

The changing face of CMS

118,599 K-12 students enrolled on 20th day

1,038 more than projected as recently as summer 2004

4,740 more than at this time last year, but:

- 318** fewer whites
- 2,296** more blacks
- 2,136** more Hispanics
- 63** more Asians
- 14** more Am. Indians
- 549** more multiracial

70% of white elementary enrollment is concentrated in just **27%** of the elementary schools

Details, Pages 3-5

Pughsley: 'We are at a crossroads'

Supt. Jim Pughsley Tuesday announced that classroom resources would take a hit as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools recasts its budget. The district's slow progress toward academic success for all children could give way to "stagnation," he warned.

A marathon school board meeting this week left the community with:

- A swallow-your-expectations budget.
- A pitch for county money to build schools in the white suburbs that prompted central-city blacks to demand a moratorium on construction and a review of the "failed" student assignment plan.
- A blueprint for raising achievement at three high schools that one board member dubbed insufficiently radical.
- An enrollment report showing more growth, more resegregation, and a net decrease in the number of white students in the system.
- And on a night when an overflow crowd was directed to TV monitors floors away from the cramped Board Room, the board agreed to try meeting in the more spacious and comfortable Government Center Meeting Chamber. The only possible downside: even greater physical distance between seats for the elected and those for the governed.

Tuesday was a long night, and after sitting for five hours, ex-City Council member and now school

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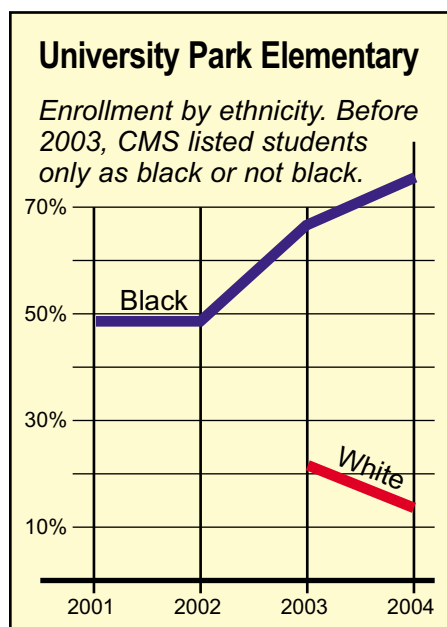
Ruinous choice

Parent laments how choice based on race and class killed choice based on curriculum, learning styles

This article traces the resegregation brought about by the choice plan at one school, University Park Elementary, an arts magnet. The writer continues to live in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

The year before my first child began kindergarten I began inquiring about my neighborhood's assigned school. I talked to people in my neighborhood and most extolled the virtues of the school. My neighbors asserted that the schools would be excellent if not for two problems that they were working on "fixing." One of these problems was the principal (an African American female) and the other was the kids who were bused in from other parts of Charlotte.

These parents thought that the bused children were a disruption to the flow of the school and did not belong there because they



weren't from the neighborhood. That attitude bothered me. I wondered why they were so concerned

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CANDIDATE FORUMS

DETAILS, PAGE 2

Ruinous choice

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about children outside the immediate area attending a public school. I felt that the concerns were probably rooted in racism, but was hesitant about inquiring further.

I was a parent who wanted the best for my child scholastically, but I also was nervous about sending him to school in the first place and I wanted him to go to a school that nurtured all children. Not a school in which the parents, and possibly children as well, looked down upon certain children because of where they came from.

Despite my negative impressions, I went to the school to enroll my child. A harried-looking lady sitting at the front desk did

not greet me when I entered. When I asked to look around the school, she told me to go home and call for an appointment. I decided I could not send my baby to a school whose employees, as well as parents, were this intolerant. I decided to look at the magnet schools.

University Park is a performing arts magnet located in an older, low-income neighborhood with

high rates of crime. Driving to University Park, I was not sure I would even consider sending my child to that area of town every day. The neighborhood was not what I was familiar with and I wondered why people were out walking around in the streets at 8:00 in the morning.

As soon as I walked in the door of the school, however, I knew I

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THE SWANN FELLOWSHIP IS PLEASED
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FORUMS FOR CANDIDATES

IN THE AT-LARGE RACE FOR
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

WHERE VOTERS ASK THE QUESTIONS

PARKS HELMS		
THURSDAY, SEPT. 16	12:15 P.M.	1510 E. 7TH ST.
.....		
WILHELMENIA REMBERT		
MONDAY, SEPT. 20	5:15 P.M.	1510 E. 7TH ST.
.....		
JENNIFER ROBERTS		
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 22	NOON	1510 E. 7TH ST.
.....		
ANDY DULIN		
MONDAY, SEPT. 27	12:15 P.M.	1510 E. 7TH ST.
.....		
JACK STRATTON		
THURSDAY, SEPT. 30	12:15 P.M.	1510 E. 7TH ST.
.....		
RUTH SAMUELSON		
MONDAY, OCT. 4	12:15 P.M.	1510 E. 7TH ST.
.....		
DAN RAMIREZ		
TUESDAY, OCT. 5	NOON	1510 E. 7TH ST.
(RESCHEDULED FROM SEPT. 14)		

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Ruinous choice

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had found the school for my child. It was the brightest, cleanest school I had ever seen. It just felt good when I walked in the door. The principal greeted me with a warm smile and hug and was more than happy to show me around (without an appointment). As we walked through the halls, she introduced me to every one we passed. When we walked by the "custodial engineer," the principal bragged that University Park was the cleanest school in the district and had just received 100% on all their sanitation inspections.

