

Responding to crisis

CMS board moves to answer public criticisms

Facing a growing chorus of citizens reciting criticisms of CMS, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education Tuesday issued a series of responses:

– Board chair Joe White announced the prospect of a study that could further consolidate local government and bring the school board taxing authority. The project might absorb a movement within the business community to recast CMS leadership along business-model lines. White’s speech is on Page 2.

– The board slowed down its student assignment review process to hash out guiding principles (Page 4).

–The board directed Supt. Jim Pughsley to create customer service standards. Vice chair Kit Cramer said the district needed to be “more responsive on everything from people who are applying for jobs [to] parents or taxpayers.”

– The board approved its long-

range facilities plan. As written, the plan calls for the elimination of all of the mobile classrooms that are the focus of many suburban parents’ ire. But the plan represents a wish list; board members, county commissioners and the public have yet to vote on the more than \$2 billion the plan will cost. Financial details will be released next month. A November 2005 bond referendum is likely. But the plan offers no immediate relief for overcrowding.

– The board asked for a report from Pughsley on how CMS could respond next school year to overcrowding. Cramer gave this example:

“At North Meck High School, we know we’ve got relief on the way with the new Mallard Creek high school. But in the interim, that school is going to be incredibly overcrowded structured the way it is structured now.

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Letter from Massachusetts: Court shuns school equity case

The writer is a Boston-based education researcher. Her topic is a court decision ending a school adequacy lawsuit in some ways similar to North Carolina’s Leandro case. CMS officials are to appear at a March Leandro hearing to explain low academic achievement at CMS high schools.

By ANNE WHEELOCK

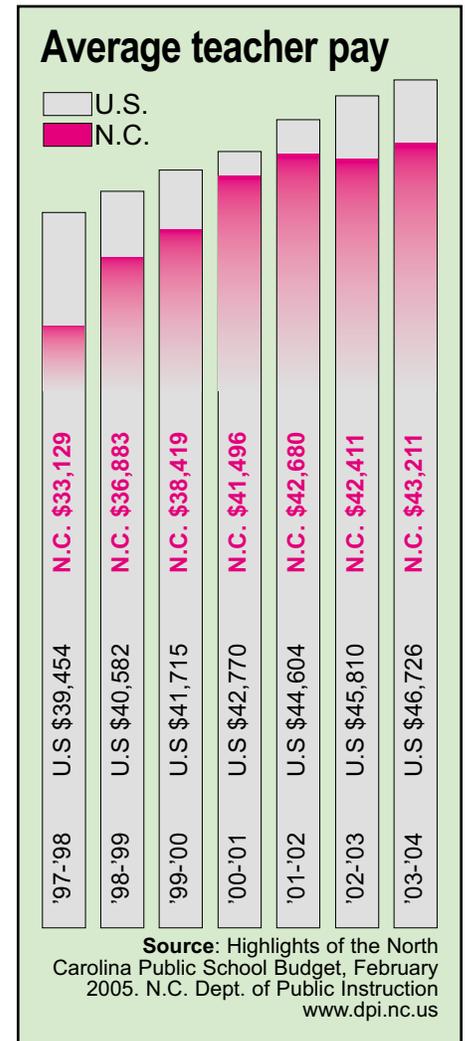
I am a walking case of despair right now. Our Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court did a number on poor children with its recent decision closing the Hancock case.

The court, headed by Judge

Margaret Marshall, has essentially endorsed the triumphalist narrative of education reform law. She states: “A system mired in failure has given way to one that, although far from perfect, shows a steady trajectory of progress.”

The existence of two distinctly unequal school systems in the state does not seem troubling to the court. Lower graduation rates, higher grade failure rates, and higher student exclusion rates, especially for African American and Latino students, are not part of this narrative.

The court’s reliance on the existence of Compass Schools in the



Continued on Page 3

Coach on Coach: An aggravated board chair responds to his critics

At 10:35 p.m. Tuesday, long after most of the school board's audience and media correspondents had left for the night, board chairperson Joe White offered a speech on a number of current topics. Topic titles have been inserted below, but otherwise the text is a verbatim transcription of White's comments, which closed Tuesday's meeting:

Governance: "For a number of weeks now, [Mecklenburg County Commissioners Chairman] Parks Helms and I have been discussing and looking for a way to take a look at governance throughout this community: a comprehensive look that would include everything from the way we in CMS manage ourselves, to taxing authority, to even that nasty word of 'consolidation' of city-county government.

"The superintendent is aware of what's been going on and supports what we've been doing.

"We believe this process needs to be externally led. We don't think we're going to do it internally with the County Commission or the City Council.

"And hopefully in the very near future we will be able to tell you that this is actually starting to take shape. I'm not able to tell you that now."

Protest groups: "Dr. Pughsley and I are also making an effort, and he has staff working, that he and I will sit down, identify all these groups that are out there tugging on us right now, to identify the two or three spokespersons for each of those groups, and to give them the opportunity to sit down and talk with Dr. Pughsley and myself and possibly some others of you [school board members] so we can actually hear from them and hear what their real agenda is."



Unfavorable media coverage: "Now, as we do all of this and with all of these distractions out there, I have been very, very emphatic in saying that I think it's extremely important that this board continue to do what we have started to do. And the two main things is to take a comprehensive look at our pupil assignment plan, and to continue to look comprehensively at our human resource issues. So that I was quoted as saying that I intended to keep on keeping on [The Observer, Feb. 22]. Well, that's exactly what I meant. I did not mean it to be negative. There are those that have taken it to be negative. That is unfortunate. That was not the intention."

Support for superintendent: "I want to say that I continue to be an extremely positive, an extremely proud, and an extremely confident person when I speak about Charlotte-Mecklenburg's school system.

"I continue to support our superintendent. I did that in the paper, and I'm proud of it. That was, by some, construed as negative, unfortunately. But I continue to support our superintendent."

Serving entire county: "I also need to say: Those of you who know me know by nature I am not quick to react. I don't get overly excited by a lot of things. I'm certainly not one that's going to panic or be stampeded into taking actions or making decisions that I personally deem unwise and irresponsible.

"So I will certainly look, listen, but I will continue to work, with everything that this old man's got left, for the good of this school system, and every child in Mecklenburg County that attends our school system. Make no mistake about it. If that's negative, then paint me negative."

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Quoted

"No more high tech."

– District 1 school board member Larry Gauvreau, commenting Tuesday night on his upcoming move, after years at AT&T, to becoming publisher of the Charlotte weekly *Rhinoceros Times*

Governance review

Continued from Page 1

“So I am asking that the superintendent come back with ideas that might allay that overcrowding, whether it is through creative scheduling, or whether it’s finding another location to move a portion of the kids, and to look at that in other aspects of the community where we’ve got severe overcrowding that might cause disciplinary problems or things of that nature. Pretty simple.”

