

## Winnowing the renovation list

### Citizen panel commits to inspect every site where work might be shelved

Working under a May 11 deadline, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district's Bond Oversight Committee is working toward its recommendations on whether to shift bond dollars from renovation work to new construction to handle additional students.

No final decisions have been made, but Tuesday brought a decision by the panel of citizen volunteers that they would personally visit any school that they might recommend be bumped off the renovation work list.

"They may not know what they agreed to do yet," quipped Guy Chamberlain, the district's assistant superintendent for building services.

Among parents worried that long-promised renovation work may be delayed at their schools, the review ordered by the school

board March 9 is all about public trust.

For parents at overcrowded schools, the review is all about relief from trailer classrooms and overcrowded lunchrooms and media centers.

The school board handed the political hot potato to its Bond Oversight Committee, set up to verify that bond dollars were spent as promised to voters in previous referendums.

The Bond Oversight Committee has held three public hearings, and met Monday with several leaders of previous bond campaigns.

The committee's discussions thus far have led to three lists.

The first contains projects that will continue unchanged. While Chamberlain declined to release specifics because the Bond

Oversight Committee has not reached any conclusions, the list is almost certain to include Metro School off Second Street uptown. Half of the school serving children with a variety of special needs has already been demolished.

Also to proceed are two new high schools and a north-end middle school. On Tuesday, county commissioners approved financing for all three. The Audrey Kell Road high school near South Carolina could be ready in 2006, with the Mallard Creek Park high and Bailey Road middle following later.

Others projects likely to proceed include Dilworth Elementary, which has received county funding as a joint-use project with Park & Recreation; Winterfield Elementary, which is already in the midst of planning for temporary relocation to the old Windsor Park building in early 2005; and Oakdale, which will move to the old Druid Hills building this fall.

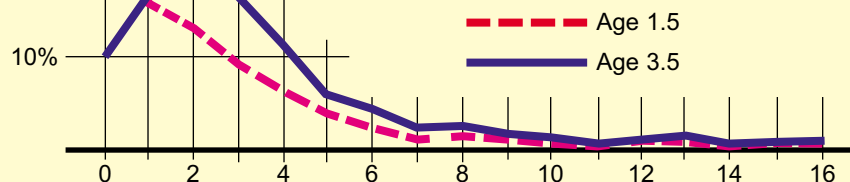
At a meeting with bond supporters Monday, Chamberlain said he was re-examining plans at Randolph Middle, a school using makeshift accommodations for a large contingent of students using wheel chairs or other devices. Earlier data showing low school occupancy failed to count those students, he said.

A second, temporary Bond Oversight list includes schools about which members have sought more information.

The third list includes projects that the committee will recommend be deferred. One likely to be on that list is the renovation of Morgan School, a 1920s building

### Study ties early TV watching to attention ills

Using a large national sample, researchers found that the more TV watching done by 1- to 3-year-olds, the more likely parents were to report "attentional problems" in the children at age 7. The study did not examine programming, and the children had not necessarily been diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Chart shows percentage of children at two different ages watching 0-16 hours of television daily. Story, Page 4.



— Source: "Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attentional Problems in Children" by Dimitri A. Christakis, Frederick J. Zimmerman, David L. DiGiuseppe, and Carolyn A. McCarty in Pediatrics, April 2004. Downloadable at [www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/apr04studies.htm](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/apr04studies.htm)

# N.C. faces principal shortage

As a Republican candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction, I was excited to read your lead article on April 2, 2004, "Principal is the Key."

It emphasizes what I have been saying for the past 15 months – that improving school leadership will be the fulcrum to future success in our schools.

North Carolina is facing a school leadership crisis: 38% of principals could retire today! Another 31% have less than three years on the job. And the pipeline is almost empty.

Regrettably, Gov. Easley's F04 budget and the legislature's penchant for avoiding tough decisions resulted in slashed funding for our only principal development

programs.

I am convinced that the surest path to improved academic results for students is to improve the effectiveness of our school

## From Readers

leaders. Principals will then be better able to lead schools where teachers flourish, where children learn and where our public will place its confidence.

Republicans and Democrats, together with school leaders and legislators must assure that qualified men and women are attracted to and properly prepared for school leadership. After all, it is the principal of the thing!

