

## Where to from here?

### Pughsley to retire June 30; interimcy expected; absence of cohesion to put community to test

By STEVE JOHNSTON  
*Educate!* Editor

We want these guys to walk on water. We expect a commanding presence. And a deft political hand. And, oh yeah, we want them to educate our kids, too.

But if we don't get organized, as Pooh would say, we may be sorely disappointed in who wants to be our next superintendent.

On Tuesday, Dr. James Pughsley, superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools since 2002, said he would retire June 30.

He told friends he had so many disagreements with the school board that he didn't think there was anything more he could do.

Say what you will, but the school board is splendidly representative of this community. So when Pughsley says disagreements abound, we should all look at ourselves, not at the board.

Pughsley's decision comes as the

district faces a daunting agenda of change and review. Pughsley himself cited that agenda as making it an appropriate time for his departure.

The issues, cited by Pughsley and chronicled in *Educate!* over

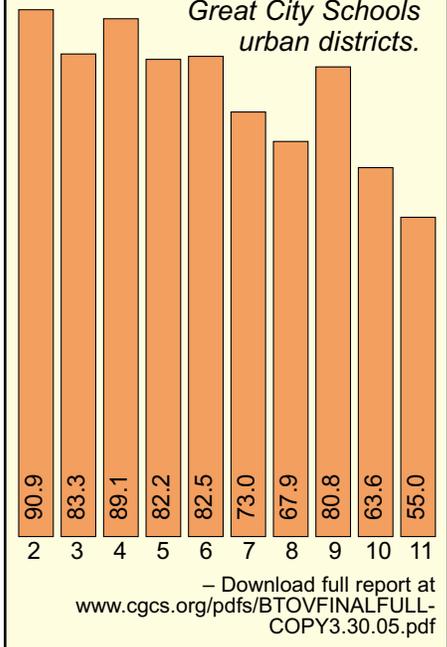
#### Commentary

the months, are student assignment, the annual budget, the prospect of a fall bond campaign for capital needs (story below), a task force dominated by business interests looking at CMS budgeting and management, and the fall election when six of nine board seats will be on the ballot.

But for the public at large, the list could be narrowed to two far more fundamental issues. If Mecklenburg can get organized about those two issues, and begin acting as though it understood what was at stake, CMS will be fine. One issue is to stop acting out of fear. The other is to stop

### Reading progress

Percentage of grades, by grade level, showing gains in state reading tests in 2003-2004, among 65 Council of the Great City Schools urban districts.



behaving with indifference.

Most of the decisions our school board makes reflect the community's fears and its indifference.

How else to explain why the

Continued on Page 4

## CMS official argues for money needed for growing district

Hours before news of Supt. Jim Pughsley's decision to leave CMS June 30, one of his assistants was making a case for public support of the money CMS needs to put a roof over the heads of all children.

"We are in a tenuous position and clearly money is the big issue," Assistant Supt. for Building Services Guy Chamberlain told a Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum meeting at the West Charlotte Recreation Center.

CMS has not yet decided to ask for a roughly \$600 million bond issue on the November ballot. But Chamberlain was already rating passage as "in jeopardy" because of a "feeding frenzy" of media and other attention to CMS's problems.

The recently adopted 10-year, \$1.9 billion capital

Continued on Page 2

### CMS capital dollar spending history

All figures in millions. "Funds remaining" will be gone in 25 months if construction pace of '01-'04 continues.

	Value	Sold	Initiated	Committed	Spent	Funds remaining
'96 bond	119.8	119.8	119.8	119.8	119.8	0
'97 bond	415	415	407.6	400.5	387.8	14.5
'99 COPs	50	50	50	49.9	48.1	.1
'00 bond	275.5	224	273.8	227.6	192.2	47.4
'02 bond	224	102	201.1	88.9	43.3	135.1
'04 COPs	98.5	46	98.5	39.7	10.3	58.8
'05 COPs	73.9	14	73.9	1.3	0	72.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,256.7</b>	<b>970.8</b>	<b>1,224.7</b>	<b>927.7</b>	<b>801.5</b>	<b>328.5</b>

Source: CMS

## CMS construction

Continued from Page 1

needs plan calls for spending of as much as \$287 million in fiscal year 2011. In a recent 12-month period, CMS spent \$200 million on new schools and renovations.

“The reality is... \$287 million in 2011, the county commission is not going to approve that. I know that, and the school board is not going to go that high,” Chamberlain said. The alternative, already suggested but opposed by the citizens Bond Oversight Committee, is to stretch out the 10-year plan to 13 years. Committee chairman Norm Gundel warned the school board that spending less “will leave us further behind in 10 years than we are now” (*Educate!*, April 15).