North Meck, which enrolled 2,736 students last September, may top 3,000 this fall. Core spaces like the cafeteria were built decades ago for a school half the current size. The motion was approved.

Cramer’s push for customer service struck District 1’s Larry Gauvreau as off point.

“What the public is telling us is not that they’re looking for customer service. They’re looking for action and results on key policy areas that need to change.”

On the move to put customer service standards in place, Pughsley said such standards were already common practice in some CMS departments, including Human Resources. He said standards were also already built into the Balanced Scorecard, a goal-setting and evaluation model borrowed from business.

Parent groups have been meeting in the north, south and central areas of the county. Some are clamoring for relief from overcrowding, and for policies that will remove disruptive students from classrooms. Others want to protect middle-ring schools from erosion of quality as newer schools in the far suburbs draw parents away. Others are fighting to break up the high-poverty schools that were created by the 2001 student reassignment plan.

In his speech Tuesday night, White said he and Pughsley would meet with all groups to “hear what their real agenda is.”

In an interview after Tuesday’s meeting, Joe White suggested

that the external review of local governance might be sponsored by the Foundation for the Carolinas or similar group. He said he and Parks Helms saw the issues similarly, and that now was the best time to pursue them.

City-county consolidation would remove one taxing authority, allowing the school board to pick up its own taxing authority. That decision, White said, would properly move accountability for school funding from county commissioners to school board members.

All decisions about consolidation would have to be approved by the N.C. General Assembly.

White did not indicate whether the push to reform how CMS is led would become part of that external review. Some area leaders have been discussing the idea that CMS needs a top-level executive familiar with business operations to revise district business practices and to instigate reform of internal culture.

An attempt to amend N.C. law to allow the appointment of non-educators as superintendents failed several years ago.

Also at Tuesday night’s school board meeting:

– The board’s Equity Committee suggested that reassigning students to prevent concentrations of low-income students would do little to achieve equity (Page 7).

–In a report on the first phase of folding some exceptional children into regular classrooms, administrators and one parent offered praise of the project, saying it had raised morale and test scores for EC students, and benefited regular students as well.

Lansdowne Elementary



Koenig

Principal Mary Jo Koenig said two regular teachers volunteered two years ago to team with EC teachers to create two merged classes. Two teachers in one room meant that

when one was absent, classroom activity was not slowed by insertion of a substitute.

“We made a significant increase in our scores” and both parents and teachers were pleased, Koenig said. This year, the model has expanded. Suspensions and the number of restraints used on behaviorally or emotionally disturbed students are both down.

Massachusetts letter

Continued from Page 1

umenting the abuse Joshua DeShaney received at the hands of his father, which abuse left him mentally impaired, did not act to protect him. Joshua sued the Department of Social Services claiming the department’s failure to act deprived him of his liberty under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

“The Court expressed its ‘natural sympathy’ for Joshua, but declined to hold that the due process clause offered him any relief. In his dissent, Justice Blackmun lamented ‘Poor Joshua,’ and stated that given a choice, he would adopt a “sympathetic” reading [of the due process

clause], one which comports with dictates of fundamental justice and recognizes that compassion need not be exiled from the province of judging.’

“Today the Chief Justice states that she has sympathy for the ‘sharp disparities in the educational opportunities, and the performance, of some’ children of the Commonwealth and states that, for many students, it is too late....

“I am disappointed and saddened that, instead of acting to assist our children, five Justices leave them without recourse like ‘Poor Joshua.’ Our children deserve better.”

Both the decision and dissents are posted at <http://weblinks.westlaw.com/find/default.wl?bhcp=1&bqlocfd=True&DB=MA%2DORSRIP&DOLOCATE=Locate&FindType=Y&LQuery=to%28allset+allsetrs+allsetoj+allapp+allapps%29&RS=ICLP2%2E0&SerialNum=2006211070&sp=MassOF%2D1001&ssl=n&strRecreate=no&sv=Split&VR=1%2E0>

Divided board to 'duke it out' over assignment ideas

Only a month into its tightly choreographed 10-month comprehensive review of student assignment, the CMS school board slammed on the brakes.

Board members took immediate issue with Supt. Jim Pughsley's effort to speed them toward consensus by recommending a draft of guiding principles.

Pughsley proposed Tuesday's delay in part because his list (box at right) reached board members just hours before the meeting.

The superintendent called the recommendations "those that I think are representative" of the suggestions made by board members (full list, Pages 5-6). "You must discuss what are your guiding principles" and approve a final list, he said.

A number of board members disputed his work.

District 5 member Molly Griffin said capping home school enrollment to prevent overcrowding was suggested by two members, and thus the recommendation didn't represent a board consensus.

At-large member Kaye McGarry said the board had never decided that schoolhouse diversity by ethnicity and income level "enhances education and should be encouraged."

Said District 1 member Larry Gauvreau, "We should be talking at this dais about what we each individually put together, so that thesis and antithesis doesn't come to something that may eliminate matters that we should be talking about.... I don't want Dr. Pughsley to become the funnel for this board's discussion, especially when what I see here is a busing plan. That's my opinion."

District 3 member George Dunlap said Pughsley had just done what the board had asked him to do.

"If you don't like it, that's fine.

Dead on arrival: Pughsley's recommendations

Text of Supt. Jim Pughsley's recommendation for guiding principles to drive this year's review of student assignment:

Introduction: The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education affirms its responsibility to provide a quality education to all students and to ensure that all schools have the resources necessary to provide students opportunity for high academic achievement.

The Board recognizes that a student population that is diverse by income level and by race/ethnicity enhances education and should be encouraged. Furthermore, the Board recognizes that all education problems cannot be fixed through student assignment. These problems must be addressed through excellent teaching, appropriate and effective curricula, leadership, discipline, and parent/community involvement.

In seeking to establish a student assignment plan that is practical, transparent, stable, and predictable, the Board establishes these guiding principles:

1. All students will be guaranteed a seat in a school that is close to home.
2. To address overcrowding, a home school overflow policy will be developed.
3. School size will be managed with a target to reduce the number of mobile units to no more than 20% of the building's capacity.
4. Home school boundaries will be logically drawn (regularly shaped, compact and contiguous) to encompass whole neighborhoods (based on Traffic Analysis Zones) to the extent possible, to efficiently use current facilities, and to anticipate growth.
5. Reasonable choice options, which minimize transportation time and costs, which do not include a guaranteed feed to a continuation school, and which carry a sibling guarantee to the same school, will be offered to families.
6. Magnet programs will incorporate strong, innovative and distinct themes, will address the needs of our diverse student population, and will be placed strategically around the district to enable access by students throughout the county.
7. Magnet programs will be capped so that the free/reduced-price lunch population in the program will not exceed 45% ± 10 percentage points (i. e., the FRL population may range from 35% to 55%) of the student enrollment in the program.
8. Students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency will be offered the same student assignment opportunities as other students to the extent possible.
9. The policies for the student assignment plan will be implemented consistently.

