

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Friday Report Factoid of the Week

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg is estimated to have spent between \$85 and \$100 million in his re-election bid.

- That amount of money equals a 2% across-the-board salary increase for North Carolina's 95,000 teachers.
- Political commentators estimate that a candidate for Governor of California, a state with over twice the population of New York City, will need at least \$30 million to run a respectable campaign.

Durham Superintendent Resigns, Takes National Position

The superintendent of Durham Public Schools, Dr. Carl Harris, resigned from his position to take a job with the U.S. Department of Education. Harris will take office as deputy assistant secretary of education for Policy and Strategic Initiatives after serving as Durham's school superintendent for over three years.

Harris is the fourth North Carolinian to hold a national position in education in recent years. Dr. Henry Johnson, a former employee at the Department of Public Instruction and with the Johnston County School System served as an Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education during the Clinton Administration. Former Education Advisor to Governor Hunt, Tom Houlihan, headed up the Chief State School Officers Organization, the national organization representing State School Superintendents around the country, until his retirement. And John Wilson, the former President and Executive Director of the North Carolina Association of Educators, is currently the Executive Director of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teacher organization.

Pitt Co Ed Foundation Hosts Executive Briefing on Education

This Thursday over seventy business, educational and community leaders gathered in Pitt County for an executive briefing on education that featured Phil Kirk, the Chair of the Forum Board, and John Dornan, the Forum's Executive Director. The briefing was hosted by the Pitt County Education Foundation.

The focus of the briefing was the state of education after twenty-five years of school reform efforts. Major emphasis was placed on the continuing challenges facing North Carolina's schools and the importance of business and community support of schools.

The Pitt County Education Foundation is one of the state's longest established education foundations. Its Chairman is H.L. Stephenson and its Executive Director is Frances Young. Larry Seigler, a longtime member of the Forum Board, also serves on the Foundation's Board.

The Foundation provides extensive support to the Pitt County schools. During the 2008-09 school year it contributed over \$167,000 to the teachers and students of Pitt County Schools in the form of mini-grants, scholarships, special programs and projects. It also supports teachers pursuing National Board Certification and acts as the financial agent for a variety of school support programs including Communities in Schools.

NC Named Nation's 'Top Business Climate'

Governor Beverly Perdue announced this week that North Carolina remains the state with the "Top Business Climate," according to Site Selection magazine. It is the fifth year in a row and the eighth time in nine years that the state has taken the top honor in the annual ranking by Site Selection, one of the nation's premier magazines for economic development.

"Companies know that in North Carolina they will find top-quality talent, world-class infrastructure, a pro-business environment, and premier education institutions. North Carolina is simply a great place to do business," Perdue said.

Site Selection Editor-in-Chief Mark Arend agreed that North Carolina's winning streak "demonstrates that businesses are finding in the state what they need to succeed." He added, "The synergy between North Carolina's research parks, corporations, communities, and economic developers at the state and local levels is a major factor in this year's top ranking."

Site Selection magazine's annual "[Top Business Climate](#)" rankings are based on quantitative and qualitative factors that corporate site-seekers, those who help companies expand or relocate, say they consider most important. Fifty percent of the ranking comes from a survey of corporate site selection executives who were asked to rank their top 10 states, and 50 percent is based on four measures of new plant activity as tracked by Site Selection in its "New Plant Database."

Wake School Board Majority Shifts

One of the most closely watched school board elections in North Carolina was resolved this week as another neighborhood school advocate easily won a runoff election, insuring that neighborhood school proponents had gained the majority of seats on the Wake County school board.

The election was seen by many as a referendum on Wake County's diversity policies which were intended to insure that not more than 40% of a school's student population was made up of students coming from low income homes. That policy has resulted in an extensive use of bussing to achieve balance in the schools. It also has resulted in Wake County having one of the nation's most extensive network of magnet schools, many of which were designed to attract suburban young people to inner city schools.

Over time, opponents of bussing students have become more vocal. Their numbers also grew as Wake's soaring population growth resulted in frequent student reassignments as new schools were built and attendance boundaries changed.

The issue came to a head in this year's school board races. Organized groups, including the Republican Party, supported a slate of candidates advocating a return to neighborhood school assignment patterns. With the runoff election win, that slate now holds a 5 vote majority on Wake's 9 person school board.

