

Equity at 4

Citizen panel voices concern that community is abandoning resource pledge; district's data spotlights standards not yet met

An official citizens panel that sees itself as a "brass band" ready to trumpet CMS successes in meeting the needs of all students is instead preparing "a clanging cymbal of an alarm."

As the CMS Equity Committee Wednesday reworked a draft report to the Board of Education, chairman Julian Wright observed, "I can't give you any facts that there is less money going to Equity schools, but I can tell you there is a perception."

And as school board members Kit Cramer and Louise Woods looked on, committee members divided not along racial lines but across them over the resegregation that has occurred since CMS ceded assignment decisions to parents.

Next Tuesday, the school board formally receives the fourth annual staff report on equity, from which the information in the accompanying charts was derived. The board also will receive the second annual report from its citizen Equity Committee, which by Wednesday had a draft that included the accompanying quotes.

Taken together, the two reports portray a district achieving some of its goals (Page 3), while missing the most important ones by a country mile. The chart on this page, for example, shows that 90% of the elementary schools targeted for extra financial support because of large concentrations of high-needs students have faculties that fall short on one or more elements of applicable teacher quality standards.

With a goal of having only 7% of staff new to teaching, the affected schools still have up to 20% of staff new to the profession. With that kind of turnover, virtually all the other teacher goals are out of reach. Middle school numbers are worse, and the high school faculty situation (Page 3) helped lead to a discussion

"We believe that CMS is at a crucial time, and we urge this Board to have the resolve to stick to the long and admittedly costly track toward equity. To deviate from that path now poses the real risk that we will fall further behind and never catch up on providing equity for all children...."
 — Draft report

Elementary school faculty

On key measures of teacher quality, CMS's annual equity report looks only at Equity Plus schools; how regular schools compare on the same measures is not identified. The data is for this school year. Advanced degrees received in December were counted. In six areas, E+ schools are compared with CMS Schools of Distinction and Excellence in 2001-02 and 2002-03. Below, how schools rated, with schools not meeting standard in red.

(In Percent)	Clear license	Adv. degrees	New to teaching	Avg. exper.	Board cert.	5+ yrs. exper.
STANDARD	93	31	7	10.7	6	65
Albemarle Rd.	96	26	14	9.7	2	50
Allenbrook	96	21	4	10.5	0	54
Ashley Park	100	30	9	8.9	4	61
Berryhill	100	50	0	16.3	18	82
Briarwood	84	18	20	10.1	0	58
Walter Byers	100	21	14	11.1	4	57
Chantilly/B'ville.	91	30	12	10.2	6	64
Collinswood	91	31	3	10	0	74
Devonshire	100	40	5	11.6	0	60
Druid Hills	83	12	7	10	0	49
First Ward	96	30	2	10.7	11	66
Hidden Valley	90	26	7	7.6	2	52
Highland Ren.	100	20	7	9.9	11	67
Idlewild	94	33	6	12.1	6	78
Irwin Avenue	95	21	9	8.7	5	53
Lincoln Heights	95	30	5	11.4	3	59
Merry Oaks	96	26	4	13.3	10	78
Montclair	98	40	12	11.9	7	72
Nations Ford	97	26	12	8.6	3	62
Oakdale	90	17	10	8.8	7	50
Oaklawn/Brun	90	26	19	7.9	3	45
Pawtuckett	89	21	11	6.9	4	46
Pinewood	93	22	7	6.6	11	37
Reid Park	94	39	3	10	6	76
Sedgefield	98	37	2	13.5	5	84
Shamrock Gar.	91	36	11	8.8	0	60
Statesville Rd.	89	27	16	10.4	3	65
Sterling	97	38	3	12.6	6	68
Thomasboro	94	34	6	13.7	0	78
Westerly Hills	97	36	3	9.1	6	61
Windsor Park	89	24	24	7.6	0	42
Winterfield	96	20	11	9.1	2	47
Equity Plus Avg.	94	28	9	10.2	5	61

that dominated the school board's January retreat.

Equity Committee members said Wednesday they had confidence in the details in the staff report, which they said mirrored conditions at schools they visited.

The debate over resegregation was launched by vice chair Paulette Higgins, who predicted that schools "are not going to get what they need" when they are minor-

Continued on Page 3

Our economic future is shaped in the classroom

By DAVE BOLIEK

Economic growth is born in the classroom. The quality of every high school's graduates determines the quality of that community's workforce. The quality of the workforce determines the quality of current and future jobs. And the quality of jobs determines the ultimate quality of the community. Everybody says that's common sense. A strong body of research also makes the link between highly effective teachers and high levels of student education achievement and high levels of education achievement to economic vitality.