Let's go back to having a work session where all nine of us put our five on the table and duke it out." A motion calling for work session or sessions "until such time as we have come up with guiding principles" was approved.

Dates for the work sessions have not been set. Assistant Supt. Susan Agruso

said the recommendations reflected suggestions both from board members and also from parents attending two public sessions.

Agruso confessed that she was the source of the word "practical" in the introduction, which says the board seeks "a practical, transparent, stable, and predictable" assignment plan.

Text of school board members' own suggestions

Text of school board members' suggestions for principles to guide the current review of CMS student assignment. Staff split the suggestions into categories, and removed the author's name.

General principles

- The student assignment plan must be clear and understandable, and operate in a way to make CMS a desirable choice to families across the community while meeting other CMS goals. This includes a guaranteed seat in a good school close to home, plus choices.

- We can't "fix" schools or student groups within schools through student assignment. We must do it through excellent teaching, appropriate and effective curricula, leadership, discipline and parent/community involvement.

- Schools can and should be the hearts and centers of communities.

- A quality education for all students.

- Provide for equitable opportunity and high student achievement for all students.

- Student Achievement is bottom line. The public school system is the foundation of our way of life and must have the support of the general public in order to survive.

- We will not assign any child to any school that does not have adequate resources, staff and opportunity for that child to achieve a quality education.

- Any plan should seek to balance the need for stability, proximity, utilization and diversity in our schools.

- Provide appropriate balance between non-guaranteed open seats via magnet schools and guaranteed home school seats.

- Establish a goal of increased diversity with the siting of: magnet schools; new home schools; development of boundaries for new schools.

- Boundaries must be logical and easily definable. They must honor proximity, diversity, and utilization when logical and reasonable (In that order in event of conflict. These are really three guiding principles.) Stability may be an impossibility in a system that will grow as predicted!

- Provide for stability to the highest degree possible.

- Stabilization of low performing schools through an infusion of talented leadership, intensive outreach to parents, innovative programming based on researched best practices and assurance of adequate resources and facilities.

- The assignment plan must be stable and predictable enough to convince parents to choose CMS for their children.

- Stability and predictability in pupil assignment.

- A feeling of security and long-term involvement with a set of schools.

Diversity

- Strengthening of magnets through meaty curric-

- ula to ensure viable choice options.

- Magnets should provide educationally distinct options for students.

- The magnet school program should be strengthened to provide distinct academic programs.

- Utilize Magnets to provide for differences in student interest and learning styles.

- Magnets should be distinctive in curriculum, delivery, and/or learning environment. (This means ensuring entering students have the prerequisites and are motivated to participate in the program.)

- Minimize transportation costs and time of travel for students.

- Proximity to home or parent's work place enables parent involvement.

- Exceptional students should be offered the same opportunities as other students for proximity, stability, and diversity, and they should be concentrated in underutilized schools only when clustering is necessary for educational purposes.

- Cost benefit analysis of assignment plan.

- The benefits of the assignment plan must justify the additional costs involved.

Choice/Options

- Incorporate reasonable "choice" options that can manually be offered by the Superintendent (for NCLB, board transfers, etc.) without the "sledgehammer" effect of the existing lottery process.

- Educational options are important to optimize learning and involvement. Some choice is also required by law (NCLB) and expected (demanded) by our families.

- Assignment alternatives include schools close to home, effective and accessible magnets, and opportunities for challenging academics and/or greater diversity. (Definition of diversity may vary – racial, SES, ethnicity, languages/ELL, geographic/international, learning styles, EC.)

- Alternative educational programs are also essential to provide specialized, smaller, structured or more restrictive learning environments. Choices include voluntary or assigned (due to significant language or acceleration needs, an exceptionality, or discipline needs).

Magnet programs

- Magnet locations that are in less attractive areas to make best use of facilities; cloning of magnets to facilitate accessibility from all geographic areas without excessive bus rides (including consolidated stops); and a limitation on the number of FRL students to ensure economic diversity.

- Establish fewer magnets, but those that are distinct and accessible and provide "choice" for parents. Keep the stronger magnets in place. Substitute some magnets for alternative schools, such as KIPP Academy or charter schools for certain populations of hard-to-reach students.

Board members' own ideas

Continued from Page 5

- Incorporate a voluntary "magnet school" option; sites/programs centered within the inner-city area. The "magnet" program should not exceed more than 15-20% of CMS seats (25 or so schools); emphasis on "full magnets" with an increase in the number of merit-based admissions criteria.

- Magnets should be strategically placed to maximize utilization and diversity.

- Facilitate diversity using magnet schools with a cap of 40% (+/-10%) on economically disadvantaged students.

- The magnet school program should make efficient use of facilities and offer diverse learning environments.

- More magnet programs with greater structure (would suggest a 6-8 military component as a magnet).

- Utilize magnets to provide opportunity for diversity and better and more efficient use of facilities. (Provide alternative setting for students who need a different structure for learning. May be full or partial depending on what works best.)

Achievement

- Any plan should reduce the percentage of schools above 50% free and reduced lunch, and provide an alternative school assignment into higher-achieving schools for underachievers in any school/feeder school with student achievement levels more than 15% below system levels.

- If a child's guaranteed seat is in a high poverty school, he should have a viable opportunity to choose a seat in a different school. However, we will embrace innovative and effective ways to make certain that high-poverty schools have the programs and resources necessary to be successful and thus be viable choices for parents.

Neighborhood schools/guaranteed seats

- End school desegregation by race, ethnicity or general social status. No more "controlled choice" schemes with irregular cluster zones or preference policies.

- A home school guarantee with logical boundaries that make sense to parents and allow for appropriate utilization of facilities.

- Ensure students have guaranteed seats at schools close to home. In other words, neighborhood schools.

- Ensure that enrollment is not capped for students wishing to attend their home school.

- Maintain the sibling guarantee to the same school as well as to feeder schools in order to keep families together.

- Each child should have a guaranteed seat close to home, and the boundary lines of the home school districts must be logical and defensible while striving to make efficient use of facilities.

- Maintain home school guarantee. Maintain

choice and flexibility where sensible and feasible and not detrimental to proximity, diversity, and utilization. (Consistency in implementation of choice is absolutely essential.)

- There may be a point when a school exceeds capacity by a certain percent that a cap is necessary for health, safety, etc. reasons. Emergency status!

- Develop a "neighborhood school" plan as our foundation for student assignment. Boundaries for each school should be regularly shaped, compact and continuous, with elementary, middle and high school feeders that are as proximate to student homes as possible. Schools are sited and maintained according to population needs, without the concept of "capping" or controlling of seats.

- The basic assignment is a guaranteed seat in a school close to home. In high growth areas this may mean reassignment predictability and keeping cohorts or neighborhoods together through moves to new schools.