We walked into classrooms and the children all had smiles on their faces. When the children walked by, the principal knew them by name, hugged them, and made comments to me about their individual achievements. I asked if I could bring my son back later in the day and the answer was, "Of course. Please do." When I brought him back, the principal took us on another tour for my son.

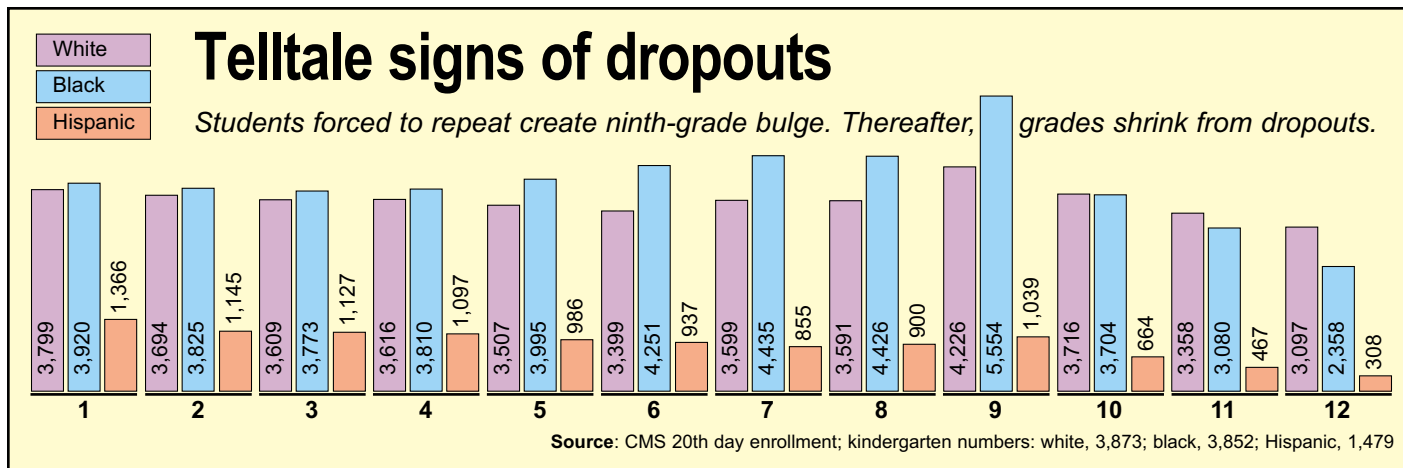
Kindergarten was wonderful. My son was in a school that was racially and economically balanced and he learned, was loved and nurtured. With help from the drama teacher, his class put on a play, "The Three Piggy Opera." It was difficult to believe that those were kindergarteners on the stage.

My other son started in University Park the next year. My children and the school appeared to be thriving. This school was truly a community. The parents knew each other and most parents participated in school functions. Walking

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CMS, Fall 2004 20th day enrollment

