

For momentum's sake at CMS

Board closes deal with Pughsley, thwarts leaks, taps Haithcock as leader

Moving quickly, even nimbly, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education this week cleared away some of the short-term uncertainty in the wake of Supt. Jim Pughsley's retirement.

Board chair Joe White led the board through final details of

Pughsley's separation agreement, arguing that prospective successors nationwide were watching to see if the board treated its departing chief fairly.

Invoking momentum, he all but promised for next Tuesday's board meeting a negotiated contract with interim Supt.-designee Frances Haithcock, ending speculation on who would lead the state's largest school district.

In a display of political savvy, White used one-on-one conversa-



Haithcock

tions quite within legal parameters to bring the board to consensus on Haithcock. The strategy may have snubbed the spirit of the state's open meetings law, but it

prevented further disclosures of private discussions on the subject. Left to another day was how to deal long-term with renegade board member Larry Gauvreau, who wants to dismantle CMS and has promised to disclose details of the board's closed-door sessions at his own discretion.

Finally, White sought to reassure staff and parents that, despite controversy and staff changes, "everything is going to be all right in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools."

A new leader

White said Haithcock was his personal choice to serve as interim superintendent for the next year. Not all board members shared his enthusiasm for the veteran educator.

And the choice of a person without a long record of wooing a reluctant public could signal that the veteran politician and "old coach" leading the school board may devote even more time during the next year representing the district to the public.

In the days leading up to the announcement, board member Larry Gauvreau broke the seal on the board's closed-door discussions and said Haithcock, regional superintendent Ann Clark and deputy superintendent Greg Clemmer were under consideration.

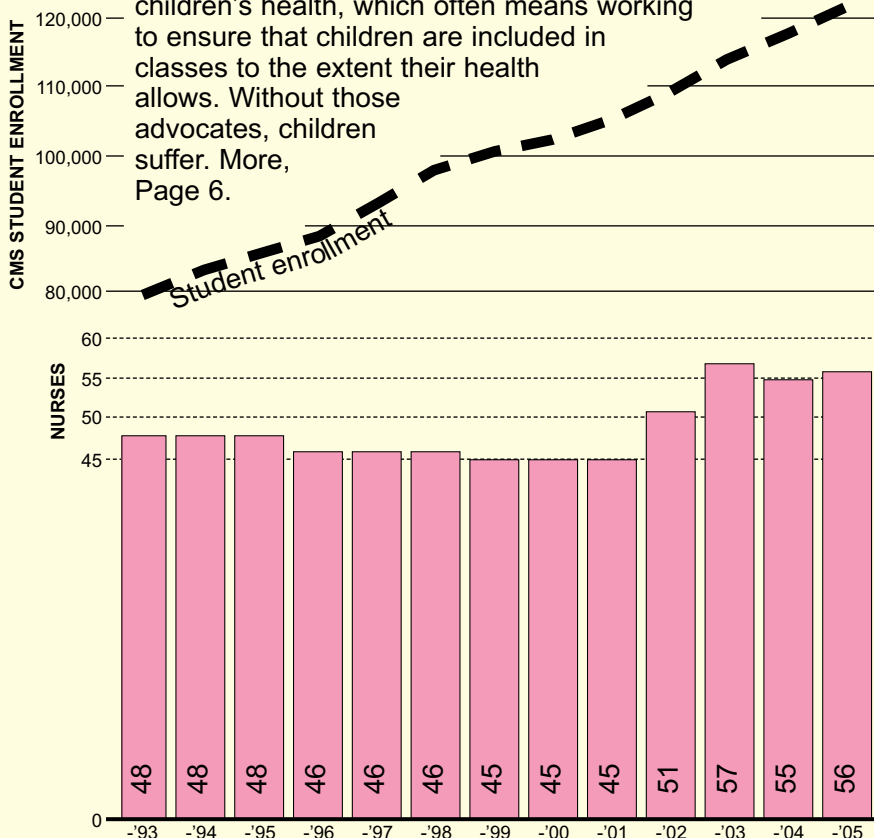
Clemmer, 56, has been in the

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School nurses: How could they possibly keep up?

In the 13 years that CMS enrollment has grown by 50%, the number of school nurses has barely changed, and funding has been flat.

Nurses' key role is not dispenser of medications: It is advocacy of children's health, which often means working to ensure that children are included in classes to the extent their health allows. Without those advocates, children suffer. More, Page 6.



Source: CMS

The Make It Happen Campaign

Q: What is *Educate's* fund-raising goal?