The long-range plan had been adopted by the school board in concept in February. When Chamberlain came back April 12 after costing out the projects, there was considerably less enthusiasm but it was approved.

“It was a little more difficult to get them to swallow the numbers,” Chamberlain acknowledged, “because they are huge. But I can’t do anything about that.”

CMS needs both to upgrade old facilities and try to catch up with growth, he said. “We grow more every year than the median-sized school district.”

Key goals of the long-range plan, he said, are:

- Build seats for 55,000 students.
- Replace 40% of mobile units.
- Renovate 47 existing schools.
- Replace major building systems when due.
- Provide adequate support facilities.
- Maintain a fund for meeting legal mandates and unexpected contingencies.

An example of contingencies is the following story. A rural route postal worker test-driving a new Taurus in the Crown Point Elementary parking lot tried to drive the vehicle from the passen-

ger seat, lost control and slammed into the building. Insurance covered the loss, but inspectors examining the hole discovered that the 1993 building lacked earthquake protection. Fixing the problem over a recent summer cost \$3 million.

The district must continue to juggle the upgrading of an “aging infrastructure” of schools built for the post-WW II baby boom, with new construction to serve “rampant growth” in suburban areas.

The good news, Chamberlain said, is that earlier bond referenda have provided the funds to meet renovation needs across the county. Future needs in the center city will drop (chart, Page 3). The overall 10-year need, he said, is about 25% for renovation, 65% for growth and 10% for service and support facilities.

“I would advocate that we at least maintain that balance in a bond referendum,” Chamberlain said. The inconveniences and academic losses paid by children at inadequate schools are different but just as substantive as those paid by children at overcrowded schools, Chamberlain said. “The kids at [unrenovated] Sedgfield [Middle] are just as bad off as the kids at [overcrowded] Bradley.”

On other matters:

– CMS asked private vendors to suggest what it would cost them to maintain the district’s 150-plus school sites. The answer was \$6.50 per square foot. CMS now spends only about \$3.50. The difference is not just because the district is more efficient. “It’s low because that’s all I have,”

Chamberlain said. Deferred maintenance was a factor in turning older buildings into sites needing total replacement during construction work in the last decade.

– Paperwork for purchase of 100 mobile classrooms for installation this summer is now in the works, and an order for 30 more will follow shortly.

– Capital needs assessments used to promise to bring all schools up to current standards. That list now includes 70 campuses. The current assessment is

designed to fix up only 47. Work would be delayed at 1980s schools that are in good physical condition but lack, for example, the tutorial rooms now designed into school hallways. Another example, he said, is the single-serving-line cafeteria, which requires longer lunch times than the double-line cafeterias built under current standards. The list of 47 would address key academic issues, as at Cochrane Middle, a science magnet that has inadequate science labs.

– The bus fleet and student enrollment have both doubled since the last maintenance facility was opened. Supply facilities in the north and south will pay for themselves in two years by cutting technicians’ travel time, he said.

– CMS owns only 10 sites for the 47 schools and other facilities

Continued on Page 3

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**People:** Lucy Bush Carter, vice president; Steve Johnston, executive director and *Educate!* editor. Assisting with this edition: Stephanie Southworth.

## CMS construction

Continued from Page 2

projected in the 10-year plan. “I can’t wait 10 years” to buy land, he said, “because if we wait it won’t be there and it will be more expensive.”

– Chamberlain defended the installation of artificial-turf stadium fields, saying they were both more cost-effective over time and allowed more sports and other activities to use the installations throughout the school year.

– School board policies set enrollment capacities for new schools: 2,000 for high schools, 1,200 for middle schools, 800 for elementaries. Delaying new buildings in growth areas then forces mobiles on to playing fields. North Meck High – “we have a nightmare up there” – dates from the 1950s and was built not for 2,000 but 1,000. This fall’s enrollment is projected at 3,000, with relief from new Mallard Creek High two years away. Meanwhile, national debate rages over the academic benefits of 500-seat high schools. “Do we build 3,000-student high schools?” mused Chamberlain. “I don’t think we want to do that.”

At the Tuesday forum, Bond Oversight Committee chairman Norm Gundel offered that suburban construction would ease the overcrowding at suburban schools that had limited central-city parents’ transfer choices.

District 2 school board member Vilma Leake, who was in the audience, thanked Chamberlain for “accurate information.” “My question,” she said, “is when do we talk about student achievement? That is the least talked about issue wherever we go.”

Commented Bond Oversight Committee member Fred Warren, “People are so polarized. They think in terms of what they need rather than what the community needs.... We’d be better served if we thought in terms of community and got out of that NIMBY – not in my back yard – mentality.”