School	'03	'04	Chg.	Pct.	School	'03	'04	Number	Pct.
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS									
Hawk Ridge	976	1,196	220	22.5	Olde Providence	726	716	-10	-1.4
Lake Wylie	1,143	1,312	169	14.8	Villa Heights	305	294	-11	-3.6
Joseph W. Grier	396	561	165	41.7	Providence Spring	805	788	-17	-2.1
Mountain Island	852	979	127	14.9	Smithfield	968	944	-24	-2.5
Blythe	1,329	1,454	125	9.4	Albemarle Road	739	713	-26	-3.5
Long Creek	637	741	104	16.3	Dilworth	407	375	-32	-7.9
Cornelius	1,206	1,299	93	7.7	Hickory Grove	779	744	-35	-4.5
Endhaven	770	859	89	11.6	University Park	568	533	-35	-6.2
Steele Creek	1,006	1,087	81	8.1	Merry Oaks	565	529	-36	-6.4
Winding Springs	438	519	81	18.5	Shamrock Gar.	513	476	-37	-7.2
Byers	353	430	77	21.8	Barringer	714	676	-38	-5.3
Myers Park Trad.	543	620	77	14.2	Druid Hills	467	428	-39	-8.4
Elizabeth Lane	889	962	73	8.2	Devonshire	509	468	-41	-8.1
Thomasboro	349	420	71	20.3	Oakdale	443	401	-42	-9.5
Paw Creek	792	854	62	7.8	Nath. Alexander	1,024	981	-43	-4.2
Oakhurst	421	479	58	13.8	First Ward	730	639	-91	-12.5
Huntersville	1,114	1,171	57	5.1	Brunswick*	405	301	-104	-25.7
Bain	782	836	54	6.9	New Oaklawn*		184	184	
Sharon	485	539	54	11.1	MIDDLE SCHOOLS				
Clear Creek	492	545	53	10.8	Alexander	1,393	1,651	258	18.5
Beverly Woods	691	743	52	7.5	Southwest	784	957	173	22.1
Newell	690	741	51	7.4	Ranson	796	935	139	17.5
Greenway Park	699	747	48	6.9	Mint Hill	912	1,037	125	13.7
Idlewild	610	658	48	7.9	South Charlotte	960	1,085	125	13.0
Univ. Meadows	912	959	47	5.2	Randolph	719	830	111	15.4
Chantilly	334	375	41	12.3	Alex. Graham	859	953	94	10.9
Reedy Creek	627	667	40	6.4	McClintock	930	1,009	79	8.5
Pinewood	349	388	39	11.2	Quail Hollow	1,145	1,223	78	6.8
McAlpine	717	754	37	5.2	Kennedy	692	765	73	10.5
Pawtucket	420	455	35	8.3	Northeast	994	1,061	67	6.7
Windsor Park	506	541	35	6.9	Carmel	1,100	1,163	63	5.7
Davidson	866	900	34	3.9	Piedmont	871	925	54	6.2
J. H. Gunn	621	653	32	5.2	Smith	892	945	53	5.9
Collinswood	480	510	30	6.3	Northridge	1,188	1,205	17	1.4
Nations Ford	397	425	28	7.1	Eastway	944	956	12	1.3
Cotswold	509	536	27	5.3	Crestdale	1,170	1,178	8	0.7
Hornets Nest	716	743	27	3.8	Bradley	1,653	1,658	5	0.3
Statesville Road	426	453	27	6.3	Robinson	1,171	1,170	-1	-0.1
Tuckaseegee	581	605	24	4.1	Davidson IB	242	240	-2	-0.8
Matthews	971	993	22	2.3	Sedgefield	608	580	-28	-4.6
Eastover	420	440	20	4.8	Coulwood	1,247	1,213	-34	-2.7
Lincoln Heights	451	471	20	4.4	Albemarle Rd.	899	858	-41	-4.6
Allenbrook	310	329	19	6.1	Marie G. Davis	512	445	-67	-13.1
Berryhill	279	298	19	6.8	Spaugh	642	567	-75	-11.7
Highland Ren.	507	525	18	3.6	J. T. Williams	803	720	-83	-10.3
Winterfield	545	561	16	2.9	Cochrane	612	507	-105	-17.2
Crown Point	742	754	12	1.6	Martin	1,708	1,599	-109	-6.4
Elizabeth Trad.	510	522	12	2.4	Wilson	589	480	-109	-18.5
Irwin Ave.	582	594	12	2.1	HIGH SCHOOLS				
Pineville	712	722	10	1.4	North Mecklenburg	2,387	2,736	349	14.6
David Cox Road	1,101	1,109	8	0.7	Berry Academy	1,145	1,449	304	26.6
McKee Road	878	886	8	0.9	Olympic	1,387	1,643	256	18.5
Morehead	781	789	8	1.0	West Charlotte	1,483	1,686	203	13.7
Piney Grove	676	683	7	1.0	Butler	2,048	2,245	197	9.6
Montclair	456	462	6	1.3	Garinger	1,488	1,685	197	13.2
Hidden Valley	585	589	4	0.7	Hopewell	2,048	2,225	177	8.6
Mallard Creek	826	830	4	0.5	South Meck	2,216	2,303	87	3.9
Briarwood	554	554	0	0.0	Waddell	1,054	1,139	85	8.1
Reid Park	457	457	0	0.0	Harding	1,409	1,492	83	5.9
Ashley Park	271	268	-3	-1.1	Providence	2,436	2,518	82	3.4
Hunt. Farms	546	542	-4	-0.7	Myers Park	2,613	2,687	74	2.8
Westerly Hills	341	337	-4	-1.2	West Meck	1,524	1,556	32	2.1
Sedgefield	456	451	-5	-1.1	Northwest	1,183	1,150	-33	-2.8
Sterling	435	430	-5	-1.1	East Meck	2,275	2,233	-42	-1.8
Lebanon Road	714	707	-7	-1.0	Independence	2,729	2,536	-193	-7.1
Rama Road	599	591	-8	-1.3	Vance	2,420	2,157	-263	-10.9
Park Road	367	358	-9	-2.5	---				
Selwyn	526	517	-9	-1.7	Notes: * Brunswick lost students to Oaklawn, which reopened as a magnet with a priority zone surrounding the school.				
Highland Mill	241	231	-10	-4.1					
Lansdowne	587	577	-10	-1.7					



Ruinous choice

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down the hall, parents greeted each other by name or introduced themselves. The teachers had all been there for years and knew who most of the children were.

