

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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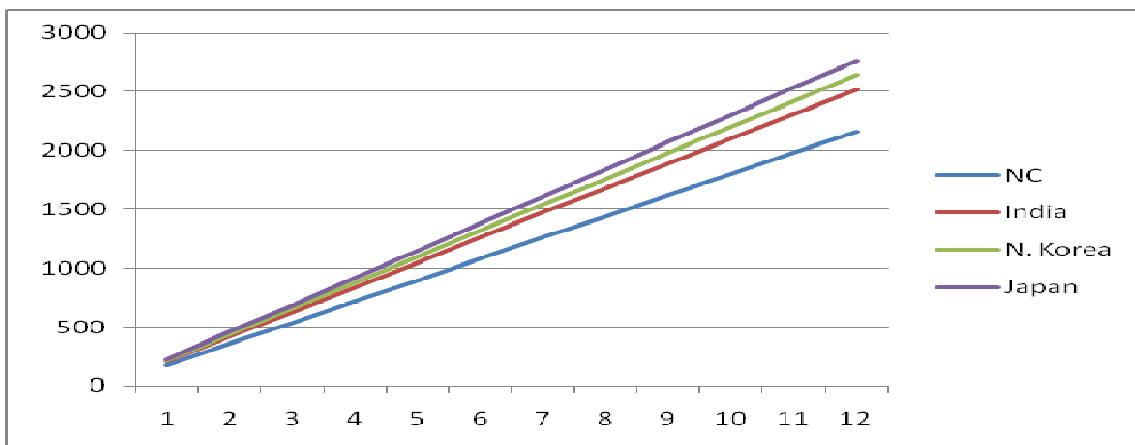
House Proposal Could Put NC's Children Further Behind

As the preliminary draft of the House education budget was unveiled on Wednesday, people throughout the education community began speaking out on the possible implications. "A sound basic education is a civil and basic right of every student in our state," said NCASA Executive Director Bill McNeal. "The House budget threatens the ability of this state to ensure that all students are equipped with the educational skills to be successful in this 21st Century environment, thus inhibiting our state's economic recovery now and in the future."

While the proposal presented to the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee allocates nearly \$932 million less than the state had originally planned to spend on K-12 education this year, it was the proposal to eliminate five instructional days from the school calendar in 2009-10 and 10 instructional days in 2010-11 that had everyone fired up.

Chairman and CEO of the State Board of Education William Harrison doesn't like the idea of a shorter school year. As he has pointed out, with students in most other industrialized countries already spend more time in school than U.S. Students, it doesn't make sense to put North Carolina's children even further behind.

In a study group released in 2006 by the Public School Forum, it was noted that North Carolina lags behind when it comes to the amount of time students spend in the classroom. Compared to India, South Korea, and Japan, North Carolina's cumulative learning deficit is between 360 and 600 days of schooling (or the daily equivalent of 2 to 3.3 full years of schooling in North Carolina).



Source: The Public School Forum's Study Group XII: Creating Internationally Competitive Schools.

House Proposal (cont'd)

While state law requires the school year be 180 days and 1,000 hours of instruction, the proposal to shorten the school year from 180 days to 175 next year would save the state \$100 million. In 2010-11, the school year would be shortened by 10 days to 170 days, saving \$200 million. Teachers and other school staff would be furloughed, creating most of the savings.

House budget subcommittees are expected to finalize their recommendations by Wednesday, May 27th. The proposed cuts to the school calendar are just a few of the key elements of the preliminary House education budget, which may be accessed at: http://ncasa.net/associations/2410/files/ProposedHouseBudget_5-20-09.pdf .

It Could Be Worse . . .

After California voters soundly rejected a package of budget-balancing propositions that were on the ballot this week, California lawmakers are now facing a \$21.3 billion deficit and have few, if any, alternatives but deep budget cuts. Unless a compromise is found by the end of June, the state could have trouble paying its bills by the end of July. It appears that less than 20% of the voters bothered to cast a vote on the proposed budget-balancing measures. Under consideration are moves to shorten the school year by up to seven days, laying off 5,000 state employees and withholding money from local governments. Tens of thousands of teachers could also face layoffs.

Study Looks at Success of North Carolina's Urban High School Graduates

The Public Education Research Institute, a component of the Wayland H. Cato, Jr. School of Education at Queens University in Charlotte, just completed a two-part study looking at the performance of freshman enrolled in the UNC system in the 2006-07 academic year. The study was designed to examine college intentions and performance of students attending public high schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system.