## Capital spending by area, in millions

	North	East	South	West	Central
1985-2004	\$400.3	\$337.0	\$443.0	\$184.6	\$480.3
Next decade	472.5	460.5	310.8	368.9	214.2



Assistant Supt. Guy Chamberlain at April 12 school board meeting

## Chamberlain on...

*On whether rating agencies will downgrade the county’s bond rating because of new bond issues:*

“They’re not flinching at a \$3 billion need over the next 10 years, and two-thirds of that is for schools.”

*On results of lack of construction dollars:*

“We’re going to be pushing 900 mobiles when school opens this fall.”

*On county Parks & Recreation, which chips in to turn schools into joint-use projects for public use:*

“The relationship is probably the best relationship of any two government agencies in Charlotte.”

*On the likelihood CMS will obtain impact fees on new construction to supplement bond debt, the district’s primary source of money to build new schools:*

“The development community is very strong, and I don’t think we’re going to see impact fees.”

*On school board’s current search for a new student assignment policy:*

“The challenge is that nine of them can’t get on the same page right now.”

*On prospects for relief from an N.C. lottery:*

“... it will be like a small pad of butter spread over a great big piece of toast.”

*On calls for review of the “base-*

*line standards” governing sizes and quality of schoolhouses, to cut budget for 10-year capital needs:*

“I can make the building cheaper, or we can start hacking space to the detriment of the kids. That’s not a legacy I want to leave, but it may be a fiscal necessity.”

*On why he doesn’t recommend CMS build modular schools, even though many charter schools start out in them:*

“The schools I build today need to last 50 years because the community can’t afford to go back and rebuild them.”

*On resegregation:*

“It’s only a matter of time before we are back to 1970, and [civil rights lawyer] Julius Chambers is going to be back [in court] in Raleigh or Richmond.”

*On what will be cut from list of school facilities needing renovation or building over the next 10 years if the community does not approve funding:*

“Maybe anything could be cut.... The reality is that some whole renovations won’t be addressed, and some whole schools won’t be addressed.”

*On the possibility of installing fair-weather hospitality tents to supplement overtaxed cafeterias:*

“We’re not going to do that. The superintendent asked to look at everything. No tents. My wife said the same thing.”

## Where to from here?

Continued from Page 1

school board will deliberately craft assignment boundaries that separate neighborhoods by race and economics?

How else to explain why the board holds its collective nose when it asks for the money it knows it needs to educate all children? One board member insists there weren't even five votes for the annual budget when the April 12 board meeting began.

Pughsley's departure after school lets out for the year will likely bring an interim manager or managers. Such times can be healing times for communities, can help bridge differences, resolve disputes, encourage consensus.

### The interimcy

Since CMS was formed in 1960 out of the former Charlotte city and Mecklenburg county school districts, most interimcies have lasted about a year.

In a number of cases, including Dr. A. Craig Phillips in 1962, Dr. William C. Self in 1967, Dr. Rolland W. Jones in 1972 and Dr. Pughsley in 2002, superintendents were brought in from nearby or rose through the CMS ranks and there was no interim.

Interim CMS managements have included from one to four people. State law places the decision in the hands of the local school board. The board meets next Tuesday.

Pughsley began his superintendency in June 2002, but had joined the district in 1996. In his comments Tuesday, he referred to his "nine-year tenure in CMS."

Tuesday's announcement brought a variety of reactions.

"The Board succeeded. They ran him out of town," one wag responded.

Or should it be said, the community ran him out of town?

Indeed, earlier in April, after a community gathering, when it was suggested that most folks would quit in disgust if they, like

## Tracking segregation under the schoolhouse roof

*Federico Echenique and Roland G. Fryer, Jr. in "On the Measurement of Segregation," published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The paper argues for a new research tool called the Spectral Segregation Index:*

"We also apply the SSI to the measurement of within-school segregation patterns, using data on friendship networks available in the National Adolescent Study of Health (Addhealth). Our analysis uncovers many new facts.

"First, the common practice of using the percentage of black students in a school as a substitute for within-school segregation measures, is a poor proxy for actual social interactions. When black students are relatively scarce in a school, they tend to be integrated. As their share of the student population increases, segregation increases dramatically, hitting a ceiling when blacks comprise roughly 20% of the student population. Schools that have 20% or more black students exhibit severe within-school racial segregation.

"Second, we correlate individual-level segregation with several traits. More segregated Black students are less likely to smoke (a behavior predominant among white teens) and have lower vocabulary test scores. More segregated Asians are less likely to skip school, they have higher vocabulary test scores, put in more effort, and report being happier. Among Hispanics, more segregation is associated with less smoking, lower vocabulary test scores, lower probability of attending college, and lower grades. Students of all races are less likely to date interracially when schools are more segregated."

