

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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NC Receives Average Scores on US Chamber Report Card

A report card issued Monday by the U.S. Chamber on state-level innovation in education found North Carolina lagging in several key areas including finance and school management. The report, "Leaders and Laggards," uses state data and existing and original research to assign letters grades to states, based on seven indicators of innovation: school management, finance, hiring and evaluation of teachers, removal of ineffective teachers, data, "pipeline to postsecondary" (or high school quality), and technology.

The most disturbing news was that North Carolina scored in the bottom five states (receiving a "D" grade) in the area of finance. Scoring higher than only New Jersey, West Virginia, Alabama and Rhode Island, the report indicates that North Carolina received its poor mark for the simplicity of its state funding mechanism and received an average score for the online accessibility of its financial data. In addition, the state received a low score for its lack of a performance pay program for teachers.

In all, North Carolina received five Bs, one C and one D. To view the report in its entirety along with an interactive map, visit: www.uschamber.com/09reportcard/.

Race to the Top Point System and Budget Guidance Released

According to final regulations released yesterday by the U.S. Department of Education, for a shot at the \$4 billion in grants from the federal Race to the Top Fun (RTTT), states will need to make a strong case for their education reform agenda, demonstrate significant buy-in from local school systems, and develop plans to evaluate teachers and principals based on student performance.

To win funding, states will have to do much more than lift their charter school caps, or remove data firewalls between student and teacher data, said Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education. Bids will be rated on a novel [federal point system](#), which Secretary Duncan approved. A perfect bid will score 500 points and could be worth millions of dollars.

Race to the Top (cont'd)

According to [nonbinding estimates](#) provided by the U.S. Department of Education, each winning state's share of the RTTT funds will depend on its population of children ages 5-17. At the high end are the four biggest states: California, Florida, New York and Texas, which could get between \$350 million and \$700 million each. North Carolina qualifies as a category 2 state with the potential of winning between \$200 million and \$400 million.

Governor Perdue Launches Race to the Top Website

This week Governor Bev Perdue launched www.racetothetop.nc.gov and called upon North Carolinians to participate in the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative. In addition to providing information about North Carolina's RTTT efforts, the new website seeks ideas and suggestions from the public regarding new education innovations and reforms.

As part of Race to the Top requirements, each state must submit an application from the Governor and signed by the Chairman of State Board of Education and the Chief State School Officer. The application must assess the state's current education reform efforts and build on those by presenting a comprehensive plan for improving student outcomes in four areas:

- Internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments.
- Development of data systems that measure success and improve instruction.
- Supporting effective teachers and leaders.
- Turning around low-performing schools.

SREB Vice President Challenges Legislators

Rep. Doug Yongue, Co-Chair, Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, has recently been elected Vice-President of the advisory committee of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). On Monday of this week, Rep. Yongue recognized Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President of SREB at the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. Mr. Bottoms made a presentation to the members on how to keep middle grades students on the path to success in high school and ultimately graduate. He strongly suggested that the key was to improve the instruction of math and science in the middle grades. He gave four ways to middle grades achievement.

- 1) Meet readiness standards for high school in reading and math
- 2) Close achievement gaps
- 3) Meet national averages for number of students at NAEP Proficient level; all students at Basic or higher
- 4) Prepare students to enroll in Algebra I or be ready for it by the end of the eighth grade.

SREB (cont'd)

Mr. Bottoms shared a sobering finding for the “ninth grade bulge” in North Carolina. He stated that for every 100 eighth graders in North Carolina in 2006, there were 115 ninth graders in 2007...15 more students who failed to pass grade nine. Unfortunately, the highest grade for dropouts is the ninth grade. He then offered a series of things schools are doing to improve middle grade achievement. It all begins with teacher knowledge of math and science content. Mr. Bottoms gave seven actions for improving middle grades.

- 1) Make adolescent reading a priority
- 2) Accelerate curriculum for struggling students
- 3) Better prepare students for Algebra I by grade eight or nine
- 4) Teach inquiry-based science
- 5) Support professional development of teachers and school principals
- 6) Build student aspirations for college, advanced training and careers- education planning, and
- 7) Develop and adopt a vision for the middle grades.