Bill Fletcher

## Oversight panel will visit renovation sites

Continued from Page 1

in the Cherry community near downtown. Students in an alternative program were relocated to leased space earlier. Historic designation and other issues have raised renovation costs.

Tuesday's Bond Oversight meeting went more than three hours, committee chairman Ken Harris said. The group meets again Wednesday, then will spend a half-day or more visiting sites.

The additional detail coming up during this review, Harris said, has helped the committee understand how repair work at one site may affect another. But the effect is to reduce the number of projects that could be delayed. The list "is getting tighter rather than looser," he said.

Harris says the committee some years back suggested the use of "swing space" to speed renovation work. Eastway Middle School is an example. During significant repair work at the east Charlotte school, teachers and students are using the new Lambeth Drive

middle school campus in Hidden Valley. When Eastway repairs are complete this summer, Lambeth will be readied to become a free-standing middle school, relieving overcrowding at nearby Martin Middle.

Similarly, Eastover Elementary is meeting this year in the old Selwyn Elementary building, with Selwyn in their new building just yards away.

But such swings mean lots of projects must be coordinated, not only in the aggregate but in their

Continued on Page 3

## Students as teachers

*Iowa City math teacher Bob Brems on using students to fill in during planned absences, with the substitute teacher present only to deal with any discipline issues that come up:*

The next day "the students would usually remark on how different it was to have a classmate in the front of the room. Some students commented that the student-as-teacher's explanation of a concept was different from mine. Several even commented on how the student's explanation actually cleared up some points of confusion they had been experiencing....

"Students often are better behaved when the class returns to the regular format. When questioned about that, students-as-teachers often expressed empathy with a teacher in front of a class. They related how frustrating it was to repeat the same thing several times, asking: "Why don't they listen?"

– [www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/voice/voice110.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/voice/voice110.shtml)



Brems

**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.

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# Cutting renovations

Continued from Page 2

timing.

Harris said the Bond Oversight Committee agreed to the site visits. "We want to be fair," he said, adding that any plan to move money should be designed "to try to maintain the trust of the people."

Earlier media coverage occasionally focused on three projects that might be delayed simply because Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities had not provided the water and sewer lines that would be needed to meet code for the renovated buildings.

Chamberlain said Tuesday that he had reached an understanding with CMUD that utility services could be in place at Reedy Creek and Clear Creek in time for occupancy permits, should the school board decide to proceed with those two projects.

That leaves Berryhill Elementary, the westside school near the Catawba River. Utilities could be delayed up to six years, Chamberlain said. The school is operating at about 60% of its 396-student occupancy.

The original plan for Berryhill was for a new 800-seat school, which would be needed if land west of a planned new airport runway, now zoned for residential

## A call for 'leadership, courage and integrity'

*Excerpts from comments of Rev. Casey R. Kimbrough, pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, at the Bond Oversight Committee's final public hearing April 8:*

"It is important that the Bond Oversight Committee and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board not pit parents and communities against each other. We understand that the needs of all children are important and must be addressed.

"I am here to encourage you not to recommend the shifting of bond money away from commitments that have been made to the community, as it relates to bringing all of our schools up to baseline standards and equity.... There are needs for repairs, renovations, and new schools that are long overdue. The children of Charlotte need our best. We are concerned that the promise of equity for all children must be realized....

"We are at the crossroads again. Each of you has an opportunity to break the historical pattern of broken promises and set a new direction into the future....

"We recommend the following:

"First, fulfill the promise of equity and baseline standards. Bond money needs to go where bond money has been promised.

"Second, demonstrate courage and call for new resources to build new schools.

"I ask you not to pit the communities in Charlotte against each other – around broken promises.

"Charlotte is one of the wealthy cities in our nation. We can build our city on leadership, courage and integrity, not broken promises...."

use is developed for that purpose.

On Tuesday night, the school board approved Supt. Jim Pughsley's \$903 million operating budget for 2004-2005. It includes a request for \$290 million from county commissioners, up from \$265 million. In the last two

budget cycles, commissioners did not provide additional funds, even as enrollment rose a total of more than 7,000 students. The bulk of the district's funds are from state and federal sources.

After Tuesday's school board meeting, chairman Joe White said he had been working hard with county commissioners chairman Tom Cox hammering out details of a proposed funding formula designed to end annual bickering between the two bodies over school funding.

