

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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30 Schools Left Out of Assistance Plan

Thirty of 65 elementary schools in North Carolina whose test scores put them in the bottom 5 percent in academic performance do not qualify for extra help from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Despite their low scores, their students' scores improved enough from one year to the next, a measure of academic performance, so the schools do not qualify for special assistance or the label of "low-performing". For schools tagged low-performing, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction sends evaluation teams to suggest improvements.

The current system's classifications create a situation in which two schools in the same district can be performing at about the same level, but only one school is offered state assistance. For example Lake Forest Academy in New Hanover County, the school with the lowest scores in the state, also gets not state help.

DPI plans to remedy the problem by hiring additional staff to focus on elementary and high schools that were left off the low-performing list. The agency received an additional \$2.5 million to help struggling schools and districts improve. The division that focuses on improving lagging schools will get to add 10 to 15 people to the 70-member staff. In addition, DPI is working on a new way to assess schools that takes into account both general performance as well as year-by-year changes, so that schools are offered the help they need.

Madison Co. School Wins Blue Ribbon Award

Brush Creek Elementary (Madison County Schools) was recently named a 2009 *No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon* school by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Brush Creek Elementary is among 264 public and 50 private schools nationwide being recognized for helping all students achieve at high levels and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap..

In announcing the schools, Secretary Duncan said, "These Blue Ribbon Schools have shown that all children can learn with appropriate supports. These schools are places where students are challenged to meet high expectations with the active support of teachers, parents and the community."

Madison Co. School (cont'd)

For the past 27 years, this prestigious program has honored more than 6,100 of the nation's most successful schools. Schools selected for this prestigious award model excellence in leadership, teaching, curriculum, student achievement and parental involvement. In 2002, Department officials announced that schools singled out for national honors must also reflect the goals of the nation's new education reforms for high standards and accountability found under *No Child Left Behind*.

Two representatives from the school will be honored during a National Recognition Ceremony scheduled for Nov. 3 in Washington, DC. They will receive a plaque and a flag signifying their No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School status.

Hunt Institute Seeks Research Coordinator

The James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, an institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is seeking a Research Coordinator. The Hunt Institute works at the intersection of politics and policy to provide leaders with evidence-based information on public education policy issues.

The Research Coordinator will conduct primary and secondary research on public education policy issues and analyze the Hunt Institute's work as directed by the Director of Research & Evaluation. The incumbent will present findings and analysis to Hunt Institute principals and clients through issue briefs, white papers, and reports.

The successful candidate will have knowledge of state and federal education policy with a high awareness of research in the field. S/he will be able to provide information cogently and succinctly in a time-sensitive atmosphere.

Qualifications include a Master's degree plus three years related work experience (or a combination of education and experience) in education research, public policy analysis, and/or program evaluation. Apply online at <http://jobs.unc.edu/1001957>. Please attach resume and salary history to your online application.

Task Force Looks at Teacher License Application

Last weekend the *Wilmington Star-News* reported that nearly half of the 289 teacher license revocations and suspensions in North Carolina over the past decade were for sexual misconduct. While the state does not currently require background checks for teacher's license applicants, a state task force of veteran educators and legal experts has been meeting for more than a year to examine problems with the current license system and reporting practices.

Their report, while not complete, includes recommendations such as fingerprinting of teachers when they apply for a state license and upping the number of ethics questions on the application from two to twenty. It would also increase the standards on reportable offenses to inappropriate interaction of a sexual or romantic nature, instead of just sexual. The final report will be presented to the State Board of Education and Superintendent June Atkinson later this month.

Panthers Player to Speak Out on Education

Rowan Partners for Education would like to invite you to attend their October 15 Education Summit at Jesse Carson High School in Rowan County. In an effort to attract more parents and businesses to their 3rd annual Education Summit, Mike Minter, retired Carolina Panther will be their keynote motivational speaker.

Principals from all 35 public schools in Rowan County have submitted volunteer needs for their particular schools. After the presentation and call to action, participants will have the opportunity to speak with school representatives and sign up to volunteer as well as meet Mike Minter at the reception. The event is free and no reservations are required.

National News ...