Teachers, principals and other education leaders who prepare our students clearly form the basis for the entire equation. Research shows teachers are the most important factor affecting student learning. Higher levels of student learning link with a higher quality workforce. The challenge then becomes generating higher levels of student achievement in order to provide a higher quality workforce. Improving teacher quality provides that link.

Consider the economic impact of high school dropouts.

In a lifetime, a high school graduate will earn \$280,000 more than a high school dropout. The economic cost is staggering and repeats itself every year. North Carolina surrendered almost \$6.1 billion in lifetime earning potential when 21,773 students dropped out of high school in 2001.... That is why an emphasis on helping every teacher engage more students through effective teaching is critical. Effective teachers actively engage students in their own learning. As a result, students persist in schooling and don't drop out.

Not only do students stay in school, but when they have a

most effective teacher, especially in early grades, research shows their achievement gain can go up 53 percentile points in a year, while students of least effective teachers show only a 14-percentile point gain in a year. Over three years, students with the most effective teachers show an 83-percentile point gain, while students with least effective teachers show a 29-percentile point gain – a 54-point difference.

An additional element to consider: From October 2001-2003, 521,266 North Carolinians filed unemployment claims as a result of being laid off. For workers who provided the information, 64% of the laid off workers had skills broadly associated with high school dropouts (short and moderate term on-the-job training). This appears to validate findings that show “workers with higher educational attainment (and higher literacy scores) are unemployed less... than workers with lower educational achievement.”

One reason for this may be that higher educational achievement values learning and provides students with the skills that support lifelong learning processes. These processes allow the holders to either maintain their jobs or quickly and creatively adapt or find new jobs in the face of changing economic conditions.

To address the economic crisis, policymakers must work on multiple levels. This includes immediate steps to improve today's economic climate and at the same time prepare for tomorrow's challenges to economic vitality.

While policymakers focus, of necessity, on short-term problems, the long-term solutions – based in improved education for all students – await implementation.

Improving teacher quality today will not result in improved educational achievement for today's workforce. The focus of improving teacher quality today is the labor force 10, 20, 30 and 40 years in the future, which is critical for the state's ongoing economic growth and vitality.

Clearly, the state's economic future and its ability to withstand future economic volatility will depend on our public school graduates and their abilities to learn, earn and adapt. As Tom Lambeth of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation put it so well, “the path to economic development begins at the schoolhouse door.”

The writer is CEO of ExplorNet, a Raleigh-based nonprofit training teachers in the use of classroom technology. Research citations were dropped, but are available upon request; message swannfello@aol.com.



Boliek

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Continued from Page 1

ity-dominated. “That’s what we’re going to be known for – and that’s not a perception.” City leaders are interested in attracting new businesses, she said. “Segregated schools are not going to do that, let me tell you.”

“Can equity address that issue?” asked committee chair Julian Wright. “I would agree we are getting too many segregated schools.” He asked if CMS policy should be to “shift

resources around so you discourage segregated schools.” Later he asked whether the equity effort is aiding and abetting racial and economic separation.

African-Americans on the committee are divided. “Why are we even trying to wrestle with segregation?” asked Greg Metcalf. Kay Cunningham replied, “We’re just saying we want to keep the focus on not slighting those schools because they are high poverty.”

“It’s a perception, right?” asked Metcalf.

“It’s a perception that you don’t want to become reality,” Cunningham replied.

“If it’s a perception, it’s not as high a priority as achievement,” Metcalf said.

CMS staffer Rahman Khan encouraged the debate, saying that “people in their own separate neighborhoods

“We have concerns about schools teetering... on the brink of becoming qualified for Equity Plus II status [should be supported with extra resources so they wouldn’t become Equity Plus II schools] and those just coming out of Equity Plus II status... not have their extra resources removed immediately.... Our ultimate goal should be to have as few schools qualifying for Equity Plus II status as possible.”

– Draft report

are having their own discussions,” oftentimes without the information available to the committee. “Don’t take the responsibility lightly,” he said, calling the opportunity to raise the issue an “awesome responsibility.”

Board member Louise Woods agreed. “There’s an elephant in the middle of the room, and nobody is willing to acknowledge it.... Is the segregation the result of inequities, or as we have more segregation do people rush to leave?” With parental choice controlling assignment, if a school reaches 75% minority one year it will be 90% minority the next, she said.