Mr. Bottoms then gave very specific steps North Carolina could take to improve middle grades for each of the above seven actions. Throughout his presentation, he showed comparisons between North Carolina, Maryland, and Texas. In most cases, the other states' numbers were higher than North Carolinas. For more information, you may contact Gene Bottoms at gene.bottoms@sreb.org or Yvonne Thayer, Director, Making Middle Grades Work at Yvonne.thayer@sreb.org.

Legislators to Address Childhood Obesity

Representative Doug Yongue, a retired educator, and Senator Bill Purcell, a licensed doctor, are hoping to use their backgrounds to find realistic solutions as co-chairs of the Legislative Task Force on Childhood Obesity. “In the United States, about a third of our younger population is obese and approximately the same percentage is on the verge of being overweight. It is just a serious problem that is running the health-care costs up, explained Rep. Yongue. Other members of the legislative committee include Senators Berger, Dannelly, Davis, Preston, and Tillman. Representatives include Brown, England, Grady, Hughes and Weiss.

Obesity is a condition affecting many residents in North Carolina. The 2007 North Carolina Child Health Report Card states in 2008, 15.4 percent of children ages two to four, 25.7 percent of children ages five to 11, and 28.5 percent of children ages 12 to 18 are overweight. The 2009 report finds only 44.3 percent of high schoolers were physically active for 60 minutes or more a day for at least five days a week.

Superintendent Gorman Unveils CMS's New Strategic Plan

This week Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) announced the new CMS strategic plan. The new strategic plan includes several big changes. It has two major goals: effective teacher and leadership and performance management. The new plan de-emphasizes teacher graduate degrees and tenure credentials and instead emphasizes student achievement linking pay for performance. [Click here](#) for additional information about the new strategic plan.

Did You Know...

Economy's Impact is Being Felt Everywhere

Some 40,000 students will be unable to attend the California State University system in the next year and a half because of enrollment cutbacks. The following seven Cal State campuses are each predicting a 10.8 percent enrollment decline, the highest among the system's 23 institutions.

- San Diego 3,065
- Long Beach 3,044
- Fullerton 2,945
- Northridge 2,787
- San Francisco 2,537
- Sacramento 2,488
- San Jose 2,433

Forum News...

The Honorable Judge Manning Addresses EPFP Fellows

This week NC EPFP fellows had the rare opportunity of listening to the history behind the Leandro Case from none other than Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard E. Manning Jr. The case began back in 1994 with eleven North Carolina counties (Hoke, Vance, Robeson, Cumberland, Halifax, Asheville City, Buncombe, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Wake, Durham, and Forsyth) challenging the idea that the State was not providing a "sound basic education" as is guaranteed in our State's Constitution.

The Honorable Judge Manning (cont'd)

In July 1997, Judge Manning was appointed by then Chief Justice Mitchell to preside over *Leandro v. North Carolina*, in which he was tasked with determining if the State of North Carolina was meeting its Constitutional obligation to provide North Carolina's school children with the opportunity to obtain a sound basic education. Judge Manning heard evidence, tried the case, and in 2000 wrote a 190+ page decision ruling that the State had failed to meet its constitutional obligations and needed to implement strategically targeted plans to improve the quality of education. Specifically, the Judge ruled that the Constitution required, at a minimum, that each child be afforded the opportunity to be taught by a certified, competent teacher, in a school managed by a certified competent principal with the necessary resources available to support the instructional program within that school.

In July 2004, the North Carolina Supreme Court largely affirmed that decision and Judge Manning continues his fight today to see that the State is carrying out its obligations as set out in our State's Constitution. The Judge continues to schedule hearings throughout the year in which he has turned his focus to that of student performance, failing test scores, and the need for turnaround teams in struggling schools. The most recent hearing, held in late October was to place in the court's record the impact the State's economy is having on school systems and their ability to continue to carry out their Constitutional obligations. As Judge Manning will explain, "I will either retire or die by this case. Neither of which I plan to do anytime soon."

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