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Letters

Did we listen to expert?

Am I the only one who appreciates the irony in Pughley becoming an "expert" similar to the ones that some CMS Board of Education members want to hire to advise them on issues?

They have not been listening to him all this time, but suddenly if you hire an "expert" and pay for advice, then they are a better

board for spending money they desperately need for construction, etc.

Isn't that price perceived value as defined by marketing academe? Who do they think the "experts" are?

Name Withheld

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CHAPTER

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Momentum

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district 35 years, but this week announced that he would retire Oct. 31. An insider said the job offers started coming his way as soon as Pughsley announced his retirement. A CMS press release said Clemmer “has several career opportunities that he will be pursuing.”

As associate superintendent for education services, Haithcock has served as chief academic officer. The role has not put her in the public eye often. While she regularly attended board meetings – as did all of Pughsley’s senior staff – she was not often a public speaker.

Haithcock entered the district five years ago, brought in from Florida by then-Supt. Eric Smith to help install a systemwide program aimed at improving test scores of low-performing readers.

With what some call brutal efficiency, the Open Court program was imposed on a teacher corps accustomed to having more autonomy in the classroom than the new “managed instruction” program would allow. Scores went up; so did teacher turnover.

A similar systemwide overhaul of the district’s science curriculum now underway reportedly de-emphasizes hands-on science exploration for textbook instruction. The move has caused similar divisions among teachers and parents. Some of those involved saw Haithcock’s role in the process as an enforcer, not as a consensus-builder.

Tuesday night in front of a bank of television cameras, however, Haithcock praised teachers and said she thought CMS could succeed as an achievement-centered urban school district.

Haithcock said she had served in “almost every job” in Broward County Schools in Florida, including teacher, guidance counselor, assistant principal and principal. She spent 22 years at the high school level and then was “demoted to central office,” where she

N.C. may press districts for parent involvement

Excerpts from a proposed State Board of Education policy on parent and family involvement, scheduled for adoption at the board’s June meeting:

“Local school districts, in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, students, and administrators must establish and develop efforts that enhance parental involvement and reflect the needs of students, parents/guardians and families in the communities they serve. In order to enhance parental involvement, schools should promote the following essential elements:

- **Communication.** Facilitate regular, two-way, and meaningful communication between home and school. (Communication should be in a format that parents/guardians understand.)
- **Parenting.** Promote and support responsible parenting.
- **Student Learning.** Inform and involve parents and caregivers in children’s learning activities so that they may play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- **Volunteering.** Ensure that parents/guardians are welcome in the school and seek their support and assistance in a variety of ways.
- **Advocacy and Decision-Making.** Include parents/guardians as full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- **Training.** Assess the parents’ informational needs and provide parent training based upon those needs.
- **Community Collaboration.** Collaborate with community agencies and other organizations to provide resources to strengthen school programs, families, and student learning.
- **Student Health.** Promote health awareness among parents/guardians by addressing the need for health programs and student health services, which are linked to student learning.”

The policy also backs the addition of “professional development opportunities for school personnel to enhance understanding of effective parent involvement strategies and to develop and implement practices that involve parents/families in a meaningful way in the education of their children.”

– www.dpi.state.nc.us

ended up serving as what CMS would call a regional superintendent, responsible for 70 schools.

But the native North Carolinian, born between Concord and Kannapolis, relished the idea of moving to CMS. “I came home.... I love the people and know the people and this is the perfect time to have a career back where my roots are,” she said of the move to Charlotte.

She said people had asked her this week if it would be easy or hard to accept the interim superintendent job if it were offered. She said she replied that it would

be “an easy decision for me.”

From her first public speech in Charlotte to a Chamber of Commerce group, she said she had believed that “this was the district” among all other big urban districts that was capable of excelling. “I still believe this 1000%.”

“We are respected across the country. We haven’t perfected being a prophet in our own land.”

During the next year, she said, it would be “a personal loss if we didn’t keep the pace and continue the improvement.”

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Haithcock said she had “never seen teachers of the quality we have in this district.”

She acknowledged the “opportunity to have great models” of educational leadership. Former CMS (and Cabarrus schools) Supt. Jay Robinson “happened to be my trig teacher and I was his baby-sitter.”

And she called Pughsley “the most ethical and most focused superintendent that anyone would have an opportunity to work with.”

She said her goal for the year would be “to stay the course but push that student achievement.

“I know that we have the conditions to move this district forward.”