“Why are people leaving the Rama Roads of the world? Is it because the school has more poor

✓ = Goal met

Page

Audio-visual	✓
Class size	✓
Co-curricular	5
Courses	✓
EC programs	5
Facilities	4
Materials	✓
Media centers	5
Teachers	1, 3
Technology	5
Textbooks	✓

Middle, high school faculty

The staff report looks only at Equity Plus schools, so there is no way to know how regular schools compare. The data is for this school year. Advanced degrees received in December were counted. In six areas, E+ schools are compared with CMS Schools of Distinction and Excellence in 2001-02 and 2002-03. Below, how schools rated, with schools **not meeting standard in red.**

Middle schools

(In Percent)	Clear license	Adv. degrees	New to teaching	Avg. exper.	Board cert.	5+ yrs. exper.
STANDARD	87	29	10	9.4	6	56
Albemarle Road	83	25	9	9.2	2	48
Cochrane	96	29	6	9.7	0	55
Coulwood	84	24	14	9.2	2	56
Marie G. Davis	81	21	5	6.9	0	42
Eastway	88	23	15	6.3	8	41
Martin	81	18	16	6.1	1	37
Northridge	88	27	11	7.7	4	56
Piedmont	97	34	5	10.7	8	68
Randolph	98	24	4	10	0	58
Ranson	91	20	11	6.6	2	46
Sedgefield	89	19	13	9.5	4	64
Spaugh	92	16	20	7.4	2	54
J.T. Williams	89	29	13	8.3	0	55
Wilson	75	13	13	8.2	2	46
Equity Plus Avg.	88	23	11	8.3	2	52

High schools

(In Percent)	Clear license	Adv. degrees	New to teaching	Avg. exper.	Board cert.	5+ yrs. exper.
STANDARD	93	38	6	14.4	6	73
Berry Tech	79	26	31	8.2	1	52
Garinger	82	31	20	11.6	2	61
Olympic	85	25	20	10.6	9	59
E.E. Waddell	86	43	11	11.1	2	57
West Charlotte	86	28	10	12.5	2	72
West Meck	87	31	10	11.6	7	62
Equity Plus Avg.	84	31	17	10.9	4	60

children, or does it have more to do with the majority-minority?”

Metcalf said he saw the shifts as “more of an economic divide,” though “it could be racial.” Later, he suggested the committee “advise the board that you have this coalescing of the haves and the have nots... The question is, what is the Board of Education’s role in that? How can they get out of the box to affect that?”

Committee member Rev. George Cook Jr. grew up in segregated black schools.

“When I [hear the word] segregation, I think of a law that is being broken.... Like objects are just going to attract.... But how do we make sure that everybody gets the resources from our tax dollars and how do we make sure that the money is spent for the purposes for

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 3

which our tax dollars are being raised? To me that's what equity is about....

"I see the elephant as fear, because it has been a reality that under those conditions [of segregation] the resources did not follow.... To me the challenge is, should we be trying to figure out how to make sure they follow? To me that's what the job is."

He agreed with Wright that the question has become a more important one to raise now than it was even a year ago. "We easily revert back to what we are accustomed to,"

"We also encourage this Board to think long and hard before deciding to 'reprioritize' the spending of bond money that was passed in prior years for particular work on particular schools.... This Board shifts bond money at the risk of losing trust."

– Draft report

Cook said. "We need," Cook said, "for the political leaders of our community to come together to reach consensus on what equity should look like... so we can all come together, just as we do for the Panthers."

"You don't have anything at stake with the Panthers," Cunningham replied.

Member Ellen Martin said she thought "everybody was on the bandwagon" in support of equity when the choice plan was new, "but I can see it waning. It is more in jeopardy the further we get...."

Woods asked if the committee thought achievement gains were equitable. Committee members said the data released to them made comparisons impossible.

"We urge this Board and the Board of County Commissioners to resist the idea of imposing any sort of fixed 'cap' on spending either in terms of real dollars or as a percentage of the annual Mecklenburg County budget. In short, such a 'cap' restricts too much CMS's need to be able to respond to increases in its student population, year-to-year, both in terms of numbers of students and the needs of the particular students coming into our school system."

– Draft report

But committee members agreed that school visits have convinced them that the equity programs – smaller class sizes, more materials, additional support staff – do help the children at high-poverty schools. The group's final report will make a pitch for continuing the effort, and even strengthening it.

