



Pughsley

'We have something very serious before us'

"If you view the achievement results over the last few years, of course we have been climbing, especially at the elementary and middle school levels.

"But that is starting to level off. And if I'm not mistaken, that leveling off started with implementation of choice. That first year, there was continued growth, but it was starting to level off a bit.

"There are two things that I think will have to be in place to propel us, or

to break through where we are now.

"One has to do with quality teachers throughout this district, for every child, in every school, no matter where that school is located in the county.

"And the other has to do with some modifications to the student assignment plan as we know it today."

— Supt. Jim Pughsley, closing a school board work session Wednesday

Board begins assignment plan review

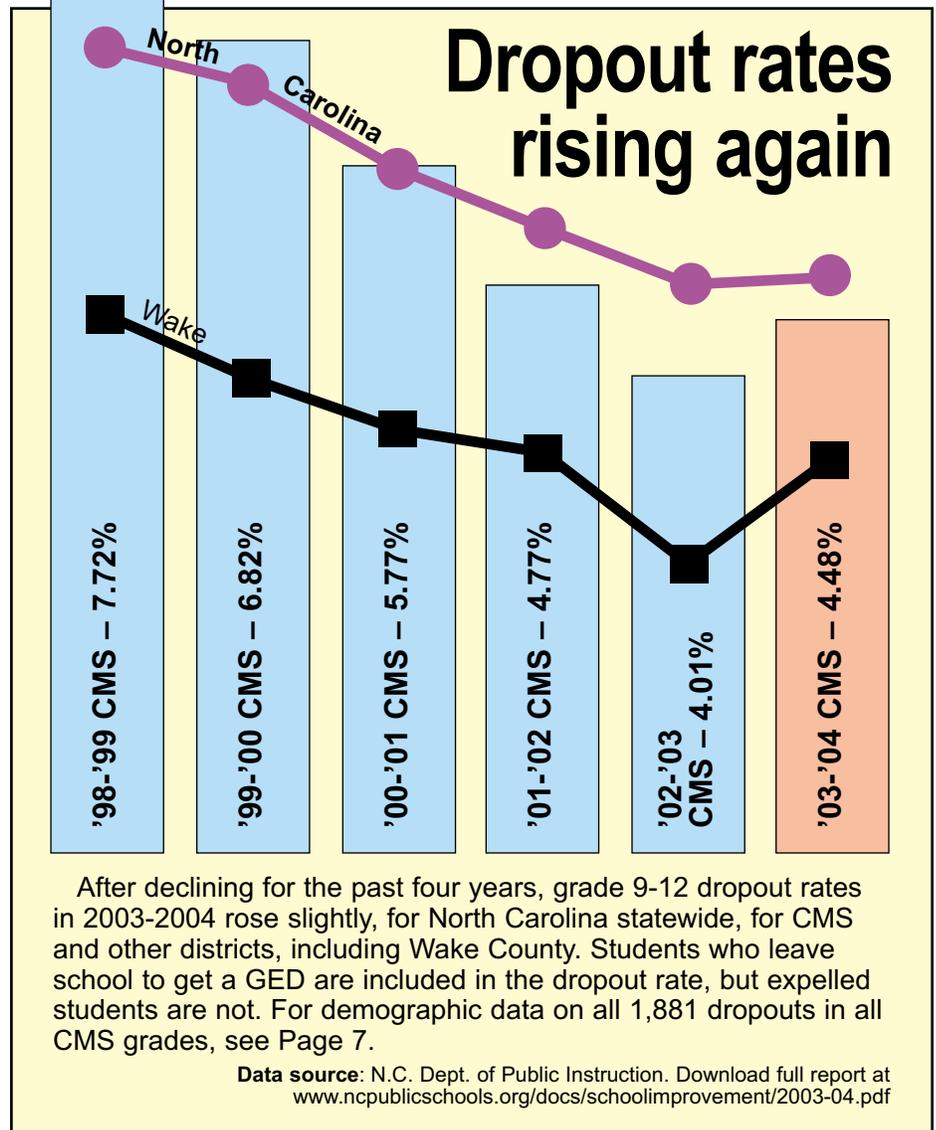
Only some of the key players were in the room Wednesday as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board began a months-long review of student assignment.