Before the 2002-03 school year, when it was decided that parents would be given a “choice” as to which schools their children would attend, University Park parents began to be concerned about the effects this would have on the school. The fact that CMS was giving first priority to the children in the immediate area who were not interested in the performing arts of the school began to worry the parents. A group of parents met with a CMS official, but he only gave us a half hour, and by the time he finished talking, 25 of those 30 minutes were up. The parents never had a chance to voice their concerns.

Many middle class parents, black and white, chose not to send their children to University Park in the 2002-2003 school year. Most said they just wanted to “try out” another school. I felt like they were scared of what changes the new student assignment would bring.

The first year after choice was a challenge. University Park now had students who were there not because of the performing arts magnet part of the school, but because it was close to their home and they could get in.

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Where whites have concentrated

Percentage white, fall 2004.

ELEMENTARIES

Prov. Spring	88%
Davidson	87%
McKee Road	85%
Elizabeth Lane	85%
Bain	85%
Selwyn	83%
Cornelius	81%
Huntersville	81%
Olde Providence	80%
Matthews	80%
Endhaven	78%
Sharon	75%
Long Creek	74%
Hawk Ridge	73%
Beverly Woods	71%
McAlpine	70%
Eastover	68%
Clear Creek	68%
Blythe	66%
Mountain Island	60%
Park Road	57%
Myers Park Trad.	56%
Lansdowne	53%
Lake Wylie	53%
Pineville	53%
Crown Point	47%
David Cox Road	43%
Eliz. Traditional	42%
Mallard Creek	41%
Paw Creek	40%
Lebanon Road	37%
Cotswold	37%
Reedy Creek	35%
Smithfield	34%
Berryhill	33%
Greenway Park	32%
Rama Road	30%
Villa Heights	30%
Oakhurst	29%
Tuckaseegee	28%
Piney Grove	26%
Hunt. Farms	25%
J. H. Gunn	23%
Dilworth	23%
Steele Creek	23%

Barringer	21%	Bradley	73%
Pawtuckett	19%	Mint Hill	68%
Pinewood	19%	Alex. Graham	67%
Highland Mill	17%	Carmel	58%
Collinswood	16%	Northeast	46%
Statesville Road	16%	Smith	44%
Univ. Meadows	15%	Quail Hollow	43%
Newell	14%	Southwest	43%
University Park	14%	Alexander	41%
Oaklawn	14%	Coulwood	38%
Winding Springs	13%	Piedmont	30%
Morehead	13%	McClintock	29%
Allenbrook	12%	Randolph	26%
Hickory Grove	11%	Kennedy	18%
Idlewild	11%	Wilson	16%
Hornets Nest	11%	Albemarle Rd.	12%
Oakdale	11%	Sedgefield	10%
Windsor Park	10%	Martin	10%
Montclair	10%	Ranson	9%
Merry Oaks	9%	Eastway	9%
Nath. Alexander	9%	Northridge	8%
Joseph W. Grier	9%	Cochrane	6%
Albemarle Road	9%	Spaugh	4%
Shamrock Gardens	9%	Marie G. Davis	1%
Lincoln Heights	8%	J. T. Williams	1%

HIGH SCHOOLS

Providence	82%
Butler	73%
Myers Park	66%
Hopewell	65%
South Meck	63%
North Meck	62%
East Meck	39%
Northwest	38%
Olympic	38%
Independence	33%
West Meck	23%
Vance	23%
Waddell	19%
Harding	12%
Berry Academy	10%
Garinger	9%
West Charlotte	3%

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

South Charlotte	79%
Robinson	78%
Crestdale	77%
Davidson IB	75%

Ruinous choice

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Consequently, the magnet part of the curriculum suffered because the teachers now had many new students who did not want to be in drama and dance classes.

At the end of the 2002-03 school year, another mass of middle class parents left – as well as a bunch of teachers, including the drama teacher.

The 2003-04 school year arrived and after the first month, parents could see that something was amiss. The quality of instruction appeared to be deteriorating. Things appeared less organized and the PTA had shrunk considerably.

Parents, as well as teachers, no longer walked about the school with smiles on their faces. There were no longer parent volunteers in every classroom. My children both still enjoyed the school, and I was not too concerned.

There were, however, a few things that bothered me. One was the language my son learned at school. Another was the fact that my third-grader asked me why he was the only white child in his class and why there was only one black child in talent development. I felt and still do that third-graders are trying out their vocabulary and will use bad or inappropriate language no matter where they are. When talking to my son about being the only white child in his class, I said that people are people no matter what their skin color. Actually, he did not appear bothered by being the only white child, just curious.