The committee defines equity this way:

"Equity is the condition in which each student is able to realize his/her full potential for academic achievement, individual performance, and personal success. Equity requires an ongoing

process to allocate resources to each school so that each student has access to rigorous academic challenges and an environment that promotes high expectations. An equal allocation of baseline resources is the

Facilities: What's done, what's left to do

List shows year schools came into compliance with then-applicable facilities standards. The 2004 report creates two suspect new categories, here listed in *italic*, of schools that "come close" or where the equity gap "has been significantly reduced."

Schools **in bold** won't meet standard until projects planned or under way are completed. The report is silent on conditions at the 21 schools whose names are indented from the left margin.

Elementary	Morehead '98	Kennedy
<i>Albemarle Rd.</i> '04	Mountain Is. '02	Lambeth Dr. '03
N. Alexander '98	Myers Park '03	Martin '98
<i>Allenbrook</i> '04	Nations Ford	McClintock
Ashley Park '04	<i>Newell</i> '04	Mint Hill '03
Bain	<i>Oakdale</i> '04	Northeast
Barringer '02	Oakhurst '03	Northridge '98
Berryhill	Oaklawn '04	Northwest
<i>Beverly Woods</i> '04	Olde Prov.	Piedmont '04
Billingsville '04	<i>Park Road</i> '04	Quail Hollow
Blythe '98	<i>Paw Creek</i> '04	Randolph
<i>Briarwood</i> '04	<i>Pawtuckett</i> '04	<i>Ranson</i> '04
<i>Bruns Ave.</i> '04	<i>Pineville</i> '04	Robinson '02
W.G. Byers '01	Pinewood '04	Sedgefield
Clear Creek	<i>Piney Grove</i> '04	Smith
Collinswood	Providence Sp. '02	South Charlotte '98
Cornelius	<i>Rama Road</i> '04	Southwest '03
Cotswold	Ranson Rd.	<i>Spaugh</i> '04
David Cox Rd. '98	Reedy Creek	J.T. Williams
Crown Point '98	Reid Park '98	Wilson
Davidson '98	Sedgefield '02	
Dilworth	Selwyn '02	High
Druid Hills '01	<i>Shamrock Gar.</i> '04	Audrey Kell Rd.
Eastover	Sharon	Berry Tech '02
Elizabeth Ln. '01	Smithfield '98	Butler '98
Elizabeth Trad. '03	Statesville Rd.	East Meck
Endhaven '03	<i>Steele Creek</i> '04	Garinger
First Ward '03	Sterling '02	Harding
Greenway Pk. '98	Thomasboro '03	Hopewell '01
Grier Academy '01	Tuckaseegee	Independence
J.H.Gunn '02	<i>Univ. Meadows</i> '04	Mallard Cr. Park
Hawk Ridge '00	University Pk.	Myers Park
Hickory Grove	Villa Heights	North Meck
<i>Hidden Valley</i> '04	Westerly Hills '02	Olympic
Highland Mill '02	Winding Sp. '98	Providence
Highland Ren. '01	Windsor Park '04	South Meck
<i>Hornets Nest</i> '04	<i>Winterfield</i> '04	Vance '98
<i>Huntersville</i> '04		E.E. Waddell '01
Hunt'towne F.	Middle	<i>West Charlotte</i> '04
<i>Idlewild</i> '04	<i>Albemarle Rd.</i> '04	West Meck '04
Irwin Avenue '98	Alexander	
<i>Lake Wylie</i> '04	Bradley '98	Pre-K, Alternate
<i>Lebanon Road</i> '04	Carmel	Derita
Lincoln Hts. '02	Cochrane	Chantilly
Long Creek	Comm. House '04	Metro
Mallard Creek	<i>Coulwood</i> '04	Midwood/TAPS
<i>Matthews</i> '04	Crestdale '98	Morgan
<i>McAlpine</i> '04	Davidson	Plaza Road
<i>McKee Road</i> '04	Marie G. Davis	Starmount
Merry Oaks '02	<i>Eastway</i> '04	Tryon Hills
Montclair	Alex. Graham	

first step toward equity, but equity requires much more. Equity requires a differentiation of resources among all schools to enable every school to meet the unique needs of every student."

Exceptional children

The staff report surveyed Equity Plus and Green Zone schools, and found 72 or 45% of classes fully equipped. Overall, 13% of E+ schools and 10% of all schools surveyed were at standard. Below, schools with materials at less than 95% of standard last May. CC = Cross-Categorical; BED = Behavioral-Emotional Disabled.

