

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

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Volume 8, Issue 24

December 16, 2005

## **Standard & Poor's Recognizes NC's NAEP Performance**

North Carolina's NAEP performance has been recognized by Standard and Poor's School Evaluation Services' (SES) in a recent analysis of the 2003 and 2005 NAEP reading and math results that considers the demographic challenges states face. Under their analysis, "state's performance is considered to be 'risk-adjusted' in that it accounts for the percentage of 'at-risk' students that are served by a state. As an example, New Hampshire's proficiency rate was double that of New Mexico's, but New Mexico has an at-risk population four times larger than New Hampshire. SES accounts for the size of the at-risk population, and notes that both states are performing similarly on a risk-adjusted basis.

North Carolina's 4th grade math proficiency performance received recognition, as the state was one of 11 states that outperformed the statistical expectations of the nation in fourth and eighth grade. Kentucky, Massachusetts, and New York were recognized for their reading performance across grade levels, and Kansas, Minnesota, and South Carolina were recognized for their math performance across both grade levels.

For a copy of the report, go to [www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com)

### *State News . . .*

## **Charlotte Mecklenburg Task Force Recommends Decentralization; Greater Choice**

A citizen's task force has offered 21 recommendations to improve the governance and management of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). The task force convened in March with the charge of focusing on the structure and governance of the state's largest school system for the decade ahead (see September 30, 2005 *Friday Report*). The first major recommendation calls for dividing the district into three or four autonomous area offices. Each will be led by an area superintendent and an area office that will focus on supervision of teachers and principals, school improvement, curriculum and instruction, and providing services ranging from special education to transportation. The central office's role will focus on providing leadership and the vision for the future, holding schools accountable, and providing equitable resources. The task force calls for the superintendent/CEO to have expanded authority to manage the district.

## Task Force (cont'd)

Another key recommendation calls for the district to intervene in low-performing schools, suggesting that schools considered low-performing for three consecutive years should be “reconstituted and redesigned as new schools.” In contrast, high-performing schools should be granted “charter-like” autonomy. CMS should restructure its large high schools into smaller, thematic high schools and develop alternative venues for schools, including banks, community colleges, *etc.* The task force believes that the K-8 assignment plan should be based upon residence, and the high school plan should focus around school choice: “A paradigm shift is occurring where equity of outcome must replace diversity as a guiding principle for operational decision making. The desire for diversity of a significant number of CMS stakeholders must be addressed, but it must be addressed differently than in the past due to a new set of operating circumstances. In this environment of growth we feel that the best avenue to provide opportunities for diversity is an expanded system of choice schools that are socio-economically balanced by design.”

The final area the task force considered is district governance. They recommend replacing the current model for choosing the school board with one that has a district represented county elected board. In addition, the board should be reduced from nine members to seven members, with one of the members appointed by the county commissioners.

For a copy of the full task force report, go to <http://www.fftc.org/news/taskforce/>

*National News . . .*

## Texas Instant Certification Program Falls Flat

A solution to address the teacher shortage in Texas that would permit districts to certify teachers has failed, reports *The Dallas Morning News*. The state has gained just one certified teacher in the year and a half since officials agreed to let school districts instantly certify college graduates as teachers to ease shortages in certain subject areas, such as math and science, in eighth through 12th grades.

Of the state's 1,037 school districts, only two small districts have been authorized to offer the instant certificate, called the Temporary Teacher Certificate, to individuals who have a college degree in the needed subject area and pass a state competency test.

An estimated 1,640 people have applied for the Temporary Teacher Certificate, but have been denied because they didn't have a job offer from a school district or had not met all the requirements, such as passing the state competency exam for new teachers. "Apparently, most school districts don't want to be responsible for instantly certifying folks as teachers," said Richard Kouri of the Texas State Teachers Association, a group that vigorously opposed the instant certification plan. School district representatives said the requirements for the new program were too burdensome and costly, and that killed interest in the idea.

## Texas (cont'd)

Another reason for the program's failure is that most districts are instead filling vacancies either from the ranks of recent college graduates with teacher training or through alternative certification programs. A big factor is that candidates for alternative certification pay for their training and preparation, while school districts pick up the tab for those entering the instant certification program. This includes mentoring, training and support for the two years the teacher retains the temporary certificate.

According to recent estimates, at least 32,000 of the 300,000 classroom teachers in state schools are not certified in the subjects they teach. The biggest shortages are in math, science, foreign languages, bilingual education, special education, and computer science.

## Report Shows California's Neediest Students Taught By Newest Teachers

California's lowest-performing students attend schools with the least-prepared teachers, according to a new 150-page report, *The Status of the Teaching Profession 2005*, released this week by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Each year the Center documents the characteristics of the state's teacher work force and its distribution among the 6.3 million students in public school.

The good news is that this year's report shows that the number of teachers with emergency or intern credentials has declined significantly. However, the report illustrates a pending crisis on several fronts:

- For the first time, high school seniors must pass a math and English exit exam to graduate, but the report shows that one in four high school math and English teachers are not trained to teach those subjects. The lack of trained teachers is greatest at schools with the lowest pass rate and smallest at schools with high pass rates.
- Sixth-graders in schools with the lowest test scores have a three in 10 chance of having more than one underprepared teacher, while sixth-graders at schools with the highest test scores have a one in 50 chance of being taught by more than one such teacher.
- California's student population is growing, but so are the number of teachers nearing eligibility for retirement. The report says that about 97,000 of the state's 306,000 teachers are over age 50, and the number of new teachers is not keeping pace. The state is expected to face a shortage of tens of thousands of teachers in the coming decade.

## California (cont'd)

Underprepared teachers include interns and teachers with emergency credentials. Unlike student teachers, interns are not supervised by experienced teachers. The report shows that they overwhelmingly work in schools that serve students of color: 85 percent work in schools where at least 60 percent of the students are nonwhite. Under No Child Left Behind, interns can be considered "highly-qualified," but not teachers with emergency credentials. Margaret Gaston, executive director of the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, said she believes teachers in both categories are in need of more training. "These individuals have not yet met the state's requirements for the preliminary credential," she said.

The report includes a list of recommendations, including creating financial incentives for teachers to work in the neediest schools and allowing retired teachers to come back and teach part time. It calls on the state to reinvest in teacher training programs that have lost funding in recent years.

### *Forum News . . .*

## 2005 Local School Finance Study Released Next Week

The 2005 Local School Finance study will be released next Wednesday, December 21 at 9:30 am at a press conference at the Public School Forum office. Copies of the study will be sent to legislators, members of the media, Forum Board members, and others. If you would like to order a copy of the study, go to [http://www.ncforum.org/doclib/publications/lsf\\_order.html](http://www.ncforum.org/doclib/publications/lsf_order.html)

## Happy Holidays

The *Friday Report* will resume publication on January 6, 2006. The Forum offices will be close December 23 and reopen on January 3. Some *Friday Report* readers were kind enough to send it some holiday cartoons to lighten our mood (see below). As recognition of how busy our readers are, we thought we save time in 2006 by giving you a holiday card to use throughout the year.

Have a safe holiday season and a Happy New Year!

It would save me a lot  
of trouble, if you'd put  
this on your frig and  
leave it up all year...





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