

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Late Breaking News . . .

More Educational Cuts Possible

School superintendents in Western North Carolina received late-afternoon emails yesterday from their RESA office (Regional Educational Service Alliance) alerting them that there apparently will be a formal order requiring school systems to revert \$41 million of state funding back to the State by the end of this fiscal year (June 30).

The Friday Report calls to various sources confirmed that the “inside the beltline grapevine” was full of similar reports of an upcoming reversion order, but nothing official confirming the accuracy of the rumors had appeared. If accurate, it would mean that local school systems would be required to find the equivalent of \$27.75 per child to send back to the State. For a small system like Washington County with 2,013 students that would mean finding \$55,861. For a large system like Wake County with 132,518 students it would mean returning \$3.67 million. Coming near the end of the school year, the reversion request will prove difficult for many systems. Some will have fund balances in accounts such as technology or staff development; others will face the possibility of having to dip into local funds to meet the reversion order. Watch for a special *Friday Report* bulletin early next week as more information confirming or denying the reversion order becomes available.

“It’s all About the Children. They Are the Focus of This Case.”

Superior Court Judge Howard Manning made his point clear on Wednesday during the hearing he called to get a response from the state on what interventions would be taken to address Halifax County School’s low proficiency rates. Rather than ordering the state to take over operating Halifax County Public Schools, Judge Manning allowed a three-year experimental plan in salvaging local control, starting with the retraining teachers and principals.

The plan, approved by the Halifax County School Board on Monday night, intends to use approximately \$1.8 million in new federal funds to hire 12 full-time education coaches before the start of the new school year in August. All staff, including principals, teachers, office staff and teaching assistants in the district would have to attend August retraining courses, with all but the teaching assistants paid \$100 a day for attending the 10-day sessions. “It’s very important that the capacity be developed in the people,” stated Dr. Pat Ashley, Director of District and School Transformation at the Department of Public Instruction.

“It’s all About the Children” (cont’d)

While he feels the plan is a good start, the judge asked several times, “what happens when they don’t do what the district transformation coach says?” Not directly responding to his question, the state agrees that the focus must not be on the adults, but the children in Halifax County. The next step is for CEO of Public Schools, Dr. Bill Harrison to present the plan to the State Board of Education at their monthly meeting next Wednesday.

The Goodnights Recognized for Their Service to Children

Dr. James Goodnight co-founded SAS software company in 1976 and since that time has served as the company’s CEO. His wife, Ann Goodnight is director of community relations at SAS. In shaping the corporate focus at SAS, the Goodnights have emphasized support for education. Earlier this month the couple was named as recipients of the 2009 UNCW Razor Walker Award.

The award recognizes exceptional contributions toward the welfare of children and youth in the areas of: art/literature, business, educational administration, law, medicine, philanthropy, public service/policy and teaching/research. It is considered one of the more prestigious and unique service awards designed to honor North Carolina citizens.

In 2001, the Goodnights were honorary co-chairs of the Wake Education Partnership’s “Funds for Education” campaign, which raised more than \$1 million for the Partnership, an independent advocacy organization dedicated to uniting community resources for excellence in public education. Other recent examples of their initiatives include financing more than \$3 million in software and services for educational programs for students displaced by Hurricane Katrina, matching employees’ donations of up to \$500 each year to provide materials requested by teachers through a nonprofit Web site, and supporting a 3,000- square-foot expansion of the Communities in Schools Learning Center in Kentwood Public Housing Complex in Raleigh, including equipping it with computers for public use.

In addition to the Razor Walker Award, Dr. Goodnight was also recognized in the list 100 Most Influential People in Business Ethics (December 2008) and Ann Goodnight was presented the Charles Duncan McIver Medal at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (April 2009).

Workforce Development Commission to Convene Monday

The State Superintendent's Commission on Workforce Development will hold its first meeting next Monday (May 4) to begin discussions on issues pertaining to workforce development, workforce education and economic development in North Carolina. The meeting, which will be chaired by State Superintendent June Atkinson, will be held from 9-11:30 a.m. at the Public School Forum, 3739 National Drive, Suite 100, Raleigh.

Workforce Development Commission (cont'd)

State Superintendent June Atkinson, who established the Commission at the request of Governor Perdue, said workforce education has always been important to her. "I bring over three decades of experience to this issue having been a business education teacher, and chief consultant and director in the areas of business education, career and technical education, and instructional services. I look forward to working with Commission members to develop recommendations to ensure that workforce education is relevant to the needs of our state and economy in the 21st century."