Resource CC* BED**		Resource CC* BED**	
Elementary		Middle	
Nath. Alexander	92	Albemarle Rd.	83 90
Ashley Park	90	Alexander	92 72 90
Berryhill	87 87	Bradley	90 86
Blythe	92	Cochrane	27 61 67
W.G. Byers	90	M.G. Davis	75
Irwin Avenue		Martin	87 83
Long Creek	93	Northridge	67 89
Merry Oaks	73	Ranson	90
Morehead	92	Sedge Mid.	90
Nations Ford		Spaugh	53 80 80
Oakdale	88	J.T. Williams	79 85
Pawtuckett	92	High	
Reid Park	69	Harding	72 80
Sedgefield	88	Independence	41 75 27
Shamrock Gar	94	W. Charlotte	92
Sterling	79	West Meck	94 92 92
Westerly Hills	88 83	Waddell	89 66
Windsor Park	94 83	Hopewell	57 91 80

Media center holdings

The staff report says all CMS schools meet the minimum quantitative standards for book holdings. Against quality standards, the story is different: On age of the collection, only 7.5% of the collections are outstanding. And in terms of a Core Collection based on the N.C. Standard Course of Study and "reputable selection criteria," only 16% of schools are at standard. Collections containing fewer than 75% of the Core Collection were rated "minimal." Inadequacies in the "story collection" are important because these mostly picture books shape new readers' view of the value of reading. Schools below were rated "minimal" in the identified areas.

School	Non-fiction	Story coll.	Ref.	School	Non-fiction	Story coll.	Ref.
Elementary				Middle			
Allenbrook		x		Pawtuckett		x	
Ashley Pk.		x		Reedy Creek		x	
Bain		x	x	Selwyn		x	
Berryhill		x		Univ. Meadows		x	
Briarwood		x		Alternate			
Cotswold		x		Metro	x	x	x
Elizabeth T.		x		Midwood		x	
H'towne F.		x					
Merry Oaks		x					
Montclair		x					
Morehead		x					
Oakdale		x	x				
Oakhurst			x				
Oaklawn		x	x				

Technology

The staff report says CMS is moving from a goal of one computer for each eight children, or an 8:1 ratio, to a 5:1 ratio. All schools meet the 8:1 ratio, and 76% meet the 5:1 ratio. All Equity Plus schools meet the 5:1 ratio except Winterfield. These schools do not yet meet the 5:1 ratio.

Elementary	H'towne Farms	Smithfield
Bain	Lake Wylie	Steele Creek
Barringer	Lansdowne	Tuckasegee
Beverly Woods	Lebanon Road	Univ. Meadows
Blythe	Long Creek	Univ. Park
Clear Creek	Mallard Creek	Villa Heights
Cornelius	McAlpine	Winterfield
David Cox	McKee Road	Middle
Crown Point	Mountain Island	Alexander
Davidson	Newell	Quail Hollow
Dilworth	Paw Creek	Pre-K
Eastover	Pineville	Amay James
Elizabeth Lane	Piney Grove	Double Oaks
Endhaven	Providence Spring	Plaza Road
Greenway Park	Rama Road	Starmount
Hickory Grove	Reedy Creek	Tryon Hills
Huntersville	Sharon	

Co-curricular offerings

The staff report says CMS met its goal last year of having 65% of all schools offering a list of co-curricular offerings. But reaching the 2005 CMS goal will take \$184,000 for staff stipends. All Equity Plus schools meet the current standard. Below, the schools that did not have listed programs. NAL=National Academic League.

Elementary	Chess	Math Olympiad	Providence Sp.	
			Reedy Creek	x
Nath. Alexander	x	x	Selwyn	x
Barringer		x	Sharon	x
Blythe		x	Smith	x
Clear Creek	x	x	Steele Creek	x
Cotswold		x	Univ. Meadows	x
David Cox Rd		x	Villa Heights	x
Crown Point		x	Winding Springs	x
Elizabeth Trad.		x		
Endhaven	x		Middle	Chess
Greenway Park		x	J.M. Alexander	x
J.H. Gunn		x	Davidson IB	x
Hawk Ridge		x	Northwest Arts	x
Highland Mills	x		Robinson	x
Hornets Nest	x	x	Smith	x
Lake Wylie		x		
Lansdowne		x		
Lebanon Road	x	x	High	Chess
Long Creek	x	x	Hopewell	x
Mallard Creek	x	x	North	x
Matthews	x	x	Northwest	x
McKee Road		x	Providence	x
Mountain Island	x	x	South	x
Park Road		x	Vance	x
Paw Creek	x	x	Waddell	x
Pineville	x			
Piney Grove		x		

Safe and sound in suburban schools: Is that, too, a myth?