Transportation

- Consider cluster pickups and/or evaluate changing from 1/2 mile transportation guaranteed to 3/4 or one-mile transportation guaranteed.

- School locations determine traffic patterns and mode of travel to school and work, and strongly influence community development. This impacts air quality and quality of life for the whole community.

- Walkable schools are particularly important in lower income and higher density/transit-oriented areas, and should be a consideration in community development planning and zoning processes.

- Probably not a guiding principle, but transportation often has negative impact on pupil assignment and this must be "user friendly"! If it isn't illegal, unsafe, or overly costly in time or money, then do it and do it quickly (transpecialist specialist level).

Other

- Important factors include appropriate and efficient facility utilization and transportation to deliver educational programs effectively. Thus utilization must consider differential staffing and space requirements for special needs and programs.

- Smaller schools (would suggest school within a school).

- Manage school size to eliminate use of mobile units beyond 20% of normal school capacity and develop a home school overflow policy.

- Grade configuration restructuring; i.e., K-6, 7-8, 9-12.

- Some way to encourage utilization and diversity with transportation: transportation for student moving from overutilized to underutilized; moving from regular to equity situation if in FRL classification!! Just thinking; could impact so few as to not be worthwhile!

- Incorporate CMS alignment with N.C. charter schools. Charters will become part of the fabric of CMS "choices" and also become an outlet for future "choices" as growth continues. This principle might require that CMS reconstitute some of our schools into charters with state approval.

Equity panel pans caps on SES rates

The CMS Equity Committee Tuesday said reassigning students to balance schools by socioeconomic status would do little to boost equity in the district.

Committee members listed capping SES as one of two ideas that “might least be able to impact equity.” The other idea was No Child Left Behind.

The committee instead suggested the school board focus on improving teacher and principal effectiveness, along with raising student achievement. Committee chair Julian Wright said the panel would weigh in later on Supt. Jim Pughsley’s suggestion of involuntary teacher transfers into hard-to-staff classrooms.



Wright

Administrators asked the committee to review topics the board said in January it would consider during this year’s student assignment review process.

The committee’s divisions over assignment policy are evident in the report, reprinted below.

Addressing the board, Wright said, “Try not to assign students in a way that demonstrably inhibits achievement from the get-go. Don’t start off by duplicating some of the mistakes we’ve made in the past.”

Break up the high-poverty schools or, if they are to remain, “you’ve got to provide the radically different resources needed to overcome barriers to being able to provide equity.” In earlier reports and again Tuesday, the committee praised the Equity Plus II program but said it was insufficient.

While panning the use of socioeconomic status in a new plan, the committee favored redrawing attendance lines to spread out low-income students. Wright said some committee members want SES caps piloted at magnets.

“If you’re looking at any types of diversity to maximize, we think to best boost equity, you should focus on socioeconomic diversity instead of potentially other measures.”

Said Wright of divisions over guaranteed seats, magnets, home-school enrollment caps and how to reduce the number of high-poverty schools, “Our committee does mirror our community.”

The value of the panel’s report was unclear Tuesday. With members appointed by individual school board members, the committee appears now to be merely echoing splits on the school board.

Text of Tuesday’s Equity Committee report: “Reactions to Areas to be Reviewed as Part of Student Assignment Evaluation”:

Your CMS Equity Committee wants to make the Board of Education aware of our concerns and thoughts as the Board considers the priorities it wants to pursue in an evaluation of CMS’s student assignment plan. Specifically, we have examined the “Areas to be Reviewed,” listed below as provided by Dr. Pughsley and CMS staff, and we have examined them through an “equity lens” to try to determine which of these aspects of student assignment potentially could have the greatest impact on providing equity to all CMS students. Our thoughts follow.

As one of its ways to examine the “Areas to be Reviewed,” our Committee tried to determine which of the Areas are most important – or could have the greatest impact – in providing equity in educational resources within CMS. We did so by rating each Area on a scale of 0 to 10 (10 having the most impact). From the Committee members participating in this process (8 of 11), we provide the averages of these admittedly unscientific rankings below. Not surprisingly, if you have read our prior reports to you, we rated Staff Effectiveness and Student Achievement as the two Areas that could have the most impact on equity. We rated Limitation on Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students (i.e., FRL population caps) and Impact of No Child Left Behind as the Areas that actually would have the least impact in promoting equity.

We provide you here our initial, collective thoughts about priorities to be pursued in student assignment. We do not provide a roadmap for how to achieve those priorities. We cannot pretend that as a Committee we have consensus on all aspects of what we tell you here – our Committee runs the gamut of those giving a “10” to the importance of maintaining Guaranteed Seats as a means ultimately to achieving equity to those giving it a “0.” As you will read below, however, we do have virtual unanimity on the importance of Student Achievement and Staff Effectiveness for CMS to be able to achieve equity. We certainly have unanimity in our willingness to continue to advise and work with you as you evaluate student assignment. We want to continue to work with you in the months ahead to come up with a roadmap that takes into account all of the Areas listed below and that will guide our community to the best way to assign children to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools so that each child can achieve his or her full academic potential.

Staff effectiveness

9.00

(Teacher Quality, Deployment, Hiring, Retention)

– As we have repeatedly stressed to the Board, we believe that having effective principals and teachers at every school is of paramount importance in providing equity in our schools. Please note that “staff” effectiveness has to include strong principal leadership, and we would add “Principal Quality” to the parenthetical list above.

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– Overall staff effectiveness can be enhanced by not requiring teachers to perform too many roles, such as by making effective use of parent advocate positions at schools where the principal believes such positions are needed.

– Our Committee does not have a consensus reaction yet to Dr. Pughsley’s proposals potentially for moving staff to lower performing schools. Our Committee generally prefers enticing principals and teachers to schools with very significant “carrots,” (radically lower class sizes, exceptionally generous compensation packages, educational opportunity incentives, greatly improved teaching environments, enhanced safety, greater disciplinary discretion, etc.), but members of our Committee worry that not enough resources have been – or can be – allocated for the size “carrots” CMS needs to attract staff to some schools, and so it could be time to consider using “sticks” along the lines urged by Dr. Pughsley. Other Committee members worry about a drain of some of our very best teachers from CMS if those teachers, for whatever reason, do not like the assignments they are given. Some of these same Committee members worry about having teachers in any school where the teacher really does not want to be and want even more emphasis put on creating overall cultures of significant learning and teaching that attract teachers to particular schools. As a Committee, we expect to consider these issues further and respond specifically to them in the coming months.

Student achievement 9.00

– Your Equity Committee urges the Board to assign students to schools in a way that allows each student to maximize his/her academic achievement, and if CMS is assigning students in a way that demonstrably inhibits achievement, then no longer assign students to schools in that way.

– It seems clear to the Equity Committee that some student assignment decisions create and enhance barriers to equity, specifically high concentrations of poverty in too many schools. CMS either needs to eliminate those barriers or provide the radically different resources needed to overcome those barriers to equity.

