

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Mrs. Mable Johnson of Atlanta, Georgia, sister of Senator Katie Dorsett, passed away on Monday, January 12. The funeral service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 17. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Senator Dorsett and the Johnson family.

Perdue Orders Budget Cuts

The News and Observer reported this morning that Governor Beverly Perdue has ordered larger cuts in state agencies, vacant job freezes and halts in spending of millions of dollars in construction, purchases and travel to try to get ahead of the deepening budget crisis.

According to the Governor, state agencies are close to laying off employees, and services will be cut, though she does continue to promise to protect education spending and public safety funding as much as possible. The cuts, announced yesterday, will provide \$1.1 billion towards filling the expected \$2 billion budget gap. So far, these measures will enable the Governor to cover the budget gap without tapping in to the state's \$790 million rainy-day fund, which she hopes to save for emergencies such as hurricanes, ice storms, or future budget problems.

HOW PERDUE HOPES IT ADDS IT UP

SERVICE	SAVINGS	
Public schools	\$156 million	2 percent cut
UNC System	\$150 million	6 percent cut
Community Colleges	\$45 million	5 percent cut
Health and Human Services	\$91 million	4 percent cut for mental health; 6 percent for others
Justice and Public Safety	\$93 million	4 percent cut corrections and courts; 5.5 percent others
Other agencies	\$63 million	7 percent cut
Medicaid savings	\$122 million	Assumes no growth
Construction	\$107 million	frozen
Repair and renovations	\$70 million	Frozen

OTHER TAPPED ASSETS

Other reserves, credit	\$217 million	-
Federal stimulus	\$934 million	-

TOTAL \$2.048 billion

NC Teacher Nominated for National Teacher of the Year

Cindi Rigsbee, North Carolina's Teacher of the Year for 2008-09, is one of four finalists for the prestigious 2009 National Teacher of the Year Award. Rigsbee, a 2008-09 EPFP Fellow, teaches sixth- and seventh-grade reading at Gravelly Hill Middle School in Orange County.

“Being named a national finalist is a testament to the great things happening in Orange County Schools and the work being done by all of our teachers every day,” Rigsbee said. “I can’t express the immense gratitude that I feel to everyone in our schools and community. This honor is as much theirs as it is mine.”

The National Teacher of the Year is chosen from among the representatives from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity. President Obama will recognize the winner and the state representatives in a ceremony at the end of the school year. To read more about Ms. Rigsbee’s nomination, go to <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/newsroom/news/2008-09/20090114-01>.

Joint Ed. Oversight Presents Findings, Recommendations

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee met Wednesday to review and adopt their report to the members of the 2009 regular session of the General Assembly. The following eight findings and recommendations including the related draft legislation can be found in their report:

1. Child Nutrition - The committee recommends the General Assembly provide funds to allow Child Nutrition Programs to continue to operate in schools, implementing State Board of Education nutrition standards and improving overall program operations.
2. Dropout Prevention - The committee recommends the General Assembly continue to support initiatives aimed at reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates. The committee recommends continued funding for the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and reform efforts in place across the state
3. The Collaborative Project – A 21st Century Initiative of the NC General Assembly - The committee strongly recommends continued funding of this program.
4. Teachers - The committee recommends the Appropriations Committee evaluate current ABC bonus awarding processes, and reconsider the decision to place a cap on spending. The committee recommends the enactment of legislation to extend sunset legislation on allowing retired teachers to return to the classroom to October 1, 2011, and reduce break in service from six months to four months.
5. Assistant Principal Salaries - The committee strongly supports the Study Committee’s recommendation that National Board certified teachers who become assistant principals should receive the higher of their salary as a teacher or their salary as assistant principal.

Joint Ed. Oversight (cont'd.)

6. Tuition Forgiveness for Social Workers - The committee recommends that the General Assembly provide funds to implement a loan scholarship program to train social workers in order to deliver services to underserved areas.
7. Sales and Use Tax Refund - The committee recommends the enactment of legislation to repeal the transfer of a percentage of State sales and use tax revenue by the Department of Revenue to the State Public School Fund, and to reenact the refund of these taxes to LEAs. The committee recommends the enactment of legislation to provide a refund of the State sales and use tax to institutions of the Community College System.
8. Exceptional Children - The committee recommends the enactment of legislation to fund three personnel positions to support and expand the Positive Behavior Support Initiative.