Barely a dozen members of the public were in the Education Center Board Room for the two-and-a-quarter hour session. But Thursday's Charlotte Observer carried a message bound to reassure many parents worried that the board would entertain large-scale changes:

Board members, the Observer reported, "showed little enthusiasm for capping school poverty levels or forcing students to leave crowded schools."

But also missing from the room were the intense eyes and tart tongue of Superior Court Judge Howard Manning, who oversees the Leandro school adequacy lawsuit.

As part of that decade-old litigation, the N.C. Supreme Court has ruled that districts like CMS fail to provide a constitutionally-mandated sound basic education when children score below grade level on state tests (definition, Page 5)



or drop out of school (box, above).

Manning will have CMS officials in his courtroom in March to

explain why so many students are below grade level, particularly at

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Highlight issues, but do it more evenhandedly

I know you are not particularly interested in my ideas of what needs to be done to keep *Educate!* going, but I thought I'd put in my two cents worth anyway. Contrary to what you all probably believe, I think *Educate!* can be a valuable asset to our community but only if it re-examines exactly what it is trying to accomplish.

From Readers

While you state that your mission has been to serve as a community forum for education issues, it appears to me (and I imagine many others) that for the past year or so your mission has actually been to undermine our current assignment plan. Your attacks on this plan have been incessant. You have not served as a "forum" on this issue (except when one of us non-believers gets so fed up we fire off a response), but rather as a mouthpiece for one agenda – to return to busing.

You are informed enough to know that assignment is a very complex issue and that there are very good reasons, not involving race or selfishness, why many (I suspect the vast majority) prefer to have their children attend school close to home.

I believe you have also been less than honest when discussing the benefits of busing versus our current plan. Recently you described assignment under busing as stable – many in the community would question just how you came to that conclusion.

You also constantly criticize student achievement under the current plan (even though achievement is improving) but choose to ignore the dismal minority achievement levels that were acceptable in this community for many years under busing. You frequently blame the community

at large for lack of responsibility in educating low-income children but you do not seem to be asking for any personal responsibility in exchange.

So my suggestion to you would be that you continue to highlight issues that you think are a problem.

But examine them in a more evenhanded, less hostile manner and give an honest and respectful hearing to opposing viewpoints. People are not bad or uncaring just because they have a differing view on how to accomplish the goal we all have – providing academic success to all children.

You had once indicated to me that Swann was eager to help facilitate some honest and positive discussion in this community. However, the recent attitude of *Educate!* has not been conducive to positive discussion and seems designed to foment distrust and dissent within the community.

If you want the community to buy into your mission, perhaps you need to make that mission relevant and useful to the community.

Sharon Starks

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Educate!

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the district's high schools.

Wednesday's state report on dropout rates, another indicator Manning watches closely, shows that a multiyear pattern of declining dropout rates has been broken. Statewide as well as in CMS, Wake and other districts, dropout rates rose last year.

Supt. Jim Pughsley, in a statement that closed Wednesday's workshop, asserted that the adoption of the 2001 choice plan marked a leveling off of student achievement gains in the district (box, Page 1).

Pughsley told that board that better-quality teachers and unspecified changes in student assignment would be required to "propel us, or to break through where we are now" on student achievement.

In a November exchange of memos with Manning, Pughsley suggested that CMS would also need more money to address the needs of low-performing students. No financial implications of student assignment changes were discussed Wednesday.

The board had initial discussion on five issues: magnets; diversity, capacity and facility usage, guaranteed seats, and caps on the number of economically disadvantaged students at any school.

More issues are ahead, including caps on school size, how to ensure quality teachers at all schools, boundaries for attendance areas, student achievement and its implications for the assignment plan, and the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind law.

The discussions Wednesday might have given staff small hints of board members' initial leanings. But it may be premature to start counting votes:

Not only has the public not weighed in, but key factual information is not yet on the table, on issues from the academic effectiveness of various magnet programs to the timing of some

How the public can participate

CMS has scheduled the first four in a series of meetings designed to allow parents to participate in the promised "comprehensive review" of the 2001 student assignment plan.

Assistant Supt. Susan Agruso emphasized that the events are not hearings dominated by speechifying. Instead, parents will sit down at cafeteria tables and respond to what Agruso promised would be a series of "neutral" questions.