I worried a bit about how the changing school population would affect my children, but I was determined to support the school and do whatever I could to make it work. The boys both had great teachers, and although they were no longer doing some of the interesting projects they had enjoyed in the past few years when the school had a more active PTA and stronger arts teachers, I thought they were still receiving a quality

Where whites are leaving, gathering

Percentage-point increase or decrease in white percentage in student body, between fall 2003 and fall 2004.

ELEMENTARIES

Oakdale	-9.6
Dilworth	-8.0
University Park	-7.4
Blythe	-6.5
Mallard Creek	-6.4
Oakhurst	-5.9
Rama Road	-5.8
Reedy Creek	-5.7
Mountain Island	-5.6
David Cox Road	-5.3
Smithfield	-5.3
Hawk Ridge	-5.1
Winding Springs	-4.9
Newell	-4.7
Highland Mill	-4.7
Hickory Grove	-4.6
Barringer	-4.5
Pawtuckett	-4.5
Steele Creek	-4.4
Cornelius	-4.4
Lake Wylie	-4.4
Statesville Road	-4.3
Hunt. Farms	-4.0
Lebanon Road	-3.7
Piney Grove	-3.7
Paw Creek	-3.6
Irwin Ave.	-3.6
Greenway Park	-3.5
Tuckaseegee	-3.4
Morehead	-3.3
J. H. Gunn	-3.1
Villa Heights	-2.9
Univ. Meadows	-2.9
Highland Ren.	-2.6
Sedgefield	-2.5
Davidson	-2.5
Allenbrook	-2.3
Montclair	-2.3
Merry Oaks	-2.2
Clear Creek	-2.2
Berryhill	-2.2

Lincoln Heights	-2.2	MIDDLE SCHOOLS	
Bain	-2.0	Randolph	-10.3
Winterfield	-2.0	McClintock	-9.2
Devonshire	-1.7	Alexander	-9.1
Nath. Alexander	-1.7	Southwest	-7.8
Albemarle Road	-1.6	Northeast	-5.7
Cotswold	-1.6	Mint Hill	-5.0
Prov. Spring	-1.5	Smith	-4.9
Pineville	-1.4	Piedmont	-4.1
Westerly Hills	-1.4	Sedgefield	-3.6
Elizabeth Lane	-1.2	Northridge	-3.4
Hornets Nest	-1.1	Eastway	-3.2
Joseph W. Grier	-1.1	Davidson IB	-2.7
Huntersville	-1.1	Carmel	-2.3
Pinewood	-0.9	Robinson	-2.3
Elizabeth Trad.	-0.8	Bradley	-2.1
Crown Point	-0.8	Ranson	-1.9
Windsor Park	-0.7	Martin	-1.7
Ashley Park	-0.7	Quail Hollow	-1.6
Matthews	-0.7	Cochrane	-1.5
First Ward	-0.6	South Charlotte	-1.5
Beverly Woods	-0.4	Alex. Graham	-1.3
Sterling	-0.2	J. T. Williams	-0.4
Hidden Valley	0.0	Crestdale	-0.4
Collinswood	0.0	Marie G. Davis	-0.3
Nations Ford	0.1	Albemarle Rd.	-0.2
Olde Providence	0.1	Spaugh	-0.1
Endhaven	0.2	Wilson	0.0
Reid Park	0.2	Kennedy	0.3
Idlewild	0.3	Coulwood	0.3
Druid Hills	0.3	HIGH SCHOOLS	
McAlpine	0.5	Harding	-6.5
Bruns	0.5	East Meck	-4.7
Briarwood	0.5	North Meck	-4.4
Shamrock Gar.	0.8	Independence	-3.8
Park Road	0.8	Vance	-3.3
Byers	0.9	Northwest	-3.3
Chantilly	0.9	Berry Academy	-3.0
McKee Road	1.2	Olympic	-2.4
Lansdowne	1.3	Hopewell	-2.3
Thomasboro	1.5	Waddell	-2.2
Myers Park Trad.	1.8	West Meck	-2.1
Eastover	2.2	South Meck	-1.9
Sharon	2.6	Garinger	-1.6
Selwyn	4.1	Providence	0.2
Long Creek	5.2	West Charlotte	0.4
		Butler	0.6
		Myers Park	1.0

education.

Some parents were not satisfied, however, and when January rolled around and parents were once again given a choice as to which school their children would attend the following year, many of the second- and third-grade parents whose children had been there since kindergarten chose to move schools. I, along with a core group of middle-class parents, began to count the number of students our children would know in the following year. It got to the point that we were saying, If A

and B and C stay, we'll be OK. I decided not to move my children.

Near the end of the summer of 2004, parents of child A and child B both decided to pull their children out of University Park. The parents of both children appeared embarrassed when they told me their children were changing schools. But child C was still there. I thought, "It will be OK if the teachers are still there. I know that they are good."

Before school started, I left two messages for the principal. I

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wanted to be assured that my children would still have someone they knew in their classes in the upcoming year. My phone calls were not returned.