CA Study Finds Dropouts Cost \$1.1 Billion Annually

The California Dropout Research Project at UC Santa Barbara has found that high school dropouts, who are more likely to commit crimes than their peers with diplomas, cost the state roughly \$1.1 billion annually in juvenile crime costs while still minors. The study, released two weeks ago found that cutting the dropout rate in half would prevent 30,000 juvenile crimes and save \$550 million each year.

According to the California Department of Education, nearly 19% of students don't graduate from high school. In Los Angeles County, the figure is more than one in five, and at some L.A. schools, fewer than half of students graduate within four years.

CA Study (cont'd)

“The connection between dropping out of school and juvenile crime is very clear,” said Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer. Dyer and others have urged the govern to sign SB 651, which would require the state Department of Education to produce an annual report that accurately depicts the number of students not finishing school. “Dropout prevention is crime prevention,” said Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca. “Schools need better tools for identifying potential dropouts so they can target interventions at the kids who need them most.”

DC Launches Rigorous Teacher Evaluation System

D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee recently launched a rigorous evaluation system that will make some District teachers among the first in the nation to have their job security tied to standardized test scores. “Academic progress must be measured by growth,” Rhee said. “By using value-added analysis we can finally be able to consistently reward and recognize the significant contributions of every adult in a school building.”

Rhee is investing \$4 million in the system, called IMPACT, which will also assess teachers against a detailed new framework of requirements and guidelines that cover a range of factors including classroom presence and how carefully they check for student understanding of material.

During the initial year only reading and math teachers in grades 4 through 8, fewer than 20 percent of the District’s 3,800 classroom teachers, will be evaluated on the basis of growth on the annual District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS). Student value-added will account for half of their evaluation.

The majority of the other half, and the bulk of the evaluations for teachers in non-testing grades, will be based on an elaborate new “teaching and learning framework” introduced at the beginning of the school year. Over the course of five classroom observations, teachers will be scored in 22 areas across nine categories, including clarity in defining a lesson’s objective and instilling in students a belief that hard work leads to success.

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.

Teaching Fellows Scholarship Approaches

The application for the Teaching Fellows Scholarship Loan is available on the Teaching Fellows webpage at 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 16th 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!

Did You Know...

Raleigh Ranks #1 in "Smart Cities"

According to the Daily Beast, Raleigh-Durham leads the nation as the "Smartest City". The Daily Beast, dedicated to news and commentary, culture, and entertainment, this week tackled ranking 55 cities based on collective brainpower. They started by ranking only metropolitan areas (the cities and their suburbs) of 1 million people or more, using Census data, with the definition of each greater metropolitan area defined by Nielsen.

Raleigh Ranks #1 (cont'd)

They then divided the criteria into two halves: half for education, and half for intellectual environment. The education half encompassed how many residents had bachelor's degrees (35 percent weighting) and graduate degrees (15 percent). The intellectual environmental half had three subparts. First, looking at nonfiction book sales (25 percent), as tracked by Nielsen BookScan, the nation's leading provider of accurate point-of-sale data, which tracks roughly 300,000 titles each week. They focused on nonfiction as an imperfect proxy for intellectual vigor, because overall sales are dominated by fiction works that, while entertaining, aren't always particularly thought-provoking. They also measured the ratio of institutions of higher education (15 percent), as defined by the federal government—different than just measuring college degrees, this acknowledges that universities don't just churn out diplomas, but instead drive the intellectual vigor of cities. Finally, many studies link intelligence and political engagement, so they weighed this, too, as measured by the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots in the last presidential election (10 percent). (Our relatively small weighting acknowledges that numerous other local factors can affect turnout.)

Once they had all these comparable, per-capita figures, they ranked the cities in each category, assigning 10 points to those near the very top, and 0 to the bottom, with scores allocated between in a broad bell curve. They then added the totals, and multiplied by two, which made for a perfect score of 200, a wash-out score of 0, and an average score right at 100—close to the exact parameters of a classic IQ test. To view the complete list, [click here](#).

BYOR: Bring Your Own Roll

Students at a St. John's girls' primary school in Carrigaline, Ireland were asked to bring their own supplies including rolls of toilet paper in an effort to save money. Catherine O'Neill, the school's principal, said, in a letter to parents, "from time to time we will request your daughter to bring in a toilet roll to her class teacher. These rolls will be specifically for your daughter's class and will be dispensed by the class teacher."

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