"We're going to ask parents to work with us. This is not a stand-up-at-the-microphone-and-tell-us-what-you-think kind of meeting. We actually want them to sit at tables with other representatives from the community and have a discussion about these... issues.

"We want them to tell us what are the big areas they are concerned about, the big issues for them in the student assignment plan, the things they want most desperately for the board to address.

"And then we want to get their feedback on where the board is at at that point... so we get much more input from the community before the board has formal recommendations...."

Hearings on various parts of the comprehensive review have already been scheduled as part of regular school board meetings (box, Page 4).

Agruso said later meetings would be held closer to the county's edge. The meetings announced Wednesday:

Feb. 9, Rama Road Elementary, 6-8 p.m. Subject: Fundamentals and guiding principles.

Feb. 17, Highland Renaissance Elementary, 6-8 p.m. Subject: Fundamentals and guiding principles.

March 24, Ranson Road Middle, 6-8 p.m. Subject: Magnet programs.

April 19, Waddell High, 6-8 p.m. Subject: Boundaries and feeders.

school renovations and openings.

And there is also the question of what might come out of Manning's courtroom.

Highlights of Wednesday's discussion on two key subjects:

Magnets

Locations: Provide access to magnet programs in all geographic areas of the county, said at-large member Kit Cramer. "And I would suggest that you put magnets in tough-to-populate areas."

Too many: "Some are not working and I would like to get rid of those," said at-large member Kaye McGarry. "We have too many magnets; 51 magnets are too many. I would rather concentrate on those that are doing well... they are very expensive.

McGarry said, however, she'd like to add some magnets for hard-to-handle children, using an extended school day. "We can't do the parenting and all that, but we can do some more educating."

Military: Add a program featuring discipline, uniforms and a core curriculum, said District 2 member Vilma Leake. "I'm not saying you have to have a military magnet in each region."

Mission: "Be sure that our magnet programs are academically distinct, that they serve a specific academic purpose," said District 5 member Molly Griffin. "We may need to eliminate some and we may need to add some.

"I think it's important that they be strategically placed throughout

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the district.” She suggested studying whether attendance should be limited to students from within a zone, as is done now with Advanced Placement programs, and “whether partial magnets are working or are counterproductive.

“We need to minimize the misuse of magnets.... Too often our magnet programs have been used by parents looking only for a way to escape another school as opposed to looking for a specific academic approach.”

Too much choice: “We have so many choices that it is very confusing and stressful to a lot of parents,” said District 6 member Lee Kindberg.

“We do have magnet locations where we simply do not have facilities or staffing to deliver the program. I’d like to identify those, and either move them or staff them – or not offer them, because we are doing a half-baked job.

“Paideia and communications magnets are not clear in terms of actually being something very different to parents.... it doesn’t pull the parents that it might.

“The distance, locational and traffic issues are preventing many families from participating in many magnets that they might otherwise be interested in....

There are some places where the commute’s just gotten overwhelming and people have dropped out.”

Just kidding: “I was, in jest, going to start,” said District 1 member Larry Gauvreau, “by saying, hey, we need more busing... with targets and goals by ethnicity and race in all of our schools. We can substitute free and reduced lunch as a proxy for some of those factors.... More magnet schools, lots more, with innovative themes – we’ve got to have those. No neighborhood schools because that’s what the public wants.

“I’m kidding when I’m saying that, but I see we’re going down the road now where we’re going to put all the same stuff we’ve been

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Comprehensive Review timeline (draft)