Study Looks at Success (cont'd)

2006 High School Seniors by District					
District	# Graduating HS	% Enrolled in UNC System	Recommended for Remedial Math	Enrolled in 1 or More Remedial Class	5 year Graduation Rate
Statewide	73,527	30.9%	8.7%	4.8%	54.1%
CMS	6,075	35.3%	10.8%	5.6%	56.2%
Durham	1,785	35.5%	16.0%	7.9%	51.0%
Fosyth	2,579	38.8%	8.1%	5.2%	53.2%
Guilford	4,048	40.0%	9.2%	5.5%	53.1%
Wake	6,799	43.7%	7.5%	3.8%	63.9%

The study used data collected by the University of North Carolina system to compare Charlotte-Mecklenburg's performance to that of Durham, Forsyth, Guilford and Wake counties. Some of the report's conclusions include:

- A lower percentage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) high school seniors, when compared to other NC urban districts, indicated intention of enrolling in one of NC's public 4-year institutions.
- It appears, as a whole, the expectation for students in Wake County to pursue a 4-year degree is higher than it is for CMS students.
- A higher percentage of Wake County students actually enrolled in one of the UNC schools than did students from CMS, Durham, Guilford, and Forsyth counties.

House Presses Secretary Duncan to Set High Bar

Rep. George Miller (D-California) believes that the U.S. Department of Education should set a high standard for deciding which states get a piece of the \$4.35 billion in discretionary "Race to the Top" funding under the economic-stimulus package. In Secretary Duncan's first appearance as secretary before the House and Labor Committee, Rep. Miller, the committee's chairman, said it would be better to give fewer states access to the money than to allocate it to those who don't have comprehensive plans for improving education.

Rep. Miller helped champion the inclusion of the Race to the Top funding in the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). To get access to the Race to the Top money, state must show that they are serious about improving teacher distribution, data systems, standards, and assessments.

House Presses Secretary Duncan (cont'd)

In addition, Secretary Duncan indicated this week that the department may have additional criteria in awarding the grants. He reported this week that the Obama administration will encourage the proliferation of charter schools by requiring states to say on their Race to the Top applications whether they have caps on the number of charter schools. He will also consider whether states are using the stimulus funding in the way Congress intended. In particular, the secretary said

75% of Aspiring Teachers in Massachusetts Fail Math Exam

For those who contend that one of the weakest areas of teacher preparation programs is the preparation of elementary teachers in mathematics, scores released this week in Massachusetts will come as no surprise. Of the 600 plus candidates taking the state's required licensing exam, only 27% passed the mathematics portion of the test that includes geometry, statistics and probability questions. Tom Scott, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, says "The high failure rate puts a shining light on a deficiency in teacher preparation programs."

Non-College Graduates Bearing Brunt of Recession

The Brookings Institute has just released a study underscoring the relationship between education and earnings. The hardest hit group by today's economic recession is composed of males who only have a high school diploma. Their unemployment rate is considerably higher than the national average while the unemployment rate for men with a college degree is only 1.4%. Further, those with only a high school degree have seen their spending power go down by \$5,000 since the 1970's. For North Carolina the findings are sobering. The bulk of unemployed men with only a high school degree were employed in manufacturing or construction jobs. With the nation's 4th highest unemployment rate, North Carolina is exhibit number one in validating the findings of the new study.

NYC Assistant Principal Dies from Swine Flu

Mitchell Wiener, assistant principal at Susan B. Anthony Intermediate School in Queens became the first New York City death linked to the swine flu virus. Wiener had been hospitalized and on a ventilator for nearly a week before his school was closed last Thursday.

NYC Assistant Principal (cont'd)

Mitchell Wiener was hired as a substitute teacher in March 1978. Serving as a mathematics teacher until 2007, he had been employed as an assistant principal at Susan B. Anthony Intermediate School (I.S. 238) for the past two years.

The city's first outbreak of swine flu occurred nearly three weeks ago, when roughly 1000 students and adults with a Catholic high school in Queens began falling ill following the return of several students from vacations in Mexico, causing the school to close. Five additional schools were to close Monday, bringing the total to 11. The latest closings will affect nearly 3,000 students. Schools are prepared to provide curriculum material online.

SC Battle over Federal Funds Continues

South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford is taking the State's General Assembly to court after lawmakers required him to accept \$350 million in disputed federal money by overriding his budget vetoes. The South Carolina Governor quickly announced the federal suite after the Senate voted 34-11 on a state budget that forces him to accept the money.

Sanford and lawmakers have battled for months over whether to include nearly \$350 million in federal money over the next two budget years. Governor Sanford has said he will not accept the money unless the state pays off an equivalent amount of debt. Lawmakers said Wednesday there was little room to negotiate with the governor, and they would welcome a lawsuit if the governor chose to ignore the new state law. State courts should decide the issue, they said.

Forum News...

Call for EPFP Applications

Applications are now being accepted for the Forum's Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP). The ten month seminar program meets weekly on Tuesday night from 5:30 to 8:30 pm from September 15, 2009 to May 11, 2010. The program addresses issues related to policy and leadership development. North Carolina boasts almost 600 EPFP alumni. The program seeks high energy individuals committed to enhancing their professional career through networking and exploring leadership and policy in the "real" world. An application may be obtained at the Forum's website. Go to www.ncforum.org and click on EPFP. The deadline is July 31st. Don't delay. Apply today!

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