Cox briefed the Education Budget Advisory Committee Wednesday on the principles he hoped to see embedded in the formula, but he did not provide details of how it would work.

Earlier versions have had impacts ranging from deep cuts in county funding to small increases.

White said the negotiations would soon be forgotten if they failed, but that he was still hopeful that a funding formula would be agreed to.

## 15-year-olds' reading skills

*In an international survey, Finland finished first in education last year, the New York Times reported. The results are surprising since children do not begin school until age 7 and Finland spends only \$5,000 per year on each student. "We are a bit embarrassed about our success," a government adviser told the Times.*

*Below, the percentage of 15-year-olds in the top two of five reading proficiency levels on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reading literacy scale. Sources: www.nytimes.com, OECD.*

Country	Pct.	Country	Pct.	Country	Pct.	Country	Pct.
Finland	50.1	Korea	36.9	Denmark	30.1	Greece	21.6
Canada	44.5	Sweden	36.8	Germany	28.2	Portugal	21.0
New Zealand	44.5	Norway	34.9	Czech Rep.	26.8	Latvia	17.9
Australia	42.9	Austria	33.8	Spain	25.3	Russian Fed.	16.4
Ireland	41.4	<b>United States</b>	<b>33.7</b>	Italy	24.8	Luxembourg	12.9
U.K.	40.0	Iceland	32.6	Liechtenstein	24.6	Mexico	6.8
Japan	38.6	France	32.2	Poland	24.4	Brazil	3.6
Belgium	38.4	Switzerland	30.2	Hungary	23.5		

# Learned behavior

## New study associates age 7 attention issues with screen-watching at earlier age when brain was developing

A recent study on a possible link between short attention spans at age 7 and large doses of watching televisions or game screens at a much earlier age will not settle the debate about a key issue in child development.

But it might spur further research on a controversial but vitally important issue. And it is yet another “beware” for parents.

Children who spend many hours a day in front of screens – televisions, computers and game machines – are the children who parents rate as having “attentional problems” when they are 7, according to the study.

The study doesn’t rule out the possibility that children prone to short attention spans were drawn to the fast-moving screen action in the first place. “It could be that attentional problems lead to television viewing rather than vice versa,” according to the study.

But most experts believe screen time “teaches” young brains to rewire for fast-paced action, and that the rewiring is permanent.

Four years ago, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that parents not allow children under age 2 to watch TV.

The most recent study, “Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attentional Problems in Children,” was published by a Seattle team led by University of Washington Pediatrics Professor Dimitri Christakis.

Their study, involving data on 1,278 children at age 1 and 1,345

“One-year-olds who watched one to two hours daily ‘had a 10% to 20% increased risk of attention problems. Fourteen percent watched three to four hours daily and had a 30% to 40% increased risk compared with children who watched no TV. The remainder watched at least five hours daily.”

– The Associated Press

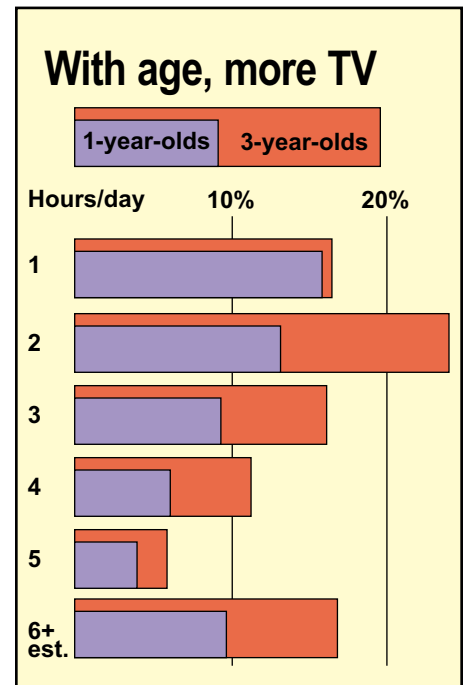
at age 3, found 10% of them had problems with attention at age 7. Those who had watched more television were more likely to have such problems.

The researchers did not track the content of what was watched. And the attention issues were based on parent surveys, not on formal diagnosis of Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The study ruled out possible other factors for short attention spans among children, including “home environment, maternal depression, cognitive stimulation, and emotional support,” though they acknowledge that “our adjustment may have been imperfect.”