– Download the full copyrighted report from <http://papers.nber.org/papers/W11258>

Pughsley, faced the prospect of another school board deciding to assign students in such a way as to ensure segregated schools, Pughsley responded, "Let me just say I keep my options open."

In his announcement, Pughsley said he would stay in Charlotte but become associated with the Stupski Foundation, a California-based operation that consults with public school districts to improve student achievement. The foundation's executive director is a former vice chairman of BankAmerica Corporation.

### Promises, promises

An old codger came by the *Educate!* office this week recalling the days, decades ago at a silk-stocking CMS school, when the school was desegregated but all classes were either white or black, and when white teachers were so busy teaching white children their supplemental courses that

black teachers were assigned to black language arts classes – whether or not the teachers were trained to teach language arts.

As a community, there may have been a time when we said, That is not acceptable.

But today the community is, overall, indifferent to the third of CMS schools that have been re-segregated by race and economics, that do not draw or retain experienced teachers, that depend on inexperienced teachers with hearts of gold but little in the way of training or experience.

Indifferent as well to a budget that fails to provide all the extra resources promised those schools when the re-segregative assignment plan was adopted in 2001.

This summer, the community will likely shrug as CMS reports its failures to meet many of its 2005 academic goals. End-of-grade test scores may not only fall

Continued on Page 5

## Where to from here?

Continued from Page 4

below the 95% targets, but achievement gaps will continue to be huge.

The community will likely blame the school board – or Pughsley.

Yet, as Walt Kelly's comic character Pogo said in 1971, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

### The work at hand

Most of the matters on Pughsley's agenda will be dealt with in the next months.

Some portion of the assignment plan overhaul is required by the opening of new schools.

The county won't fund the schools' full annual budget, and the interim administration and board will spend weeks or months cutting away, as the state does the same (box at right).

A bond issue will be offered, and probably approved, because it will promise a working majority of voters some relief from the suburban overcrowding resulting from earlier refusals to invest in the community's children.

The task force will pursue its narrow and useful agenda of making CMS budgeting and communication more modern, rational and transparent.

And of course the county will elect a new school board. How divisive, argumentative and dysfunctional it turns out to be will be determined by voters.

### The larger issues

The community can tackle the big issues of fear and indifference – or not – as it chooses. But neither can be tackled without sacrifice. And since the discussion is about schools, that means that children must be enlisted in the effort. Privileged parents don't seem inclined, but underprivileged parents don't have a choice.

How does a community learn to stop acting out of fear? How does a sprawling community like Mecklenburg draw close enough to overcome its indifference?

## DidYaHear?

✓ Tom Davis of the North Meck High School Leadership Team sent board members a paper April 12 arguing that SLTs, which write a state-mandated School Improvement Plan each fall, should be asked to perform a "gap analysis" each January to identify the resources needed in the following year's budget to implement the SIP. At North Meck, Davis wrote, action plans are being written, but they "require dollars for accomplishment; yet have not been included in the current CMS Budget [or] in the formalized Balanced Scorecard approach to accountability."

✓ The Wake County school board's assignment changes earlier this month involved enrollment caps at four elementaries. Enrollments were capped at from 509 to 905, depending on the site, with from one to three elementaries serving as overflow sites. District communications said a "cap means families who move in after May 1 will be required to attend schools that are farther away until space opens up for them."

✓ The talk may be about lots of new lottery money for education, but the action in Raleigh is about budget cuts. CMS has been told to brace for a 4% cut for next fiscal year. And on Monday, the legislature's Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Education issued a draft of its "preliminary joint money report." Insiders will be familiar with the nibbling ways of legislators whenever the budget is out of whack. But voters might be intrigued. Among the amounts and targets: \$10.4 million next year by paying for one seventh-grade teacher per 22 students rather than 21 students; \$13 million by paying for one vocational education teacher per 90.5 students rather than 95 students; slicing driver's ed funds to \$235.45 per ninth-grader, from the current \$245.55. The plan swipes \$33 million in sales tax that now goes to districts, and \$10 million in corporate tax receipts – then in effect gives it back by eliminating \$44 million that was cut from next year's budget by last year's legislature. Confused yet? One thing may be clear: The honorables don't want to mess with Leandro judge Howard Manning, but aren't ponying up money to fix state school problems, either. The plan calls for continuing a 16-district, \$22.5 million pilot for disadvantaged students, but doesn't appear to tackle additional annual needs estimated in court at \$225 million a year.

