

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

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## State Board Presents “Friend of Education” Awards

This week members of the State Board of Education presented the “Friend of Education” award to both North Carolina Representative Doug Yongue and GlaxoSmithKline. Chairman Lee presented the prestigious award recognizing both Rep. Yongue and Bill Shore of GlaxoSmithKline for their “dedication to providing support and leadership” to our state’s public schools.

Representative Yongue, a former educator, principal and superintendent, accepted his award while thanking his district’s superintendent, Dr. Shirley Prince of Scotland County for her continued dedication and innovative approach to leadership.

Bill Shore, Director of US Community Partnerships for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) accepted the award on behalf of the organization. Mr. Shore, a finalist for the 2008 Jay Robinson Leadership Award, later participated in a presentation to the Board on GSK’s collaboration with the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) on an innovative new model for increasing math and science teaching quality statewide. The National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) Return on Investment Initiative, supported through a \$100,000 grant from GlaxoSmithKline, taps into a unique resource: the more than 2,000 NBCTs in our state who specialize in math and science.

## Former Gov. Jim Hunt Joins New National Initiative

Three of the nation’s leading education policy organizations have united to ensure American students in every state receive a world-class education. The National Governors Association (NGA), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Achieve, Inc. have joined forces to provide to states a roadmap for benchmarking their K-12 education systems to those of top-performing nations.

The partner organizations and Advisory Group members (co-chaired by Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue and Craig Barrett, chair of the board at Intel Corporation) “agree that the stakes are too great to ignore current global trends and allow our nation’s students’ education performance to be surpassed.” In late October, members of the Advisory Group and partner organizations plan to release a report about this critical issue while offering steps to take that will ensure state educational systems exceed the best in the world.

Former North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. is serving on the International Benchmarking Advisory Group, along with others including: Kati Haycock, Director of Education Trust, Richard W. Riley, Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Vivien Stewart, VP for Education at the Asian Society and Chester E. Finn, Jr., President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

## The Message: Graduate!

State Superintendent June Atkinson held a press conference Monday to officially kick off “Graduation Awareness Week”. Governor Easley’s Proclamation for Graduation Awareness Week was read by Superintendent Atkinson followed by the signing of a Call to Action to raise the state’s graduation rate. The Call to Action was signed by several organizations including: AT&T, NCASA, NCSBA, NCAE, PENC, NCPTA, NC Chamber, Communities in Schools and the NC Justice Center.

The signing ceremony was followed by an awards ceremony to recognize the following schools and school districts for their accomplishments during the 2007-08 school year.

### Top Ten School Districts

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Elkin City Schools                | 89.4% |
| Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools | 87.9% |
| Pamlico county Schools            | 85.5% |
| Dare County Schools               | 85.3% |
| Camden County Schools             | 81.8% |
| Alleghany County Schools          | 81.6% |
| Catawba County Schools            | 81.2% |
| Newton-Conover City Schools       | 81.0% |
| Mount Airy City Schools           | 81.0% |
| Ashe County Schools               | 80.9% |

### 100% Graduation Club

|  |
|--|
| Burke Middle College (Burke Co.)           |
| Nantahala School (Macon Co.)               |
| Philip J. Weaver Education Ctr. (Guilford) |
| Greensboro College M.C. (Guilford Co.)     |
| Early College at Guilford (Guilford Co.)   |
| Highland School of Technology (Gaston)     |
| Reid Ross Classical (Cumberland Co.)       |
| Cape Hatteras Secondary (Dare Co.)         |

### Top Two Schools by 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Size

#### 0-99 Cohort

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Reid Ross Classical – Cumberland Co.          | 100% |
| Philip J. Weaver Education Ctr.- Guilford Co. | 100% |

#### 100-199 Cohort

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Highland School of Technology – Gaston Co. | 100%  |
| Raleigh Charter High School                | 98.3% |

#### 200-299 Cohort

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| First Flight High – Dare Co.            | 92.4% |
| Reagan High – Winston-Salem/Forsyth Co. | 91.9% |

#### 300-399 Cohort

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Southeast Guilford High – Guilford Co. | 92.1% |
| Western Guilford High                  | 91.9% |

#### 400-499 Cohort

|                               |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Weddington High               | 93.3% |
| Green Hope High – Wake County | 92.6% |

#### 500+ Cohort

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Northwest Guilford High – Guilford Co. | 92.7% |
| Apex High – Wake County                | 90.1% |

## **Ambitious Goal Announced for Kentucky Schools**

At an event commemorating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence launched an ambitious goal for Kentucky schools. Entitled “Achieving the Top 20 by 2020”, the initiative challenges Kentucky to do what not other state has ever done; move from the bottom of national rankings to the top tier of states.

The Prichard Committee’s report details what top 20 results would look like today for Kentucky in a number of indicators, such as early childhood education, teacher salaries and college completion. The information compares Kentucky’s current ranking with that of the state that is now ranked No. 20 in the indicators.

The Report also notes that adequate funding, leadership, accountability and community, business and parental involvement are all critical to the success of the state’s efforts to improve its schools. The full report and supporting documents are available at <http://www.prichardcommittee.org> .

## **Tight Budget Times Threaten Teachers’ Jobs**

Faced with high fuel costs and budget deficits, school districts have had to cut administrative positions, bus routes, special services and athletic programs. As conditions worsen, the salaries and jobs of teachers have become the next target.