But the study concludes that “our findings suggest that preventive action can be taken with respect to attentional problems in children.

“Limiting young children’s exposure to television as a medium during formative years of brain development consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommendations may reduce children’s subsequent risk of developing ADHD.”



The full text of the study can be downloaded from the American Academy of Pediatrics Web site at [www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/apr04studies.htm](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/apr04studies.htm)

The study was financed by the Nesholm Family Foundation of Washington State and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

## Prom schedule

Times are generally 8 p.m.-midnight, except East Meck beginning at 7 and Midwood ending at 11.

Date	High school	Place	Date	High school	Place
4-3	Providence	Founders Hall	5-7	Midwood	Mint Craft Mus.
4-3	West Meck	BofA Stadium	5-7	Waddell	Hilton Exec. Park
4-24	Hopewell	Founders Hall	5-8	Garinger	Speedway Club
4-30	East Meck	Oasis Temple	5-8	North Meck	BofA Stadium
5-1	Butler	Founders Hall	5-8	Olympic	Levine Museum
5-1	Indepen.	Oasis Temple	5-15	Harding	BofA Stadium
5-1	Myers Park	BofA Stadium	5-15	Vance	Westin Hotel
5-1	Northwest	BofA Stadium	5-22	West Charlotte	Embassy Stes.
5-1	South Meck	Convention Ctr.		Berry Tech	None

# 'Our past is our past'

## Gauvreau makes pitch for his race-blind position

School board member Larry Gauvreau staked out a race-blind position Tuesday morning that left his largely African American audience offended and angry.

Gauvreau declined to address the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case allowing separate-but-equal facilities. "It's too far." He declined to address the 1954 *Brown vs. Board* ruling ordering desegregation. "Brown was too far."

Today, he said, schools are not practicing segregation. And the claim of haves and have-nots "just doesn't add up...."

"The suburbanization of the black population, it's just fact.... We have to realize that and not get caught up in the past."

A member of the audience stood and said "My name is... and I am a racist and because I'm white and a racist I can ask other people who are white to acknowledge... some element of racism of their person...."

Gauvreau replied, "I as an individual am not going to put myself into psychotherapy.... I'm sorry you feel your past is a hamstring or an Achilles heel. I'm sorry."

Later he added, "There are people that race matters to them. They believe every decision must be mapped to the color of someone's skin. I don't.... Our past is our past."

When a member of the audience asked Community Relations Committee Director Willie Ratchford if he and other African Americans still face racism daily, Ratchford replied, "It's like having a second job."

"You need a new job," Gauvreau said.

The fact that 100 of the district's roughly 150 schools have enrollments 25% or more black proves that the system is not segregated. "That is a highly integrated school system...."

"There's no doubt about it that we have pockets that happen to

be one race or the other. But at the end of the day, who cares?"

"I believe the school system needs to be focused primary, almost entirely, on academics," he said. Other activities "dilute the primary information, which is education."

Citing two experts, Gauvreau said the prime causes of test-score gaps are family income, parents' level of education and the number of parents in the home. And second-grade scores are a good predictor of how those children will fare later. "If you're not doing well by second grade, it doesn't necessarily change... Societal woes isn't something our school systems are going to fix.... We can try, including me. How we try is where we differ."

Asked how the gap came about, Gauvreau said, "I'm just not going to go into years of societal woes...."

"The black students who are attending West Charlotte High School are Americans. Their culture is just the same as mine."

Fourteen hours later, Gauvreau told school board members and a television audience, "I had the opportunity today to meet, as many of you have, with the Tuesday Morning Breakfast Club. I was thoroughly raked over the coals, enjoyed every minute of it... the best time I've had in a long time."

On other matters:

– Overall operating budgets have increased from \$612 million in 1998 to a proposed \$903 million next year, and county spending has increased at three times the rate of enrollment increase. "I don't think it's sustainable."

– Adjusted for area cost of living, CMS funding is "on a par and sometimes much more than other school districts across the country."

– Next fall CMS will be operating "almost 1,250 school buses half empty."



Larry Gauvreau with Sarah Stevenson Tuesday morning.

– While he favors "some level of magnet choice," the district is spending, he estimated, \$25 million "into magnet programs that may not necessarily be giving us the right bang for the buck."