At the back-to-school night the Thursday before school started, the atmosphere in the auditorium was unlike anything I had felt at that school before. Nobody knew anyone. Not only did I not know anyone, but it turned out that nine more teachers had left the school at the end of the previous year. That is 18 teachers in two years. I am not sure the total number of teachers in the school, but on average, there were five or six classes at each grade level, so in effect, three grades worth of teachers left over two years.

One of my son's teachers did not make a good first impression on me, but she was a first-year teacher, so I assumed she was nervous. My other son's teacher appeared to be wonderful. She was the only fourth-grade teacher who was not in her first or second year in the profession and she was very receptive.

In past years, open houses lasted for two hours or more. This year we were in and out in 20 minutes. I saw fewer familiar teachers and very few familiar parents this time. Although I was still confident that my children were in the right place, I was concerned with how the school would respond to the seemingly massive teacher as well as pupil changes.

By the end of the second week of school, however, things had changed. One son's teacher was still struggling with the basics. As I was pondering what to do about that, the other son's experienced teacher quit. After three days of substitutes, a teacher arrived who gave the fourth-graders homework that said, Color all the 1,000s green and all the 10,000s blue etc.: Kindergarten homework in fourth grade. My last straw broke. Although I felt like a hypocrite and was extremely disap-

DidYaHear?

✓ The CMS Equity Committee may poke into a can of worms with lots of potential. The group wants achievement data that shows which schools lift children the most. If that is what you want to know, most of CMS's data won't tell you. To find where below-grade first-graders are being turned into above-grade eighth-graders, the group wants to track individuals, not entire schools or entire grades. CMS is now reporting such data where it found that it could be useful – as it argued that Bright Beginnings give kids benefits that last. Data on cohorts of Bright Beginnings alums are now tracked at least through third grade.

✓ Everybody likes the idea of partnerships, but Parks & Recreation chairman William Chandler says the ones between Park & Rec and CMS have proven difficult. Central administrators are fine, but “principals take ownership of their schools” and pretty soon coaches and others are shouldering the public off the shared ball fields and other facilities that were to be for joint use. “We’ve experienced some difficulties.... I’m sure there are reasons from the CMS point of view,” Chandler told a community group this week.

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

pointed that we were in this situation, I want my children educated, not baby sat.

My kids are now at an overcrowded suburban school. On the first day of school, my son came home and said: The school is too big. Where were all the black kids? It's a mile to the cafeteria. I need five dollars for a planner; everyone has to have one. Why do we do our specials in our rooms rather than going to the specials room? (University Park had a separate room for drama, art, music and dance. This new school is so overcrowded that they barely have enough room for classrooms, much less the special classes.)

By the end of week one, my children had decided they like this school. But I have no experiences with this school, positive or negative, with which to make a decision. I do not like the fact that this school is so segregated, but I enjoy the fact that the children must have planners, in which they are expected to write down their homework assignments, and that those homework assignments are expected to be turned in.

What I do know is that my children used to go to a wonderful, desegregated school which was

truly representative of the Charlotte area community. The school was economically as well as racially balanced. They had gifted children as well as children with disabilities. It truly felt like a community school and I felt safe sending my children there, knowing that if any problems arose I would hear about it through the teachers, the principal or through other parents.

Choice in Charlotte-Mecklenburg changed that sense of community.

Within one year, the school was racially as well as economically segregated and the sense of community disappeared. A year later, my children are now attending a segregated white, upper-class, overcrowded school and are wondering where all the black children are.

I do not know what the future holds for my children. What I know is that, so far, our best experiences were in the school that looked like and acted like a community should. When my children attended a desegregated school, they believed that this was the way all schools are and they were comfortable with all people, regardless of their race or class.

'We are at a crossroads'

Continued from Page 1

board chairperson Joe White quipped, "The last time I did this we built an arena."

Shrunken budget OKd

Federal and state dollars rose, and the overall budget is up 7%. But with no additional local dollars, a whole lot of shifting went on over the summer and, for the first time in recent memory, vacant employee positions are disappearing even as enrollment grows.

Taking advantage of some new flexibility granted by the state, Pughsley has shifted to state dollars a number of programs previously financed locally. Campus security and law enforcement officers hired with local money will now be paid by the state.

Gov. Mike Easley's statewide 3rd-grade class size reduction program brought 95 new positions for a 1:18 ratio. But Pughsley said he would use a 1:19 ratio, "which will allow us to be in compliance with state standards. That assisted us, in that it required 71 of 95 positions, therefore there were 24 positions that we could apply towards cuts."

Among the plans and funding formulas scaled back or shelved, many directly affecting the district's core academic business:

- One hundred teacher assistant positions have been eliminated, raising the ratio from one assistant per 35 children in applicable grades to one per 38 children.

- Middle school class sizes will grow, with the teacher-pupil ratio rising from 1:20.5 to 1:22 for all non-Equity Plus schools.

- The highly touted \$3.68 million Transition 9 program aimed at struggling ninth-graders was cut by \$1.5 million. "In effect we scaled it back," Pughsley said.

