

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

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## **Senator Hagan Co-Chairs Rural Education Roundtable**

This Tuesday, North Carolina's Senator, Kay Hagan, Co-Chaired a Senate Roundtable on Rural Education that heard from fifteen organizational and educational leaders including the Executive Director of the Public School Forum. The roundtable session was attended by Senators from a number of states including Arkansas, Nevada, Montana, Minnesota and others that have large numbers of rural school systems. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid attended the roundtable and addressed the group.

The Forum's Executive Director, John Dornan, said, "It is clear that there are members of the Senate, including Senator Hagan, who understand the challenges of rural school systems. In their opening comments they talked about the difficulties of attracting and keeping high-quality instructional personnel, transportation over long distances and inadequate resources."

In addition to Dornan, other panelists included the Chairman of the National Afterschool Association, the President of the National Rural Education Association, the President-Elect of the national PTA, the Chairman of Rebuild America's Schools, the President of the Rural Community College Alliance, the President of the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition, the President of the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools and others.

## **State Board Considers English I in Middle Schools**

This week the State Board of Education took up for consideration the allowance of high school English I in middle schools. While board member Patricia Willoughby was concerned with "stifling the children", NC Independent Colleges and Universities President Hope Williams expressed her concerns to the board that such an expansion may leave high school seniors without a much needed English / Writing course in their final year of high school. After much discussion, Board members approved the honors course policy revisions and considerations for middle school students to take English I courses (GCS2).

In addition, board members heard updates on key initiatives being handled within the Department of Public Instruction. The ACRE report, District and School Transformation Report, and CEDARS report laid out for board members the progress, timelines and impact the programs are likely to make in the coming school year.

## State Board (cont'd)

As Chair of the state's e-Learning Commission, Lieutenant Governor Walter Dalton reported to the full board on Thursday the progress and work of the Commission. Thanking Joe Freddoso, MCNC President / CEO and the Friday Institute for their continued involvement, Lt. Governor Dalton credited the success of the Commission to its "very strong public/ private partnerships."

## Charter School Ad Hoc Committee Reviews Statutes

The Charter School Ad Hoc Committee met on Wednesday to review charter school statutes, the operations of the Office of Charter Schools, and the recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on charter Schools. State Board Chair Bill Harrison highlighted the two recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission which he felt were key issues to be reviewed by the committee; (1) increasing the cap with the use of a "smart cap" of 6 schools per year, and (2) the recommendation that low growth and low performing charter schools be given one year to demonstrate performance or have their charter pulled.

Taking a view slightly contrary to that held by the State Board, Harrison shared with the committee, "I am not interested in increasing the cap." Harrison concluded the meeting by providing a timeline for the committee's work. By early next week, the committee will begin work on the two contradicting policies, streamlining the renewal policy, and reviewing the budget provided by the Office of Charter Schools.

## WUNC series highlights high school innovation in Warren

Nearly half of the students in North Carolina attend rural schools - only one state in the country has more. For decades, the formula that funds schools at the state and national level has favored urban and suburban schools. That has led to a crisis in North Carolina's small communities: historically high drop-out rates, low test scores, and a high teacher turnover rate.

WUNC Reporter Dave DeWitt visited Warren County to highlight the county's efforts to raise student expectations and achievement through high school innovation. There reports are part of the on-going [North Carolina Voices series](#) from North Carolina Public Radio - WUNC.

## WUNC Series Highlights High School (cont'd)

Reporter Dave DeWitt explored issues of high turnover among teachers, high levels of poverty and the wide gaps that tend to divide schools in many rural counties from the state's more affluent urban and suburban districts. The third segment of the three-part series focused on Warren County's two innovative high schools as a promising solution to those kinds of stubborn problems. The two schools, Warren New Tech High School and Warren Early College High School, are both partners with the North Carolina New Schools Project.

Click [here](#) to listen to the entire series along with extended interviews with Early College Principal Danylu Hundley, State Superintendent June Atkinson, NCNSP President Tony Habit, and others.

## NC STEM Kicks off in the Davie County

The Davie County NCSTEM Community Collaborative kick-off on Monday, September 28<sup>th</sup> was a dynamic, high energy event attended by over 400 engaged Davie County citizens. Engaging speakers challenged community leaders, parents, teachers and students to collaborate on developing innovative solutions to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in STEM education.

Larry Colbourne, President of the Mebane Charitable Foundation was the master of ceremonies for this kick-off event. During his opening remarks, Mr. Colbourne established a context for the activities of the evening: “We are here to engage, ask questions, and to be part of the vision for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education in our public school system.” Video of Mr. Colbourne’s opening remarks and of the 2 keynote speakers have been posted to the Davie County YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/daviecounty>.