Each of the above recommendations was adopted by the Committee and will be eligible for action in the legislative session which convenes on January 28th.

Nomination Period for Class of 2011 Kenan Fellows is Open

The Kenan Fellows for Curriculum and Leadership Development Program, established in 2000, grew out of a community effort to address math and science teacher retention and recruitment. Classroom teachers selected as Kenan Fellows represent the most outstanding and committed educators across the state. As Fellows, they engage in a two-year fellowship in partnership with distinguished scientists and university faculty to develop innovative curricula for use in classrooms all across N.C.

Recipients will:

- Receive a \$10,000 stipend
- Work with a mentor/researcher in a laboratory to develop new and innovative STEM-related curriculum
- Earn six graduate credits from NC State University

The Kenan Fellows Program is accepting applications for Fellowships through January 30, 2009. K-12 public school teachers from all disciplines are encouraged to apply. School administrators, community leaders, parents of students, and former Kenan Fellows may nominate candidates online. For a map of the eligible counties and more information on how to nominate a candidate, visit the Kenan Fellows Program website at: www.kenanfellows.org.

MeckEd to Hold Open Conversation on Public Education

Mecklenburg Citizens for Public Education (MeckEd) and WTVI invite you to save the date for a meaningful conversation about public education featuring the PBS documentary, “*Where We Stand: America’s Schools in the 21st Century*”. “*Where We Stand: America’s Schools in the 21st Century*” presents a frank evaluation of our educational system’s strengths and weaknesses. Hosted by Judy Woodruff, Senior Correspondent for The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, the documentary introduces students, parents, teachers and administrators whose stories illustrate the overwhelming odds and shining successes of education in America. The forum will be held at the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte on Monday, January 26th from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. For further information, visit <http://www.mecked.org/calendar.htm> .

National News...

Student Choir to Perform Inauguration Event!

A group of 20 students from the Ron Clark Academy will be traveling to Washington, DC next week to perform their new song, “Dear Obama,” during at least four inaugural balls Tuesday. The choir, who gained fame last fall with their YouTube rap, “You Can Vote However You Like,” wrote the lyrics to “Dear Obama,” collectively as a group. In their new song, they thank the President-elect, and encourage him to follow through with his campaign promises.

Education Leaders Argue for School Bailout

In a recent article in *US News & World Report*, Bob Wise, the president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, and Marguerite W. Kondracke, president and CEO of America's Promise Alliance, argue that national leaders need to invest in efforts to improve high school outcomes. The op-ed piece, “School Bailout: Student Dropouts Are the Next Big Failing Financial Assets,” that appeared on December 26, 2008 is part of a joint effort by Wise and Kondracke’s organizations to address the high school dropout crisis. They feel that dropouts are an “important group of nonperforming assets that must not be forgotten,” as the Obama Administration and Congress work to prepare an economic recovery plan.

The op-ed piece argues that poor student outcomes are inextricably linked to the current economic crisis, and to the success of the nation. One year of dropouts, according to the article, costs the country more than \$319 billion in lost wages over their working lives. Failure to address this will cause increased revenue losses, increased taxpayer costs, and threaten job creation and global competitiveness. Cutting the high school dropout rate in half could generate \$45 billion in additional tax revenue and cost savings. Wise and Kondracke feel an investment in converting dropouts into graduates will reap positive returns, transforming at-risk students from liabilities to assets, with demonstrable long-term economic benefits.

The article can be viewed at:

http://www.usnews.com/articles/opinion/2008/12/26/school-bailout-student-dropouts-are-the-next-big-failing-financial-assets.html?s_cid=rss:school-bailout-student-dropouts-are-the-next-big-failing-financial-assets

Duncan Highlights Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools applauded Secretary of Education-designate Arne Duncan's commitment to community schools he set forth in his Senate confirmation testimony on Tuesday. A leader in the community schools movement, Duncan has worked to create the largest initiative in the nation during his tenure with Chicago Public Schools. These 150 community schools work to create partnerships between schools and other community institutions. Citing one example, Duncan said, "With different sets of partners, examples like this across the country, in urban districts and rural communities, have demonstrated that, given opportunity and support, every child can learn."

