



Discussing *Brown Saturday* at UNC, from left: Julius Chambers, William Darity, Gerald Torres, Lani Guinier and Jack Boger.

Principal is the key

Leaders of poor but high-achieving schools build ties to community, researcher finds

If you're looking for ways to improve schools, start in the principal's office.

Or so says Gerald Torres, a University of Texas researcher who Saturday recounted his inquiry into what ignites stellar student achievement.

Sifting Texas data for underprivileged districts with high test scores, Torres found among the state's 1,500 school districts just 26. He then put down the numbers and got in his car. What he found in every school he visited, he told a Chapel Hill audience, was a top-notch principal.

"They made use of every resource they had," Torres recalled. "This doesn't always mean money.

"The principal turned out to be the key character," and the successful ones "built a community within the school and used that community to build a community around the school."

Successful school principals, Torres said, made contacts with the community that resulted in donations of, for example, badly needed landscaping and painting that boosted morale.

In one town where there was no public library, Torres said, the principal ignored state law and opened the school library to community use.

The community was involved in school decisions, and "parents were involved in the educational development of the kids."

"A lot of these parents never graduated from high school themselves, yet they were integrated into the planning process."

Continued on Page 4

Playing catch-up

As hearings open on shifting building funds, panel confronts reality of backlogged needs

If North Carolina's legacy as a poor state unable or unwilling to meet its children's basic needs were to get dressed, what would she wear?

Wednesday she was dressed in summary tables like the following three-year projection of CMS spending on capital needs:

	(In millions)
Lifecycle replacements	\$26.4
Mandates, initiatives	18.1
Baseline standards	120.0
Growth, real estate	274.1
TOTAL	\$438.7

Members of the Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee reviewed three- and 10-year projections for school needs. And on most lines of the charts and spreadsheets, there is evidence of effort to overcome a legacy of deferred maintenance, undersized facilities and a reliance on mobile classrooms to accommodate growth. New building codes are also forcing CMS into costlier work when it renovates.

CMS Building Services chief Guy Chamberlain urged the CCBAC to support a more "realistic" standard for major renovations than the once-ever-60-years notion the committee embraced earlier. While that standard

Continued on Page 7

Case didn't outlaw use of race in CMS assignments

The writer represented two black families in the litigation under discussion.

Commissioner Bill James' March 19 letter contains a basic misunderstanding about the result of the 1999 trial and subsequent appeals that ended the CMS desegregation order. He claims that the court ruled that any use of race in assigning students is now illegal.

Lots of people seem to believe that was one of the outcomes of that litigation. Nothing could be more wrong.

A court of appeals ruled that Judge Potter's effort to make such a declaration was unlawful, and reversed on that issue unanimously.

Judge Potter's ruling declared that 1) CMS was "unitary" and awarded attorney's fees to the intervening families; 2) that the magnet program's use of race to assign students was unconstitutional and awarded attorney's fees on that basis; 3) that CMS was permanently enjoined from considering race in operating the schools; and 4) CMS was sanc-

tioned for stonewalling in discovery.

On appeal, a panel of the Fourth Circuit reversed Potter on the first three issues.

The entire Fourth Circuit (then 11 active judges) agreed to hear the appeal and then did the following:

1) It voted 7-4 to uphold Judge Potter's unitary status finding, but voted 6-5 not to award attorney's fees.

2) It voted 6-5 to reverse Potter on the magnets, finding that the magnet program was constitutional under the desegregation order, and denied attorney's fees.

3) It voted 11-0 to uphold the discovery sanctions ordered by Judge Potter.

On the issue that Bill James trumpets – that race cannot be used – it voted 11-0 to "vacate" the injunction against the use of race, finding no legal basis for the court to enter that injunction.

The question of what this school system can do in considering race in the operation of public schools has not been decided. The recent decisions in the Michigan higher education cases have raised the prospect that race can be considered in educational settings if applied appropriately.

And a decision in the Second Circuit appellate court upheld the use of race in a student transfer program operated by agreement

between the urban Rochester, N.Y., district and surrounding suburban districts.

Mr. James is well-known for his strong opinions. His assertions about what was decided in this recent court case, however, are quite mistaken.