– The Bright Beginnings program for 4-year-olds is "not narrow enough and not serving the students that need it most."

– The contract with construction manager Bovis is "out of control" and should be re-bid.

– The Leandro school finance case upheld by the N.C. Supreme Court is "judicial activism." "A Republican, by the way," noted a member of the audience. "Doesn't matter," Gauvreau replied. The case has "become an anecdotal, endless deal that I don't think anyone can put their arms around."

– "Even this conservative agrees with" the need for additional funding at high-poverty schools. "It's the degree to which we do that and how we split the pie that causes all the confusion.... If there were a lack of equity I would argue it is in the suburban locations."

– He supports reprioritizing bond money to build new schools in high-density suburban areas ignored by earlier school boards. Schools in the central city "are brand new or renovated and they are half empty."

# Crowds cleared partly to protect infants in arms

Police intervened to disperse youthful crowds at Eastland Mall in part to protect infants in arms vulnerable during mad dashes to get on departing city buses.

Police Sgt. Charles Rappleyea told a westside audience last week that he feared the infants could be injured as the teens jostled to get on CATS buses.

"To be honest, it is not against the law to do that. It's not a good idea, but it's not against the law."

Eastland is quieter now. The city stopped sending extra buses whenever a crowd of teens would appear. Buses now follow the regular schedule and loads are limited to the seat capacity. Resulting wait times discourage crowds.

Rappleyea said most of the scuffles at Eastland were instigated by females, not males.

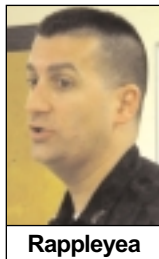
Another reason police acted when they did, Rappleyea said, was "if we don't do something now, how bad will it be when school lets out?"

While being careful to avoid criticism, Rappleyea acknowledged under questioning that "I didn't get the response from a lot of (child-welfare) agencies that I was hoping for."

Rappleyea credited City Council member Nancy Carter with visiting Eastland, mingling among the youth and pursuing solutions.

In past summers, crowds at teens developed at Birkdale, a north Mecklenburg shopping center, and at the Arboretum shopping center in the southeast.

At both, Rappleyea said, youth were not dependent on the buses. And a few threats of arrest for trespassing at the private facilities was enough to disperse the crowds, he said.



Rappleyea

## Closing the achievement gap

*Former Brooklyn teacher Leo Casey on closing the achievement gap, in "Still Separate, Still Unequal: The Continuing Struggle for Racial Justice in American Education," in Winter 2004 edition of Dissent Magazine:*

"At the elementary and secondary level, it is also vital to develop programs of ability affirmation to work in tandem with rigorous academics. Successful programs designed to establish stronger family-school and community-school partnerships, such as that pioneered by Yale psychologist and educator James Comer, and for mobilizing community resources behind academic achievement, such as the NAACP's ACT-SO program, need to be expanded and replicated....

"Small schools, in which every student is well known by the teaching staff, provide more of the individual attention and care, more of the extra-academic support, that students of color say is lacking in their current schools. However, such care cannot be at the expense of a rigorous course of academic instruction."

— [www.dissentmagazine.org/menutest/articles/wi04/casey.htm](http://www.dissentmagazine.org/menutest/articles/wi04/casey.htm)

Rappleyea said he wonders what is ahead for downtown as a basketball arena opens directly across Trade Street from the bus transfer station and buses, cars and pedestrians compete for the same asphalt. "It's going to be a mess. I just don't know how it's going to work out."

Saying it was "my opinion and my opinion only," Rappleyea concluded, "It would really be nice if parents took responsibility for their kids and found them something to do."

Park and Rec official Blanche Penn said of youth aged 13-14: "All they want to do is sit around and gossip and talk. They just want a hangout place" that they don't find in most of their neighborhoods. "We can't just keep pushing and pushing them."

Rappleyea said the young teens were not scared off by the potential for violence, but instead were drawn by it. "They want to see that now, a fight or a shooting... I don't know where they should go. They're little kids. They're not adults."

Carter said some groups have offered summer activities for the youth, but some will be financially out of teens' reach. She appealed for community solutions.