“Parental concern about the rising influence of sex, drugs, and delinquency in urban schools has long been recognized as a significant factor in the last few decades’ population flight from the cities to the suburbs.

“Parents are fleeing urban schools not just because of low academic performance but also because they believe suburban schools are safer and more wholesome.

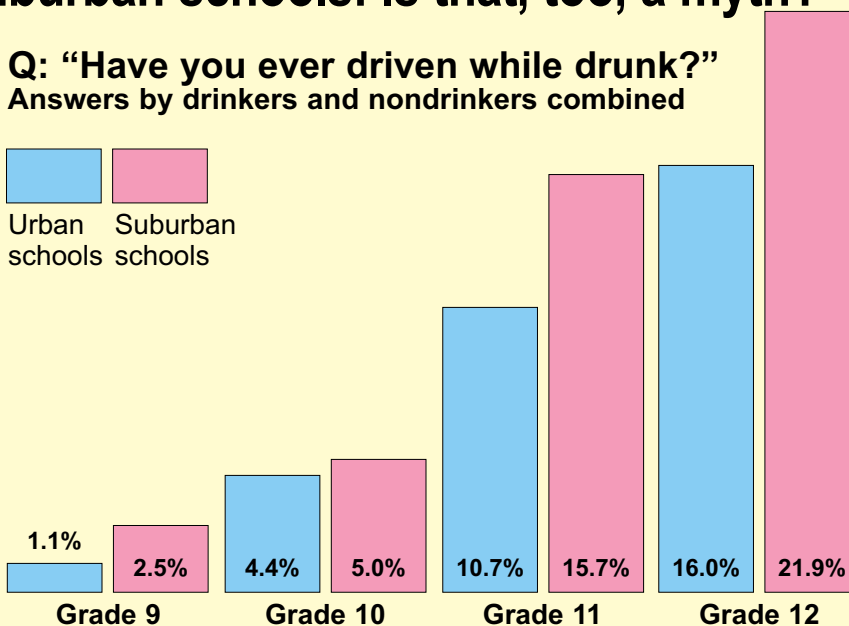
“But the results from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health suggest that fleeing from city to suburb doesn’t produce much difference in the level of these problems one finds at the local school.

“The desks may be newer, the paint may be fresher, and the faces may be whiter, but the students are just as likely to have sex, use controlled substances, and break the law.

“The comforting outward signs

Q: “Have you ever driven while drunk?” Answers by drinkers and nondrinkers combined

Urban schools Suburban schools



of order and decency – shiny new schools armed with expensive textbooks and staffed by teachers who have mastered the latest educational fads – don’t seem to be associated with substantial differences in student behavior.”

– Conclusion from “Sex, Drugs, and Delinquency in Urban and Suburban Public Schools,” by Jay P. Greene, and Greg Forster, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.
www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_04.htm

CMS’s millions go to renovation, not new seats

The writer is chairman of the Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee and an at-large candidate for the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners.

Since CMSS has been adding students at a rate of about 3,000 per year, one would have thought CMSS would be adding enough seats every year to accommodate this growth. They are not.

This year, intending to spend \$150 million, after having spent \$150 million last year, only 66 permanent new seats will be added in 2004.

The bond money we are told is so critical is being spent on renovations, which add few seats. The intent is to add 100 mobile units

to accommodate growth this year, and another 80 mobile units the next. In fact the intent of CMS is to maintain a high level of mobile units through 2012, while continuing to spend exorbitant amounts of money renovating schools, which makes them nicer, but can’t be shown to improve educational results, but is definitely politically motivated.

The fact is there is no statistical relationship between a new school, or a renovated school, built to whatever standards, and educational results. So to rationalize spending money to bring schools up to baselines while continuing to add mobile units is hypocritical.

For this reason alone, our new school board needs to re-examine

the priorities of the past and focus on schools for students, not spending taxpayers’ money on projects which can only be described as political pork for a few activists.

If the Board of Education can’t do this, then perhaps the Board of County Commissioners should take control of spending on buildings and then CMS and the Board of Education could focus more closely on education.