Boundaries for new schools 8.50

– It is important to balance out FRL populations to the extent possible by where attendance zone lines are drawn, especially when new schools are opened.

– It is important to use attendance zone lines better to maximize diversity, particularly socioeconomic diversity, in CMS schools.

– We urge the Board to be open to redrawing lines to minimize high concentrations of poverty in individual schools and to maximize sustainable, long-term stability in school assignment.

School size

8.00

– Our Committee is generally uniform in its beliefs that schools should not be too big and that when student populations rise too much at individual schools, all of the students at such schools suffer in some way.

– CMS needs better planning so that schools are not already at capacity when built and are built in the best locations to foster the goals of the student assignment plan.

– We urge CMS to manage current student population within schools better to minimize to the extent possible the need to build more schools, including special “school within a school” programs to take advantage of existing space.

– We especially urge the Board to look at “school within a school” and “multiple curriculum models on a single campus” models at the high school level. We hope that such steps could better balance numbers of students at each high school and enhance academic achievement among different segments of student populations at each school.

– As one of our Committee members puts it, “God only made elephants so big.” Even large institutions, like schools, can only be so large to be effective. To be clear, however, our Committee does not extend that analogy automatically to the size of CMS as a whole.

Diversity

6.00

– Perceptions exist that resources follow certain student populations and the only way to make sure that resources are distributed equitably is to have different student populations distributed more evenly. Not all of our Committee members embrace these perceptions, but history is a powerful teacher. The Equity Plus II program clearly directs additional resources where they are needed, but most of our Committee believes some Equity Plus I schools need even more resources and some non-Equity Plus II schools (those trending toward such status) also need some additional resources.

– Attempts should be made to foster diversity in our schools and classrooms, but there is reluctance to mandate it.

– For some on our Committee, the priority in improving student achievement should be a focus on socioeconomic diversity within all of our schools and all of our classrooms.

– Generally, our Committee believes strongly that student achievement is a more accurate barometer of equity than diversity, but diversity is important for its own sake and also may be a way to enhance overall student achievement.

Magnet programs

5.875

– Magnets can help all students reach full academic potential.

– Magnets must have appropriate resources and staff to be successful, and too often CMS’s magnet

programs do not have them.

- A small minority of our Committee would cut magnet programs entirely and focus on strengthening schools to which students are regularly assigned because magnets can effectively drain resources from other schools, and some perceive that magnet programs have not enhanced an equity platform.

- The majority of our Committee views magnets as a powerful tool for (i) providing needed options to lower performing schools, (ii) allowing families the opportunity to choose different types of diversity, and (iii) giving the opportunity for highly specialized instruction that can allow a variety of children to continue to reach their full academic potential.

- Some perception exists that not all magnet programs are as effective or as desirable as others. We suggest considering which magnets work and which do not, which are desired and which are not, and direct scarce resources to those that both work and are desired.

- Most of our Committee would advocate duplicating desired, successful magnets.

Guaranteed seats 5.75

- If capacity at schools is capped, guaranteed seats at particular schools become impossible.

- Some members of our Committee consider maintaining guaranteed seats at home schools to be of paramount importance lest some families choose to leave CMS or never enter CMS in the first place.

- Other members of our Committee consider guaranteed seats an insurmountable barrier to achieving equity because of the inequities that exist in the schools already.

- Still other Committee members express concerns that home school guarantees make it impossible at some schools (generally higher performing schools) for anyone except those with a home school guarantee to get in, thus denying many students any chance to “choose” to attend such schools. For these Committee members, opening up potential slots in higher performing schools is more important than maintaining a home school guarantee, even with the risk that a lot of CMS seats could be open from the loss of students exiting CMS if families no longer have a home seat guarantee.

Capacity, facility usage (caps) 5.125

- Our Committee thinks it important to ascertain what capacity really is at each individual school and to work to reduce overcrowding anywhere.

- Attempts should be made at least to encourage “overflow” students at over-utilized schools to go to under-utilized schools in the same geographic area or assignment zone.

- Some members of our Committee think that seriously overcrowded conditions at any school impede academic achievement and thwart equity such that enrollment at all schools should be capped at some percentage of capacity even if it means denying a home school guarantee.

- Other Committee members believe the answer to overcrowding is to build more schools in various geographic areas or create more attractive magnets close or adjacent to particular areas to lessen crowding because the costs of denying a home school guarantee could be the loss of a family from the CMS system.

Cap on low-income students 4.75

Limitation on Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students

- Our Committee feels strongly that CMS needs to minimize the numbers of schools at extremely high FRL populations, but we have little, if any, consensus on the best way to achieve this goal.

- Some members of our Committee strongly believe that FRL caps at schools are essential to achieve equity. They urge serious consideration of an assignment plan that would cap FRL populations at 40%, 45%, or even a higher percentage if necessary in each school. Such a proposal hopefully assures that no students attend any schools with extremely high percentages of FRL populations and better allows all students, especially FRL students, to achieve their academic potential.

- Other Committee members believe that the overall percentage of FRL students within CMS (45%) makes it mathematically and pedagogically impossible to set FRL caps at levels at which overall student achievement increases. These Committee members believe that capping FRL populations at too high a level offers no hope that overall student achievement will increase, rather data appears to suggest that such caps effectively “lock in” the levels of FRL to non-FRL student ratios that decrease overall student achievement. For these Committee members, any student assignment plan that imposes such a “FRL cap” also threatens to alienate further segments of CMS’s population and cause them to leave the system altogether.

- Our Committee collectively hopes for, but is not aware of, other strategies that could be employed to reduce very high (80%+) FRL concentrations in some schools and enhance achievement at such schools.

- Our Committee sees no way at this time to balance guaranteed seats, capacity issues at individual schools, and FRL caps successfully at the same time.

Impact of No Child Left Behind 4.25

- Our Committee understands NCLB to provide a “trump card” to override student assignment policies if a school is failing students for an extended time.

- Any student assignment plan needs flexibility so that students and families taking advantage of NCLB have real options and choices for schools where they can go.

Committee members: Alice Bennett; Dwayne Collins; Rev. George Cook, Jr., Vice Chair; Kay Cunningham; Richard Helms; Ellen C. Martin; Greg Metcalf; José Hernandez Paris; Amy Shetler; Rev. Dr. John H. Walker; Julian H. Wright, Jr., Chair

State of the State Speech

'To have a fair shake in life'

Gov. Mike Easley delivered a 30-minute State of the State speech Monday before a joint session of the N.C. General Assembly in Raleigh. Excerpts from the speech that touch on K-12 education – and how he would propose to pay for his programs:

...While other states buckled under budget pressure, North Carolina refused to drop the axe on our classrooms. Together, we have faith that investing in education will allow all of our people, in every corner of every county of our state, to fully develop their God-given talents.

That is not just an economic imperative, it is a moral imperative. It is a North Carolina value.

