

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Volume 11, Issue 10

September 5, 2008

Clay County Joins Those Rejecting Land Transfer Tax

Last Friday, voters in Clay County rejected a land transfer tax intended to ease overcrowding on the county's single school campus. With 61 percent of the 2,641 voters opposing the tax, Clay County became the 20th county to reject such a real estate tax.

Realtors and developers spent more than \$36,000 (or \$4.38 per registered voter) persuading Clay County voters to reject the tax on real estate sales. Through August 8th, the committee organizing the campaign had received \$10,000 from the N.C. Home Builders Association and more than \$32,500 from the Realtors Group.

The need is apparent. The overcrowding on the county's single campus has made it vital to build a fourth building intended for students in second grade and lower. The single cafeteria accommodates all 1,400 students by stretching lunch from 10:30 a.m. to about 1:30 p.m. If passed, the land transfer tax would have raised about \$350,000 annually, covering more than half the payment on a \$10 million school construction loan.

September 7 – 13 Proclaimed: Graduation Awareness Week

North Carolina is launching a special campaign to highlight the importance of graduating from high school and to underscore the activities that schools, families and community groups must take to help all students stay in school to graduate.

Highlighting the importance of graduating, this week long event hopes to provide new resources to help you and your community support the Message: Graduate campaign. For more information including statistics, legislative grants and other valuable resources, visit: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/graduate> .

Gubernatorial Candidates' Forum on Education

Friday, September 19th the North Carolina Cable Telecommunications Association and Time Warner Cable will sponsor a Candidates' Forum on Education. The program will be shown on cable television outlets around the state numerous times until Election Day. The Forum will take place on the SAS campus in Cary, Building V, from 10:30 to 11:30 am and will be co-sponsored by the Education: Everybody's Business Coalition.

This is the third election cycle that the Cable Association has collaborated with the Education: Everybody's Business Coalition to highlight educational issues during an election year. The Education: Everybody's Business Coalition, brings together the NC Chamber, the NC Council of Local Chambers, the NC School Boards Association, the NC Association of School Administrators and the Forum.

Gubernatorial Candidates' Forum (cont'd)

Seats for the Candidates' Forum are still available; registration is underway on a first-come-first-serve basis and will close 48 hours prior to the event. Readers wanting to attend the Forum can register by emailing Debra Jordan their name, position and address to djordan@ncforum.org. Because of security policies on the SAS campus, participants must be registered in order to attend the Forum.

Duke Economist Suggests "Pay for Effectiveness" Plan

A new study from a Duke economist, Jacob Vigdor, suggests scrapping the current teacher salary system in favor of one that sharply boosts pay for beginning teachers while reducing what they'd get later in their careers. Published by Stanford University's Hoover Institution, the study says credentials such as advanced degrees and teaching certification are "valueless" and that, after a certain point, experience doesn't have much effect on student achievement.

Vigdor proposes eliminating extra pay for advanced degrees and cutting the raise provided for national board certification from 12 percent to 5 percent. His plan would raise the pay of teachers in their first few years by 25 percent and even though salaries in later years would be less than they are now, he says teachers would still earn more over a 30-year period under his model.

Critics of his study agree that beginning teachers deserve more money. But they disagree with his remedy. "If you want teachers to stay in the profession and become master teachers, you certainly have to compensate them," said Sheri Strickland, president of the N.C. Association of Educators. "We're not doing a good job of compensating teachers appropriately."

Appearing in the fall issue of *Education Next*, the study may be found online at: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/27100089.html>.

National News...

Jobless Rate Hits 5 Year High

New jobless data heightens concerns about declining revenue for states across the country. According to the latest government reading today, the unemployment rate has risen to 6.1%, the highest level since September 2003.

With the report, the U.S. economy has now lost 605,000 jobs so far this year including 61,000 in manufacturing, 8,000 in construction employment, 20,000 in retail and 53,000 in business and professional services.

The increase is likely to negatively impact consumer confidence, which had just started to show gains from earlier lows due to declining gas prices. If consumer confidence begins to fall again, it could put a halt on spending which in turn would be a new drag on the economy.

Maine Considers Four-Day School Week

Struggling with high motor fuel and heating oil costs, more than 100 school districts in 16 states have decided to go with a four-day school week. Leading the charge was Utah, which this summer instituted a mandatory four-day work week for most state employees; allowing exemptions for public universities, courts and prisons. Following suit, Maine is beginning to give serious consideration to the energy-saving idea.

Governor John Baldacci's \$12.6 million energy-action plan is centered around a voluntary four-day work schedule for state employees. In response, the state Education Department is considering submitting a bill when the 2009 legislative session gets under way that would allow school districts to have four-day weeks.

Under the current state law, Maine students must be in school at least 175 days per year. By changing the minimum requirement so it's expressed in hours, local districts would have the option of going to four-day school weeks. State Senator Nancy Sullivan said, "Such a policy would bring an automatic 25 percent reduction in transportation costs."

Texas Leaders "Reach Out to Dropouts"

Volunteers including Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert and Dallas Independent School District (DISD) Superintendent Michael Hinojosa will knock on doors to reach out to potential dropouts. The program, started by Houston Mayor Bill White, is called the "Reach Out to Dropout Walk." This year it is expanding beyond Houston to include Dallas and five other Texas cities and 18 school districts.

A team of local school board trustees, council members, high school teachers and parents will gather at 8 a.m. on Saturday at an area high school before they fan out through the city. They will go to the homes of high school students identified by the district as dropout risks. School district staff members have also set up a phone bank to call families whose children should have enrolled in school this fall.

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.

Additional program information is available online via the Teaching Fellows website at www.teachingfellows.org. Applications may be downloaded from this site.

Fun Facts...

You're Know You're Getting Old When...

Beloit College of Wisconsin has released its eleventh annual "Mindset List" of entering college freshmen. According to one of the authors the list "is an important reminder to faculty, some of whom are only a Ph.D. older than their students, that what we call 'hardening of the references' can set in quickly."

BELOIT COLLEGE'S MINDSET LIST® FOR THE CLASS OF 2012

Most students entering college this fall were born in 1990.

1. GPS satellite navigation systems have always been available.
2. Coke and Pepsi have always used recycled plastic bottles.
3. Gas stations have never fixed flats, but most serve cappuccino.
4. Electronic filing of tax returns has always been an option.
5. WWW has never stood for World Wide Wrestling.
6. Films have never been X rated, only NC-17.
7. The Warsaw Pact is as hazy for them as the League of Nations was for their parents.
8. Students have always been "Rocking the Vote."
9. Clarence Thomas has always sat on the Supreme Court.
10. Schools have always been concerned about multiculturalism.
11. We have always known that "*All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.*"
12. College grads have always been able to Teach for America.
13. McDonald's and Burger King have always used vegetable oil for cooking french fries.
14. The Tonight Show has always been hosted by Jay Leno and started at 11:35 EST.
15. Authorities have always been building a wall along the Mexican border.
16. Employers have always been able to do credit checks on employees.
17. Caller ID has always been available on phones.
18. 98.6 F or otherwise has always been confirmed in the ear.
19. Radio stations have never been required to present both sides of public issues.
20. There have always been charter schools.

To view the list in its entirety along with archive lists, visit: <http://www.beloit.edu/mindset> .

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 .