Luke Largess

Gap could even grow as black scores rise

The writer is a Harvard professor of education.

The article on closing the achievement gap (*Educate!*, March 26) is misleading because you are talking about percentages of students over a threshold, not about equal achievement, which would imply similar scores.

There is a very normal tendency for scores on any well-established test to rise as it is more and more built into teaching.

As they rise and the great majority of whites were already over the threshold, the percentage of minority students over that mark will rise and thus the gap will close.

But the gap in actual achievement levels may be as large or larger than before, because white scores may be rising too, above the threshold level and thus not seen in this single statistic.

Gary Orfield

From Readers

Well, no wonder...

According to the county's Web site, Mecklenburg has dueling chairmen.

"Parks Helms, a Democrat, is Chairman of the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners, serving his sixth two-year term on the Board," according to the site. And what about that other guy?

Tom "Cox represented District 5 during his first term, then ran for and was elected Commissioner At-Large in November 2000, was re-elected in 2002 and was named chairman by a vote of the Board."

Educate! is a journal on public education focusing on Charlotte-Mecklenburg and N.C. Our aim is to supply information useful to you in your role as student, parent or citizen.

Finances: *Educate!* is made possible by individual, corporate and foundation donors, including a grant from the Knight Foundation. To make a tax-deductible donation, send your check to The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204 or, at www.networkforgood.org, use the keyword Swann Fellowship to make a secure donation.

Publisher is The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204; 704-342-4330; swannfello@aol.com. The Fellowship, named for missionaries 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 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.

Editions: The Internet edition is free to e-mail recipients, or may be downloaded at www.educateclt.org. To be removed, message swannfello@aol.com. Subscribe at www.educateclt.org. A print edition is available by mail for \$125 a year. First published September 2000; 6-week average circulation through last issue: 3,238.

People: Fellowship officers and staff: Leonard R. (Deacon) Jones, president; Lucy Bush Carter, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director and *Educate!* editor; Beth Kinny, outreach director. Assisting with this edition: Kathleen McClain, Stephanie Southworth.

Kindberg defends board review of projects promised to voters

District 6 school board member Lee Kindberg Tuesday defended the current re-examination of commitments made during bond referendums, saying a new assignment plan, its movement of magnets from inner-city schools, and “the growth out in certain parts of the county” made the review necessary.

And the growth, she said, is “not just in the suburbs,” citing enrollment increases at schools off South Boulevard and Albemarle Road. Mobile classrooms can be moved to some sites, “but the cafeteria didn’t get any bigger, and the media center didn’t get any bigger, and the gym – if they had one – didn’t get any bigger.”

When a listener at the Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum suggested a new standard – that bond money should go where teacher turnover is high, student achievement is low and the neighboring community has few resources – Kindberg said the board must also consider overcrowding. “It is a real balancing act....

“Having 2,500 kids in a school built for 1,500 is an issue and it is unacceptable. We are losing parent support....” Crowding alone may cut into achievement, she said. “In schools that big, kids get lost.”

But Kindberg also said teachers were a key to raising student achievement, and that “it’s tough to teach where kids come to school without breakfast. It’s tough to teach where kids don’t have supplies that they need.... Teachers have got to have a good work environment.”

The board directed the Bond Oversight Committee to hold public hearings to gauge public response to changing construction priorities. Those hearings began Thursday night, and continue next week (calendar, Page 7).

One problem with asking resi-

dents their opinion about moving bond money to new projects, Kindberg noted, is that “we are gathering input on something they haven’t seen, because there isn’t anything to see.” Only after the hearings are held will the CMS administration create a list of which projects will be pushed ahead and which pushed back.

The school board is expected to vote on the list in May.

Movement of bond money should not pit center city against suburbs, Kindberg said. “We’ve got old schools that need renovation all over the county.”

She said she would like to see a 400-student prototype school that would use less land, encourage walking to school and fit better into neighborhoods.

Such schools might have a homework center for afterschool use, and security should be designed around community use during afternoons and evenings.

Most new elementaries are clones of Smithfield Elementary, she said. “We have been rubber-stamping that around the Charlotte area whether it was the right thing to do in that community or not.”