## Calendar

### APRIL

**30-1** "Reauthorization and Reform: A Conference about the Education of Students with Disabilities," Friday Center, Chapel Hill, free. For information and form: Renee Palmer at 919-856-2195, [snf@mindspring.com](mailto:snf@mindspring.com)

### MAY

**11** Board of Education presents its budget request to Board of County Commissioners, 3 p.m., Government Center Room 267.

**13** League of Women Voters on No Child Left Behind's impact; speaker is John Poteat from N.C. Public Schools Forum; 7 p.m., First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 200 W. Trade St. Information: Malyn Pratt, 704-333-2037 or [malyn@carolina.rr.com](mailto:malyn@carolina.rr.com).

**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 [krcramer@charlottechamber.com](mailto:krcramer@charlottechamber.com)

**20** H.E.L.P. meeting, 7 p.m., First United Presbyterian Church, 406 N. College St.

## Briefly

### ... in the Carolinas

**Ready for No Child:** Wake County schools decide June 1 on the schools to be used as transfer sites under No Child should any school not meet AYP and be obligated to allow parents to transfer. There could be up to 19 such transferring schools, depending on year-end test results. Parents with a transfer option will be notified June 7, and must be offered two choices.

www.wcpss.net

**Coaxing test-takers:** Wake County schools are offering students an extra percentage point in all their classes just for showing up to take the High School Comprehensive test, the News and Observer reported. Then, if students pass the test, they will get a second point added to all their final class grades.

www.newsobserver.com

**Dropouts:** A coalition of five school systems in the Triangle have created “High Five: Regional Partnership for High School Excellence” aimed at reducing dropout rates. The five-year, \$2.5 million program will share best practices, encourage collaboration between school districts, colleges and universities, and seek broader community support for schools.

www.wcpss.net

### ... in the Nation

**No to bubble-tests:** Federal education officials approved Nebraska’s request to use student portfolios to meet No Child testing requirements, the Seattle Times reported. Although evaluating portfolios is time-consuming and expensive, Nebraska Education Commissioner Douglas Christensen asserts, “teachers know better than tests whether students are learning, and that they can be trusted to make that happen.”

www.seattletimes.com

**Teacher evaluation:** High school students persuaded California legislators to propose a law enabling students to grade their teachers on knowledge, classroom content, fairness and organization, the Sacramento Bee reported. Although it would be optional for teachers and grades would be confidential, some fear the law would lead to mandatory student grading of teachers.

www.sacbee.com

**Blinking on standards:** Houston school officials abandoned a policy requiring high school students to pass required English and math courses before moving onto the next grade after they realized that 5,000 ninth- and 10th-graders would be held back, the Chronicle reported. The policy had been in place a year.

www.chron.com

**Parent Ed 101:** Charlotte County, Fla. educators are getting parents involved in their children’s education, the Herald Tribune reported. Elementary schools are offering family literacy nights to show parents the reading strategies learned in school. Middle school Web sites offer hotlines to keep parents informed as to their child’s homework assignments.

www.heraldtribune.com

**Unreliable gap data:** A record number of SAT takers declined to identify their race in 2003, the Washington Post reported. So although the College Board reported a decrease in the black-white test score gap, this number may be misleading. Not knowing the ethnicity of the test takers could have skewed the gap scores.

www.washingtonpost.com

**Principal drain:** About 34 of 53 principals in Fayette County, Ky., have been replaced in the past four years, the Lexington-Herald Leader reported. Eleven schools will be without principals

Continued on Page 8

## Juggling intentions

*In “Reform Ideals and Teachers’ Practical Intentions,” Michigan State researcher Mary M. Kennedy tracks the multiple issues teachers juggle – encouraging and affirming students, for example, vs. staying on task. In making decisions on the fly, Kennedy writes, the top priority often goes to covering the established material:*

“...Teachers embraced the idea of engagement, though virtually none of them used the phrase intellectual engagement. Moreover, even as they sought engagement, they also feared that too much engagement could hinder lesson momentum and could prevent them from finishing lessons on time.



Kennedy

“This tension between intellectual engagement, on one side, and the pressure of time and momentum on the other, is something that reformers rarely address but that teachers must address.

“Teachers also indicated that engagement was not an easy thing to manage in a classroom with 25 children, any one of whom may derail a conversation by misinterpreting an idea or getting confused – or by, conversely, “getting it” immediately and thus losing interest while waiting for others to get it.

