence until marriage.

www.newsobserver.com

The top job: Nationally, women make up 75% of school employees, the News & Observer reported. In North Carolina, 17% of superintendents are women.

www.newsobserver.com

Uneventful trip: Supt. Jim Pughsley was not mentioned in the New York Times coverage of last Thursday's Tennessee event at which Pughsley appeared with President Bush. On Friday, when CMS Equity Committee members asked, "How was George?" Pughsley replied, "OK."

www.nytimes.com

... in the nation

No fix in sight: Fifty years after Brown, the public schools "are profoundly unequal and no one has any plans" to do anything, Harvard Civil Rights Project co-director Gary Orfield told the Detroit News.

www.detnews.com

Guidelines: A \$1.1 million settlement in a California case mandates annual training for staff and students of middle and high schools on how to prevent harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity, the Los

Angeles Times reported. The precedent applies in 9 Western states.

www.latimes.com

Funding suit: A new lawsuit challenges the way Missouri distributes money to its school systems, the Columbia (Mo.) Daily Tribune reported. Per-pupil spending ranges from \$4,561 to \$13,748 annually.

www.showmenews.com

Drug discounted: Secretin, a drug widely reported in the '90s to benefit children with autism, has flunked the latest clinical trials, the New York Times reported.

www.nytimes.com

One less demographic: Illinois has eliminated the category "other" in its testing program, reducing the number of demographic hurdles its schools must leap for No Child Left Behind, the Chicago Tribune reported.

Parents of multiracial children object to being forced to choose.

www.chicagotribune.com

Huge classes: Some high school teachers face classes of 200 students, allAfrica.com reported.

www.allafrica.com

Healthy snacks: At Orchard Elementary in Cleveland, the Plain Dealer reported, students participating in a pilot snack program say their favorites are pineapple, strawberries, grapes and red pears. Most hated are cauliflower and brussels sprouts.

www.cleveland.com