

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Volume 11, Issue 19

November 7, 2008



Mrs. Barbara Schroff Urquhart, the mother of Forum Board Member, Richard Urquhart, died Thursday, November 6th at Mayview convalescent Center. Family will receive visitors from 6:00 to 8:00 pm Sunday evening, November 9 at Brown-Wynne Funeral Home at 300 St. Mary's Street. A Memorial Mass of Resurrection will be held on Monday, November 10 at 11:00 am at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic church, 2718 Overbrook Drive. Family will receive friends in the Fallon Center following the service. In lieu of Flowers, contributions may be made to the NC Museum of Art Foundation, 2110 Blue Ridge Road, Raleigh, NC 27604 or Hospice of Wake County, 1300 Saint Mary's Street, Raleigh, NC 27605.

As Predicted, Performance on ABCs Drop

During a media briefing held on Thursday, school officials addressed school performance on the 2007-08 ABCs/AYP accountability report. Changes in reading tests caused public school academic performance to fall across the state for the 2007-08 school year. According to school officials, some drop in performance is normal in years when new tests are released.

Reiterated throughout the briefing was the notion that the ABCs assessments, which got their start in the 1996-97 school year were made more rigorous in recent years in an effort to "align academic standards with 21st century skills." This is the third year results have been reported using the new growth formulas.

However, the performance differences between the 2007-08 academic year and the previous year are dramatic. In one third of all state schools, less than 60 percent of students passed state tests. This was twice the number of schools who saw similar performance last year. Only 10 percent of schools had at least 80 percent of students passing the tests this year, compared to 23 percent in 2006-07. The percentage of fifth graders who passed the reading tests dropped to 57 percent from 92 percent the previous year.

The 2007-08 ABCs program also reports the adequate yearly progress (AYP) of 2,412 of the state's schools during the fifth year's implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The table below shows the number and percent of the state's schools that met and did not meet AYP in both 2006-07 and 2007-08.

AYP Status	2006-07 AYP Results		2007-08 AYP Results	
	# of Schools	Percentage	# of Schools	Percentage
Schools that Met AYP	1050	44.7%	748	31.0%
Schools that Did Not Make AYP	1300	55.3%	1664	69.0%
Statewide Totals:	2,350	100.0%	2,412	100.0%

As Predicted, Performance On ABCs Drop (cont'd)

In concluding the briefing, Chairman Lee stated "we set standards and we must provide resources ... A tight budget cannot keep us from moving ahead and getting resources to keep us making progress." He believes that by setting higher standards, we may risk having schools look worse but in the long run it will align North Carolina's academic standards with the necessary skills for life beyond high school.

For more information about the 2007-08 ABCs/AYP report, go online to <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>.

NC's New Governor Prepares for Tough Choices

Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue became the state's first female governor Tuesday by winning 60 of the state's 100 counties, the two biggest on challenger and Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory's home turf. All told, Perdue soundly defeated McCrory by 17 percentage points, having received 151,600 more votes combined in Wake, Durham, Guilford and Forsyth counties than did McCrory. The unofficial returns have Perdue winning by about 140,000 votes.

With her acceptance speech behind her, Democrat Beverly Perdue shifted her focus from campaigning to that of governing. On Wednesday, sitting down with *News and Observer* Staff Writer Mark Johnson Perdue shared the following:

Q: What sort of changes will your administration bring in?

A: A "supercode" of ethics rules on members of her administration. "I was not at all proud of North Carolina when the speaker of the House was carted away in handcuffs. There was something fundamentally wrong. ... People want more streamlined 21st century government. ... That would involve total transparency."

Q: Who will be in your cabinet?

A: "It's much too early. I've been elected less than 24 hours."

Q: What do you do first after you are sworn in, in January?

A: "I'm going to go to the office and sign the 'change orders.'" Perdue was referring to a list of eight reforms that include electronic access to state contracts, removing members of the State Board of Transportation from approving road projects, surprise inspections by her to state facilities, and a new endowment funded by private money to bankroll campaigns for governor and eliminate fundraising.

NC's New Governor (cont'd)

Q: What are your immediate priorities?

A: A budget shortfall of as much as \$2 billion, which is bound to require cuts. "I know how to do that. I know how to make tough choices. ... It's not at all insurmountable. It won't be pretty. ... But I don't intend to get bogged down spending every minute on the budget."

"I intend to work on a very focused economic development agenda." "Not eating our seed corn (cutting school funding), doing what I can to improve schools in North Carolina."

Atkinson's Long Experience as an Educator Pays Off

June Atkinson continued the strong showing by women Democrats Tuesday by winning re-election to the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Dr. Atkinson captured nearly 54 percent of the vote, while Republican, former House Co-Speaker Richard Morgan held 46 percent.

State-Level Results Shape Education

Across the country, pivotal state races that will affect education were decided on Tuesday. Democrats made gains in congressional races, while senate legislative races were divided. Chief state school officers were elected in five states, and ballot measures that affected education were found in fifteen states.

