

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

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## **Advocacy Group Files Suit on Behalf of Charter Schools**

The N.C. Institute for Constitutional Law has filed suit against the state and seven counties on behalf of several charter schools, parents, and students, claiming the schools are entitled to capital funding. Cleveland, Edgecombe, Halifax, Mecklenburg, Nash, Union and Rutherford counties are named as defendants in the lawsuit.

Presently the charter schools receive public funding for operating expenses and per pupil allotments just like traditional schools, but have been left out of construction and maintenance money. The advocacy group sent a letter to Mecklenburg commissioners in August, questioning the lack of capital funding for charter schools. In the suit filed in Mecklenburg Superior Court, the group argues the state constitution mandates “sound basic education” and similar funding.

*Editorial Opinion*  
*By John Dornan*

## **Kudos to the Community College Board of Directors**

The decision of the Community College System’s Board of Directors to allow children of illegal immigrants to attend North Carolina’s Community Colleges was a step in the right direction and the Board deserves credit for doing the right thing in the face of heated objections. In an era where civil discourse is rapidly deteriorating into a side show with carnival barkers like Glen Beck, South Carolina’s Joe Wilson, Keith Olbermann, and Michael Moore, it is increasingly difficult to rationally discuss the topic of immigration. Even the term “illegal immigrants” is semantically loaded. Is, for instance, a young child brought into the United States unknowingly by his/her parents an “illegal immigrant;” or would “undocumented resident” better describe their status? Semantics aside, there are two compelling reasons why the Community College decision makes sense for North Carolina.

First, this issue is not about the legal failings of adults. Rather it is about giving young people who overcame language deficiencies and, in many cases, frequent changes of schools and financial hardship, to succeed in graduating from a North Carolina High School a chance. Closing the educational doors for opportunity to these young people would be to further punish them without solving the legal problems created by their parents.

## Editorial Opinion (cont'd)

Second, North Carolina's economic future is already jeopardized by an unacceptably high rate of high school dropouts. To further shrink the educated-workforce pipeline by blocking access to education beyond high school is only to exacerbate the state's education deficit.

In an era where workers are increasingly required to think for a living that would be short sighted at best, ruinous at worst. The Community College System Board of Directors is to be commended for taking an important step in the right direction. The question now is whether the U.S. Congress is capable of reaching a consensus on a much-needed national solution to the larger issue of immigration into the United States.

## A New Addition

You may have noticed a new feature on this week's email edition of *The Friday Report*. If not, scroll up to the top and take a look at the right corner. A "Donate" button will appear in this and all subsequent *Friday Reports*. T

The Forum is pleased to distribute *The Friday Report* to over 3,000 recipients each week. Although the Forum does not charge for the subscription to *The Friday Report*, a great deal of time is dedicated to researching and writing the articles each week. We hope you will consider making a contribution to support our effort as we work to provide you with the most critical education & public policy events of the week!

## Governor Perdue Proclaims *Lights on Afterschool!* Day

Governor Perdue has proclaimed October 22, 2009, *Lights On Afterschool!* Day in support of afterschool programs that keep kids safe, promote learning, and help working families. More than 7,500 communities and 1 million Americans will celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual *Lights On Afterschool*, a nationwide rally for afterschool programs organized by the Afterschool Alliance. Programs and communities are invited to hold their own celebrations, or participate in a local event. North Carolina afterschool programs can take part in *Lights On Afterschool* and help call attention to the importance of afterschool programs, as well as build the visibility of their programs.

Afterschool programs that are planning events may contact NC CAP for posters, postcards and flashing light bulb buttons. The materials will be given away on a first-come, first-serve basis. Contact Katie Biggerstaff at [kbiggerstaff@ncforum.org](mailto:kbiggerstaff@ncforum.org) or (919) 781.6833, ext. 132 to place your order.

## *Lights on Afterschool! (cont'd)*

Additional resources may be found on the Afterschool Alliance website, including the 2009 [Lights On Afterschool Planning Kit](#) and registration database. Every registered event will receive 10 free posters to help promote their event, weekly tips on planning a successful event as well as free email reminders of available resources. Registered programs will also be entered in a drawing for a chance to win 100 books from Scholastic Afterschool [Learning](#). To sign up, locate an event in your area, or access event planning tools visit Afterschool Alliance at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa.cfm>.

## Washington County Schools Welcomes New Superintendent

The Washington County Board of Education recently hired John Farrelly, a New York native and current Assistant Superintendent in Alleghany County, as their next Superintendent. Replacing Julius Walker who is retiring after working 42 years with Washington County Schools, Farrelly will assume his new duties on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Excited to be working with the Washington County community, Farrelly will be joined in his cross state venture by his fiancé Rena Powers, also a school administrator and a North Carolina Teaching Fellow.

### Guest Editorial...Reprinted with Permission of Rob Schofield

Published: September 23, 2009

by Chris Fitzsimon; NC Policy Watch – Weekly Briefing

#### *Do we really want to go down this road?*

#### *The State Health Plan's "big stick" scheme to invade worker privacy*

Here is a new and fairly remarkable fact that seems to have escaped most North Carolinians: Next year, the controversial and troubled State Health Plan - the health insurance program that covers 650,000 state employees, retirees and their families and that's headed by [a man with a "doctoral" degree from a shuttered and disgraced diploma mill](#) - will commence a remarkably invasive new program that involves random workplace bodily searches of state employees. No, this is not a proposal. This is an actual, formal plan that has already been adopted.