Haithcock was asked if she would be a candidate for permanent superintendent. Her response appeared to take her out of contention. She said she was “interested only in getting us through this year.”

Asked if she thought she would work for the next superintendent, Haithcock said it would depend on “who it was and who I was” when that time came.

Asked her age, she replied: “Sixty-two, and I hate you asked that.”

Haithcock is the first woman to serve as interim superintendent, but not the first woman to have a role in a CMS interimcy. In 1976, following the firing of Supt. Rolland Jones, Jo Graham Foster and Elizabeth Randolph joined John Phillips and Chris Folk in a one-year interim management team.

Wednesday afternoon, Charlotte Advocates for Education issued a statement pledging “united support” for Haithcock during her interimcy. The statement was issued on behalf of CAE, the Charlotte Chamber, the Education Budget Advisory Committee appointed by the school board and county commis-

sioners, the PTA Council, Community Building Initiative and the Community Relations Committee. The statement quoted Chamber President Carroll Gray as saying: “The way we conduct our business through this transition will substantially impact our ability to recruit the type of high quality superintendent that Charlotte needs and deserves.”

Quick reassurance

White defended moving “as quickly as we could” on Haithcock’s appointment by saying it was important to “try to ease the anxieties of our employees” who were seeking stability.

“You can relax,” White said, “and continue to focus your energies on educating children in your school.”

“This is a one-year job,” White said of the position offered Haithcock.

White said he was “extremely excited” that Haithcock “at least agreed to negotiate with us.

“Anytime you transition it’s a tough time.” He thanked her for stepping up to the leadership challenge.

White sidestepped a reporter’s question about whether Haithcock’s selection had unanimous board support.

Questioned by reporters about how decisions were made on the interim superintendency, White acknowledged that “a lot of the way I’ve operated over the last week” was in response to Gauvreau’s decision to release information out of closed-door sessions of the board.

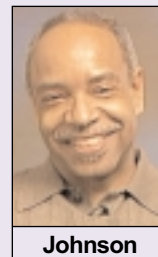
How the board conducts itself during the upcoming search will determine “who we will get to come to the table.

“The nation is looking at CMS and people are not going to want to come to a place that they think our integrity has been compromised.”

Normally, a school board would discuss candidates in closed session, ensuring candidates anonymity at least during initial

DidYaHear?

✓ Speaking of publishers influencing news, which of course we wouldn’t, there was a nice story recently about the Charlotte Advocates for Education parent training effort in the Charlotte Post. Post Publisher Gerald Johnson chairs the Advocates board. The story is at <http://thecharlottepost.com/newscae.html>



Johnson

– Send intelligence to swannfello@aol.com

phases of a superintendent search. “They don’t want their names spread all over their hometown newspapers,” White said.

If board members are willing to break that confidentiality, “then there’s no use to operating in closed session,” White said.

“We absolutely have to find a way to get beyond that.”

The Charlotte Observer quoted board member Vilma Leake as saying “the board is continuing to research the question and hopes to find a way to take a stand against Gauvreau’s actions next week.”

As board counsel Maurice Green looked on, White told reporters Tuesday, “I don’t think this board has any authority to discipline any other member of this board.”

The board met in closed session for 9 minutes Tuesday night to authorize White and board attorney Maurice Green to negotiate a contract with Haithcock.

But to bring the board to that point, White acknowledged there were no meetings. He said he “never met with any more than one person at a time.”

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Conducting a confidential national search for a superintendent under similar circumstances would be a challenge.

Exit strategy

A board divided 7-2 pushed through its separation agreement with Pughsley Tuesday. White appeared determined to close all issues with the retiring superintendent so the board could move on to setting up the national search for a successor that it has promised.

The primary discussion Tuesday in public session dealt with a \$25,000 performance bonus for the year now ending.

White indicated the amount was a compromise among board members, with some wanting to give more, some less.

Board member Kaye McGarry sought to delay the decision on a bonus, arguing that test scores weren't yet available on which to base a performance appraisal. Her motion to delay was defeated 7-2.

Gauvreau sought to eliminate the bonus, arguing that Pughsley didn't deserve it. His motion was defeated 7-2, then the overall agreement approved 7-2, with McGarry and Gauvreau voting no.

Pughsley had no comment on the separation agreement and departed from the board session before the Haithcock decision was announced.

Gender differences from Day One of life

Larry Cahille in "His Brain, Her Brain," in *Scientific American*:

"Many researchers have described disparities in how 'people-centered' male and female infants are.... Of course, these preferences might be attributable to differences in the way adults handle or play with boys and girls. To eliminate this possibility, [Simon] Baron-Cohen and his students [at the University of Cambridge] went a step further.

