

'We may have started a new tradition'



CMS-TV3

The school board's move this week to the Government Center Meeting Chamber went off with barely a hitch. Above, JROTC cadets misunderstood Chairman Joe White's instructions, and marched behind the dias instead of in front of it to shake hands, prompting White's talk of new traditions. The board had new lighting to get used to, while the public faced longer sight lines. And debate has only begun on whether the carpet, sound-absorbent walls and longer waits for speakers to reach the lectern will solemnify meetings – or push them toward somnolence.

'Basic Plus'

Pughsley envisions ensuring access for all kids to challenging courses on top of N.C.'s 'sound basic' mandate

With North Carolina poised to demand more of its schools, Supt. Jim Pughsley appears to be laying the groundwork for pushing Charlotte-Mecklenburg beyond whatever minimum state expectations emerge.

Meeting with business executives last week, Pughsley said he would bring back to them a vision he tentatively called "Basic Plus."

"Basic has to do with every kid leaving third grade able to read and comprehend on grade level," Pughsley told the Education Budget Advisory Committee.

"The plus has to do with being able to engage [every student] in a very comprehensive curriculum."

Historically, the state's schools have not performed either mission well. CMS has been more thorough than most districts in pro-

viding Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, but there are still course equity issues at high school.

And as Pughsley develops his vision, CMS may further refine its regimen focused on teaching basic skills to everyone. Experienced teachers loathe the "drill and kill," and some parents are sure that high-achieving children are being held back by the slowest performer in the classroom.

A decade-old lawsuit presided over by N.C. Superior Court Judge Howard Manning is hammering out the details of how the state will meet a constitutional test of providing all N.C. children a sound basic education (Story, Page 4.)

"We don't want to be satisfied with that," Pughsley said.

"Certainly that's a ground level." Pughsley said he wants CMS to budget for equally sound education for "the upper quartile as well."

Earlier decisions in the long-running Leandro school adequacy suit have made clear that sound basic education has to do with pushing along children at all levels. Schools providing a constitutionally acceptable education must not only teach reading basics but also challenge young geniuses.

Pughsley hinted that his vision would require moving money, and that it would be essential to reach community consensus long before the next budget cycle hits.

Violent kids: Can we see their hurt?

Two weeks after the World Trade Center attacks, Deborah Prothrow-Stith's gut was at war with her head. Her gut said, when is the government going to kill the terrorists and end her anxiety that there would be new attacks and she would be a victim?

"I had now a new understanding of what fear can do relative to violence," Prothrow-Stith told a Charlotte audience Wednesday morning.

"Some of you are in communities where fear is palpable" among children. Some adults on a

Monday morning will be working with the child who saw his mother beaten on Sunday night.

"That's a fear we have not measured well," the physician and public health advocate. "And it's not so much measuring. It's responding to it.

"Children in pain, children who are angry, children who are afraid not only need the skills to get along but need the strategies of



Prothrow-Stith

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When to declare victory in programs for ESL students

Ester de Jong in "After Exit: Academic Achievement Patterns of Former English Language Learners," in Education Policy Analysis Archives:

"The analysis of former English language learners' achievement data illustrates that former English language learners may not necessarily catch up. This is particularly true for the secondary level, but may remain hidden at the elementary level as students 'pass' the test at the lowest level, but are not quite proficient yet.

"These findings... underscore that the schooling of minority language students is not only the responsibility of bilingual or ESL teachers, but continues after students have been exited from such programs.

"Statements about achievement patterns of English language learners and native English-speaking students or claims that linguistic barriers for English language learners have been overcome can only be examined when exited English language learners are included in the analysis.

"A district cannot be said to have met English language learners' academic and linguistic needs if discrepancies in academic achievement patterns between exited English language learners and native English speakers persist. It is therefore important to disaggregate data for former ELLs and follow their achievement over time."

– www.aasa.org

FUME backs closing other areas' neighborhood schools

"From our beginning," FUME leader Rhonda Lennon announced to an e-mail audience last week, "FUME has focused on building new seats to keep up with each year's systemwide growth and also to get our kids out of mobiles and storage rooms and into real close-to-home classrooms.

"We have also supported, from our beginning, renovating every occupied seat in our older schools. That is OCCUPIED seats ONLY.

"We think it both pointless and wasteful to renovate or replace seats that will not be used, using funds that could build desperately needed seats elsewhere.

"Thus we support capacity reduction in the renovation of underused older schools. We also support the merger of adjacent underused schools, the renovation of the full, merged school and the conversion of the other school into a community center like Davidson's Ada Jenkins Center or Huntersville's David Waymer Center."

Ada Jenkins was Davidson's segregated black school. The Waymer Center sits on the former site of Torrence-Lytle High School, Huntersville's segregated black school. Both were closed rather than integrated as the school board faced mandatory desegregation during the '60s.

FUME claims to represent suburban north Mecklenburg parents. Asked about her comments Monday, Lennon added: "Closing schools doesn't have a direct relationship with funding new construction, in my mind. The biggest impact would be operational. However, in lean times, I think all things must be considered. Please keep in mind that I am in support of the E+ program and reduced class size for high-risk populations, among the other needed resources.