- A \$510,000 plan to take SAT preparation systemwide through outsourcing was eliminated.

- The supplies budget for Equity Plus schools was sliced by more than \$200,000. Equity funding for schools with large numbers of low-performing or at-risk students was already more than \$18 million below promised levels.

- State-ordered renovations of pre-kindergarten facilities, to the tune of \$1.5 million, have been delayed once again.

- Nearly \$1 million was saved by shifting unspecified work from full-time people to part-timers ineligible for health benefits.

In his report to the board, Pughsley asserted that the budget crisis is chiefly a creation of local decisions.

"This year the district faces an extreme challenge, if you will," he said, "and that challenge has come about as a result of three years of flat funding at the local level.

"While that flat funding has been occurring, there

Rev. Tonyia Rawls, pastor of Unity Fellowship Church Charlotte, said she was "part of a community coalition concerned about" the capital funding proposal approved Tuesday for construction of new suburban schools.

"We are calling for a moratorium on new construction, until an assessment can be done to determine the most effective short- and long-range plan to address the overall problems within this county.... If we can bus students out we can bus them in. A comprehensive review of the failed experiment called the choice plan is definitely warranted, and we the community look forward to standing behind you in pursuit of any action."

John Minter is a grandparent of three CMS students. He is a board member of the Swann Fellowship, which publishes this journal.

"An 'emergency' request should not be limited to just a few of the system's students. Many of us have been in an 'emergency' situation for many years. We applaud the school board's effort to deal with the 'emergency' on the fringe, but think you should also move to deal with the 'emergency' in the system's core."

Voices from the board room

has been a tremendous surge in student growth.

"Over the last three years we have grown at least 12,000 additional students..." and "the demographics are changing within those numbers...."

"I have to say to you tonight that because of the third year in the flat funding that we will have to make cuts such that they will be felt in the classroom."

"With regard to the three- to five-year window that I was speaking of three years ago, we are now in the third year of that window, and I would also share with you that we are at a crossroads as it relates to continuing the success that we have experienced in Charlotte-Meck.

"And if we can't do that, then we are at a point of stagnation."

Deadpanned District 3's George Dunlap, "I hope the community is beginning to take notice of what is beginning to occur under our county commission.

"For the last three years, while our enrollment has continued to increase, the Board of County Commissioners has continued to say, no additional dollars."

Said District 2's Vilma Leake later, "My question is, can we bring a lawsuit against the county to make them to provide the funds necessary to educate our children? They did it in Guilford County..."

Continued on Page 8

'We are at a crossroads'

Continued from Page 7

New schools to accommodate growth

By an 8-1 vote, the school board approved its facilities committee's recommendation to ask county commissioners for \$73.9 million in non-voter-approved bond financing for five new schools already sitting atop its wish list of unfunded projects.

The money, if approved, would fund elementaries at Westmoreland Road in the north, Highland Creek in the northeast, and Winget Park in the southwest; and 500-seat additions at Hopewell and Butler Highs, where the cafeterias, media centers and other core spaces were built large enough to accommodate the new wings.

The pitch for funds, brought to the board by newcomer Kaye McGarry, is off-cycle in two key ways: It's not the time of year when commissioners routinely consider bond financing, and it's just weeks before commissioners face the voters.

The proposal ignited a coalition of central-city African-Americans, who demanded parity for the long-delayed renovation projects at their schools. (See box, Page 7) The board turned down an amendment by District 4's Louise Woods to link growth and renovation projects.

Woods extracted from Assistant Supt. Guy Chamberlain an acknowledgement that selling new bonds could delay the sale of bonds for other projects already approved by voters.

High school challenge

The board by an 8-1 vote approved Pughsley's \$5.8 million blueprint for raising achievement at Garinger, West Charlotte and West Meck high schools. The document is an effort to win a purse set aside by commissioners last June for replicable projects that promise to substantially increase on-grade statistics at the schools.

Tuesday night, Pughsley defended the schools, saying all three met the state's high-growth standards, and they were the only three CMS high schools to do so. "They in fact are making progress. What we want to do by way of this proposal is accelerate that growth."

District 6's Molly Griffin said she had hoped for "bold initiatives that were were really going to take a chance and try to turn something around." She

Percent of students absent 18 or more days

Garinger	21.0%
West Charlotte	29.9%
West Meck	26.5%
CMS average	11.9%

Source: The CMS High School Challenge Program

Pam Smith represents Partners for Highest Quality Schools.

"Last year, 37% of [East Mecklenburg's] home school assigned students opted out. East Meck remains a strong strong school, but you need to be aware that it is now one whose balance is fragile and threatened.

Voices from the board room

"Last year McClintock Middle School lost 45% of its home-school assigned students to magnets and choice.... How can you sit back and allow a school to slip into Equity Plus designation when so little has been done to prevent it?....

"We cannot understand how last year 220 of East Meck-assigned students attended Butler, to the point of creating such overcrowding [at Butler]. Without spending one dollar, we can help you relieve the Butler overcrowding situation: Send our home-school students back to our school."