Four years ago, some classes had 35 students. Today in K-3, the class size is 18.

Four years ago, North Carolina was one of only two Southern states with no pre-K program. This year, over 15,000 4-year-olds will start pre-K as at-risk kids and finish as ready-to-learn students.



Easley

And our schoolchildren are making more progress than ever. Our fourth-graders led the nation in math last year. Class size is down and test scores are up.

Not long ago, our college-going rate trailed the nation. But today, because we fully funded enrollment increases and kept college affordable, we are a national leader...

We have met the challenges of the past four years, but we still have much to do. Too many of our 9th-graders are not completing high school on time. As the economy changes, our schools must change, too.

We must raise our high school graduation rate dramatically and quickly. We have great universities, great community colleges, early childhood and now great elementary schools. There is no excuse not to have great high schools too.

The high schools we have simply will not meet the demands of the global economy. Twenty-first-century schools must teach 21st-century skills.

I want all ninth-graders to hear this: By the time you reach 12th-grade, no matter where you live, you will have the opportunity to receive a two-year college degree with just one extra year of school. A new partnership with high schools, community colleges and universities holds great promise for fully developing our state's talent.

You funded these pilot programs last year. This innovative project is called Learn and Earn. Learn more and earn more.

We are taking this initiative statewide over four

'Constitutional train wreck' or not?

Gov. Mike Easley's budget, released Wednesday, proposed some important additional dollars for statewide K-12 education. But was it enough to avoid the "constitutional train wreck" that Superior Court Judge Howard Manning warned about from the bench earlier this month?

Most of the budget's \$532 million in new money for education will go to maintain current salary increases and bonuses.

About \$19 million will be added to the fund that supplements K-12 education in low-wealth counties. Easley suggested \$15 million to add social workers and nurses, \$16.6 million to add seats for at-risk 4-year-olds, and \$4 million to expand the five-year diploma program offered jointly by some school districts and community colleges.

Will that satisfy a judge who has talked about needs totaling \$225 million or more to provide all children statewide with a "sound basic" education?

Manning tends to speak chiefly from his Wake County bench. The next hearing is March 8.

years. Everybody wins. Our workforce gets better skilled and more attractive. And students get a better education, and a better job.

And we are moving forward on other high school reforms too. With help from the Gates Foundation, we are building smaller schools within a school, so the students know the teachers and the teachers know the students.

These schools will focus on areas such as health sciences, biotechnology, and information technology, the very fields that have the most growth potential. And the students will work in these sectors as part of their education. Students then see the connection between the courses they take and the jobs they want. It makes school relevant for them and they do not drop out.

If we keep their interest, we will keep them in school. And soon, the best-educated workforce in America will be found within the borders of this state.

Today, the economy demands that everybody participate. There is no room for error.

It is past time that we provide adequate funds to those counties that lack the ability to provide for

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State of the State Speech

Continued from Page 10

themselves.

Just as we will be judged individually by how we treat the least of our brethren, so shall we be measured as a state.

We cannot pretend that low-wealth and at-risk schools are not a problem. And it cannot be solved by a judge's decision or my executive order. To have a fair shake in life, these disadvantaged kids need the power, the commitment and the compassion of this General Assembly. We cannot support a system of education that discriminates against even one child in North Carolina.

My budget will fully fund the low-wealth formula over two years, an increase of over 50 percent, to see that all children receive the same opportunities as the rest of North Carolina, not because it is law, but because it is right and just and fair.

But let this much be clear, when we offer opportunity, we will demand real accountability.

We can do a better job with the money we have. Our children deserve more and so do our taxpayers.

The state has too many different funds for at-risk kids with too little accountability. I want to pull this money together under one formula with one set of requirements and a lot of accountability. That is the only way to find out what works and what does not. Then we can invest in a proven strategy that helps all children meet high standards and reach their full potential.

We know that when our children have access to good teachers, they succeed. But right now we only produce 1/3 of the teachers we need. This business model will not work. We have to change it.

We are bringing together our community colleges with our universities to educate teachers in the communities where they are needed most. If you let teachers learn close to their homes, they will stay there and teach. This partnership has worked well on a pilot basis.

Now all of our university campuses will begin programs with community colleges in every corner of this state so that teachers can get their degree from a licensed university in their community and children can get the teachers they need in their schools. This plan will increase the number of new teachers by 64 percent each year.

And even the best teachers cannot control every aspect of a student's life. Life outside of school matters as much as the classroom, if not more. That is why we mandated character education.

If we are to close the achievement gap, increase the graduation rate, and prepare every student for the global economy, we must address the whole child.

As a prosecutor for 15 years in our state courts, I saw thousands of young children come to court with their parents, and you could literally pick out the

kids who were not going to make it, not even have a chance. It was obvious to everyone in the courtroom from me to the clerk to the judge.

If we know we have a problem then we have a duty to address it and a duty to fix it. We need social service and school staff working together in our schools to connect students and their families to the help they need. The services are already available in every county. We just have to connect them with the schools.

We cannot educate a child without the help and cooperation of parents. Clearly, most parents are trying to raise their children right and get them a good education. But some ignore their parental responsibilities. There is a child neglect statute on the books in this state. For those parents who intentionally interfere with their child's education, we will use that law to protect that child's right.

Teachers are held accountable for educating our children in school. We as parents should be held accountable for our children at home.

Reforming high schools.

Requiring more accountability for more resources.

Providing more teachers.

Meeting the needs of our children.

And, improving our skills in the global economy.

That is a formula for success that leads to progress. This is what it takes to protect American values. This is what it takes to be One North Carolina and a stronger America....

So where do we get those resources? You know my idea. Rest easy, my budget will not include an education lottery.

You have fronted money from the general fund for More at Four, reduced class size and school construction. From day one, I have said an education lottery should pay for these items. This lottery issue is not going away.

Only the money for the education lottery is going away, from our state to other states every single day.

Since I delivered my first State of the State address, hundreds of millions of North Carolina dollars have gone to education in South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia and Tennessee. Our people are playing the lottery. We just need to decide which schools we should fund, other states or ours.

I am for funding our schools....

Putting third of children at risk

S.C. voucher debate threatens key source of progress for African-Americans

The writer is Distinguished Senior Fellow of the National Staff Development Council. Excerpts from a Feb. 17 lunch address sponsored by Shandon Presbyterian Church at the University of South Carolina Presbyterian Student Center in Columbia.