"I think an interesting idea is to look at the support for some schools and determine how many actual home attendance children choose it as their first choice.

"Are all neighborhood schools being fully supported by their neighborhoods? If a school is not supported and in dire need of renovation, would it not be prudent to use those resources elsewhere in an area of high support – whether suburban construction or urban renovation?"

Lennon also suggested looking "at a community's overall need, not just for school seats, but social services, medical and dental care, senior centers, park and rec facilities, tutoring centers, ESL outreach, etc. Are there alternative uses for current/former school buildings that would bring far more benefit to the entire community?"

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Basic Plus

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To meet all children's needs, "we are going to be talking about a differentiated approach to the allocation of resources," he said.

"What does it take to have a quality teacher in every classroom?... "Let's see if we can come together on some fundamental kinds of things. Let's not attempt to do it in April."

The project came up last week as Pughsley urged the committee to be more strategic in its thinking about how to advise county commissioners on school funding. The committee, jointly appointed by the school board and commissioners, has fallen into a pattern of last-minute consultations and 11th-hour report-writing. Perhaps for other reasons, the group, dominated by business executives, has had little impact on commissioners' recent budget decisions.

The school board itself is in the midst of its own struggle to focus on big-picture issues.

Next month, a board retreat will be devoted to strategic thinking. Asked Wednesday for an example, school board vice chairperson Kit Cramer pointed to teacher quality.

If all experts agree that the most important ingredient to student success is the quality of the teacher, then unequal distribution of quality teachers throughout the district's 145 schools is unacceptable, Cramer said. In the post-Leandro era, it might also prove illegal.

3 gaps to close

Supt. Jim Pughsley, from comments at a Jan. 13, 2004 board meeting:

"There is more than one gap. The first one, the one we talk about all the time... has to do with achievement.

"But there's also a gap as it relates to parental involvement.

"And there's also a gap as it relates to teacher quality.

"When we get those two in hand, then we will not only close it, we'll slam the door on this achievement gap....

"I'm proud of this community for supporting CMS. And I hope [the public will] continue to be in place so we can continue to move forward."



CMS-TV3 1-13-04
Pughsley

How the board can evenly distribute quality teachers will be a challenge. It has already made two efforts:

CMS has put teaching spots at schools with experienced faculties off-limits to transfers from existing CMS teachers. Principals at the affected schools must hire inexperienced teachers – or experienced ones from outside CMS.

And small financial enticements are in place at low-achieving and high-poverty schools.

Neither policy has ended the pattern spawned by unfettered

teacher transfer privileges: Most inexperienced teachers begin careers at challenged schools, and many that don't quit the profession transfer to easier assignments as soon as possible. The students remaining in the challenged schools never have equal access to experienced teachers.

Solving this kind of problem was the subject of an Oct. 1 school board workshop led by Don McAdams, the former chairman of the Houston Independent School District who now heads the Broad Institute for School Boards. CMS was a finalist for the 2004 Broad Prize for Urban Education.

"Urban boards don't understand the power they have with policies, and they fail to take the action that will really change behavior," McAdams told the workshop.

Most urban boards are dysfunctional, he said. For years the Los Angeles board met for eight hours every week. Too much time was spent debating secondary issues.

"I believe that you here in CMS have done some serious redesign over the last decade, perhaps not even realizing you were doing it," McAdams said. His example: managing instruction from the center, a program developed by Eric Smith and his then-deputy Jim Pughsley to assure that children's learning would not be derailed even by moves from school to school.

Today's board task may be different McAdams said. "But naming it, describing it, is a good way to formalize at the board level your commitment to redesigning the system for high achievement for all kids."

How the N.C. Supreme Court defined a 'sound basic education'

"For purposes of our Constitution, a 'sound basic education' is one that will provide the student with at least:

"(1) sufficient ability to read, write, and speak the English language and a sufficient knowledge of fundamental mathematics and physical science to enable the student to function in a complex and rapidly changing society;

"(2) sufficient fundamental knowledge of geography, history, and basic economic and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices with

regard to issues that affect the student personally or affect the student's community, state, and nation;

"(3) sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable the student to successfully engage in post-secondary education or vocational training; and

"(4) sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable the student to compete on an equal basis with others in further formal education or gainful employment in contemporary society."

– N.C. Supreme Court ruling, July 24, 1997

Tool for aiding schools goes statewide

DonorsChooseNC announced that the Web site linking teacher needs to willing donors is now available throughout North Carolina.

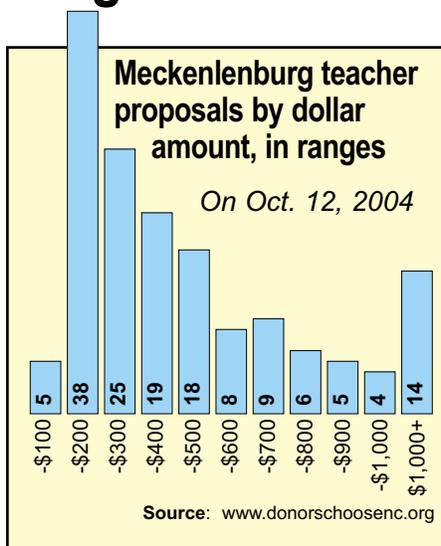
“We look forward to the day when every student has the resources they need, and DonorsChooseNC will do everything we can to achieve that goal,” said Missy Sherburne, DonorsChoose North Carolina executive director.