Many of this year's election races were historic, and North Carolina's was no exception. Lt. Governor Beverly Perdue defeated Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory to become the state's first woman Governor. Perdue, a former teacher, campaigned on expanding college scholarships for low-income students, more money for pre-kindergarten, and expansion of the Teaching Fellows Program.

Of the five states electing new chief state school officers, Washington had the most heated contest. Three-term incumbent Terry Bergeson was defeated by Randy Dorn in the nonpartisan race. Over her tenure, Bergeson clashed with the state teachers' union and shifted her stance on the No Child Left Behind Act, which she previously supported. Indiana and Montana elected new state school chiefs, while North Dakota's Wayne G. Sanstead, the nation's longest-serving superintendent, won a seventh term.

At least 15 states had ballot measures this year that will affect education. In Oregon, voters defeated measures that would have put strict limits on bilingual education and tied pay raises for teachers to classroom performance. Massachusetts voters turned down a proposal to eliminate the state's income tax. Approval of this measure would have hurt school programs and services, according to education groups.

States Split on Gambling Revenue for Education

Gambling measures that will provide states with additional educational funding have been approved in Arkansas, Colorado, Maryland and Missouri, and were rejected in Maine and Ohio.

Voters in Arkansas approved a state-wide lottery whose ticket sales will fund college scholarships. The measure, which was supported by almost two-thirds of voters, overturns a ban set in 1874. In Colorado, almost 60% of voters backed a measure to raise the maximum bet limit at casinos from \$5 to \$100. The Colorado Community College System, "are really excited and thankful to the voters of Colorado," said President Nancy McCallin. Most of the additional gaming tax revenue will go to the state's community colleges.

Maryland will get 15,000 slot machines at five locations throughout the state, after residents voted overwhelmingly to legalize them. The slots will generate funds to cover budget shortfalls, and a portion of the proceeds will go to general K-12 aid. Missouri's gambling initiative, which repeals the nation's only loss limit at casinos, caps the licensing of new casinos and raises taxes on existing casinos to direct more money to public education, was approved by 56% of voters.

Maine and Ohio did not fare as well, with measures to allow casinos for the first time in either state being rejected by over 55% of voters. This was the fourth time for Ohio and the second time for Maine that casino plans were turned down by voters.

NCFREE Closes its Doors

NCFREE, the business-supported organization that provided political analysis for its members ceased operation last Friday. In a memo to members, NCFREE board chairman William Brown cited internal and financial difficulties as causes for the closing. "Unfortunately, our financial problems are greater than our ability to solve them at this point," Brown wrote.

In recent years, former executive director John Davis' efforts to take an increasing role in political advocacy, including the endorsement of candidates, caused a number of top businesses to drop their membership. Davis stepped down from his position as executive director earlier this year, but continued to work as a consultant to the organization. Brown did leave open the possibility that the organization could resume operating in a limited fashion through its foundation. For 25 years, NCFREE had provided political analysis for the state, including testing voter trends down to the legislative district level.

Alabama Approves Rainy Day Amendment

Alabama's Rainy Day Fund Amendment was approved 57% to 43% on Tuesday. The fund was established to allow education to borrow money, to be repaid within six years, from the Oil and Gas Trust Fund when the state budget is prorated. So far, this has only happened once, in 2003, and the money borrowed was paid back in four years.

Initially enacted in 2002, the amendment called for modifying the language of the existing amendment to make it more current. The original wording specifies that education can borrow up to 6% of the Fiscal Year 2002 Education Trust Fund Budget, or \$248 million. New wording changes the amount to be 6.5% of the previous year's adopted budget, or in today's terms, \$435 million of FY08's \$6.7 billion budget.

The amendment will not cost tax payers additional money or burden the general public. Instead, it allows education to borrow readily available funds in order to ease any strain on services when education funds are cut.

Kentucky Cuts Public School Jobs

State budget shortfalls in Kentucky have caused the Department of Education to cut \$43 million for professional development programs, after-school services, and textbooks. To make up this difference, some school districts were forced to make changes in their operations.

A report released on October 21, 2008 from the Kentucky School Boards Association shows that 1,169 public school jobs were cut in 135 of the state's 174 school districts. Of the positions cut, the survey found that 594 were certified positions, including teachers, counselors and administrators. The remaining 575 positions were classified staff, including bus drivers, cafeteria workers, office clerks, custodians and teachers' aides.

The survey, initiated by Bill Scott, Executive Director of the School Boards Association, was conducted in preparation for the 2009 legislative session. District leaders are concerned that similar budget constraints facing the upcoming school year will affect momentum toward proficiency, according to Scott. All schools must meet the student proficiency standards set forth by No Child Left Behind by 2014.

Forum News...

Forum Closed Tuesday for Veteran's Day

The Public School Forum office will be closed on Tuesday, November 11th and will reopen on Wednesday. EPFP will meet at the Forum "as usual" on Tuesday evening from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Have a wonderful and relaxing Veteran's Day.

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/doc.