On other matters:

– Discussing the vision statement in which an earlier school board committed “to ensure that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system becomes the premier urban, integrated system in the nation,” Kindberg said “premier” to her meant that “every kid has the skills... regardless of color or background, you have the skills.”

Offered a definition of “integrated” as a system that had no racially or socioeconomically identifiable schools or classrooms, Kindberg said her definition of “integrated” was that “every child has an equal chance at success.” If it takes three times the resources to give some children that chance of success, then that’s



Lee Kindberg: School funding system is “not very professional. It’s not a good way to do business.” Reform talks with county commissioners are “going with some difficulty, shall we say.”

what CMS should spend, she said.

In response to another question, Kindberg said her top priority was safety, and her second priority was that all children “learn to do reading and math, wherever they come from.... My purpose is education.”

Kindberg acknowledged that poverty was a risk factor, and that poor children “have a much lower chance of success if we don’t as a community help them early and... keep at it.” But she said she would “rather that we have folks choosing into” high-poverty schools, not forced into them.

“The reality is we’re going to have more of a spread than we’ve had.”

“I can’t fix the housing patterns of Charlotte,” she said later. “I’m not going to put kids on a bus two hours a day unless they choose to. With today’s housing patterns and today’s traffic, I’m not going to do that just to hit some numbers.”

If she had a magic wand, she said, “I would fix some of those things.” In the meantime, “it’s more important to put the

Session looks at Brown at 50

Continued from Page 1

And in every one of the 26 districts, the principal at a high-achieving school was a detail person.

Successful principals knew where each child was academically. During class visits, principals could assess whether each child was making progress. And the teachers knew the principal was assessing them based on that progress.

Torres said Texas' accountability system helped focus principals' attention: In creating "grades" for schools, the Texas system rewards improvement by the lowest performers in each grade.

Torres' comments on high-achieving schools were part of a wide-ranging discussion of education issues at a UNC Chapel Hill symposium marking the 50th anniversary of *Brown v Board*, the 1954 Supreme Court decision declaring legally enforced racial separation in public education unconstitutional. Other highlights:

– "Of the students at the most selective universities," said Harvard Law School professor Lani Guinier, "3% come from the bottom 20% of the socioeconomic indicators. Ten percent come from the bottom half of the socioeconomic indicators.... Higher education has become a gift from the poor to the rich."

– "I think a lot of people are losing faith in the system," said Charlotte lawyer Julius Chambers, "because they have seen efforts to open opportunity wiped away by a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, by justices who don't see anything wrong with allowing schools to resegregate and the children to suffer as they did before Brown."

"We have not yet convinced a court that integration is a value. There are a lot of people still questioning whether Brown was the right decision, whether it is important for schoolchildren to attend a diverse school, and whether black and white children learn anything from a school that is racially mixed."



Gerald Torres, right, is a University of Texas Law School professor.

Guinier said Torres' 26 schools were examples of institutions with strong roles in their local community.

"That in fact is something we lost through desegregation. The schools once played that role in the community and I'd like to see some way for them to reclaim that role."

"I'm not saying all children have to" be educated in the neighborhood, "but schools have to become a community site for education."

Guinier referred to the controversial work of the late Berkeley anthropologist John Ogbu, whose studies in the wealthy Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights found middle class black students underperforming whites.

"It's wealth," chimed in UNC economics and sociology professor William (Sandy) Darity.

"There is another interpretation," Guinier shot back, "the possibility that middle class blacks, along with many poor, and many Americans period, have been educated to defer to professionals.... There's a feeling... that it's inappropriate for us to ask questions of people who presumably know more than we do. I want the children to ask the teacher...."

Indeed, the symposium gave much evidence that these highly placed experts on minority rights do not necessarily speak with one voice.

– Darity, in responding to a question about minorities fleeing public schools, said his family had both stayed, and fled, depending on the circumstance. "You cannot sacrifice your child, if you have the wherewithal to do otherwise, for a principle." White academies with an affluent clientele are no longer the only option, he said. "We should take the capacity of parents to choose educational options for their kids, and take the dollar sign out of it."

Chambers responded: "Sandy, I don't see us ever achieving what you're describing." Vouchers, he asserted, had been "a great disappointment for a lot of poor and minority children."