Since last February’s N.C. launch, DonorsChooseNC financed \$221,834 in 284 classroom projects in 15 N.C. districts, including CMS.

About 80% of the projects have been in low-income Title 1 schools. More than \$35,000 went to CMS classrooms, Sherburne said.

Projects funded have ranged from butterfly gardens and smoke detectors to books of the English classics. Teachers define the project or the materials needed.

The list of projects may be



sorted by grade level, subject and school district. Use the search tool at www.donorschoose.org/locale2/donors.php?action=advanced

The 151 projects listed Tuesday from CMS teachers totaled more than \$73,000, and ranged from \$65 to \$2,550. Donors may fund an entire project, or a portion. Only five of the 151 listed had received partial funding.

Manning woos legislators for school reform

Superior Court Judge Howard Manning put some pressure on his former legislative colleagues last week to take part in reform of N.C. public education.

“We have no assurance that the General Assembly will fund what the Department of Public Instruction and education leaders feel is necessary to address the needs of disadvantaged students in this state,” Manning reportedly told lawyers gathered in his Wake County courtroom.

Writing for “Legislative Link” published by the N.C. Association of School Administrators, Katherine Joyce said Manning was adamant that it is time for legislators to act: “You’ve run out of time, and you can’t hide or sit back on Jones Street and carp about it. It’s time to get moving,” Joyce reported the judge said.

“There will be no taking of Small School funding, which serves a very specific purpose, or the Low Wealth Schools funds that have never been funded adequately as it is. There also should be no [Local Education Agency] Discretionary Reduction, where you take money away from schools on one hand and give it back to them on the other...”

Joyce wrote that Manning said funding “should not be based solely on Average Daily Membership but instead should be used for addressing the needs of at-risk students. Manning also said disadvantaged students in every school district, including urban areas, should benefit from the state response to his orders. ‘It can’t be one-size-fits-all.... We’ve got to handle the needs in different districts in different ways.’”

The next hearing in the case is Oct. 25, when state education officials are to report on their long-term plans.

Communicating with parents

Beyond the bookbag (at least for parents on Internet)

Irving H. Buchen, vice president of academic affairs at Aspen University and author of “Parents Guide to Student Success,” in Education Week:

“They are also becoming the most ‘communicated to’ generation of parents. The requirement for the official dissemination of district report cards pales beside the electronic links increasingly being wired in place between schools and parents, often personalized and sustained individually by each teacher and parent.

“The comprehensive information-sharing has imparted new force to homework completion and attendance. Hard pressed for mutually convenient times to meet and talk, teachers and parents even have held electronic parent-teacher conferences, often supplemented by the phone, sometimes simultaneously. Lately, many of the linkage companies are providing research-based information and/or hot links for ways parents can guide children to school success. In short, current parents are much more school-savvy than their own parents ever were.”

– www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=06Buchen.h24

Dec. 11 town hall group begins its public pitch

Two of the the top leaders in the upcoming United Agenda for Children hit the pavement this week to explain their plans and ask people to step forward to participate.

The Agenda seeks to create “a united action plan to ensure all children in Mecklenburg County are healthy, safe and well-educated.”

Pressure for a plan comes in part from funders looking for effective investment of their donor dollars in programs affecting children, the school board was told Tuesday night.

The process to define such a plan is straight-forward: Using a demographically representative sample of citizens voting via computer-linked keypads on issues placed before them, a Dec. 11 Town Hall is to produce consensus on a list of goals for public improvement. Follow-up monitoring and reporting continues after the Town Hall to assure that governments, boards and agencies implement the agenda.

What is less straight-forward is

how the issues of the day are framed for Town Hall participants. United Agenda leaders have been sifting statistics and running the data by a citizens advisory group. All that suggests a bias in favor of issues that are quantifiable. Town Hall follow-up is also to be driven by quantifiable data.



Patterson

“We are now deep into the content for the Town Hall,” the school board was told Tuesday night by Cyndee Patterson, president of the Lee Institute that is being paid for Agenda logistical

and technical support.

At the Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum this week, United Agenda co-chair Judge Shirley Fulton termed the event “sort of a reverse form of governance.”

“We as the people are getting to make the decision up front and say to our elected officials, here’s

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Funding

The United Agenda for Children budget is \$985,000.

“You’ll ask where we are now,” Cyndee Patterson said at Tuesday’s school board meeting. “We are about \$650,000 into what we need.

“We need \$730,000 for this year, and the \$250,000 is [for] two years of implementation. The cost is really in large part in the citizen engagement model and the 1,500 people all day” Dec. 11.