Lewis Guignard

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SCHOOLS. FOR A
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**From
Readers**

Calendar

FEBRUARY

5 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., 11th floor conference room, Government Center. County commissioners to attend, discuss budget issues.

5 Documentary film premiere: "Negroes With Guns: Rob Williams and Black Power," produced and directed by Churchill Roberts, Afro-American Cultural Center, 6 p.m., free but for reservations, 704-374-1565. Panelists: Tim Tyson, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Glenda Gilmore, Yale; Gerald Horne, UNC-Chapel Hill; Gregory Dixon, UNCC; Dr. Reginald Hawkins; Mabel Williams, widow of Robert Williams.

7 Education Fair featuring representatives from N.C. colleges, 10-2 p.m., Hoefener Center, 610 E. 7th St. Sponsor: Charlotte Housing Authority.

7 UNC Law Conference on Race, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity. Held at Chapel Hill law school. Registration and information: www.unc.edu/crcge. Students free; nonstudents \$20; CLE Credit \$75. Lunch included. For information, e-mail Allison Blixt at ablixt@email.unc.edu.

19 Tony Habit, head of N.C. High School Project funded by Gates Foundation, 8 a.m., Charlotte Chamber.

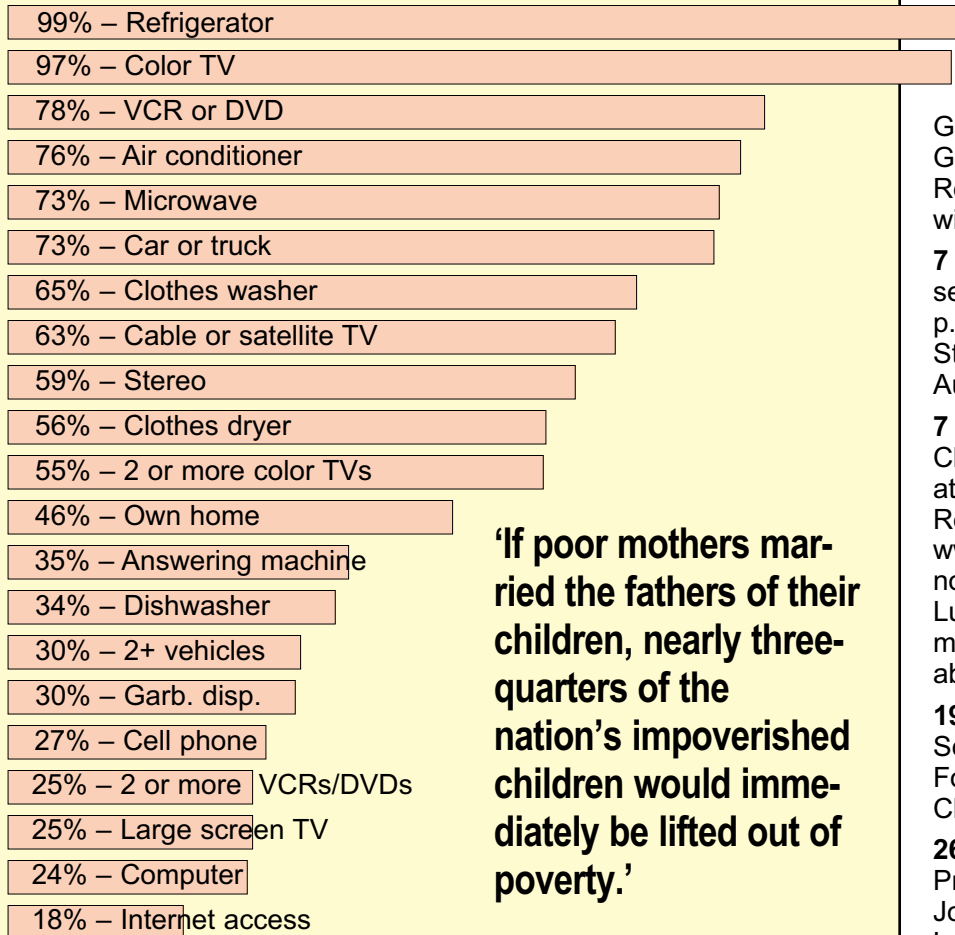
26 Public School Forum of N.C. President and Executive Director John Dornan on impact of No Child Left Behind, 7 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 200 W. Trade St. Sponsor: League of Women Voters.