– Chambers is the lawyer whose 1965 lawsuit was upheld by the Supreme Court and led courts nationwide to use busing as a means to end segregation. "I will again say," Chambers said Saturday, "that we ought to be striving for a diverse educational program.... It is absolutely crucial for the kind of society we should be building."

But Guinier said "the issue of racism is not about little children... it's not about tolerance... We think racism is simply a function of individual prejudice."

"Racism," said Guinier, "is foundational in the way we have constructed this country."

She repeated a story told by a black student at Harvard, who was a second-grader after schools were resegregated. A white student would complain to the teacher that the black student would pee on him during bathroom breaks. "The teacher, whenever she hears this, beats the black kid in front of the class," Guinier said.

The accuser was the son of the most influential member of the community. Guinier's point: "He was

Session looks at Brown at 50

Continued from Page 4

bringing power to the table that influenced the way other people responded.”

On other matters:

–Torres suggested that magnet schools should use their program monies to benefit all children at the school, not just the children registered in the magnet. The magnet money should be used “to improve the school as a whole.”

– The first step to parent involvement, Torres said, may be giving the parents ownership of a room. At one Austin school, when parents meet with the principal, the principal comes to the parents’ room. “This is their space in the school,” he said. From that room, community partners can help with job training or other needs. “This isn’t brain surgery,” Torres quipped, “but it’s harder than brain surgery.”

– Business owners will support school improvement, Torres said, because “the businesses realized that if the school got better, their property became more valuable.”

– The best way to improve parent involvement, Torres said, was to have parents survey other parents about their needs. “It does not happen overnight,” Torres acknowledged, adding, “That’s also called community organizing – but we called it peer counseling.”

– Chambers said low test scores by minority students suggest a need for more training both of the low-performing children and of those who are preparing the exams.

– Darity said, “I would never say we should return to legally enforced segregation” but that educators should give “priority to quality education regardless of the composition of the schools.”

In desegregated environments some high-achieving minority students do feel under peer pressure over “acting white,” but most of the time it turns out to be a factor when there are only one or two minority students in the class. “It is contextual,” Darity said, and generally limited to where high white enrollments make a class “look like the property of white students.”

– *Brown* seems “so lofty and far away... a gargantuan struggle,” noted Jack Boger, deputy director of the UNC Center for Civil Rights. But “continuing the work of *Brown* can get done by everybody, in the place where they are. Indeed, much of the work that led to *Brown* is like that.”

“You,” Boger told his audience, “have the present capacity to move *Brown* forward.... It’s really not an impossible thing.”

At one point Torres told a personal story about being assigned to vocational education courses when he first went to high school in California. He made A’s and decided he might want to go to college, so he pre-registered for college-track classes for the next year. When he got his schedule, however, he was



Harvard Law’s Lani Guinier with Julius Chambers after the panel discussion Saturday.

still in voc ed classes.

“I’m generally mild-mannered,” Torres said, but he acknowledged he pitched something of a fit in the office until the counselor actually looked at his grade report. He was promptly switched into college-track classes.

“I was assigned on the basis of nothing,” Torres said. “You do have to police those boundaries. If I had been more mild-mannered I guess I would have been in vocational education.”

Instead, Torres has served as a visiting professor at Harvard Law School. And the reassignment, he said, may have saved lives: It “saved numerous drivers in Southern California from having me work on their cars.”

Brown II implementation continues

National Staff Development Council Senior Fellow Hayes Mizell, opening a March 23 Converse College symposium on Brown:

“It is little wonder that in the year 2000 a University of South Carolina doctoral student chose to title her dissertation about Darlington’s desegregation as ‘From Euphoria to Betrayal: A Case Study of a High School Before, During, and After Desegregation.’

“While there is little doubt that the current generation of African-American public school students is, on the whole, benefiting greatly because of the pain and sacrifices their parents and grandparents endured to implement *Brown*, young people would do well to remember William Faulkner’s admonition that ‘The past is never dead; it’s not even past.’ In a very real sense, the implementation of *Brown II* continues to this very day.”

Kindberg defends review of projects

Continued from Page 1

resources on educating the kids.”