Funders include:

Meck. County	\$100,000
Duke Endowment	100,000
Found. for Carolinas	100,000
Knight Foundation	100,000
School board	100,000

Others who have committed:

- Bank of America
- BellSouth
- Carolinas Healthcare Found
- Duke Power
- United Way
- Wachovia

Other request pending:

- City of Charlotte
- Mecklenburg towns
- Other businesses
- Other foundations

– United Agenda For Children

Prothrow-Stith

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healing.” She recommended employing art, music, dance – and community service. “Those traumatized children... can feel better helping others.”

Prothrow-Stith, 50, addressed an audience of about 350 people at the Westin Hotel. The event was part of a national celebration of afterschool programs and was sponsored by Partners in Out-of-School Time and others.

Prothrow-Stith, a 1975 graduate of Spelman College in Atlanta who received an M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1979, was born in 24,000-population

Marshall, Texas, home of the Fire Ant Festival.

But she made her mark in Boston where, according to the Boston History Collaborative, the Boston City Hospital doctor suggested that “street violence should be considered a public health issue, contributing to Boston’s community policing model.” She currently works at the Harvard School of Public Health, is selling a book on child violence and has testified before congressional committees. In 1987 she was the first woman appointed Massachusetts commissioner of public health. She spent time in Tanzania after President Clinton named her husband, a Methodist minister, to be U.S.

ambassador there.

Prothrow-Stith critiqued media dominated by a “culture of violence,” and that groups should be “making a statement to our community that we don’t find violence entertaining and we don’t admire it....”

But banishing superheros who practice violence is not sufficient, she warned.

“Race and class issues are a substantial part of this problem of violence.

“We have to understand that to get people to believe in the children in the public schools in urban America requires getting over hurdles that have to do with race and class.”

Town Hall meeting

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what we want you to do.”

Speaking to a largely African American audience, Fulton, who is African-American, emphasized that she and other leaders “realize the importance of having some input into the decisions that are being made, and the question that are asked, in order that we get the right answer in return.”

United Agenda leaders have committed to placing in the room on Dec. 11 a sample of citizens closely reflective of Census demographics (see “Demograph-ics” box).

District 1 school board member Larry Gauvreau objected to the use of the demographics, saying it “looks like you’re trying to engineer a room.”

Precisely, said Patterson: “If you really want a community’s voice in the room, it can’t be self-selected.”



Fulton

But Fulton faced another complaint: Census data puts the Dec. 11 demographic target at 61% white. But the public schools are 60% minority as of this fall, so the United Agenda will give whites unwarranted power over children’s issues in general, and public school issues in particular.

Responded Fulton, “That’s



something the group needs to hear.”

“This community, like many across the country, is fighting and struggling with lots of misinformation and lots of misunderstanding because we’re not talking,” said John Minter, an African-American and co-chair of an Agenda citizen advisory committee.

Fulton said broad participation would be vital, not just on Dec. 11 but during the Agenda’s implementation phase over the following 24 months.

“Unless we’re on the job after that... nothing’s going to happen.”

And as for Dec. 11, Fulton and Patterson both encouraged their audiences to register to participate in the Dec. 11 meeting.

Said Fulton: “We’re asking you as part of this community to go back to the hip-hops and those who wear their hats backwards.... There’s no magic to a thing like this. We just need to jump in and make it work from our perspective.”

Register for the Dec. 11 Town Hall at 704-714-4444 or, beginning Oct. 20, on the Internet at www.unitedagendaforchildren.org

Demographics

United Agenda leaders are distributing a sheet of “approved demographics” for the Dec. 11 Town Hall Meeting that will inform who participates. Note the priority ranking.

Priority ranking	Pct.	Total
1. Race/ethnicity		
White	61	915
Black	25	375
Asian/Am. Ind	3	45
Multi-ethnic/other	2	30
Hispanic	9	135
2. Geographic area		
North	20	300
South	20	300
East	20	300
West	20	300
Inside 77-85-Rt. 4	20	300
3. Education (for those over 25)		
Less than HS	10.4	156
HS grad & equiv.	19.6	294
Some college	19.5	293
Assoc. deg.	9.4	141
Bachelor’s	27.4	411
Grad./prof.	13.7	206
4. Age		
15-21	10	150
22-34	28.5	428
35-44	23.4	351
45-59	24.5	368
60 and over	13.6	206
5. Gender		
Male	49	735
Female	51	765
Total participants		1,500

– United Agenda For Children

DidYaHear?

✓ Wasn’t Jim Pughsley due an answer by Oct. 30 if the school board wants to extend the superintendent’s contract, or give him a raise, or a bonus, or all of the above, or none of the above, or maybe not quite all – to send a message? The board next meets Oct. 26.

✓ Guilford Supt. Terry Grier, writing last Friday: “We have been reminded by the United States Departments of Justice and Education that if those agencies find that public school extracurricular activities are operated inconsistently with federal law, they will act to remedy those practices.

Examples they cited are schools that name racially separate Homecoming Queens and Kings and class superlatives such as Most Popular Student and Most Friendly....” No word on what, if anything, got the feds in a reminding mood.

✓ Writing in the Seattle Times, James Harvey from the University of Washington’s Center on Reinventing Public Education says “there’s no evidence that getting rid of recess increases learning. On the contrary, there’s a lot of research suggesting that regular exercise provides important social, physical and emotional benefits — to adults as well as children. Kids, particularly, need time to blow off steam.”

