

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Halifax Superintendent Headed to Chicago Public Schools

Geraldine Middleton, the superintendent of the Halifax County Schools district, has resigned her position effective September 18 to take a position with the Chicago Public School System. Middleton has led the Halifax County school district for two years.

Halifax County Public Schools has come under the scrutiny of Superior Court Judge Howard Manning, Jr., who presides over the Leandro v. NC lawsuit. Halifax test scores show that 71.3 percent of students in grades 3 through 5 are not reading at grade level and 74.3 percent are not reading at grade level in grades 6 through 8. Judge Manning has likened the poor performance to "academic genocide" and said the scores are "irrefutable evidence of a complete breakdown in academics" in the Halifax County schools."

In March, Judge Manning held a hearing and called for a state takeover of the district. Since then, state education officials have been working with the school system in a first-of-its-kind intensive effort to boost student achievement. During the hearing, Middleton repeatedly claimed that she was not seeking other employment and assured concerned parents that she would remain in the district.

Budget Impact Felt at DPI

State budget cuts have cost 26 people at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction their jobs. The 2009-10 state budget requires the state education department to drop 64 state-paid jobs to save approximately \$4.6 million.

Over the past several weeks, State Superintendent Atkinson and the Associate Superintendents have worked to identify positions to be cut. As much as possible, vacant positions were used to reach the target number of 64. In addition, fifteen workers moved to positions paid by other sources, said DPI spokeswoman Vanessa Jeter. Overall, twenty-six people have received Reduction In Force (RIF) notices. These reductions are effective Sept. 18.

NC Chamber's Education Summit is a Success!

Cynthia Marshall, the president of AT&T North Carolina and first vice chair of the Chamber, shared her emotional testimony of how education outlets propelled her to break free of poverty and violence last Friday during the North Carolina Chamber's First Annual Educational Summit. During various points of her presentation, she left the audience both aghast at the horrors of crime and cheerful about North Carolina's future.

"That's what it's about in North Carolina, our students and what they need to grow and prosper," said Lew Ebert, president and CEO of the North Carolina Chamber. "It's difficult to find a charge more important to our future." More than 200 business and education leaders gathered at the event to listen to experts, gather feedback from peers and brainstorm ideas for enhancement.

While North Carolina has one of the better education systems in the country and the dropout rate has slightly decreased, Bill Harrison, chairman of the state Board of Education, proclaimed that the state cannot be satisfied with the status quo. How that improvement is accomplished is through partnerships between the business and education communities.

That's the position taken by June Atkinson, the superintendent with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Atkinson noted that those partnerships are fostered by determination, persistence and two-way communication between both entities.

Accomplished Principal Standards Available for Public Review

The *Accomplished Principal Standards*, developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) are ready for public review. These common standards define what accomplished principal leaders should know and be able to do and will serve as the basis for a voluntary, evidence-based, national assessment and certification for accomplished principal leaders. These standards were developed by an exemplary committee of practicing principals and educational leaders representing district, state, and national organizations as well as higher education.

The *Accomplished Principal Standards* reflect the Nine Core Propositions for Educational Leaders that identify specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support accomplished practice, while emphasizing the holistic nature of educational leadership.

The *Accomplished Principal Standards* are available for public review August 14 - September 9, 2009. The public review survey can be accessed at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=wZKcjUdQTSbNIDL023gPIw_3d_3d.

For assistance or additional information about the public review process, please contact NBPTS at nominations@nbpts.org.

Conference Reminder: Hispanic Achievement Conference Approaching

The 7th annual Hispanic Achievement Conference will take place October 8th and 9th and is presented by the NC Society of Hispanic Professionals (NCSHP) in partnership with Meredith College and the NC Department of Public Instruction. A copy of the conference brochure can be found by going to: <http://thencshp.org/programs/achievement2009/ebrochure/ebrochure.html> .

A pre-conference workshop will include Yvonne Freeman Ph.D. and David Freeman, Ph.D. The Freemans' recent books include: *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers* (Heinemann, 2009), *English Language Learners: The Essential Guide* (Scholastic, 2007), and *Closing the Achievement Gap: How to Reach Limited Formal Schooling and Long Term English Learners* (Heinemann, 2002), among others.

Registration is now open for the conference and pre-conference at: http://thencshp.org/forms/achievement_registration_form.html. For more information about the conference visit their website by clicking [HERE](#) .

National News...

Duncan, Sharpton & Gingrich on Education Tour

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and civil rights leader Al Sharpton will join Education Secretary Arne Duncan on a tour of four cities to highlight the Obama administration's efforts to reform public education, spur innovation and discuss challenges facing America's school systems.