"They took their video camera to a maternity ward to examine the preferences of babies that were only one day old. The infants saw either the friendly face of a live female student or a mobile that matched the color, size and shape of the student's face and included a scrambled mix of her facial features. To avoid any bias, the experimenters were unaware of each baby's sex during testing.

"When they watched the tapes, they found that the girls spent more time looking at the student, whereas the boys spent more time looking at the mechanical object. This difference in social interest was evident on day one of life – implying again that we come out of the womb with some cognitive sex differences built in."

– www.sciam.com/print_version.cfm?articleID=000363E3-1806-1264-980683414B7F0000

Later in discussion with reporters, White acknowledged that McGarry had a "very valid" point, but added, "We could drag it on and on and on...."

"My goal was to say to Dr. Pughsley, you've been doing a great job" and that "based on your good service and where we think we're going to be" the performance bonus is warranted.

"What we've really got to do is move into that national search for a superintendent."

Pughsley, he said "has operated this school system in a very professional manner and moved us forward under the most adverse circumstances."

Imagine, White said, being a

superintendent not only "under fire from people in the community, but where there are those on your board who have the express goal of destroying what you are trying to run."

Test scores, he claimed "are not going to be bad...we have not lost ground." Key high school end-of-course tests will be administered next month.

White said he was satisfied that the separation agreement allowed Pughsley latitude to do consulting after leaving the district, while protecting CMS's patents and rights to programs and "intellectual property." He characterized questions raised over the issue as "pole vaulting over an anthill."

School nurses: There's no clearer children's issue

Half the nation's school districts have achieved a key health-care goal: Ensuring that there is at least one school nurse per 750 students.

World-class wannabe Mecklenburg County now stands at one nurse per 2,171 students.

Achieving the goal will take 100 additional nurses, about \$6 million a year. And yet, there is absolutely no movement toward reaching the goal or setting aside the \$6 million.

That's the upshot of one part of a recent "summit" between school board members and county commissioners. There was polite talk and widespread agreement on the goal. But no money.

Few issues facing Charlotte-Mecklenburg have a more direct impact on children's ability to learn.

It's not just that kids can't concentrate when they are sick.

Marie Bonaiuto, director of school health for the county's health department, says dispensing medications and issuing Band-Aids is "are the least" of the tasks school nurses perform.

The key role, Bonaiuto says, is being an advocate for children with health issues.

Children with asthma can participate in physical education if their conditions are taken into consideration. They need not be banished to study hall. When there are school nurses looking out for such children, they are included.

Another side benefit, according to a study cited by Bonaiuto: When nurses are at schools, early dismissals of children complaining about not feeling well drop by about 20%. After talking to a nurse about how they're feeling, many children "feel better and stay in school."

The county provides all funding for school nurses. Money is funneled through the health department; nurses are provided by Carolinas Medical Center. Bonaiuto says that relationship

works well, and puts the nursing corps under proper medical supervision.

Last August, N.C. Gov. Mike Easley released money for 145 school nurses statewide. By legislative formula, money went to districts where, with just one more nurse, the district would meet the national one nurse to 750 student standard. But focusing its resources, the state went from 10 districts to 24 districts statewide meeting the standard. Most of the money went to hard-strapped Eastern North Carolina. None of it came to Mecklenburg.

"They think we're too big and too rich," Bonaiuto says.

In February, the News & Observer reported that Easley

had suggested spending \$10.6 million to place in the field 100 nurse-and-social worker teams focusing on at-risk children.

"Mecklenburg might get one pair," Bonaiuto said this week.

If state and local resources won't move Mecklenburg towards resolution of a key children's issue, what's to be done?

Bonaiuto says the United Agenda for Children and the Children's Alliance are "listening." But there is opportunity for sponsorships by businesses, or health care organizations, philanthropic groups, even churches.

And whenever she gets a chance, Bonaiuto inserts in any pending grant application a plea for a single nursing position.

Don't blame parents for rise in ADHD treatment

Dr. Darshak Sanghavi, a clinical fellow at Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, in the Boston Globe:

"... some critics think increased diagnosis of ADHD [attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder] is society's fault. In his book 'Ritalin Nation,' Richard DeGrandpre blames the uptick in diagnoses on our 'rapid-fire culture.' Blaming the 'authority of American psychiatry,' DeGrandpre assails modern culture for allowing kids to become 'addicted' to sensory stimulation and encourages parents to slow their own lives and spend time with their kids.