Susan Irvin is a North Meck parent.

"I am not here to ask you to choose between Hopewell and North Meck, because one 500-seat addition at Hopewell will not alleviate any overflow that we have at North Meck."

acknowledged "touches of that," but ended up joining Larry Gauvreau in voting against the proposal.

A third of the Challenge budget goes to new hires for academic coaching, guidance and behavior management. About 29% would fund Pughsley's teacher pay-for-performance bonuses designed to cut teacher absences.

Other board members honed in on the need for boosting family involvement.

"We have not put enough in here to say that parents have to be responsible," said Leake. "I don't see enough in this plan to say that if a child is out of school that parents will be locked up.... This is part of the process. We have it but don't use it. What are we afraid of?"

"The challenge is really to the parents," said Dunlap.

Moving to the Big House

During last year's board election, Joe White promised to move meetings to the larger meeting hall at the Government Center. Now, on a pilot basis, he will get his wish. The board will pay the hall's owner, the City of Charlotte, about \$18,000 for one year's use of the hall and the attached TV production room.

Pending signing a memorandum of understand, the board expects the move to take place in October.

— Steve Johnston

Briefly...

Voc ed: Supporters of vocational education believe that high schools are ignoring the 38% of the students that will not go on to a two- or four-year college, the Los Angeles Times reported. They think that too many people believe college is the only goal. They also argue that vocational education should be more respected. The share of children taking vocational education classes has dropped from 27% in 1987 to 15% today.

www.latimes.com

Exercise: A study of 11,000 children found that one extra hour of exercise a week in school could significantly cut obesity in girls, The Philadelphia Inquirer told its readers. A Rand Corp study found that the obesity rate for first-grade girls fell 10% when they exercised one hour more than the kindergarteners in their school.

www.philly.com

Early gains: Children who attend preschool enter regular school about half a school year ahead of their peers who do not attend preschool, the Contra Costa Times told its readers. A University of California study also found that preschool children who attended preschool more than 34 hours a week were more likely to be aggressive and immature.

www.contracostatimes

Language learning: Although only a handful of Research Triangle schools offer dual immersion programs for non-English speaking students, most educators think it is the best strategy, the News and Observer reported. Dual immersion classes have bilingual instructors who teach half the day in English and half in Spanish.

www.newsobserver.com

Finding dropouts: The Houston Independent School

District is trying to keep kids from dropping out by going door to door and by trying to build ties with the community, the Boston Globe told its readers. The district has been in the spotlight since 2001, when they were found to have miscounted 3,000 dropouts and reported they had none.

www.boston.com

Pack 'em in: Faster-than-expected growth in Wake County schools has officials discussing whether to resort to year-round school or find temporary housing for their students, the News and Observer reported. Last year, 4,597 more students were

enrolled. This year, 5,479 more were added.

www.newsobserver.com

Teacher gap: In a trial challenging Texas' property tax funding of school systems, Ed Fuller, former researcher for the State Board of Educator Certification, testified that school districts with high populations of minorities have a higher percentage of uncertified teachers, the Dallas Morning News told its readers. Fuller testified that children in predominantly black districts have only a 50% chance of getting a certified teacher in algebra, a college gateway course.

Calendar

16 Candidate forum: Parks Helms, candidate for County Commissioners, 12:15 p.m., 1510 E. 7th St. Sponsor: Swann Fellowship.

16 "What Does it Mean to be White in Charlotte?: Exploring the Dynamics of Racial Privilege," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation needed.

21 Candidate forum: Jennifer Roberts, candidate for County Commissioners, noon, 1510 E. 7th St. Sponsor: Swann Fellowship.

23 "Sources of Interracial Distrust in Charlotte," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation needed.

29 CMS Magnet Advisory Roundtable.

30 "Stories of Hope: Racial Reconciliation," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation needed.

OCTOBER

2 International Festival, UNCC Barnhardt Student Activity Center, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Booths representing the cultures of about 50 nations will be staffed by UNCC students and members of the community. Some will have native foods for sale.

3 International Peace Day at Myers Park Methodist Church, 1501 Queens Road, 4 p.m.-6 p.m. Guest speakers: Dr. James Howell and others; music directed by Dr. Thomas Moore, and a presentation by the combined youth choirs. Sponsors include United Religions Initiative, Mecklenburg Ministries, NCCJ.

9 Parent education event, UNCC Fretwell Building, 10-2. Youth aged 12-18 and their parents welcome. Sponsor: Parents On The Move/Parents In Action. Free. Info: Blanche Penn, 704-890-4101.

21 "Choosing on Faith: A Look at School Choice," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation needed.

28 "Your Child or Our Child: Moral Responsibility and Care of 'the Other'," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation needed.

NOVEMBER

11 "Intro to the Continuum of Care for the Homeless in Charlotte," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation needed.