Feb. 8	At board meeting, report on magnet program, staff recommendations for vision, goals and objectives.
Feb. 22	At board meeting, BOARD VOTE on vision, goals and objectives; staff report on staff effectiveness issues; answers to board members’ questions about magnets.
March 8	A board meeting, report on attendance area boundaries and feeder patterns; answers to board members questions about staff effectiveness issues.
March 16	At 5 p.m. work session, further discussion of magnets, boundaries and feeder patterns.
March 22	At board meeting, recommendations for staff effectiveness, additional information about boundaries and feeder patterns.
April 12	At board meeting, PUBLIC HEARING on staff effectiveness; staff recommendations on magnets, boundaries and feeder patterns.
April 26	At board meeting, BOARD VOTE on staff effectiveness; staff report on lottery priorities; response to questions about magnets, boundaries and feeder patterns.
May 10	At board meeting, PUBLIC HEARING on magnets, boundaries and feeder patterns; additional information about priorities.
May 11	At 4 p.m. work session, more discussion of magnets, boundaries and feeder patterns.
May 24	At board meeting, BOARD VOTE on magnets, boundaries and feeder patterns.
June 14	At board meeting, annual staff report on end-of-grade test results, and their implications for student assignment.
June 28	At board meeting, staff recommendation for lottery priorities; annual staff report on end-of-grade test results, and their implications for student assignment.
July 26	At board meeting, annual staff report on No Child Left Behind adequate yearly progress; answers to board members’ questions about lottery priorities.
August Policy Committee meeting: Begin drafting policy changes required by assignment plan changes.	
Aug. 8	At board meeting, staff report offering drafts of student assignment policy changes.
Aug 23	At board meeting, additional information on policy changes.
Sept. 13	At board meeting, Policy Committee to report recommendations for changes in assignment plan.
Sept. 15	At 5 p.m. work session, discussion and staff response to board members’ questions about policy changes.
Sept. 27	At board meeting, PUBLIC HEARING on proposed assignment plan policy change.s
Oct. 11	At board meeting, BOARD VOTE on assignment plan policy changes.

Source: CMS

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doing and come up with the same plan we've always had. And that's disturbing to me.

"In seriousness, with regard to magnet schools, all I would recommend as a vision... would be to take the advice of the experts.... You've got to be from Mars to think that we need more magnets.... There are far, far too many.

"And there are themes that may lure parents for the purpose of desegregation, but that's not even working anymore, because we're tipping the balance that we had in this school district.

"Policies themselves are unwittingly in some cases causing the white flight that we are trying to stop....

"I think it's dishonest to say that many of these magnet themes are somehow different from the core state curriculum."

"We need to have more merit-based entrance requirements for our magnet schools. If they're going to be that special, I believe the limited ones that we should have, some number of those need to be merit-based."

Flight: "We will say full magnets are important because they are attracting lots of people," said District 4 member Louise Woods.

"The reason full magnets are attracting a lot of students is because the parents who choose, don't want to choose magnets where regular children end up.

"A full magnet means everybody has to make a choice to go to that magnet. Children that we are having trouble educating, children that have all the discipline issues, in most cases, are children [with] parents that are not going to make these choices. So if I win the lottery and get in a full magnet, then I have avoided the children that I want to avoid.

"On the other hand, partial magnets, while we might say, this one didn't work because it didn't attract so-and-so or it didn't have quite as high achievement num-

N.C. mandate for 'sound basic education' defined

Last year the N.C. Supreme Court ruled that the test of achieving a sound basic education was a student's being at Level 3 or above in the state's annual testing program. In 1997, the Supreme Court said a sound basic education must include:

"(1) sufficient ability to read, write and speak the English language and 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;

"(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."

— Hoke County Board of Education, et. al. vs. the State Board of Education and the State of North Carolina

bers, we really need to take a close look at partial magnets because where they have worked successfully, that's where parents have gone in and bought into schools.... For example, Idlewild, where I truly believe that [Talent Development] magnet impacts that whole school....

Report scores: Because we don't do [partial magnet] scores separately, those schools have a very difficult time marketing their program... and that's a problem," said McGarry. "You have those scores.... Otherwise we're going to lose those parents."

Breaking home-school pledge: "I agree," said chairman Joe White, that magnets should be placed in hard-to-populate schools. "The danger of that is that if that becomes the school in that neighborhood, and it's not a partial magnet, then you doom the kids that live in that neighborhood to be bused out....

"The criteria in the past has been, it's more convenient for mama, it doesn't make them go to school with 'those' kids, and I'll just be bluntly honest, that's been

the criteria. It hasn't been, 'I want my kid in an open school setting because the learning style of my child is conducive to good learning in an open school setting....

"The other thing that happens... where you take a Learning Immersion and a Talent Development, and you put it together, you hide, you hide statistically the Learning Immersion kids. We did that at Barringer. We flat did that at Barringer.