The Commission is expected to hold four meetings over the summer to develop recommendations to present to Governor Perdue, the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, economic development boards and educational institutions. Other tentative meeting dates are June 12, July 15 and Aug. 19.

National News...

State Leaders Push for National Standards

The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers co-sponsored a meeting earlier this month to build a prototype of common national guidelines in mathematics and English-language arts. Convening representatives from 41 states, the undertaking is designed to start with rigorous math and language arts standards that are aligned with college- and career-ready expectations and made available for states to adopt voluntarily.

The idea of national standards and national tests has struggled to get off the ground over the past quarter century, starting with the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk*. Within the past few months, momentum on the issue has seemed to escalate. At the state level, Washington-based Achieve has been working to improve and align standards in 34 states that are participating in its American Diploma Project. In December, the NGA, the CCSSO, and Achieve released a report urging states to start pursuing an agenda of common standards entitled "Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S Students Receive a World Class Education" (<http://www.edweek.org/media/benchmarking%20for%20success%20dec%202008%20final.pdf>).

At the federal level, common standards have been declared a priority by the Obama administration and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Duncan has said he wants to use part of the \$5 billion in "Race to the Top" incentive funds included in the economic-stimulus package to help fuel the drive for common standards.

Following the meeting, states ready to support common standards were to be asked to put their commitment in writing within weeks. States choosing to commit to the movement will then have to figure out how to get those new, common standards adopted. This process may vary from state to state with some states needing to work with their legislatures, others through their state boards of education. Lastly, states will have to get those standards down to the district and school level.

State Budget Shortfalls Continue to Grow

With at least 43 states projecting shortfalls totaling more than \$121 billion next year, the recession continues to take a toll on state budgets. According to a survey released last week by the National Conference of State Legislatures, two-thirds of states expect budget deficits through 2011, forcing lawmakers to find further savings on top of deep cuts they've already made in the areas of education, health care, public safety and other programs. Unlike the federal government, nearly every state is legally required to balance its budget.

NCSL's report found that 19 states face shortfalls equal to or greater than 10 percent of their budgets, with Alaska and Arizona exceeding 20 percent. California has struggled to close the largest shortfall of all, nearly \$42 billion over FY 2009 and 2010. Only Iowa and Nebraska have gaps below one percent of their budgets.

Forum News...

2008-09 EPFP Class Hears from Final Speakers

As their experience comes to an end, this week EPFP fellows had the opportunity to hear from a panel of inspiring women leaders. The panel included:

- Matty Lazo-Chadderton, Director of Latino Relations, President Pro Tem's Office
- Tricia Cotham, NC House of Representatives
- Elaine Marshall, Secretary of State
- Valeria Lee, Former President of the Golden Leaf Foundation
- Linda Stephens, District Court of Appeals Judge
- Linda Suggs, Advocacy Consultant, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Jennifer Terry, Senior Vice President, Paragon Commercial Bank

The women each spoke candidly about their journey taking questions from the fellows along the way. Each shared how they felt the journey impacted the women leaders they are today.

The 2008-09 class will complete its 10-month weekly seminar sessions on May 12. The class' graduation will be held on October 27, 2009 at the Cardinal Club in downtown Raleigh. Coordinators Kendall Jordan and Jo Ann Norris are now taking applications for the 2009-10 class. If you are interested, contact either coordinator by calling 781-7833, or email them at kjordan@ncforum.org (Kendall Jordan) or jnorris@ncforum.org (Jo Ann Norris). The application period will close when twenty-five Fellows have been accepted. The program will begin mid-September 2009. Meeting every Tuesday night from 5:30 to 8:30 pm, the program will end mid-May 2010. Fellows will be expected to attend the Washington Policy Seminar in early April 2010.

Fun Facts...

Lottery Winners Required to Pay Debts

The *News and Observer* reported this week that before anyone can claim a big prize from the North Carolina Lottery, state law requires lottery officials to first check on whether the winner owes the government any money. Apparently, many people do. Since the lottery began sales in March 2006, it has helped the state collect nearly \$1.3 million in back taxes, delinquent child support, overdue student loans and other debts. For some winners, the hit is a few hundred dollars out of thousands. For others, the debt wipes out their whole prize.

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