Under [the program](#), employees of a private contractor hired by the State Health Plan will show up at public workplaces around the state - elementary schools, Department of Transportation garages, museums, university faculty offices, and even, apparently, the [Tobacco Research Commission](#) - and demand that employees insured under the plan submit to having their mouths swabbed for a saliva sample. The sample will then be analyzed to determine whether or not the employee has made use of products containing nicotine. If the sample comes up positive, the employee will be relegated to a less desirable and more expensive health insurance plan.

## Guest Editorial (cont'd)

In 2011, the mandatory random testing program will be expanded to test workers' "body mass index." Under this plan, only those workers whose body weight meets predetermined criteria for their height will be entitled to the more desirable insurance plan. In 2012, the standards for body size will be toughened further. Under the policy, even workers who undertake in an aggressive fitness regimen, but fail to meet the criteria, will be penalized.

### Why the big stick?

The ostensible reason for these new policies is, as you might suspect, financial. As noted above, the Plan has run into enormous financial problems in recent years. Just this past spring, the General Assembly was forced to come up with a huge emergency bailout appropriation of \$250 million just to keep the Plan solvent. Given the common wisdom that smokers and obese people are generally less healthy, it is the Plan's apparent hope to save money by incenting workers to stop smoking and lose weight.

At first blush, this argument seems to make some sense. The move to discourage smoking and to encourage healthier lifestyles has long been a part of the insurance world and is something with which most Americans are familiar - even comfortable.

A second look at this particular plan, however, raises some huge red flags. [\[more...\]](#)

## NC STEM Kicks off in the state's BRAC Region

The 10 counties surrounding Fayetteville and Fort Bragg, considered part of the state's BRAC military growth region is one of three North Carolina communities selected for a national program that promotes science and math education. NC STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is dedicated to ensuring all North Carolina students have the opportunity to engage in a rigorous, sustainable STEM education giving them a foundation for future success and providing their communities a workforce that aligns to richer economic opportunities.

A community collaborative work session held Tuesday night at 71<sup>st</sup> High School in Fayetteville kicked off the region's efforts to support successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching and learning. Through designed collaboration, local partners will make certain their students have the opportunity to participate in creative, sustainable STEM education that provides them with good choices in life and bolsters the economic strength of their community.

The state's BRAC military growth region, Lenoir County, and Davie County are the first North Carolina communities where NC STEM will focus their efforts. NC STEM will work with leadership and stakeholders from policy, industry, education, economic development, and other community sectors to create a cohesive education model suitable for each region's needs and informed by the state's needs. For more information, visit their website at: [www.ncstem.org](http://www.ncstem.org).

## **Collaborative Project Leadership Institute Begins 2009-10 Program**

Meeting for the first time during the 2009-10 school year, was the Collaborative Project's Leadership Institute which brought together all of the elementary and middle school principals, superintendents and central office administrators from the five pilot project counties: Mitchell, Caswell, Washington, Greene and Warren.

Meeting at Raleigh's Crabtree Marriott Hotel beginning on Wednesday and running through Friday, the institute focused on the project's first two years including the impact of Collaborative Project initiatives, as well as the challenges that lie ahead, and sustaining Project initiatives at the end of the three-year pilot.

Institute participants shared what their schools and districts were doing differently since participating in the pilot project. Many cited the impact the strong professional development had on their teaching staff stating they witnessed "teachers collaborating at unprecedented levels throughout the school system". Additionally, the afterschool programs in each district had made jaw dropping improvements to the systems' students labeled "at-risk". Deyton Elementary School in Mitchell County is a prime example. Led by Principal Gary Moore, Deyton's afterschool program saw 90.63% of its afterschool students experience growth in reading; and 96.88% experience growth in science.

Partnering with Jason Mooneyham, Director of Sales with Lenovo, the Collaborative Project staff wrapped up the three day meeting by announcing the opportunity for Collaborative Project district teachers to win a Lenovo tablet laptop. Teachers in each district are tasked with describing a concept for the best use of technology to increase the level of engagement in the classroom. Judged on innovation, imagination, scalability and student engagement, the winners will be announced in late January 2010.

## **Teaching Fellows Experiment with Video Conferencing**

In partnership with the Friday Institute at North Carolina State University and MCNC, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program presented its annual Local School District Screening Training via live broadcast Monday, September 14, 2009. The training has been traditionally presented in person by Fellows staff in each of the 8 Educational Regions. Typically, High School Liaison Counselors and School District Chairs come together at a site in their designated region, hosted by one of the college campuses in the Fellows program. This year, due to budget restraints and travel restrictions, many counselors were unable to make the trip to a regional site.

## Teaching Fellows Experiment (cont'd)

The Friday Institute along with MCNC provided space, staff and technology that allowed the training to be delivered simultaneously to all regions across the state. Twenty-nine locations hosted a video conference of the training and another 45 received the training through a video streaming process. Sites hosting a video conference were able to ask questions directly to the presenters in Raleigh at the end of the training and those hosting video streaming were provided with an email address to send their questions.

The training was recorded and is archived on MCNC's website. Schools that were unable to view the training on September 14th were provided with a URL link to the site to view the training at a later date. Along with reduction of costs, providing the training in this method ensures that all counselors and chairs across the state are receiving the same information.

## Reminder: Teaching Fellows Scholarship Application Available

The application for the Teaching Fellows Scholarship Loan is available on the Teaching Fellows webpage at [www.ncteachingfellows.org](http://www.ncteachingfellows.org). The \$26,000 scholarship is for 500 current high school seniors who want to become great teachers. Fellows are given a uniquely enhanced teacher preparation program which includes leadership, travel, early school experiences, and special summer opportunities. The program seeks talented students who want to make a difference in the lives of others and have a passion for learning. The deadline for submission is October 16<sup>th</sup> by the close of the school day. The application and references must be turned into the high school Teaching Fellows Liaison Counselor. Don't delay. Apply today!

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