"We never educated those kids at the lower end of the spectrum.

"We did that at West Charlotte. The Richard Vinroot kids got educated. The kids that we are not educating today, we didn't educate then. That's a Joe White belief.... I say shame on us that we hid those kids...."

Academic purpose: White said Pughsley would recommend a magnet program only if it serves student achievement. "If we're not doing it for the purpose of student achievement, and trying to make magnets meet the needs of more kids that we weren't meeting the needs of in a

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regular setting, then we ought not to be doing it. That's not what we're all about."

End sibling guarantee: "It doesn't make sense," observed White. "I look at my own children, and the oldest and the next oldest have absolutely no business being in the type of magnet, because their interests are entirely different. If you're really interested in the child, then the sibling guarantee goes away."

"There would be a lot of people unhappy with that, 'cause that's not convenient."

Diversity

Diversity adds to an educational experience, said Kindberg, "but not at the cost of two hours each way on the bus.... There also need to be options for those who are seeking" diversity not present in their home school.

"We can foster diversity in this county, but we cannot force it" under current legal conditions, Griffin said.

"I do believe diversity is important, but diversity as I said before is divisive and it divides people rather than unifies them and our common cause should be the quality education," said McGarry. "We get sidetracked with the other and that's what's causing problems."

"This shouldn't be a big rock," said Gauvreau.

"We need to look at the home school areas that are diverse already," said Woods. "And we need to find ways make schools work in those communities so that people who live in diverse neighborhoods can stay there and have diverse schools. And somehow we're not doing that very well."

"I would hope that this board would want diversity," said Leake. "If we just stay in those boundaries [of isolated neighborhoods], our children are not going to be able to function outside and be

Will next generation be less educated?

Mark Musick, president of Southern Regional Education Board, in "Creating College Opportunity for All: Prepared Students and Affordable Colleges":

"If students from minority and low-income families don't graduate in larger numbers from high school and college, we will face a situation that America has never experienced before:

"The new generation will actually be less educated than today's – and less prepared to contribute to an economy that by 2020 will depend even more on education.

"We are not suggesting that this future is inevitable, but it clearly is where current trends are pointing.

"In the nation and in all SREB states, a fast-growing proportion of students are black or Hispanic. But an unacceptably small percentage of these students now graduates from high school and two-year or four-year colleges.

"We simply cannot fail to prepare all groups to succeed. SREB's Challenge to Lead goals call on states to ensure that many more youth – particularly from minority groups and from families in the lower half of incomes – prepare for, enroll in and graduate from college. A key factor in making this happen is ensuring that college is affordable for these students...."

Percent of adults (age 25+) with bachelor's degrees, 2000

	White	Black	Hisp.
Maryland	34.7	20.3	21.4
Georgia	27.4	15.5	13.6
Texas	25.8	15.3	8.9
Virginia	32.3	15.1	20.7
Delaware	26.7	14.4	13.5
U.S.	26.1	14.2	10.3
Oklahoma	21.5	13.7	9.6
N.C.	25.0	13.1	10.5
Tennessee	20.5	12.9	14.1
Florida	23.8	12.4	17.5
Alabama	21.2	11.5	14.6
W. Va.	14.7	11.5	19.7
Louisiana	21.8	10.9	19.5
Kentucky	17.4	10.7	13.0
Arkansas	17.8	10.2	7.1
Mississippi	20.0	10.1	12.1
S.C.	24.2	9.9	14.1

Source: U. S. Census Bureau

– Download full report from www.sreb.org

competitive in a world that is diverse."

"What I am not willing to do," said White, "if we're not going to find a way to encourage diversity, then it is absolutely essential that we provide the equity to ensure that everybody gets a quality education. And I am absolutely at this point in this old man's life, unwilling to go back to using integration as a way to hide our shortfall and our inability to educate all of the children in this community. That is unacceptable. I do not want those children hidden.

"That's something this pupil assignment plan and No Child Left behind has made very obvious. We are not getting the job

done with a group of kids in this community, and that's what we've got to find a way to do."

Other topics

In a meeting that stretched to 6:15 p.m., board members also discussed capacity and facility usage, guaranteed seats, and caps on economically disadvantaged students.