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

*Meet the candidates:***Dan Ramirez**

From a series of conversations with candidates for Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners at-large. This Q&A is extracted from comments about public schools and the candidate's plans made during forums sponsored by The Swann Fellowship, the publisher of this journal. Ramirez, a Republican, met voters Tuesday, Oct. 5.



Government Channel

In this society we live, in this city, integration is important, and it is a situation that to a certain extent is being done.

Unfortunately, we have come out of a lawsuit that has kind of put some brakes in some areas....

I know the black community is very concerned about going back to the yesteryear of segregation, not by enforcement but by circumstances of how our schools are being built and the choice plan.

To me, integration is probably the most important thing because what happens is when you have an integrated school, you have children that are learning from my culture, my children are learning from your culture; the black community, the Hispanic community, the white learning from both, and I know, judging by children, they are a lot more tolerant. The racial divide is not as important to young people as it has been to all of us here. I don't mean to say that we're old, just have more....

I have three daughters. Two of them have children of their own. They grew up in the Charlotte area. We discussed the issue of integration and racial problems.... Basically, what they're telling me is, "You guys are the ones that are having the problem. We, young people [are not]."...

But unfortunately, because of geography, because of social tendencies, we are in a very dangerous point....

We [Hispanics] are making the same mistake that the black population made some years ago, and that is that we are trying to have our community as a commune, instead of being integrated [into] the community.... It's all right, for

instance, in the business sense to patronize your community... but there is a world out there, and there is a world in which we as Hispanics have to integrate and learn the language, and learn the system, and make the system work for us instead of working for or against the system.

It is a period of accommodation, a period of learning. Of course culturally, we are totally different because we don't trust in government or agencies or anybody. We only trust in ourselves, in our families, and that's why we are so close-knit a community.

It is difficult for somebody else to come into that family circle or circle of friends. But we have to be more open.

And fortunately, I have to say, that the community... is being more inclusive and at the very least, you know we exist, and there is something you might want to do about integrating our community. And that is helpful....

I'm the eternal optimist, but I see a lot of progress and I see a lot of optimism as to how this community is evolving.

You are an individual. You are a family. Work ethics are paramount in your life. You believe in educating your family. And because of my ideals are individualistic and they are Republican, that doesn't diminish the fact that I believe that education is paramount in the life of everybody and I am a leading example of that.

Q: Why did the Republican Party support people who were not in support of integration and education?

A: I didn't get involved in that.... Unfortunately, a board that is supposed to be nonpartisan is probably the most partisan of them all.

My take is this... I'm a Republican, I elected to be Republican, it was my choice, but I'm not a politician. I don't wave that Republican flag for everything that I do. The way I was brought up to think, and I truly believe in the individual. I truly believe you have power within yourself to do things that probably you can't do with government help.

I truly believe in increasing the entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant society. We in the Hispanic community are very entrepreneurial anyway. We have thousands and thousands of people that came in, and you see them cutting lawns.... Five years ago, you see all these people working for big companies. What do you see now? You see this little truck saying "Ramirez Lawn Service" or whatever. Why? Because they came in, they bought their lawnmower and then they called their cousin Pedro, their friend Jose and, bingo, you have a small company right there. And they are succeeding – within their means, but they succeeding.

That's what I celebrate. I celebrate it because, honestly, that's what I did. And I don't know anything else to do but to work hard for what I had. It was not not easy. I'm not complaining. But I did it. And I think and believe that a lot of people have it in them to do it too. And the only thing that we need is an opportunity.... Give us that opportunity and we'll run with it.

Q: What needs do you see the immigrant population having, and what role should the county play in meeting those needs?

A: The need that I see is that I do realize that not everybody is Dan Ramirez. I was very fortunate that my parents instilled in

Ramirez forum

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me the need, the desire to educate myself.....

My biggest concern, and what I'm working toward, is to have adult education – through CPCC, even the school system – because the problem we have when an Hispanic family comes here, they come in with their children, their children, being children, learn the language in no time at all, they learn the system, they learn a lot of things within the system.

The parents do not, because they're busy working. And what is happening is that these children, 13, 14, 15 years old, with the time, they are translating for their parents.... This 13-, 14-year-old becomes de facto head of the family. He, she is the one that is leading that family in a direction. Good direction? Bad direction? Don't know. But they don't deserve to have all these responsibilities besides having the pressure of just being teenagers. On top of that they have this responsibility of having the family to take of.

That's why we have the highest dropout rate in the school system, because our children see that they can go wash cars for six, seven bucks an hour. And that's real money....

And the parents do not have the education to tell their children, don't do that; stay in school. The parents sometimes welcome the idea of having their children helping with the food basket and the family. And that's a fact of life in Latin America, and that's the main problem we have – adult education. Nobody talks about the education of adults. Everybody talks about education of children and how we can help. And they are being helped. And they are being educated.

But when they have this influence from the house, from their parents, that it's OK, just go out and do some work and help us out, then that's when we have this society that is in a vicious cir-

cle in which they can't come out of poverty, they can't come out of their uneducated background.