Asked if additional resources would ever bring success at high-poverty schools, Kindberg replied, “Kids at Highland Renaissance are being successful. The question is what are we doing there.... We really need to be putting our energy into how can we help these teachers be successful.”

– Asked whether the community faced a “moral crisis” over its priorities, Kindberg replied, “Saying it’s a moral question raises an emotional level. Saying it’s inefficient is probably a better way to do that. Calling it a moral question may tend to pull people apart because it creates defensiveness.”

Asked later to return to her reply, Kindberg said, “My concern is that when you throw words at people that have a high emotion content, they are less likely to open up and work with you” and that, if the issue can be framed in another way, the community is more likely to see “the outcome we want to achieve.”

She said she hoped “we frame things in a way that causes people to want to work together rather than creating new separations or lack of communication.” But she acknowledged that sometimes issues need to be couched as moral choices.

Black children “bore the brunt” of busing for desegregation “and it wasn’t fair,” she said. She has pushed to build into official reports the commitment CMS has made to small class sizes in struggling schools, adding that “if you’re going to have kids assigned close to home, every one of those schools needs to be a good choice.”

– Part of the county money that CMS petitions for each year doesn’t go to CMS but to charter schools, Kindberg noted. State law mandates that county money go to CMS, but that CMS then send charters their share, based on pupil enrollment. In five years,



Martin Middle’s reading team will represent CMS next month at Burns Middle in Lawndale for regional Battle of the Books competition. The Jeopardy-like event asks questions taken from books on a state reading list. Martin bested J.M. Robinson last week in overtime.

CMS

enrollment of Mecklenburg children in charters has grown from 1,007 to 2,264 and is projected at 2,975 next year, according to Kindberg’s data.

– If you count charter students and Bright Beginnings pre-kindergartners, Kindberg said, the CMS budget helps educate 119,363 students this year, not the official 113,859. She projects next year’s total at 123,876.

– The county’s contribution to CMS on a per-pupil basis has dropped for two years running. The superintendent’s proposed budget, on a per-pupil basis, would be less than in 2001-02.

– “The reality, as Commissioner Samuelson points out, is that the kids needing more services in CMS are the same kids who also need services from DSS, and other parts of the county.” For the county, meeting all the needs “is a real balancing act.”

– Some schools are underutilized because their attendance areas don’t match the building. Waddell High, built for 1,500, has

1,086 students in its attendance area, Kindberg said. She did not advocate adjusting attendance boundaries. Instead, she supported the early college magnet opening at Waddell this fall. “We’re optimistic this will pull up [enrollment] and attract strong teachers.”

– She ruled out assigning top teachers to highest-needs classrooms. “We cannot assign teachers because they can go right across the line and teach in Union County.... We’re trying to attract them where they are needed. Maybe the bonus needs to be much bigger.”

– Kindberg said a planning liaison committee would over the next four months be devising a way to “do a better job planning for schools.”

– Asked how the public could be involved in ongoing discussions about future school funding, Kindberg replied in part, “This is an election year for the county commissioners. You have the attention of the county commissioners this year.”

– Asked to describe her district, Kindberg said she shared it with Bill James. “Please do not assume that I am – ooh, let’s not go there.”

	CMS county funds, per-pupil	
total at		
123,876.	'99-'00	\$2,046
– The coun-	'00-'01	2,163
ty’s contribu-	'01-'02	2,436
tion to CMS on	'02-'03	2,374
a per-pupil	'03-'04	2,284
basis has	---	
dropped for two	'04-'05 Asked	2,405
years running.	'04-'05 Flat	2,198

CCBAC reviews CMS 3-, 10-year forecasts

Continued from Page 1

would allow 2.6 million square feet to be renovated over the next 10 years, the schools believe 5.4 million square feet need upgrades, and 1.3 million square feet need to be added "to make up for program space the schools don't have."

Schools needing work were built before kindergartens, before pre-kindergarten, before the English as a Second Language program and its small-group tutoring, before federal specifications for the spaces used by exceptional children. "The nature of schools has changed," Chamberlain said.

Yet the legacy continues.