29 H.E.L.P. meets to hear parents' education issues, 4 p.m. Sites: Advent Lutheran, 8840 University City Blvd.; St. Paul Baptist, 1401 N. Allen St.; Mount Carmel Baptist, 3201 Tuckseegee Road, Antioch Baptist, 232 Skyland Ave.

Blaming the poor, or truth-telling?

A recent Heritage Foundation paper collated from federal sources the following information about ownership of property and consumer goods by households that are labeled "poor" under federal rules, for example a family of four with less than \$18,556 in annual income, or a family of three with less than \$14,702. Income does not include food stamps and the value of public housing. The Foundation paper observes, "Even if a family's income falls below the official poverty thresholds, the family's actual living conditions are likely to be far higher than the image most Americans have in mind when they hear the word 'poverty.'"

The full study is at www.heritage.org/research/welfare/bg1713.cfm



'If poor mothers married the fathers of their children, nearly three-quarters of the nation's impoverished children would immediately be lifted out of poverty.'

'If work in each family were raised to 2,000 hours per year – the equivalent of one adult working 40 hours per week throughout the year – nearly 75 percent of poor children would be lifted out of official poverty.'

– Robert E. Rector and Kirk A. Johnson, "Understanding Poverty in America," Jan. 5, 2004 by The Heritage Foundation. Downloadable at www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/bg1713.cfm

Brown calendar

— Compiled by UNCC College of Education

ONGOING

"Courage: The Carolina Story that Changed America," about a Clarendon County, S.C. case that became part of *Brown v. Board*. Levine Museum of the New South. Through Aug. 15.

FEBRUARY

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.

23 Lecture, "Issues Facing African Diaspora and Education," Harvard's Prudence Carter, Myers Park High.

26 Mary Dillard, Sarah Lawrence College on "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, "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, Cheryl Brown Henderson, 7 p.m., UNCC.

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, 4-6 p.m., UNCC Library.

Briefly

... in the Carolinas

Start times: The Wake County Board of Education meets Feb. 18 to discuss start times for high schools. A research committee is examining if there are differences in achievement between students in schools with 7:30 a.m. and 8 a.m. start times.

www.wcpss.net

Mobile classroom upgrades: Researchers in Chapel Hill are studying whether there are financial or achievement gains from installation of high-grade trailers. An experimental portable at Chapel Hill High sports skylights and low chemical emitting paint and carpet.

www.newsobserver.com

... in the Nation

Girl-fighting: A new book asserts that mean, aggressive behavior in girls is the result of cultural messages girls receive about the value of femininity and beauty, the Christian Science Monitor reported. The author of the book, Lyn Mikel Brown, suggests that girls who are confident and feel powerful are less likely to put down others.

www.csmonitor.com

Spelling can be taught: Traditional spelling instruction is not good enough, the Boston Globe reported. Spelling takes time and effort. Author Rebecca Bowers Sipes says spelling lists are important, but some children do not learn to spell that way. Knowing the rules — even if there are many exceptions — is important.

www.boston.com

Parent power: The Jefferson Parish, La., school district is beginning an Internet-based coalition of parents to keep track of education issues in the legislature, the Times-Picayune reported. The purpose of the coalition is to inform and unite parents as well as increase the district's political power.

www.nola.com

Honor rolls: Schools in Nashville are requiring parents to sign permission slips for their children to be listed on the honor roll, Education Week reported. Parents of underachievers complained that their children could be embarrassed if their names weren't on the list. School lawyers advised that the state's privacy laws might prohibit the release of any information, good or bad, without the parent's permission.

www.edweek.org

No dirty looks: The new alter-

native to traditional education may be virtual schools, Yahoo.com told its readers. About 1,000 students go to school at home via computers in Wisconsin's virtual charter schools. The children are assigned a licensed teacher with whom they can communicate via phone or e-mail. The students are required to take the same standardized tests as other students.

www.yahoo.com

Unifying achievement data: A new Web site, www.schoolresults.com, offers access to state school report cards online, the Boston Globe reported. The goal is to unify data and make it easier for parents and policymakers to make comparisons between schools and districts.

www.boston.com

Viable students: More home-schooled children are being admitted to college, the Des Moines Register reported. As the number of home-schooled children is increasing, they are attending more schools, and more colleges see them as viable students. According to Tom Bear, dean of admissions at the University of Evansville, home-schooled students perform well on standardized tests and their performance has helped change their image.

www.desmoinesregister.com