Q: Is that important enough for you to raise taxes? Is there anything important enough to you to raise taxes?

A: Yes.... The biggest argument is the school system. Why don't we raise taxes for the school system? I don't know, but again, I'm one of the commissioners and I receive a lot of e-mail and a lot of phone calls of people who say, "We don't need more taxes."...

But I believe this.... What is the purpose of raising taxes? Just to have more money? The school system has a budget. What really irks me is that people don't know that it is equal to the county's – almost \$1 billion, of which the county contributes only 40%. And yet because we are the closest one to the school system, then we are the tangible people that they can point a finger at for whatever failures – it was because county commissioners didn't give us the money, we are failing here and there.

The federal government is funding the schools, and the state has the obligation by law. We are mandated to fund the school system to the tune of \$60 million a year. And I assume you know what the school system is receiving right now – \$265 million.

That is one thing. When we have our budget and all these political fights about increasing taxes, decreasing taxes, not giving money to the schools, what have you, they don't mention that usually the state and federal government do give them more than what they have been giving before....

Q: But the state and federal money all has strings on it.

A: And I wish our money would be the same way. The problem we have is the county is mandated to fund a certain portion of the school system without any responsibility as to how they

report the expenditures.

And the problem, you know it is a fact, is that the school system has a credibility problem, and has had it for a few years.

Q: Do you hear that in the Hispanic community, that we don't need more taxes, we don't need better schools. We'd rather have a tax cut.

A: You're overemphasizing.... Talking about Bill James, that's the radical way....

I think that throwing money at failed programs is not going to resolve the problems.

Q: I agree, but what are the failed programs?

A: If we were concentrating on academics, which is what I'm always saying, let's concentrate on academics, I'd say yeah, it is a problem. But the problem is that we in the county have a department the Department of Social Services. And a lot of, not a lot but a few, of the programs that we have are duplicated in the school system. Is the school system there to educate, or is the school system there to produce social programs?

My position is yes, [the schools] do need funding. As far as I'm concerned they're going to have the funding that they need – not what they wish to have, which is two different things. ...

Q: What do we do about segregated schools? Today's kids have friends who are white and black and Hispanic, but what about the next generation?

A: It is a complicated issue, as you say. I am not a school board member or school expert.

But one thing that I had asked to members of the Board of County Commission and the Board of Education is, what is wrong with neighborhood schools? And everybody jumps: Oh, no, because then we're going to have

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all solid black schools....

Q: What about kids who grow up without support?

A: I think, with all due respect, what you're saying is that you're describing failure of the school system. Why is it that a school that happens to be in a black neighborhood has to be lower than any other school? The fact is that it should be higher. Instead of trying to have schools that are half-way empty, why don't you concentrate on having for them the best teachers there are, probably the best assistants there are in those schools.

Normally, white parents and conservatives are going to [make up for] the lack of computers, the lack of assistants, by their affluence.... Why don't we transfer all of these efforts and resources into these schools that really need, the children that really need that type of education? I don't know. And again, I don't pretend to be an expert.

Q: The state's money goes to salaries. The funds that the school system could move around like that come from the county.

A: I wouldn't have any problem.

Q: What you say would work in a fantasyland. But at 80% low-income schools, parents work two or three jobs, children worry about what they're going to eat that day. It doesn't matter what the teacher quality is if the students don't have a support system.

A: I posed that as a question because I don't know the answer. If I knew, I mean, wow!....

Unfortunately, and that's really what bothers me, it becomes so political. Oh, because you're a Democrat you're doing this, and

because you're a Republican, you're whatever whatever. And it shouldn't be.

Q: Yet both parties vote a party line when it comes to raising taxes. If you're re-elected, would you divert from party lines?

A: I'm an individual.... I selected the Republican Party because I am me. I vote my conscience, and again, it might not be the vote that you wanted me to cast, but it is my vote, not the party's.

Yes, I would be willing to reallocate, like you were saying. That sounds to me logical. That's the way it should be done.

Q: As new schools are built, can we combine them with affordable housing on the same site, and see it not just an education solution but an economic and social solution?

A: Sure. Of course, and that goes within the sphere of influence of the city. Something has to be done. This is a century-old debate all the time and there is no solution to it, or a current solution because everybody's posturing....

Q: Given your interest in voting on some key school issues, would you prefer dissolving the school board and let the commissioners deal with school issues directly?

A: Yes, in the back of my mind, [that is] something that I had thought probably would be beneficial is to have one body – not dissolve it, but merge it with the county commission.

Q: Last budget cycle there was talk of setting the tax rate, then deciding how to spend the money. That failed, but you voted for it. What I hear today is you'd be willing to be raise taxes for things you thought needed to be done.

A: No, I haven't said anything different.... Now what I said is, I don't want to increase taxes for something that I don't see a demonstrated benefit to the community....

A decision was made some time ago – and again, I am not an expert in school issues – but the decision was made some time ago to rebuild or renovate a lot of the inner-city schools that are sitting halfway empty right now.

Probably at the time, with the information that they had, it was a good decision. But they didn't follow through, they didn't follow through in the sense we were talking about, you know, bringing the good teachers, enticing people to be in those schools.

