

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

PDF versions can be found at [www.ncforum.org](http://www.ncforum.org)

Volume 11, Issue 7

August 15, 2008



*The Public School Forum expresses its sympathy to the family of Leslie Winner, Executive Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, upon the death this week of her mother, Julienne Winner. Donations for Mrs. Julienne Winner may be made to the following: Julienne Winner Fund, UNC-A Foundation, Alumni Development, Owen Hall, CPO 1800, UNC-A, One University Height, Asheville, NC 28804-8507.*

## **New Schools Presents: “Graduation by Design”**

With the statewide high school graduation rate hovering below 70 percent for a third consecutive year, North Carolinians have vital questions to answer.

1. What would a school that graduates ALL students look like?
2. How would teaching and learning be designed to ensure ALL graduates are ready for college, careers and life?
3. Does school design impact dropout rates?

Join educators and leaders from business and government at Graduation by Design: Creating Schools that Prepare All Students for College, Career and Life conference. School designers and educators from North Carolina and around the nation will present the innovative high schools that they are creating and getting promising results.

Among the presenters will be the Asia Society, the Coalition of Essential Schools, Expeditionary Learning, New Tech and several innovative high schools supported by the North Carolina New Schools Project.

Graduation by Design will take place at the [Raleigh Marriott City Center](#) on Thursday, October 9, 2008, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

This important event is being organized by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, the North Carolina Association of Educators, the North Carolina Association of School Administrators, the North Carolina Business Committee for Education, the North Carolina Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Center, the State Board of Education, the Public School Forum of North Carolina, the North Carolina School Boards Association, and the State Chamber with financial support from our sponsor the North Carolina Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Center.

**[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)**

For more information, contact Linsey Dyson by telephone at (919) 277-3774 or by e-mail [ldyson@newschoolsproject.org](mailto:ldyson@newschoolsproject.org).

## Judge Manning Orders the State to Pay Up

Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr. has ordered the state to pay North Carolina's school districts nearly \$748 million for illegally withholding civil fines over the past nine years.

Manning's order, which was entered last Friday, doesn't say where the state will find the money and how long they have to pay it out to the state's 115 school districts. The Judge said any money should be distributed on a per-pupil basis, meaning the more students in a district, the more money it will receive.

Some school leaders fear that the General Assembly will comply with the court order by taking away other education funding rather than providing new money. "There's not another \$700 million out there to pay this without reductions in the education budget," said House Speaker Joe Hackney, D-Orange.

The Judge's ruling stops short of ordering the Legislature or the agencies to place the money in a special fund now earmarked for school technology needs. The Judge said doing so would exceed the judiciary's powers in the state constitution.

### *Guest Editorial...Reprinted with Permission of Chris Fitzsimon*

#### Shrugging off Money for Schools

Published: August 13, 2008

by [Chris Fitzsimon](#)

You would think that the ruling by Superior Court Judge Howard Manning that the state owes school systems almost \$750 million in civil fines collected over nine years would spark some concern among legislative leaders and other state officials.

But House Speaker Joe Hackney and Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand don't seem too worried about it judging from their reaction to Manning's ruling. Hackney says the money will just come out of existing education funds and that everybody assumed that all along.

Rand says there's not much money available anyway given the state's tight financial situation. Governor Mike Easley says figuring out what to do about the ruling is up to the General Assembly. It's only public schools after all, no need for any displays of leadership.

Manning's ruling came in response to a lawsuit filed by several local school systems and the North Carolina School Boards Association ten years ago who argued that the state constitution required that civil fines and penalties go to school systems. The money instead went to the state's General Fund and now Manning says it must be paid back.

Don't hold your breath. The position of Hackney and Rand may be disturbing, but it is not a surprise that they simply assume the money will just come out of existing education funds. That has become the way the General Assembly does business in recent years and this past session is no exception.

## Guest Editorial (cont'd)

The education budget did not include enough money to pay for the annual teacher bonuses as part of the ABC testing program, so local school systems can make up the difference if they are able. But it is more likely that teachers won't get their full bonus.

Same for the rising cost of fuel for school buses. The recent drop in gases prices will help, but even if gas doesn't go back up, the \$45 million in the budget to pay for higher fuel costs may not be enough and local schools will have to find the money for that too.

State lawmakers still have not restored the state sales tax exemption for schools they repealed a few years ago. Schools are still absorbing that \$33 million hit. Lawmakers could and should restore that exemption and consider paying back the \$750 million over the next several years.

But that task won't be easy given the decision to spend \$166 million in one-time money on recurring expenses in this year's budget, creating a hole in 2009, or the approval of \$857 million of new debt without a vote of the people, adding a \$90 million annual bill for debt service starting next year.

Then there is the \$115 million shortfall in the State Health Plan that could be twice that big at the end of the fiscal year. The House tried late in the session to fill the hole with money from the state savings account, but the Senate refused to consider it. Better to put that off to next year and let the next governor and General Assembly deal with it.

And now state leaders are shrugging their shoulders at a judge's ruling that \$750 million has been unconstitutionally withheld from the schools. At least they are consistent in shirking their responsibilities.