The tour, an outgrowth of their meeting with President Obama last spring, will include school visits, stakeholder meetings and media briefings. The goal of the tour is to stimulate discussion and community engagement around issues of education reform.

The tour will take them to Philadelphia on Sept. 29, New Orleans on Nov. 3, and Baltimore on Nov. 13. Duncan said the cities were chosen both for logistical reasons and for what they can show about school reform. More stops, including a rural site, will be added as the tour progresses.

Secretary Duncan was in North Carolina on Monday of this week along with US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. The two were part of a US Department of Agriculture Rural Tour. The Rural Tour was hosted by Richmond Community College in Hamlet. The two Secretaries, along with Senator Richard Burr and Congressman Larry Kissell fielded questions from an audience of over 500 people.

States Look to Expand Charter School Option

Amid a strong push by the Obama administration to ensure that states don't constrain the growth of the charter school sector, several states are considering measures on how many charters to allow, or whether to have such schools at all. Currently, a total of 40 states and the District of Columbia permit charter schools.

In recent weeks, seven states have lifted their charter school restrictions, including Tennessee which passed a law that raises the state's limit on the number of charter schools to 90 from 50 and allows more students to qualify for entry. Illinois doubled its limit on the total number of charter schools to 120, and Louisiana passed a law that simply eliminated the existing cap of 70. Rhode Island's legislature, which had considered cutting \$1.5 million from the budget for charter schools, restored that money in part to compete for the federal funds.

In North Carolina, HB 856 Modify Charter School Law looks to increase the statewide charter school cap from 100 to 106. Having passed the House of Representatives during the 2009 session, this bill is now in Senate Education and is eligible for consideration during the 2010 session.

Rhode Island Opens New Charter Focused on More Seat Time

The Segue Institute for Learning in Central Falls, RI. is advancing the notion embraced by President Obama and Secretary Arne Duncan that more seat time, a longer school year, with more hours a day at the books, will help close the education gap between urban and suburban youth.

Segue teachers will work an 11-month school year, taking vacation only during July. The teachers will have their students from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day. They will be responsible for making sure students have breakfast before they hit the books and will structure late-afternoon hours that otherwise might be prime time for mischief.

Chief operating officer Angelo Garcia says Segue will be a "full-service community school," and will reach out to parents in a number of ways. Parents will be invited to attend classes with their children two days a month. In addition, a community outreach officer will not only help to engage parents in the school, but will help to connect them with any social services or adult education they may need.

With the addition of supplementary teachers in art, computer science and American Sign Language, the core subject teachers will be able to keep class sizes to about 15 to 17 students. Opening with about 60 sixth graders, Segue plans to add one grade each year through eighth grade for a maximum of 240 students.

South Carolina Launches Dropout Prevention Pilot Program

The South Carolina Department of Education has announced a new pilot program to reduce dropout rates through early intervention. Twelve elementary and middle schools in the state will be taking part in a pilot program to meet the needs of at-risk student in lower grades. The two year program, called Early Connections, is focused on strengthening the collaboration of dropout prevention activities between high schools and their feeder elementary and middle schools.

The program, jointly sponsored by the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) center, the Education and Economic Development Act's At-Risk Student Committee and the South Carolina Department of Education's Office of Regional Services, will provide technical assistance and training in analyzing school data and developing intervention strategies to reduce the number of potential at-risk student why may fail to graduate

Did You Know...

The State Board of Community Colleges' policy committee has drafted a new policy that would allow for the admission of illegal immigrants into the state's community colleges. Under the policy, undocumented immigrants could be eligible for admission if they graduated from a U.S. high school. The immigrant students would have to pay out-of-state rates of about \$7,000 a year. Lawful U.S. residents would have priority when classrooms are crowded. A vote by the full community colleges board isn't expected until next month's meeting. The country's third-largest community college system has changed its illegal immigrant admission policy four times since 2000. The latest look comes as laid-off workers fill classrooms.

Forum News...

Call for EPFP Applications – Final Week for Applications~

Only four spots remain in this year's class of fellows 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.

Confirmed speakers/presenters for this fall's program include: Dr. Jim Johnson, Urban Investment Strategies Center, Kenan Flagler Business School; Rob Christensen, author of *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics: The Personalities, Elections, and Events that Shaped North Carolina Politics*; and Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr.

Call for EPFP Applications (cont'd)

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. Apply today! **Final application deadline is August 28th!**

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 .