And now we have the problem of the suburban schools that are bursting at the seams. They have so many people there and they are screaming for more schools, more classrooms.

Not that they have to follow what I say. It's just that when they build schools, it is usually a nicely designed school. They have an architect and they are doing a design. And why can't we build modular schools, a design-build school – functional, efficient, comfortable for the children to go to. But they don't have to be designed... and then move them as necessary. That's what they do in Europe. I'm not saying that we should be Europe. But if you have a modular building and it's halfway empty, let's move it to the north side, let's move it to the south side.

Q: Why not change the assignment plan to move kids into the empty seats?

A: You mean busing?

Q: They could walk or hitchhike. Busing is never a problem when getting white kids to white schools. It's only a problem for white neighborhoods when you're talking about whites into black neighborhoods.

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Calendar

OCTOBER

- 14** Candidate forum for youth, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., meeting chamber, Government Center, 600 E. 4th St. Sponsor: KidsVoting.
- 19** Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services, 3301 Stafford Dr. off Wilkinson Blvd.
- 20** Candidate forum for at-large county commissioner candidates, noon, Charlotte Chamber's Belk Action Center, 330 S. Tryon St. Bring your lunch and questions for candidates. Mike Whitehead of Whitehead Associates will facilitate. RSVP krcramer@charlottechamber.com. Sponsors: CMS Partners for School Reform and Charlotte Advocates for Education.
- 20** School board's Safety Committee, 3:30 p.m., Room 414,

- Education Center.
- 21** "Choosing on Faith: A Look at School Choice," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation.
- 21** Candidate forum for U.S. Senate, U.S. House, N.C. Senate, county commissioners, 7 p.m., St. Paul Baptist Church, 1401 N. Allen St. Sponsor: H.E.L.P.
- 23** Education Fair, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Merchandise Mart, free. Public, private, charter and faith-based schools, as well as colleges, technical and trade schools, and adult education programs. Alternative options, such as home schooling, special needs programs, and after-school enrichment programs will also be represented. Sponsor: Bessire & Associates.
- 26** School board's Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

- 26** School board meets, 6 p.m., Meeting Chamber, Government Center.
- 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.
- 28** School board's Personnel Committee, 2 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

NOVEMBER

- 1** Day of the Dead at Myers Park High School. Music, drama, altar displays, writing contest and other events to mark the Mexican holiday celebrating departed loved ones and the continuity of life. Myers Park High.
- 11** Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., 11th floor conference room, Government Center.
- 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.
- 12** "Invisible Fences: Municipal Underbounding and Minority Exclusion," the third annual conference of the UNC Center for Civil Rights, Friday Center, Chapel Hill, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. An exploration of how annexation, zoning and sewer extensions, and environmental regulations are being used in small Southern towns to disenfranchise African-American homeowners, deny them city services and even leave them little alternative but to sell their ancestral lands. Information: UNC School of Law, Van Hecke-Wettach Hall, 100 Ridge Road CB #3380, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3380 (919) 962-5106.
- 17** Cheryl Brown Henderson and Linda Brown Thompson to discuss *Brown v. Board*, 7 p.m., Dana Auditorium, Guilford College, Greensboro. The Brown sisters are daughters of the lead plaintiff in the landmark *Brown v. Board*.

Ramirez forum

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A: My daughters went to... Bruns Avenue.

Q: To build more suburban schools, don't we need more money?

A: I think it is a big bureaucracy, that it is turning around, that it is listening to people now, and I think the future is probably more positive than negative the way I see it.

In January this year I started several meetings with the school board members, which I was crucified in the paper for doing so. But that's OK.

I thought that having an individual [discussion], in fact I wanted we wanted to do the same thing with the City Council and County Commission, is just to sit down with an individual and see what he she thinks about things. Without all the pressure of having to posture and be political. Just person to person.

And the reason I did it is a lot of people, including me obviously,

didn't know some of the board members of the school board....

It all started well and everything, but then, they just didn't continue. I shouldn't say they. We didn't continue doing this that I think is beneficial to the community....

That's the tone of conversation I'm trying to encourage, and not only with the other boards, but the people as a whole.

Q: Would you like to serve as chairman?

A: Ah, I would like to if I have the votes, yes.... One step at the time. I have to get re-elected....

Q: What would eliminate most of the schools' problems would be to eliminate the guaranteed home school. Then in every school there would be enough kids to change the culture to one of getting an education, and then the good teachers would go back.

A: Something different has to be done. And you have to try until it works, I guess. We can't just sit back and say it didn't work then, I don't think it's going to work now....

DECEMBER

- 9** "Going Hungry in a City of Plenty," noon, Covenant Presbyterian, 1000 E. Morehead St. \$6 includes lunch, no reservation.

Briefly...