According to the Coalition, community schools improve student achievement, increase attendance and behavior, as well as develop greater parent involvement and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable students. Results similar to those seen in Chicago are being seen in other community school initiatives across the country, including Cincinnati, OH, Portland, OR; New York, NY; Evansville, IN; and Albuquerque, NM. Last September, the Coalition issued *The Community Agenda for America's Public Schools* in which they argue that the shared capacity of schools and communities must be harnessed if education reform is to succeed. More than 150 national, state, and local organizations have endorsed The Community Agenda.

For more information on the Coalition for Community Schools, visit <http://www.communityschools.org/>. Mr. Duncan's Senate confirmation testimony can be read at http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2009_01_13/Duncan.pdf.

California's Higher Education Ranking Falls

According to a report released last Wednesday by the California Faculty Association, California is rapidly losing its status as a national leader in higher education as fewer students graduate from high school and enroll in college. Despite having the country's largest public higher education system, California's investment in higher education has dropped 40 percent since 1980, when it ranked 11th in the nation in state tax investment in higher education. Today, it ranks 21st nationally.

According to the report, *California at the Edge of a Cliff*, college participation rates have been dropping since 1996. The state ranks 49th in the country for number of adults with at least a high school diploma, 46th for the number of 19-year-olds currently enrolled in college, and 31st for college enrollment among low-income students. Tom Mortensen, author of the report, feels this is a, "staggering commentary on this state's commitment to higher education." The full report can be viewed at <http://www.calfac.org/calattheedge.html>.

Georgia Seeks Class-size Waivers for all Districts

In a letter to the State Board of Education, Georgia schools Superintendent Kathy Cox has requested that all of the state's 180 school districts be allowed to increase class sizes for the 2009-10 school year to help decrease budget shortfalls. Such a move could help save \$200 million while helping districts to avoid layoffs.

Georgia Seeks Class-size Waivers (cont'd.)

In 2006, state lawmakers passed a law limiting class sizes in core classes – math, science, social studies and language arts – from kindergarten to middle school, to help improve students' performance on standardized test and increase graduation rates. Under Cox's plan, most class minimums would grow by two students, in an effort to reduce the number of new teachers a district would have to hire. Enrollment in special education, English as a second language, fine arts, and foreign language classrooms would not increase.

If passed, the statewide waiver would be effective for one year, at which point, districts would return to the usual system of applying individually for class-size waivers. The waiver will not require districts to expand class sizes, but rather allow them the flexibility to do so if needed, providing financial relief during the next school year. Board members are concerned that larger class sizes will decrease the amount of one-on-one time teachers can spend with students, and thus impair how much they learn. The board is expected to vote on the measure on Thursday, January 15, 2009.

Forum News...

Seeking Jay Robinson Award Nominations

The Jay Robinson Leadership Award was established by the Public School Forum Board of Directors in recognition of outstanding leaders in the field of public education. The award may be given to anyone who has displayed innovative, creative, effective leadership for the public schools of North Carolina.

Past winners include Laura Bilbro-Berry, the first Teaching Fellow to be named North Carolina Teacher of the Year; Tom McNeel, superintendent of Caldwell County schools; Jim Causby, two-time state Superintendent of the Year and executive director of the NC Association of School Administrators; Robert Bridges, former superintendent of Wake County Schools and former chair of the state's Raising Achievement and Closing Gap Commission; Superior Court Judge Howard E. Manning, Jr., the trial court judge in the *Leandro* school finance case; Dr. Ann Denlinger, former superintendent of Durham Public Schools and Wilson County Schools and currently President, Wake Education Partnership; Phillip J. Kirk Jr., Vice President for External Relations at Catawba College and Dr. Bill Harrison, superintendent Cumberland County Schools.

The nominations must be postmarked by March 2, 2009. Nominations postmarked after that date and nominations delivered in person will not be accepted. The award ceremony will be held on June 8, 2009, at the Raleigh Crabtree Marriott Hotel. Admission will be by invitation only. The honor includes a cash award sponsored by BB&T.

To obtain an application, contact Claire Ancelet (cancelet@ncforum.org) at 919-781-6833 or you can download a copy at www.ncforum.org.

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