Districts in Alabama and Florida have begun to cap hiring, eliminate staff positions and cut salaries. In California, districts are still watching to see how the state’s \$15+ billion deficit will affect the teaching force. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nationwide, teachers’ salaries and benefits make up approximately 80 percent of a district’s overall budget.

In Alabama, a state that relies heavily on sales tax as well as property tax for school funding, a state law required more than 1,200 employees to be notified that they would be either laid off or transferred to lower-level positions. Ultimately only 350 people lost their jobs, among them 100 teachers, but the notices dampened morale through the impacted districts.

Florida faces a shortfall of \$1.5 billion this year that has affected districts across the state. In Manatee County, where the biggest item in the 2008-09 district budget is salaries, the system has laid off over 100 teachers and reduced the number of paid in-service days.

## Low Birth Rate Blamed for Maine's Drop in Enrollment

Enrollment at Maine public schools has fallen to approximately 190,000 students for the 2008-09 school year, continuing a decade-long decline that experts believe is expected to continue for several years to come. In the past 10 years, K-12 enrollment has fallen by more than 25,000 students; from 216,121 to the current 190,000.

"The decline can be blamed on the state's demographics and low birth rate", says Maine Department of Education spokesman David Connerty-Marin. Maine has the nation's oldest median age and eighth-lowest birth rate. The Education Department is projecting student enrollment to continue falling until at least 2012 and then to experience a slow growth to top at 184,000 by 2018.

As student enrollment declines, communities are facing the prospect of school closures. Several elementary schools do not have the numbers to provide the educational offerings or financial ability to remain operational and are not opening their doors this year.

## NC Gubernatorial Candidates' Forum 1 Week Away

Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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](mailto:djordan@ncforum.org). Because of security policies on the SAS campus, participants must be registered in order to attend the Forum.

### *Forum News...*

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

The 2008-2009 application for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program is now available online at [www.teachingfellows.org](http://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](http://www.teachingfellows.org). Applications may be downloaded from this site.

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

**Balking at a Nutritious Start for Kids**

Published: September 4, 2008

by [Chris Fitzsimon](#)

For the last 10 years, Queens Creek Elementary School in Swansboro has provided a free breakfast for all its kindergarten students. But not this year. There's an announcement on the schools' website that kindergarteners will have to buy breakfast on their own from now on.

North Carolina began the statewide kindergarten breakfast program on 2000 and the state spends \$2.2 million a year to feed the students.

And it makes sense. Studies are clear that kids who eat breakfast before school are healthier overall than kids who don't. And they do better in class and make higher scores on standardized tests.

Federal programs that provide free or reduced lunch and breakfast to poor students are important, but not enough. Some kids are embarrassed to participate because they don't want their classmates to know they are poor. Some families who earn too much to be eligible still can't afford breakfast every day and single moms often need the help.

All that prompted North Carolina lawmakers to establish a program that would provide breakfast for every student in kindergarten. No stigma, no eligibility requirements, just a basic breakfast for all the four and five year olds in their first year of school.

But not all elementary schools offer breakfast, just ones that have a certain percentage of poor children, based on eligibility levels for free and reduced lunch. The 2007 budget prohibits the State Board of Education from setting the eligibility percentage below 39.04 unless lawmakers provide money to expand the program.

The State Board asked lawmakers for \$500,000 in new funding in 2007, but the final budget included no expansion. Neither did the 2008 budget, so kindergarten students in roughly a fourth of the elementary schools in the state don't get a free breakfast even if more than a third of the students at the school are poor.

It is not clear than another \$500,000 a year would to pay for the program at all elementary schools but education officials say it might come close. Half a million dollars in a \$21 billion budget isn't much to fully fund a program that lawmakers were wise enough to start nine years ago, especially when kids' nutrition and health is at stake.

The unwillingness to expand the breakfast program for kindergartners is far from the only problem schools face in addressing child nutrition. The State Board asked for \$20 million this year to help schools offer healthier meals, an important part of the state's initiative to reduce childhood obesity.

The healthier meals proposal didn't get \$20 million. It got nothing. Lawmakers instead funded a few obesity pilot projects, leaving schools scrambling with their food budgets and forcing many to fall back to cheaper, high calorie foods that make things worse, not better.

## Guest Editorial (cont'd)

Legislative leaders like to boast about their commitment to public education. Too bad that commitment doesn't include supporting efforts to make sure kids are fed in the morning and eat the right food at lunch.

Too bad the kindergartners at Queens Creek Elementary won't get breakfast this year.

### *Fun Facts...*

## NC Bill Drafting Request Stats

The following are some interesting statistics on the total number of bill requests received by North Carolina legislative staff for 2007-08 compared with 2005-06, 2003-04 and 2001-02. The data was provided by the Director of Bill Drafting Gerry Cohen.

Total drafting requests for each biennial session (excluding blanks):

|                   | <b>2007</b> | <b>2005</b> | <b>2003</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Bill Drafting Div | 4,986       | 4,687       | 2,920       | 3,103       |
| Research Div      | 707         | 680         | 613         | 298         |
| Total Draft       | 5,693       | 5,367       | 3,533       | 3,401       |

Increase/Decrease (% change)

|                   | <b>2005 to 2007</b> | <b>2003 to 2007</b> | <b>2001 to 2007</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Bill Drafting Div | +6.4%               | +70.8%              | +60.7%              |
| Research Div      | +4.0%               | +15.3%              | +137.2%             |
| Total Draft       | +6.1%               | +61.1%              | +67.4%              |

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