Middle college: Orange County and Chapel Hill-Carrboro school districts may jointly launch a middle college program at Durham Tech, the News & Observer reported. Aimed at potential dropouts, the nontraditional program could lead to both a diploma and a community college degree.

www.newsobserver.com

Recess first: Arizona schools are joining a Midwest trend of having recess before lunch rather than after, the Republic reported. Appetites are heartier and nurses report fewer stomachaches.

www.azcentral.com

Some gains: New York reported some gains in test scores, the Times reported. In the city, 60% of eighth-graders are not proficient in math, but that's a 20-point improvement in three years. Statewide, about 43% are below grade level.

www.nytimes.com

Teacher housing: San Francisco schools, where enrollments are dropping, may convert excess property into housing for teachers, the Chronicle reported. The proposal is fueled by a wage gap: Median-priced homes in the city require a monthly income of \$10,308.08; teachers are paid \$4,160.75.

www.sfgate.com

Recruiting opportunity: In Britain, new fathers are the likeliest group to consider teaching, the Guardian reported. A third of new fathers polled said "parenthood has made them more likely to consider" the profession.

www.guardian.co.uk

Schools at risk: With No Child standards rising this year, 1,200 or 13% of California's schools that have rising scores nevertheless face sanctions, the Los Angeles Times reported.

www.latimes.com

States short low-wealth districts

States continue to shortchange low-income students, a new study by the Education Trust concludes.

Using the most recent available data, for 2001-02, author Kevin Carey adjusted budgets for the additional cost of special-needs students and cost of living. Further, he followed No Child Left Behind formulas approved by Congress that "set a standard that states should provide additional funding per low-income-student equal to 40% of the average per student amount." The calculations are below, with North Carolina's high-wealth districts having an average of \$622 more per pupil than low-wealth districts.

Thirteen states, including South Carolina, funnel more money to high-poverty districts. But "in 36 states, the highest-poverty districts receive fewer cost-adjusted dollars than the lowest-poverty states. The national funding gap – the difference between the top 25% and the bottom 25% nationwide – is \$1,348 per student..."

"Until state policymakers get serious about fixing these problems," the study observes, "they cannot in good conscience pretend to have fulfilled their basic obligations to those students who are most in need of a high-quality public education."

– Download "The Funding Gap 2004" at www.edtrust.org

State	Low-pov. districts	High-pov. districts	Gap	State	Low-pov. districts	High-pov. districts	Gap
New York	\$9,980	\$7,365	(\$2,615)	Kentucky	\$5,955	\$5,597	(\$357)
Illinois	\$8,075	\$5,610	(\$2,465)	Ohio	\$7,983	\$7,636	(\$347)
Virginia	\$7,764	\$6,334	(\$1,430)	Wisconsin	\$8,554	\$8,217	(\$337)
USA	\$7,731	\$6,383	(\$1,348)	Idaho	\$6,198	\$5,862	(\$336)
Pa.	\$8,223	\$6,916	(\$1,308)	Connecticut	\$8,591	\$8,257	(\$334)
Vermont	\$11,656	\$10,464	(\$1,192)	California	\$6,042	\$5,741	(\$301)
Arizona	\$6,129	\$4,957	(\$1,172)	Florida	\$5,993	\$5,745	(\$248)
Michigan	\$8,205	\$7,119	(\$1,085)	Kansas	\$7,227	\$7,014	(\$214)
New Hamp.	\$7,683	\$6,711	(\$972)	Washington	\$6,438	\$6,264	(\$173)
Louisiana	\$6,226	\$5,263	(\$963)	Oklahoma	\$5,367	\$5,220	(\$147)
Alabama	\$6,648	\$5,705	(\$942)	Missouri	\$6,728	\$6,612	(\$116)
Texas	\$6,963	\$6,027	(\$936)	Oregon	\$6,643	\$6,551	(\$92)
Montana	\$6,910	\$6,100	(\$809)	Nebraska	\$7,361	\$7,291	(\$70)
Maryland	\$7,750	\$6,979	(\$772)	New Mexico	\$5,748	\$5,718	(\$30)
Rhode Is.	\$7,261	\$6,587	(\$674)	S. Carolina	\$7,056	\$7,100	\$43
N. Carolina	\$6,595	\$5,973	(\$622)	Wyoming	\$9,275	\$9,398	\$123
Iowa	\$8,080	\$7,512	(\$568)	Georgia	\$7,504	\$7,655	\$150
Arkansas	\$6,136	\$5,656	(\$479)	S. Dakota	\$6,437	\$6,591	\$154
Maine	\$8,099	\$7,674	(\$426)	Nevada	\$6,081	\$6,336	\$255
West Va.	\$6,990	\$6,574	(\$417)	Tennessee	\$5,113	\$5,393	\$281
Colorado	\$6,776	\$6,374	(\$402)	N. Dakota	\$6,504	\$6,866	\$362
Indiana	\$8,139	\$7,760	(\$379)	New Jersey	\$9,338	\$9,904	\$566
Mississippi	\$5,127	\$4,767	(\$359)	Utah	\$4,950	\$5,516	\$566
				Minnesota	\$7,665	\$8,322	\$657
				Mass.	\$6,972	\$7,746	\$774
				Alaska	\$6,507	\$7,347	\$840
				Delaware	\$7,710	\$8,640	\$931



Source: "The Funding Gap 2004: Many States Still Shortchange Low-Income and Minority Students," by Kevin Carey for the Education Trust. Unsigned illustration from report. www.edtrust.org