### Thumbs Up to Cumberland County Schools

Cumberland County school board members dipped into a reserve fund to provide full bonuses to teachers whose students performed well on standardized tests last year, making up the amount left unfunded by state legislators.

About 80 percent of Cumberland schools met or exceeded state expectations on the end-of-year tests. Teachers at those schools are eligible for bonuses of up to \$1,500. With the reduced legislative funding, however, the maximum bonus will shrink to \$1,053. The board voted to dig into the school system's \$21 million reserve fund and make up the estimated \$1.4 million difference between what lawmakers appropriated and what successful local teachers were promised.

## Teach for America NC Undergoes Leadership Changes

Effective August 1st, Alex Quigley transitioned out of his role as the Executive Director of Teach For America's Eastern North Carolina region, and into a new position on Teach For America's National Alumni Affairs team, as the Managing Director of the Teacher and School Leadership Initiative.

In this new role, Alex will manage a team responsible for supporting the thousands of Teach For America alumni who continue to teach after their two-year commitment, and for enabling at least 800 TFA alumni to become principals by 2010. His team will build relationships with national organizations that offer paths to school leadership and professional development support for classroom teachers. "I believe that channeling more alumni into school leadership, and effectively supporting those alumni who choose to remain in the classroom, are two of the most powerful things our organization can do to ensure that more children in this nation receive the educations they deserve," said Quigley.

Taking Quigley's place as the Executive Director is Erin Swanson Oschwald. Erin is a 2001 graduate of Wake Forest University, where she majored in English. She joined the Teach For America corps in 2002, and taught English at Warren County High School in Warrenton, NC, where she led 93% of her students to pass the End Of Course exam in English. Over the past three years, she has worked as a Program Director and supported over 150 teachers.

## Texas Study Shows Teacher Quality Gap Expected to Grow

A noted education researcher for the Association of Texas Professional Educators states that Texas is headed for big problems if state lawmakers don't fix the serious inequities in teacher quality and experience between rich and poor schools. According to a new study, wealthy, high-performing schools in Texas attract and keep experienced, higher-quality teachers, while schools with large numbers of low-income and minority students are left with less-experienced teachers.

According to the report, schools with high populations of low-income students have twice as many teachers not properly certified to teach math and science as schools in more affluent neighborhoods. In high poverty schools, nearly 20 percent of math teachers and 40 percent of science teachers were assigned to teach courses for which they were not properly certified. "The students most in need of the most qualified teachers are the least likely to be taught by them," says Jerry Bonham, a middle school English teacher in Mesquite.

Approximately 56 percent of the 4.6 million students attending Texas public schools come from low-income families, and the percentage of white children continues to drop; down to 35 percent in 2007-08. Unless state legislators act, the achievement gap and teacher quality gap are expected to grow. "It's going to take extra mentoring, more professional staff development and meaningful incentive pay to improve the teacher quality at low-income, low-performing schools," said Edward Fuller, a professor in the Educational Policy and Planning Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

*Forum News...*

## 2008-2009 Teaching Fellows Scholarship Applications Available for High School Seniors

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission has announced that the 2008-2009 application for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program will be available online at [www.teachingfellows.org](http://www.teachingfellows.org) beginning August 15, 2008.

The deadline for students to return completed applications to a Teaching Fellows Liaison Counselor in a high school is October 17, 2008, by the end of the school day.

Jo Ann Norris, Associate Executive Director for the Public School Forum and Administrator of the Teaching Fellows Program, states, "In order to meet the increasing demand for top quality teachers for North Carolina's public schools, the program was created by the General Assembly in 1986, upon the recommendation of the Public School Forum of North Carolina."

Each Teaching Fellow receives a \$26,000 scholarship/loan from the state, payable in \$6,500 annual increments. The full loan is forgiven after the Fellow has completed four (4) years of teaching in North Carolina's public schools. Dr. John D. Denning, Chair of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission issues a challenge to North Carolina high school seniors. "I encourage high school seniors willing to make dreams come true for future North Carolina students to apply for this one-of-a-kind opportunity."

Additional program information is available online via the Teaching Fellows website at [www.teachingfellows.org](http://www.teachingfellows.org). Applications may be downloaded from this site.

*Editor's Note:* In last week's Friday report story "State Board Meeting Focuses on Accountability and Professional Development," it was incorrectly stated that "starting in 2009-10, schools must either use full-time teacher mentors or contract mentoring services to non-classroom teachers; full-time teachers will no longer be able to serve as mentors after the current year." This was NOT approved by the Board last week. As reported by DPI, Dr. Jesse Dingle will be convening a group of stakeholders to develop another plan for 2009-10 and beyond. The Board heard concerns about the proposal that only full or contracted mentors be used after this year from MANY superintendents, personnel administrators, and beginning teacher program administrators and subsequently did not act on this component of the plan.

---

The *Friday Report* is published weekly by the Public School Forum of NC and is distributed to Forum Board members, legislators active in education policy, the press, and Forum subscribers. Archived editions can be found at [www.ncforum.org/doclib](http://www.ncforum.org/doclib).