By HAYES MIZELL

Today, at this very hour in South Carolina's public school classrooms, tens of thousands of students are struggling to learn under the shadow of our state's past. As a group, these students constitute 46 percent of the enrollment in South Carolina's public schools. They are from generations of families who played major roles in the development of South Carolina, though few people acknowledge or appreciate it. If their nineteenth century ancestors were not buried in unmarked graves, what might we learn when comparing the DNA of these students with that of their forebears? Certainly, many of these students are descendents of the 1,131 slaves owned by Joshua John Ward in 1860, or descendents of the 838 slaves owned by John IZARD Middleton, or the 719 slaves owned by William Aiken, or the 671 slaves owned by William Henry Heyward, or the 631 slaves owned by Robert Francis Withers Allston, or the 570 slaves owned by John Ashby Colclough and Eliza Maria Cantey Colclough, or the 448 slaves owned by James Chestnut, Sr., or these students are the descendents of nearly 400,000 other South Carolina slaves owned by more than 25,000 citizens of the Palmetto State.

These facts remind us of a long and chilling chapter in our state's history. Most people would like to forget it, even though during the 335 years since the colonization of what is now South Carolina, African-Americans spent nearly 200 of those years in slavery. In other words, over the course of our state's history, as a racial group African-Americans living in South Carolina have spent more time in slavery than out of it....

One way or another, to a greater or lesser extent, all South Carolinians bear the economic and social burdens of the state's pernicious and self-destructive actions of the past, but African-American students suffer the most. Thirty-one percent of African-American children between the ages of 6 and 17 live in poverty, more than three times the percentage of white children in the same condition. Forty-four percent of African-American families earn less than \$25,000 a year; 26 percent earn less than \$15,000 annually.

South Carolina is now in the process of clawing out of the deep educational hole the state dug for itself. It dug that hole in five ways. First, the qual-

ity of our state's public schools and the resulting academic performance of their students have not occurred by chance. During the past 140 years, state and local political leaders made choices that shaped today's schools and achievement levels. Many were bad choices, frequently motivated by rank prejudice, base political considerations, expediency, or ignorance. Quite often, a deep suspicion of public education, if not outright hostility towards it, has been a subtext of the state's bad choices and missed opportunities. Frequently, the General Assembly has followed, rather than led, citizen and legal efforts to improve South Carolina's public schools.

Second, because of intention, callousness, or oversight during the past century, our state undereducated or miseducated hundreds of thousands of its youth. It was only in the mid-1970s that South Carolina began to develop a truly inclusive system of public education. Until then, the state did not seriously seek to educate all children who were either disadvantaged, African-American, disabled, or female....

Third, the state's determination to restrict the opportunities of African-Americans also stifled South Carolina's interest and ability to develop educational policies that would benefit the state as a whole. Racial discrimination trumped all efforts to improve public education....

Fourth, until the last quarter of the twentieth century, the quality of public education was not a priority for South Carolina.... Fifth, the total effect of all of the above was to create a culture of low expectations that plagues South Carolina to this day.

South Carolina's legacy of bondage, no education, miseducation, and inadequate education reaches into present day classrooms to profoundly impact the academic performance of current students. The State Department of Education groups elementary and secondary students' academic performance in four categories: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the national goal is for all students to perform at the Proficient level by 2014. On the 2004 Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test, 37 percent of fifth-grade African-American students taking the English/language arts test performed at the Below Basic level, while 14 percent of white students scored Below Basic. From the third through the eighth grades, the percentage of students performing Below Basic slowly increases until in the eighth grade 55 percent of African-American and 23 per-

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'Giving parents more choices'

From a Feb. 26, 2004 press release from the S.C. governor's office announcing the "Put Parents in Charge" Act:

"Governor Mark Sanford today joined House Speaker Pro Tempore Doug Smith, Rep. Lewis Vaughn and Sen. David Thomas in unveiling the 'Put Parents in Charge' Act, a groundbreaking education reform initiative designed to restore parental control of education, improve public school performance and expand educational opportunities for low and mid-income families.

"The 'Put Parents in Charge' Act would provide parents with tax credits for tuition costs – credits that could then apply against income tax and school property tax liability.

"This proposal is a significant step forward on the education front for two reasons," Gov. Sanford said. 'First, it's giving parents more choices to determine for themselves what's in the best interests of their own kids. Second, it brings a real market pressure to bear on the current system – something that's been proven to help improve performance at public



schools where similar choice measures have been implemented.

"You'd be hard pressed to find anyone out there who doesn't believe that a parent engaging in their kid's education is a central component in producing better results in the classroom. We're all about giving parents in South Carolina both the opportunity and the financial incentive to do just that – and to make what's ultimately a much more important investment in the lives of their kids.'

"We can either continue with the status quo approach to education in South Carolina or we can try new approaches that have proven successful in empowering parents and improving public schools in other parts of the country,' said House Speaker Pro Tempore Doug Smith, the bill's primary sponsor in the House of Representatives. 'The governor is committed to new ideas and the idea of giving parents more choices is one that is long overdue in our state.'

"We are standing up for the rights of parents to make choices based on the individual needs of their children and refuting the long-held belief in education that one size fits all,' said Rep. Lewis Vaughn. 'Parents in South Carolina deserve the right to seek out alternatives when their children's needs aren't being met by the current system.'"

– www.scgovernor.com/interior.asp?SiteContentId=6&pressid=75&NavId=54&ParentId=0

Putting third of S.C. children at risk

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cent of the white students perform Below Basic. The aggregate raw numbers across grades three through eight are sobering: 44,000 African-American students and 24,000 white students score Below Basic in English/language arts alone.

The proportion of African-American and white students performing at the Basic level in English/language arts is comparable. At first glance, this seems to be encouraging until one realizes that approximately three times as many white as African-American students are performing at the Proficient level and five times as many white as African-American students are performing at the Advanced level.

Performing at the Basic level is what we might call "getting by." Though the students qualify to go on to the next grade, Basic means they are only "minimally prepared." Students who perform at the Basic level are unlikely to lift either their own economic fortunes, or those of the state, very far. More students performing at the Basic level is a worthy interim goal, but the ultimate goal is for increasingly greater proportions of students to perform at the Proficient and Advanced levels....

Clearly, South Carolina will not reach the national goal of all eighth graders performing at the Proficient level by 2014 if the state veers from the path of hard work and sustained investment it has trod in recent years. South Carolina is now in the solid middle of state rankings of public investments in K-12 education.... Four-year-old children with a variety of risk factors who participate in South Carolina's child development program are going on to score significantly higher than non-participating children on PACT tests through the fifth grade. The English/language arts performance of South Carolina fourth graders, and the mathematics performance of eighth graders, is improving at a rate that exceeds that of all but a handful of other states. South Carolina ranks among the top 20 states in nation in the percentage of high school students demonstrating mastery on Advanced Placement exams. In recent years, South Carolina students have also made impressive gains on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Unfortunately, neither the rest of the country nor the world is standing still, waiting for South Carolina to overcome its past. Next month the new SAT test will make its debut. Designed to measure students' critical thinking and writing skills, it will include a 25-minute timed essay and a section of multiple-choice questions testing students' aptitudes in grammar and editing. The essay will require students to take a point of view on an issue and defend that position with reasoning "based on their own

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Putting third of S.C. children at risk

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experiences, readings, and observations.” This is only one indicator that expectations for academic performance will continue to rise.