"This is a noble idea, but has a curious blame-the-parents subtext that doesn't jibe with the data.

"While behavioral therapy and greater adult involvement have great appeal for treating ADHD, they're less effective than drugs. In a major 1999 National Institute of Mental Health-sponsored project, children getting 35 behavioral therapy sessions, an in-class teaching aide, a summer treatment program, and specialized teacher and parent counseling didn't do much better than another group of children who didn't get such intensive therapy. But a third group on medication did much better, and adding behavioral interventions for children taking the drugs provided some modest benefit.

"In the end, we should stop blaming parents, teachers, and pediatricians for diagnosing ADHD. As Malcolm Gladwell wrote in *The New Yorker*, the world mourned by critics like DeGrandpre was 'a ruthlessly Darwinian place' where kids with "neurological quirks" were simply allowed to fail."

— www.boston.com

Briefly...

No gap relief: A University of Chicago economist, Derek Neal, found that the black-white achievement gap nationwide has remained stable since 1990. The Chicago Sun-times reported that the test score gap in urban areas actually increased. Neal cited increased incarceration rates for black males and lower employment and wages rates for low-skilled workers as possible explanations for the gap.

www.suntimes.com

Aiming higher: Los Angeles Unified school district leaders are proposing that all high school students be required to take the courses required for California college admission, the Los Angeles Times reported. The proposal is aimed at increasing graduation rates and the number of students who attend college. Introduction of a mandatory college prep program in San Jose increased graduation rates from 73% to 79%.

www.latimes.com

Wasted time?: Educators and parents of special education students want their children to learn basic skills but are instead spending hours struggling to pass alternate end-of-grade tests required by No Child Left Behind. The Washington Post reported that teachers spend up to 100 hours over months to complete the administration of the test – time that could otherwise be spent teaching children to feed themselves.

www.washingtonpost.com

Housing and school quality: Housing prices in a city can differ by as much as \$70,000 depending on the quality of the neighborhood schools, the Christian Science Monitor reported. With Internet tools, parents are comparing test data for schools in different areas. At Homestore.com, a popular site for home buyers, school scores are the second most

Raising family income and student achievement

Gordon Dahl of the University of Rochester and Lance Lochner of the University of Western Ontario in "The Impact of Family Income on Child Achievement," a study published last month on test scores among children whose families saw their income rise because of the Earned Income Tax Credit:

"Our results indicate that current income has significant effects on a child's math and reading test scores. Our estimates imply that a \$1,000 increase in income raises math test scores by 2.1% and reading test scores by 3.6% of a standard deviation.

"For children growing up in poor families, extra income does appear to have a positive causal effect. While our estimated effects are modest, they are also encouraging. They imply that the maximum EITC credit of approximately \$4,000 increases the math scores of affected children by one-twelfth of a standard deviation and reading scores by nearly one-sixth of a standard deviation.

"Based on previous estimates of the effects of test scores on subsequent earnings, our results suggest that the EITC raises the future earnings of affected children by as much as 1-2%."

– Download study at http://troi.cc.rochester.edu/~dahl/Gordon%20Dahl_files/Research.htm

popular feature, right after the actual home listings.

www.csmonitor.com

Recruiting op I: Hundreds of Indiana teachers have received pink slips in the last two weeks, the Indianapolis Star reported. Districts blame spending cuts at the state level, with one district reportedly putting 350 of its 1,600 teachers on notice they may not have a job in the fall.

www.indystar.com

Recruiting op II: Portland, Ore., schools will cut about 10% of the work force before fall, the Oregonian reported. The 47,500-student district is expecting to lose 400 students, but most of the trims are due to revenue losses, including a local option property tax that expires this summer.

www.oregonlive.com

Teacher control: Denver's teachers union this week approved a new contract after a strike threat and much mediation, the Rocky Mountain News reported. The 3-1 decision by the 60% of teachers in the 4,000-teacher district who voted means

a 6.5% overall compensation increase. But the negotiations have been widely watched nationwide for another reason: The new pact, the News said, "gives teachers more say over professional development, student achievement, instruction and educational reform."

www.insidedenver.com

Calendar

MAY

- 6** Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 9** School board's Policy Committee, 3:15 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 10** School board, 6 p.m., Government Center Meeting Chamber.
- 18** School board's Safety Committee, 3:30 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 19** School board's Personnel Committee, 2 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 19** School board's Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 24** School board's Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.