At its meeting Tuesday, the board will receive a staff report on magnet program issues, along with staff recommendations for the vision, goals and objectives to be achieved through the student assignment review.

The following Tuesday, Judge Manning holds his next hearing in a Raleigh courtroom.

Dropout data by CMS school, 2003-2004

North Carolina's "Dropout Data Report, 2003-04" included the following information about individual CMS schools. All numbers are in percent, except the number of dropout "events" in the first column.

This list includes students who were enrolled the previous year but

were not enrolled on the 20th day of the 2003-04 school year, had not graduated and who were not known to have transferred, been absent on the 20th day, or died. The report notes:

"... many questions remain about the state's ability to accurately track

dropouts. Counting students who are no longer in school is not easy. Dropouts do not behave in ways that make them easy to track.

Student movement from school to school, state to state, and even to other countries presents a major challenge."

	"Events"	Male	Fem.	White	Black	Hisp.		"Events"	Male	Fem.	White	Black	Hisp.
HIGH SCHOOLS													
BERRY ACADEMY	18	55.56	44.44	33.33	61.11	5.56	BYERS	4	75	25	0	100	0
BUTLER	33	60.61	39.39	66.67	21.21	6.06	COLLINSWOOD	1	0	100	0	100	0
EAST MECK	128	60.94	39.06	39.06	42.97	11.72	CROWN POINT	5	60	40	0	80	20
GARINGER	100	66	34	13	59	23	DAVID COX ROAD	22	63.64	36.36	27.27	59.09	0
HARDING	21	66.67	33.33	14.29	71.43	4.76	DRUID HILLS	1	100	0	0	100	0
HOPEWELL	67	67.16	32.84	49.25	43.28	2.99	EASTOVER	1	100	0	100	0	0
INDEPENDENCE	88	70.45	29.55	23.86	60.23	11.36	ELIZABETH LANE	1	0	100	0	100	0
MYERS PARK	88	64.77	35.23	30.68	60.23	7.95	ELIZABETH TRAD	3	66.67	33.33	33.33	66.67	0
NORTH MECK	74	71.62	28.38	48.65	40.54	8.11	FIRST WARD	2	50	50	50	50	0
NORTHWEST	21	66.67	33.33	19.05	76.19	4.76	GUNN	2	0	100	50	50	0
OLYMPIC	52	73.08	26.92	32.69	40.38	15.38	HAWK RIDGE	2	50	50	50	0	50
PROVIDENCE	64	70.31	29.69	65.63	25	4.69	HICKORY GROVE	2	50	50	0	50	50
SOUTH MECK	70	78.57	21.43	61.43	17.14	15.71	HIDDEN VALLEY	2	0	100	0	50	50
VANCE	154	64.94	35.06	23.38	55.84	14.94	HIGHLAND MILL	1	0	100	0	100	0
WADDELL	105	53.33	46.67	21.9	42.86	32.38	HUNTINGTOWNE	1	0	100	0	100	0
WEST CHARLOTTE	34	55.88	44.12	0	88.24	2.94	IRWIN AVENUE	2	0	100	50	50	0
WEST MECK	147	50.34	49.66	23.13	62.59	4.08	LANSDOWNE	5	60	40	20	80	0
							LEBANON ROAD	1	0	100	100	0	0
							LINCOLN HEIGHTS	1	100	0	0	0	100
							MALLARD CREEK	5	60	40	0	80	0
							MERRY OAKS	2	50	50	0	50	0
							MONTCLAIRE	3	66.67	33.33	33.33	33.33	33.33
							NEWELL	1	100	0	0	100	0
							OAKDALE	5	40	60	40	0	20
							OAKHURST	3	66.67	33.33	0	100	0
							OLDE PROV.	2	50	50	0	50	0
							PAW CREEK	2	50	50	0	100	0
							PINEWOOD	3	66.67	33.33	33.33	0	33.33
							RAMA ROAD	3	66.67	33.33	0	100	0
							SEDGEFIELD	3	66.67	33.33	0	33.33	66.67
							SHAMROCK GAR.	1	100	0	0	100	0
							SMITHFIELD	8	50	50	25	37.5	25
							STATESVILLE RD	2	50	50	50	50	0
							STEELE CREEK	14	57.14	42.86	21.43	42.86	14.29
							THOMASBORO	3	33.33	66.67	0	66.67	33.33
							TUCKASEEGEE	1	0	100	0	100	0
							UNIV. MEADOWS	14	50	50	14.29	42.86	28.57
							UNIVERSITY PARK	6	50	50	50	50	0
							VILLA HEIGHTS	2	0	100	0	100	0
							WINDING SPRINGS	1	100	0	100	0	0
							WINDSOR PARK	2	50	50	0	50	0
							WINTERFIELD	2	50	50	0	100	0
							ALTERNATIVE, SPECIAL SCHOOLS						
							DERITA	174	69.54	30.46	10.92	81.61	4.6
							METRO	2	50	50	50	50	0
							MIDWOOD/TAPS	100	30	70	15	81	2
							MORGAN	21	80.95	19.05	9.52	90.48	0
							CMS SYSTEMWIDE						
							9-04 enrollment	1,881	61.03	38.97	28.23	55.29	11.16
											39.70	43.00	10.40
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS													
ALBEMARLE RD	7	28.57	71.43	28.57	71.43	0							
ALLENBROOK	1	0	100	0	100	0							
ASHLEY PARK	1	0	100	0	100	0							
BARRINGER	1	0	100	100	0	0							
BERRYHILL	2	100	0	100	0	0							
BLYTHE	3	66.67	33.33	0	66.67	33.33							