– Send intelligence to [swannfello@aol.com](mailto:swannfello@aol.com)

Are there institutions with the universal respect to lead, to set a new expectation, to set an example for both employees and customers? Is there a company in town determined to respect the worth of every one of its employees enough to ensure that not a single employee's child grows up in poverty?

Can the school board act in kind and stop selling its best educations to the highest bidder? Today's assignment plan does just that: To the family with the income to pick up stakes and buy

a house in a new assignment zone, it offers the reward of a coveted, valuable asset – a guaranteed seat at a high-performing school.

Can pastors ease off preaching about Hell in the next life long enough to offer counsel on how to reform the hell we've created in this life?

Are there individuals with such universal respect that their voices could help coalesce the community around action?

And, if so, will they step forward?

## Briefly...

**First call:** A New Jersey school may be the first to give emergency transmitters to teachers and support staff, the Star-Ledger of Newark reported. The device allows teachers to push a button to call for emergency help for medical as well as security emergencies from the security guards and the central office.

[www.nj.com](http://www.nj.com)

### Achievement growth slows:

A study conducted by the Northwest Evaluation Association, a test development company, found that students' test-score growth has slowed since No Child Left Behind was enacted, the New York Times reported. One possible reason is that teachers feel the need to spend their time with children who are near proficiency to help them pass the tests and are not spending as much time with other students.

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

**Recruiting op:** Chicago schools are being forced to raise class sizes due to budget cuts, the Chicago Tribune reported. The cuts will eliminate 800 teaching positions as well as 250 administrative jobs. School principals are concerned and may have to cut vocational and advanced placement classes in order to have a teacher in every classroom.

[www.chicagotribune.com](http://www.chicagotribune.com)

**Unintended use:** The nation's first federally funded voucher program is off to a rocky start, the Boston Globe told its readers. The program, located in Washington, D.C., is designed to help students from low-performing schools attain a better education by using vouchers for private school tuition. Only 4% of the applications received, however, came from schools labeled in need of improvement. The majority of the applications came from students

## Reforming instruction means taking some heat

*From "Anatomy of School System Improvement: Performance-Driven Practices in Urban School Districts," based on interviews with senior staff in 28 districts about barriers and needs as districts move to use test-score data to drive improvement in instruction:*

"The difficulties associated with creating a culture of inquiry and improvement were described by several of the study's participants."

"The hardest challenge is to get people in a new mindset. Anybody in the helping profession has a hard time thinking analytically about their work," said one superintendent. "What you know at the end of the day after working hard is that you helped your clients. But it doesn't lead you to think about whether it was the best way to help your clients."

"This speaks not only to the difficulties in promoting this type of change, but also to the type of barriers that are likely to be encountered. Several of the participants discussed the need to be 'thick-skinned' and willing to take the unpopular risks to put performance-driven practices in place.

"Said one superintendent, 'Anyone who embarks on large-scale school reform who expects it to be done without agitation is deceiving themselves. If you don't have the agitation, then you know you aren't making much progress.'"

– Download the full copyrighted report from

[www.newschools.org/viewpoints/documents/District\\_Performance\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.newschools.org/viewpoints/documents/District_Performance_Practices.pdf)

already enrolled in private schools. A spokeswoman for D.C. Public Schools stated, "That's one of the tragedies of vouchers – that private school students use public money to fund private education."

[www.bostonglobe.com](http://www.bostonglobe.com)

**Bullying and TV:** A study conducted by the University of Washington's School of Public Health found that the risk of a child being a bully in school increased 9% for every hour of television the child watched at age 4. The Seattle Times reported that children who are designated as bullies in school watched about five hours of TV per day.

[www.seattletimes.com](http://www.seattletimes.com)

## Calendar

### APRIL

**21** School board's Personnel Committee, 2 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.  
**21** School board's Finance, Capital

& Facilities Committee, 2 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.  
**26** School board's Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.  
**26** School board meets, 6 p.m., Government Center.  
**28** Diversity Summit at Berry Academy for 200 students from all CMS high schools. Sponsor: NCCJ. Co-hosted by Berry, Myers Park High. Info: NCCJ at 704-334-0053.  
**28** Betsy Leondar-Wright, author of "Class Matters: Cross-Class Alliance Building for Middle-Class Activists," 7 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 234 N. Sharon Amity Rd., free. Sponsor: Mecklenburg Ministries.  
**28** "Building Common Ground: Claiming Your Child's Right to a Sound Basic Education," 6:45 p.m., Durham Main Library. Sponsors: N.C. Community Advocates for Revitalizing Education; N.C. Child Advocacy Institute; N.C. Justice Center.