– With funds being squeezed by county commissioners, the school board has begun a re-examination of promises made during previous bond referenda. The exercise is almost certain to shift money from renovating older buildings to building new ones. The shifts will please some voters, but at the cost of breaking or delaying promises made to others. County commissioners face the voters this fall.

– Chamberlain said \$5 million set aside to design school renovations may be redirected because the bond money needed to actually build the renovations won't be available for years at the current rate of selling bonds.

– The 10-year capital plan includes \$27.2 million for mobile units because funding for brick-and-mortar classrooms is not keeping up with growth. CMS needs about \$180 million annually to build new seats. If it gets only \$90 million as some commissioners have suggested, the \$27.2 million for mobiles will balloon to \$50 million, Chamberlain said. If the capital spending plan is better funded, schools will be built faster and fewer mobiles will be necessary.

CMS, which is using mobile

Continued on Page 8

Briefly

Eased: No Child Left Behind rules will allow future tests of 95% participation, both by whole schools and by subgroups of students, to use average participation over three years of testing, Education Week reported. In some states, nearly 20% of schools failed to make annual yearly progress because of the 95% rule.
www.edweek.org

Good, but...: Under No Child, Princeton High School in New Jersey was listed in 2003 as needing improvement, the Christian Science Monitor reported. The school had a 100% graduation rate and 79% of graduates went on to four-year colleges.
www.csmonitor.com

Retention study: Chicago low-performing third-graders who attended summer school and then repeated the grade later showed achievement gains, the Washington Post reported. Sixth-graders in the same study who were held back showed no improvement over two years.
www.washingtonpost.com

Preschool impact: A study of 123 poor black children found that the children who went to a high-quality preschool were more likely to graduate from high school, earn good money and own homes than those with no preschool, the Boston Globe reported.
www.boston.com

Court case: Little Rock will soon be released from all court oversight, Yahoo told its readers. The district's last desegregation lawsuit involving black student achievement is expected to be approved by the court.
www.yahoo.com

Rankings: Over 20% of female teachers were at the top of their high school class in 1964. In 2000, that number was near 10%, the New York Times reported.
www.nytimes.com

Calendar

APRIL

1 Demographer Dr. James Johnson on trends affecting communities and education, 7:30 a.m., Board Room, Education Center. Sponsor: Charlotte Reads.

1 Bond Oversight Committee hearing on capital projects and whether to move bond money from projects promised to voters, 7 p.m., Vance High School.

5 Peter Storey, a Duke visiting professor, former South African Methodist bishop and Nelson Mandela's prison chaplain, Myers Park High Art Gallery, 9 a.m.

6 Bond Oversight Committee hearing on capital projects and whether to move bond money from projects promised to voters, 7 p.m., South Meck High School.

8 Bond Oversight Committee hearing on capital projects and whether to move bond money from projects promised to voters, 7 p.m., Berry Tech High School.

20 School board meets, 6 p.m., Education Center.

30-1 "Reauthorization and Reform: A Conference about the Education of Students with Disabilities," Friday Center, Chapel Hill, free. Register for one or both days. For information and form: Renee Palmer at 919-856-2195 or snf@mind-spring.com

MAY

19 Chamber Education Lobbying Trip to Raleigh to visit with members of the N.C. General Assembly about public education needs, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Day includes lunch with delegation and forum on taxing authority for school boards. To reserve seat on bus, call 704-378-1301 or e-mail kramer@charlottechamber.com

CCBAC reviews CMS 3-, 10-year forecasts

Continued from Page 7

units purchased in the 1960s, has clearly saved money by buying the units. Chamberlain said purchase becomes cheaper after the fifth year of a lease.

– The school board recently shifted operating money to buy 100 mobile units to accommodate some of the 3,700 additional schoolchildren expected in August. “If we can find the money we will order 25 more,” Chamberlain said, adding that CMS planners say the district will actually need 150 more.

– Since 1987, when the last bus garage was opened, the bus fleet has grown by 65%. Technicians are spending up to 2.5 hours commuting to where the buses are each day from their single maintenance facility off Wilkinson Boulevard. The 10-year plan proposes new facilities in the north and south ends of the county.