CMS adds sites for suspended students

Decision follows meeting with county's mayors

CMS promised Wednesday to move within a month to revamp how it houses students suspended from regular classes.

The commitment follows a January meeting in which Mecklenburg mayors pushed CMS to do something other than dump disruptive students on the streets.

At Derita Alternative, seats will be added. Parents will be required to meet parent involvement standards and students will have to meet academic and behavior guidelines for the student to return to a home school.

CMS said it would also add "academic suspension truancy centers" near Garinger, West Charlotte and West Meck Highs and look for additional spaces in Huntersville and Matthews. The centers would offer a regular core curriculum, and hold students suspended for 3-10 days. At the end of the suspension period, "a decision will be made to return the students to their home school or Derita," according to a statement.

Finally, the Right Moves boot camp will expand to focus on middle school and ninth-grade students "who display serious inappropriate behaviors.

"The expansion will introduce a substantially greater number of middle school and ninth grade students to immediate self-contained corrective discipline, thus reducing the need for corrective action in high school," CMS said.

Derita, Morgan, Morningside and Midwood are alternative schools. Derita also houses over-age students in a "Mastery" program. Right Choices, a boot camp setting, offers "a very structured

Suspension and expulsion: A medical view

Excerpts from recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on School Health, from an article "Out-Of-School Suspension and Expulsion" published in "Pediatrics":

"1. Schools need to establish relationships with various health and social agencies in their communities so students with disciplinary problems who require assistance are readily referred and communication lines between these agencies and schools are established.

"2. Students and their families should be encouraged by school staff members to access health care and social services, which can be accomplished if these important topics are included in health education and life skills curricula. It is also recommended that health care professionals provide information to children, youth, and families on access to health care and social services.

"3. As part of the school's or district's written policy on disciplinary action, schools should routinely refer a student to his or her primary health care professional for an assessment if there is a disciplinary action or a student is at risk of such action.

Assistance with obtaining a medical home should occur in circumstances in which a student facing disciplinary action does not yet have one....

"6. Matters related to safety and supervision should be explored with parents whenever their child is barred from attending school. This includes but is not limited to screening parents by history for presence of household guns....

9. A full assessment for social, medical, and mental health problems by a pediatrician (or other providers of care for children and youth) is recommended for all school-referred students who have been suspended or expelled. The evaluation should be designed to ascertain factors that may underlie the student's behaviors and health risks and to provide a recommendation on how a child may better adapt to his or her school environment...."

French justice?

Parents who receive letters similar to this may find that their child has not been charged or found guilty of incidents for which the children must now pay restitution in order to be re-admitted to their regularly assigned school.

The letter contains no reference to how a parent might appeal CMS's decision.