For the first time, South Carolina knows how to improve student achievement, even for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We know the way, but do not always have the will. South Carolina schools are changing for the better but they need to change still more and more rapidly. Improvements in the performance levels of both educators and students demonstrate they can achieve at higher levels, especially when they are encouraged and supported in their efforts. If South Carolina continues to focus on strengthening its public education system, and becomes more aggressive in targeting underperforming students and their communities for intensive educational development, the state can make even greater progress. If it chooses to pursue any other course, the state’s educational progress during the past 20 years will stagnate, if not erode.

Unfortunately, the current posture of some of our state’s elected leaders does not bode well. They have difficult choices before them, but as too frequently has been the case in the past, they whistle in the dark while walking down the wrong road. The General Assembly has already spent more than \$10 million in legal fees defending itself against a school finance lawsuit brought by eight rural school districts that serve low-income, African-American majorities. The school districts argue the state is not providing the resources they need to ensure that each child receives the “minimally adequate education” the Supreme Court of South Carolina requires. Lawyers for the General Assembly contend that the Court only requires the state to provide the opportunity for an adequate education and current laws and resources satisfy that mandate. As far as I know, the General Assembly has not sought a compromise that would be in the best interests of both the children of the plaintiff school systems and the state. Instead, as in those no-so-glorious days of yesterday, the legislature has yielded to its primal instinct of resistance.

In addition, the General Assembly has not kept faith with its commitments under the 1977 Education Finance Act (EFA) to cover the costs school systems incur in providing the basic elements of education for South Carolina students. Whereas school systems should be receiving \$2,274 per student from the state, the General Assembly is providing \$1,897 per student. Aside from the fact that even full funding would be inadequate because the Education Finance Act is badly out of date, the lack of full funding has the greatest impact on school districts in low-income areas of the state. Unlike

Private schools ‘don’t exist’

From a news report in The Charlotte Observer:

“While children in South Carolina’s poor rural districts need help, University of South Carolina education school dean Les Sternberg said, ‘A tax credit giving them money for private schools simply won’t work, because they simply are not there, they don’t exist.’

“David Breneman, dean of the University of Virginia School of Education and an expert in state school finance, agreed. ‘I don’t have any doubt this would be a waste of public funds,’ he said. ‘You’re giving money to people to do what, for the most part, they’re doing anyway.’

– www.charlotte.com

school districts in more prosperous counties, these districts depend most on state funding for basic operational support but have the least capacity to raise additional funds through local taxes to compensate for shortfalls in state appropriations. It is not by chance that school districts that suffer the most are the ones with high percentages of students from low-income and African-American families.

There is also reason to worry about the future of public education because the proposals and rhetoric of some state political leaders seem to be an echo from the distant past. The rationale and words have changed, but the effects are likely to be the same. Instead of mobilizing ordinary South Carolinians to help all students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform at the Proficient level, these leaders exploit the narrow self-interests of individuals who have given up on public education. Instead of expanding South Carolina’s rigorous program of school accountability, these leaders seek to cobble together a parallel education system that values choice over results. Instead of mounting programs that ensure low-performing students will develop skills and values that contribute to the state’s economy, these leaders proffer a have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too philosophy designed for short-term political gain. Instead of working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of school districts, these leaders’ rail against the “education bureaucracy” that, ironically, exists only because the state mandates and funds it.

These actions repeat a pattern all too familiar to South Carolina: avoid the real issues, elevate a specious ideology to an article of faith, confuse citizens about what is in their best interests, and ignore the needs of at least a third of the state’s population. Because South Carolina has experienced all this in the past, it is not hard to imagine the future consequences for our people and the state’s economy. Whatever the outcome, it will not occur by chance.

Briefly...

Ready for school: A report, "Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative" found that access to medical care, quality pre-kindergarten programs and the educational level of the mother are critical indicators of school readiness, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported. The study measured not only family factors but school and community factors. Other crucial indicators include the percentage of children living in poverty, suffering from lead poisoning and those without health insurance.

www.nwanews.com

No more tags: After parents raised health and privacy concerns, the Sutter, Calif., schools dropped use of electronic identification tags on all elementary students, the Los Angeles Times reported. The electronic badges had been instituted for safety reasons. (See "Kids as inventory," *Educate!*, Feb. 18)

www.latimes.com

Indiana vouchers: An Indiana bill may allow thousands of students to use vouchers to attend private schools, the Indianapolis Star reported. Although the vouchers may be offered to students currently attending underperforming schools, critics argue that vouchers would siphon money away from the public school system and decrease support for public education.

www.indystar.com

No more resources: Federally mandated testing of historically ignored students such as migrants hasn't brought with it the resources to improve achievement, the Christian Science Monitor reported. More migrant children are attending U.S. schools than ever before, but funding was decreased in 2004.

www.csmonitor.com

Where vouchers went: Fewer

DidYaHear?

✓ Aiming to attract talented students from all economic groups, Harvard University announced a three-year summer program called Crimson Summer Academy for rising 10th-graders, combined with a pledge that families with annual incomes of less than \$40,000 would pay nothing, and families up to \$60,000 less than they now do. Two-thirds of Harvard undergrads receive financial aid, and nearly half receive more than \$24,000 annually.

✓ As Wake County commissioners and school board members began sparring over how to pay for dozens of new schools that higher-than-anticipated growth will require, the News & Observer was pointing toward CMS Building Service Chief Guy Chamberlain's last employer, the schools in Gwinnett County, Ga. There, the county has "abandoned relying on bond issues for construction in favor of a 1-cent sales tax. They're in a \$995 million building program to add 2,000 classrooms to keep up with growth of 6,000 students every year. 'The sales tax has allowed us to raise more money than we would have through bonds,' said Sloan Roach, a Gwinnett schools spokeswoman. 'And we don't have to worry about paying back long-term debt.'"

— Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

than 80 of the 1,300 students using vouchers in the District of Columbia to attend private schools came from low-performing schools, Education Week reported. The rest of the students were already enrolled in private schools or came from public schools that were not underperforming. Washington Scholarship Fund CEO Sally Sachar said the public schools received priority and that every voucher recipient had to meet income requirements. For a family of four, household income could not exceed \$34,873.

www.edweek.org

Calendar

FEBRUARY

25 Bond Oversight Committee retreat, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Professional Development Center, 428 West Blvd.

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

2 School board's Finance, Capital

& Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

4 Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.

7 School board's Policy Committee, 3:15 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

8 School board meets, 6 p.m., Government Center Meeting Chamber.

16 School board's Safety Committee, 3:30 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

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 rthompson@ci.charlotte.nc.us

17 School board's Personnel Committee, 2 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

17 School board's Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.

22 School board's Curriculum Committee, 3:30 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.

22 School board meets, 6 p.m., Government Center Meeting Chamber.