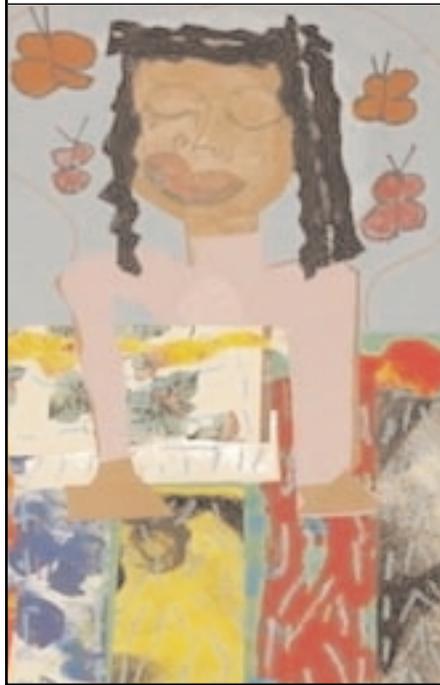
– Responding to criticism that CMS would add only 66 new seats this fall, Chamberlain said he had proposed a 2002 bond issue of nearly \$400 million. “You can only fit so much into what is authorized,” he said. Assistant Supt. Greg Clemmer mentioned that Providence High, opened in 1989, was the first high school built since Independence High in 1969. And 1997 was the first big bond issue approved by voters.

Former Park and Recreation Chairman Chris Jackson said the community was “reacting to something that we should have settled 20 years ago.” Speaking of his two children not yet of school age, Jackson said, “I don’t want them to suffer from what we do today.”

– Chamberlain said previous school boards had sought to bring all older buildings up to standard in the 10-year plan. Today, he said, “maybe we should look at the top 50% of the baseline projects.... I’m a realist and I don’t think we’re going to see a bond referendum this year. Until I get

Board Room Art

– DeMaria, grade 1, Elizabeth Traditional



new money I can’t start any new projects.”

At the rate at which county commissioners are selling bonds already approved by voters, the schools won’t need a bond issue until 2006. If there were a referendum in 2006, the schools built with that money would mostly not open until 2010, he said.

– By handling the most dilapidated schools first, CMS may soon get a break from criticism that it demolishes “perfectly good” classrooms to put up new. Long Creek Elementary, which has structures dating from 1923, 1932, 1938, 1954, 1969, 1974, 1982, and 1991, will be the last school where all old structures could be demolished. Design work is not done, and if it proves cost-effective to renovate some existing buildings, CMS will do so, he said.

The three-year, \$438.6 million needs improvement plan and the 10-year, \$1.485 billion assessment presented Wednesday do not take into account any trims the school board may order in May. About \$330 million in construction for which bonds have already been approved has not yet begun. Two \$50 million high schools are des-

perately needed, however, and for the reprioritization review now under way “we just decided to draw the line” at \$67 million of the \$330 million, Chamberlain said.

The capital needs budget is sorted by priorities, with most critical needs being addressed first. Overall, Chamberlain said, Buildings Services officials rate schools by letters, with an A school meeting all standards, B schools needing some work and C schools having even more deficiencies. Chamberlain agreed to arrange school tours for CCBAC members to help them understand the differences between A, B and C schools.

– When CCBAC chair and county commissioner candidate Lewis Guignard asked how few seats CMS was legally mandated to provide for pre-kindergartners, Chamberlain said it was about 5% to 6% of CMS’s total. But school board vice chairperson Kit Cramer, who was in attendance, said the investment in pre-kindergarten “will save us dollars down the line” as more children enter third grade on time and at grade level. And the community, she said, will save money in jail construction, substance abuse treatment, teen pregnancy treatment and other social services. Pre-K “dollars well spent,” she asserted.

– CCBAC member Rhonda Lennon noted that revisions already made in the capital needs assessment move more money to building new seats. If funds must be cut, will they come from new seats or renovations, she asked. “You are asking the wrong person,” Chamberlain replied.

“The approach we have taken in the past,” Cramer said, “is to balance growth and equity and I imagine that is what we would continue to do. But that is what we will have to talk about.”

Board member Kaye McGarry said the board had some “tough decisions” to make and said they should be made “logically and not with emotion” to “reprioritize so we are making the best use of the dollars we have.”