Dear Ms. –

"This letter is to confirm that your son – is assigned to – for the third quarter of the school year. He is not allowed to attend any school function or be on any other school property during this period of time without permission from the principal upon whose campus he seeks admittance. – will transition at the end of the third quarter, provided he enrolls in the alternative school immediately, made restitution of the \$– for the – that was stolen and successfully completes the school's criteria for transition...."

– Download full article from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/112/5/1206>

environment and regimented instruction before students return to the classroom after being suspended."

Briefly...

Color of rigor: Guilford Schools Supt. Terry Grier told High Point parents this week that the district is trying to make all courses more rigorous, the Greensboro Daily News reported. "Minorities are underrepresented in advanced classes, he said. You can tell whether a class is honors or not by the color of the students in the class, he said. The audience groaned. 'Come on, Terry,' someone shouted from the back of the room. 'If you want, come to school and see for yourself,' Grier said. 'It's there, and it's a reality.'"

www.news-record.com

Narrowing gap: Half of the 209 suburban Pennsylvania schools in the Philadelphia area are narrowing the test score gap between white and minority students, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported. Schools have enlisted help from parents, analyzed test scores and improved instruction. The paper cited an Education Trust study that found Pennsylvania schools to have one of the largest achievement gaps by race in the country.

www.philly.com

'Test-prep academies': After several teachers in Michigan were accused of using state test questions to coach their students in 2001, Michigan education officials began "hiding" the tests from teachers, the Detroit News reported. This is frustrating teachers who have a difficult time preparing their students for state tests. The issue has also prompted concern about the pressure both students and teachers are under to perform. "We are changing our schools into test-prep academies," said Nelson Maylone, professor of education psychology at Eastern Michigan University.

www.detroitnews.com

Inappropriate standard?: Many historically high-performing Connecticut schools are being accused of failing to meet academ-

DidYaHear?

✓ An example of a school district getting out ahead of the curve came out of Guilford Schools this week. More than a day before the state released its annual report on district dropout rates, Supt. Terry Grier sent out an e-mail claiming progress over four years but acknowledging that "we appear to have reached a plateau." The e-mail included charts on current efforts this school year – data not even in the state report. "Our staff is working hard to convince these students and their families to return to school," Grier wrote. "However, we must do a more thorough job of examining and addressing the conditions that led to their leaving school. We should pay particular attention to the number of students who dropped out that are two years older than their peers – a condition created by retaining students multiple times."

Grier's data showed this year's 472 dropouts were 58% black, 64% male and 56% more than two years older than their peers. The second-largest reason behind attendance problems that was cited for leaving, affecting 23% of those who dropped out, was failure to return from long-term-suspension.

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

ic standards under No Child Left Behind, the Hartford Courant reported. Special education students face the same grade-level tests as non-special ed students. Educators and parents are becoming frustrated with what they believe is an inappropriate label. Chip Ward, a senior planner for West Hartford Schools said, "You're identifying a whole district based on the performance of [one] group."

www.ctnow.com

Targeting turnover: One in five Durham teachers leave their positions every year, the News and Observer reported. The Durham Public Education Network (DPEN), found that on surveys, teachers reported lack of respect and improper training as reasons for leaving. DPEN will use a \$640,000 grant from the Goldman Sachs Foundation to push for improving teacher working conditions.

www.newsobserver.com

Cyberfailures: Students who attend Colorado's cyber schools are failing at four times the state average, the Denver Post reported. Cyber schools are a nontraditional approach to education in

which students take their courses online. Defenders of the schools say the failure rate is not a measure of the effectiveness, but of the population of students that choose to enroll in the programs, including children who have been kicked out of traditional schools and those with disabilities.

www.denverpost.com

Calendar

FEBRUARY

7-8 School board meets with legislative delegation, Raleigh.

26 Let's Talk R.A.C.E. Conference focusing on "Language, Culture and Education," 9 a.m.-4 p.m., UNC Chapel Hill. Speakers: Lisa Delpit, Enrique Murillo. For information and for online registration, see www.unc.edu/sites/ltr

MARCH

16-18 Quad State Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Conference, Adam's Mark Hotel. Keynote: Scott Syphax, CEO of Sacramento's Nehemiah Corp. of America. Registration: \$75 for 3 days; \$40 for one day, by March 1; scholarships available. Info: Renee Thompson at 704-336-2424 or rtompson@ci.charlotte.nc.us