

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Fluency vs. Memorization

This Wednesday Judge Howard E. Manning Jr., Superior Court Judge, held a special scheduled session of the Wake County Superior Court to address math instruction in elementary, middle and high schools, the lack of effective use of the formative assessment as part of classroom instruction in mathematics and other subjects, and the need to align the new standards and Framework for Change with licensure requirements and the University curriculum for teachers, administrators, and superintendents.

The Judge began the hearing by questioning the word choice of “to develop fluency and flexibility” in the State’s Standard Course of Study (SCOS). As he understood it, the SCOS no longer required teachers to require elementary students to learn (memorize) multiplication tables, long division or to multiply and divide fractions. Taking the stand first was Everly Broadway from the NC Department of Public Instruction. In an effort to clear up some confusion, Broadway was asked not only to define the word fluency as it is used in the math Standard Course of Study but also how it compares to memorization. In her words, “fluency means to not only memorize but have command of the numbers.” Broadway agreed with the Judge that the SCOS needed to be made more “parent and public friendly”.

Next on the stand was Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Senior Policy Advisor to the State Board of Education. Dr. Sullivan discussed the new standards and evaluation instrument and how teachers can utilize summative and formative assessments to analyze student learning. As Judge Manning pointed out, this assumes the teacher knows how to use/analyze formative and summative assessments. Dr. Sullivan stated that beginning teachers can only receive a continuing license if they are able to show understanding and use of formative assessments (as determined by the Principal in the annual evaluation). She stated that DPI had just completed the process of training 2,500 principals and assistants on the new evaluation tool this summer.

The day wrapped up with Alan Mabe, Vice President for Academic Planning and University-School Programs (UNC System), taking the stand to address the effort the schools of education are making to ensure the new standards are aligned with the University curriculum for teachers, administrators, and superintendents. In conclusion, Dr. Mabe wished to point out that “if you want great math teachers, you have to be willing to pay them more.”

North Carolina Governor's Race is Extremely Close

According to the latest *DecisionMaker* poll conducted by the Civitas Institute, Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory and Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue are running neck-and-neck. Perdue currently leads McCrory 43-41 among the 600 likely voters surveyed with thirteen percent of voters still undecided.

McCrory leads in the Charlotte, Western and Piedmont/Triad regions while Perdue maintains a strong lead in the Triangle and Northeast region. North Carolinians are split as well by age groups with McCrory leading among voters 26-40 and 56-65.

The study of 600 registered voters was conducted on August 14-17 by Tel Opinion Research of Alexandria, Virginia. Voters were interviewed using live callers, and for purposes of this study had to have voted in either the 2002, 2004 or 2006 general election or were newly registered voters since 2006.

Community Colleges Experience Influx of New Students

Two-year community colleges are seeing record enrollment as families squeezed by tough economic times steer high school graduates away from more expensive four-year universities. Preliminary reports from community colleges across the country, which had overall enrollment of 11.5 million last year, show summer enrollments increased, a trend expected to extend into the fall. Nationwide, the average annual cost of attending community college is \$2,361, compared with \$6,185 in tuition and fees for four-year in-state public universities.

In addition, other economic downturns have lead to an increased demand for workforce-training programs from people who have been laid off or are search of additional skills. In Cabarrus County, where Philip Morris USA Inc. is preparing to shut down a tobacco plant in three years, nearby Rowan-Cabarrus Community College is working with the company to let employees take classes in computers, Spanish and other fields to develop skills to find new jobs.

Community college officials are concerned with the economy's impact on their own finances, brought on by rising costs and state budget shortfalls, possibly limiting their ability to handle the anticipated surge in enrollment. With the bulk of federal higher-education funding going to four-year schools, community college officials say they have long been expected to do more with less; a challenge growing as large as their enrollment.

Can Money Motivate Learning?

While cash incentive programs are expanding rapidly in schools nationwide, measurable evidence of their effectiveness is scarce. Researchers examining a 12 year old program in Texas have found that rewarding pupils for achieving high test scores on tough exams can work. In the Texas program, high school students enrolled in AP (Advanced Placement) classes who get top scores on math, science and English tests are paid up to \$500. The latest study, by C. Krabo Jackson, an economics professor at Cornell University, found that over time, more students took Advanced Placement courses and tests, and that more graduating seniors attended college. Most of the gains recorded came from minority students in the 40 high schools studied, accounting for nearly 70,000 students in all.

Previous data on the Texas program found that in the 10 schools where it was initially launched, passing AP test scores doubled in the first year, quadrupled in the second year and have continued to climb, with the program now used in 61 schools statewide.

This year six states plan to replicate the Texas program, each with five-year grants of \$13 million from the National Math and Science Initiative, a nonprofit organization launched last year with funding from Exxon Mobil Corp. and other private sources. With plans to expand to 20 states within five years, the initiative hopes to eventually expand nationwide.

Researchers and policymakers are focusing their attention on Roland G. Fryer, an economics professor at Harvard and “chief equality officer” of the New York City public schools. The professor oversees a privately funded program in NYC known as the Fryer initiative, where roughly 10,000 elementary and middle school students earn cash and prepaid cell phones in exchange for high state test scores and good grades. Fryer recently launched a study of the program and expects the initial results as early as October.

New Hampshire Extends School Day

This year students in 5 Hudson, New Hampshire schools will spend a little more time in the classroom. The school day will be extended 20 minutes at Hudson’s 4 elementary schools and 26 minutes at Hudson Memorial (middle) School.

The adjustments add 90 hours of instructional time a year. That’s 720 hours over eight years, which equates to roughly 110, 6 1/2 –hour schools days. According to Superintendent Randy Bell, the only cost for the longer days is about \$28,000, to pay the district’s 26 full-time paraprofessionals since their salary is based on the student’s day. “Extending the school day was the only way to increase students’ classroom time in reading and math without cutting back on some other subjects,” Bell said. “It isn’t just the quantity. It’s the quality of the time we’re using.”

*State Superintendent proclaims September 7 – 13
as “Graduation Awareness Week”.*

New Schools Presents: “Graduation by Design”

Join educators and leaders from business and government at Graduation by Design: Creating Schools that Prepare All Students for College, Career and Life conference. 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.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

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

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 is now available online at www.teachingfellows.org.

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. Applications may be downloaded from this site.

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