“As these dilemmas arise, the clock is ticking, and teachers feel pressure to move along. And when teachers faced tradeoffs among competing intentions, lesson momentum was most likely to be the dominant concern.”

– <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n13/>

# Briefly

Continued from Page 7

in August. Officials blame retirements and added pressures from No Child Left Behind.  
www.kentucky.com

**Guy thing:** Scientists found that female chimps learn how to gather termites faster than males, who would rather play, the BBC reported. U.S. scientists believe that this relates to humans as well. They believe that gender-based learning differences in fine motor skills may have an ancient origin.  
www.bbc.co.uk

**Bulge at ninth:** Almost every big-city school has almost twice the number of ninth-graders as they do 12th-graders, the New York Times reported. Thousands of students are held back each year because they cannot read the textbooks. But many who repeat still do not learn to read, and ultimately drop out.  
www.nytimes.com

**Eroding opportunities?:** A report issued by the National Women's Law Center accused the Bush Administration of limiting girls' and women's opportunities to succeed in school, Education Week reported. To back up their claims, the center pointed to government efforts to weaken females' Title IX protections for athletes and abolish funding for the Women's Educational Equity Act.  
www.edweek.org

**On trial:** A program in Los Angeles put a real-life drunk-driving case on trial in front of high school seniors, the Los Angeles Times reported. Drunk drivers are brought into the classroom with a real Superior Court judge who acts as judge and jury. Twelve students are picked at random to enter their own verdict. The program is designed to show the consequences of drinking and driving. In the case written about, the students and judge agreed on a verdict: guilty.  
www.latimes.com

**Welcome!:** A months-long class project ended successfully as 25 fifth-graders ran Darla's Grill and Malt Shop in Stillwater, Mn., for an evening, the Minneapolis Star reported. The kids pooled tips for charity.  
www.startribune.com

## Paige on closing achievement gap

From a Q&A in the April issue of *Educational Leadership*:

**Q**"... But how much can schools really do when so much depends on changes in society?"

**A**" We have to start with the perception that schools can and must do 100 percent. Anything else would be making excuses. Now, I don't want to sound like someone who doesn't understand outside factors. There are many, but we don't have control over them. There is no sense moaning about them. We're in the teaching business. The problems outside school make our job even more difficult. But they do not give us an excuse not to do our jobs.



Paige

"I believe that schools can close the gaps by engaging teachers and students in authentic pedagogy. We cannot afford to wait until every child has two parents or a middle-class income before we assume the responsibility for educating all children well. U.S. schools have always been the means to rise from poverty to wealth, and we have many examples – from Abraham Lincoln to Vernon Jordan – that prove that case."

– www.ascd.org

## Urban seed corn

The image of a corn field, at right, helped lead Wednesday night's launch of the Web site attached to CMS's new in-house nonprofit fund-raising arm, The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools Foundation.



www.foundationforcms.org

Named directors Wednesday were:

Rev. Claude R. Alexander, Jr., senior pastor at University Park Baptist Church.  
Kevin Collins, North Carolina site director for Microsoft.  
Graham W. Denton, Jr., executive vice-president at Bank of America.  
George R. Dunlap, school board member.  
Mac Everett, retired Wachovia executive.  
Shirley L. Fulton, retired senior resident Superior Court judge, now partner in the law firm of Helms, Henderson & Fulton.  
Harvey B. Gantt, former Charlotte mayor and founder of Gantt Huberman Architects.  
Rai Glover, senior vice-president of marketing at Bank of America.  
Hilda H. Gurdian, publisher of La Noticia.  
Don Hathcock, vice-president of regu-

latory and external affairs at BellSouth.  
Shannon McFayden, senior executive vice-president of corporate and community affairs at Wachovia.  
Michael Marsicano, president and CEO of Foundation for the Carolinas.  
Jim Pughsley, CMS superintendent.  
Christopher C. Rolfe, vice-president of human resources at Duke Energy.  
Ed Tapscott, executive-vice president and chief operating officer for the Charlotte Bobcats.  
Joe I. White, Jr., school board chairman.  
Billy O. Wireman, president emeritus of Queens University of Charlotte.  
CMS's principal of the year and teacher of the year will receive one-year appointments.