Davie County, the state’s BRAC military growth region, and Lenoir 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).

## Wake Ed Partnership Honors Educational “Heros”

The Wake Education Partnership honored the late state Sen. Vernon Malone when it handed out its annual awards Thursday. Malone, who died in April, was praised for his longtime work in integrating and strengthening the Wake County school system. The partnership gave its newly renamed Vernon Malone Friend of Education Award to Dargan and Blount Williams in recognition of their support of Wake's schools.

## Wake Ed Partnership (cont'd)

The Partnership also honored long-time educator and current UNC Board of Governors member Dr. Dudley Flood with its first Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Flood served as a public school educator in North Carolina beginning in the 1950s. He held positions as a teacher and principal before going to the NC Department of Public Instruction as Director of the Division of Human Relations and later Associate State superintendent. Dr. Flood has received many honors and awards, and was recently named the ninth recipient of the Jay Robinson Leadership Award given by the Public School Forum of NC.

## NC - EPFP Alumni Named to Governor Perdue's Staff

An education advocate is joining Gov. Beverly Perdue's staff as her director of outreach to constituent and religious groups. Perdue announced Friday the hiring of Angella Dunston as director of faith and citizen outreach. Perdue's office said she'll make about \$70,000 a year. Dunston is a former Warren County school board member who worked the past nine years at the North Carolina Justice Center's Education and Law Project. Dunston, a 2000-01 North Carolina EPFP fellow, succeeds Donice Harbor, who died in July at age 36 from breast cancer.

### *National News ...*

## States Labeled as 'High Risk' on Stimulus Spending

According to a report issue last week by the Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Department of Education has identified four states as "high risk" for economic stimulus spending problems. California, Illinois, Michigan, and Texas have been singled out for intensive technical assistance by the Education Department to help them implement good practices in using the federal aid. The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico also made the department's list.

For those states and the other jurisdictions, the Education Department is concerned about their use of all stimulus aid, from State Fiscal Stabilization Fund money to smaller grant programs. To help, the department will provide the four states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico with financial and programmatic expertise, which may include site visits.

The department has also identified an additional 12 states as posing a "high risk" in the use of Title I funds. They include Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Oklahoma.

## IEL Seeks National EPFP Director

The Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) seeks a senior-level professional to direct the Education Policy Fellowship Program and related leadership development and policy work. The Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) is IEL's flagship leadership development program with strong network of 6,500 alumni across the country. EPFP works as a partnership between IEL and fourteen state-based sites. The Program Director must be highly knowledgeable in education issues and related policy areas with strong oral and written communication skills, experience with program management, and have demonstrated success working collaboratively with teams and organizations. This position reports directly to the President of IEL. Salary commensurate with experience. The full job description can be found by [clicking here](#).

### *Forum News...*

## EPFP Graduation Reminder

The NC EPFP Annual Graduation Celebration honoring the 2008-09 EPFP Graduates will be held on **Tuesday, October 27**, at the Cardinal Club, which is located on the twenty-eighth floor, Wachovia Building, 150 Fayetteville Street, Raleigh, NC. The reception will begin at 5:30 pm, followed by the dinner and program at 6:30 pm. The keynote speaker will be Mrs. Muriel Summers, principal of A.B. Combs Elementary School in Raleigh. Mrs. Summers is featured in Stephen Covey's best-selling book, "*The Leader in Me*" and was recently featured in an article in the News & Observer. There are a limited number of tickets available for non-EPFP Fellows/Sponsors on a first come, first serve basis. Tickets are \$40. For more information, please contact Claire Ancelet at 919-781-6833 or email her at [cancelet@ncforum.org](mailto:cancelet@ncforum.org).

### *Did You Know...*

## Census Data Shows Decline in NC Household Income

Medium household income in North Carolina has declined more than \$3,500 over the past eight years, according to newly released census figures. The data also indicate the percentage of households below the poverty line increased by 2.3 percent during that period. The Office of Management and Budget defines the poverty threshold based on the Consumer Price Index.

## Census Data (cont'd)

In 2008, the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four was \$22,025; for a family of three, \$17,163; for a family of two, \$14,051; and for unrelated individuals, \$10,991. More than 12 percent of North Carolina residents are living in poverty, the figures show. The U.S. Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey includes social, housing demographic and select economic data collected throughout 2008 for areas with populations of 65,000 or more. The median household income statewide in 2008 was \$46,549, down from \$50,155 in 2000. Both figures are in 2008 dollars.

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