While it is clear that Wake's policies are about to change, there are many more chapters yet to be written about diversity practices in the county. Even before the runoff election took place the NCAAP threatened legal action if a return to neighborhood schools results in low-income minority students being concentrated in inner city schools. Rev. Barber, the President of the NCAAP, contends that re-segregation of the Wake County Schools would run contrary to the constitutional right guaranteeing all children a sound basic education.

CMS Students Show Gains Reversing Past Low Performance

Charlotte Observer reporter Ann Doss Helms began digging into just released school report data this week and found that black and low-income teens in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) are outperforming state averages and their counterparts in Wake County. That is a striking reversal from student performance outcomes in recent years when Charlotte was charged with creating "educational genocide" by Judge Manning who presides over the Leandro decision. [Click here](#) to see the Helms' article reporting on Charlotte performance gains.

NC Decision to Change Graduation Requirements Attracts National Attention (Not Altogether Flattering Nat'l Attention)

The following article appeared in the November 5 issue of "Education Gadfly," a widely read electronic newsletter issued by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

High school diplomas go retro

In perhaps the worst decision since the resurrection of the legwarmer, the North Carolina General Assembly has effectively granted retroactive diplomas to scores of high school seniors who failed graduation tests. Apparently to cut costs (though how, exactly, is not self-evident), the Tarheel legislature has eliminated the requirement that students pass state graduation tests in math, English, and computer skills. But in an odd, and seemingly unnecessary twist, they've made the measure retroactive to 1981. Paging Jim Hunt (who authorized the state board of education to institute the graduation test requirement): One of your reforms has just been sent the way of the side ponytail. It's not clear how many students will take advantage of the new rules, since only those who completed all other graduation requirements save passing the tests are eligible, but the measure is certainly not going to be much of a money-saver. Districts will now have to spend time and dollars to determine who is eligible for a diploma; this will be particularly difficult for non-graduates from more than five years ago, as the state's present data system was not in place then. Don Martin, Superintendent of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school board called the move just another "unfunded mandate" and "tedious." But we're left wondering about the greater repercussions on North Carolina's work force. Will students retroactively be able to get into UNC? Retroactively earn their lost income? Retroactively attend senior prom? The potential chaos is endless.

Forum Board Member, Ann Denlinger is Honored

Congratulations to Dr. Ann Denlinger, who this week was recognized by the Academy of Women Awards in the area of education. Created in 1983 by supporters of the area YWCA, the Academy of Women Awards celebrate the achievements of women of distinction in our region. These women leaders positively impact our communities and are among the most accomplished and dedicated individuals in their respective fields.

From her first teaching assignment in 1966 at the newly integrated school in downtown Raleigh, Dr. Denlinger's career can be viewed within the framework of eliminating racism and empowering women in education. With confidence and an understanding of each child's potential, she moved quickly through the ranks of principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent in various school systems.

Forum Board Member (cont'd)

Today, as president of the Wake Education Partnership, she leads the non-profit's work with the business community, elected officials, and educators. In addition, Dr. Denlinger serves on the Public School Forum's Board of Directors and she continues to persevere to provide all children with equal opportunities as well as with instructional and financial resources to assist them in the learning process.

International News...

UK Aims to Turn Schools into Community Hubs

By next year, all of England's 23,000 public school will become "extended schools" open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. throughout the year. The campaign to turn all schools into community hubs was a key education priority of Mr. Blair's administration, which aimed both to make schools a place of learning and to give them a central role in the community.

The schools in England offer day care, after-school activities, social services such as health care, and central spots for communities to gather. "The school should become the center for the support and nurture of the future generation, and a hub for the whole community," said Mr. Blair, who served as prime minister from 1997 to 2007 and is currently a visiting professor at Yale University.

Key features of England's Extended Schools program include:

- A [varied menu of activities](#) (including study support, play/recreation, sport, music, arts and crafts and other special interest clubs, volunteering and business and enterprise activities), in a safe place, for primary and secondary schools
- [childcare](#) 8:00am — 6:00pm, 48 weeks a year for primary schools
- [parenting support](#) including family learning
- [swift and easy access](#) to targeted and specialist services such as speech and language therapy
- Community access to facilities including [adult learning, ICT and sports facilities](#).

These will often be provided beyond the school day but not necessarily by teachers or on the school site.

Forum News...

Forum Closed Wednesday for Veteran's Day

The Public School Forum office will be closed on Wednesday, November 11th and will reopen on Thursday. Have a wonderful and relaxing Veteran's Day.

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 .