

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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'Tis the Season . . .



If you, like many, tend to make end-of-the-year donations to charitable organizations of your choice, we hope you will consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the Public School Forum. Your contribution will help offset the cost of producing the weekly *Friday Report* as well as enabling the Forum to send thousands of readers the *Forum Report*, our quarterly newspaper, and special reports on topical issues. From all of us at the Forum, happy holidays and we wish you the best in the New Year!

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Ed Oversight Committee Focuses on Teacher Quality

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee received three reports this week focusing on teacher quality and supply and demand. The report receiving the most attention was the preliminary findings of a study looking for correlations between teacher preparation and student achievement conducted by the Carolina Institute for Public Policy. That report segregated teachers according to how and where they received preparation for teaching (i.e., those who majored in education in a UNC college or university; those who majored in education in a NC private college or university; those educated in a college or university in another state; those who did not major in education, etc.). It then looked at the student achievement of students to determine which, if any, of the various preparation programs resulted in positive or negative achievement results. The study also sought to identify any positive or negative correlation between teachers with graduate degrees or National Board Certification and student achievement.

Some of their findings will come as little surprise. Students being taught by teachers teaching subjects in areas other than those in which they majored did worse than those taught by teachers teaching in areas in which they majored. Students taught by first-year or beginning teachers performed worse than those with more experienced teachers.

Ed Oversight Committee (cont'd)

Committee members were especially focused on the mixed findings for teachers with advanced degrees as well as conflicting studies on the impact of teachers with national board certification. This is an on-going study and it is anticipated that future reports will go much deeper into the impact of different preparation programs.

Applications Surge for Candidates Seeking National Boards

The Education Oversight Committee also received a report on the number of teachers who are applying for National Board Certification. The number of candidates has nearly doubled over last year. In 2008, 2,303 teachers applied to undergo the rigorous assessment process required for recipients of National Board Certification. In 2009, the number has swelled to 5,885, more candidates than in any year since the state began paying the application fee in 1994.

For policymakers the surge in applications is a mixed blessing. On one hand, it almost insures that North Carolina will continue to lead the nation in the number of teachers who have received Board Certification. On the other hand, the General Assembly had budgeted only \$3,274,500 to offset application costs and it will take \$14.7 million to pay the application fees for 5,885 candidates.

Several factors might explain the surge in applications, but the two most likely causes are that in light of salary freezes for teachers and other state employees, National Certification is one of the only ways teachers can increase their pay during this economic downturn. Successful candidates who achieve National Certification automatically receive a 12% increase in their pay. With that, as a result of House action during the last Session, beginning next year North Carolina will no longer pay the application fee for candidates. Instead, candidates can take out a loan from the state, but will be under an obligation to repay the loan over three years. It may well be that many teachers decided to file before the deadline for state-subsidized application fees.

Teacher Vacancies at Recent Historical Low

The Department of Public Instruction issued its annual "Teacher Vacancy Report for fall 2009" at this week's Education Oversight Committee meeting. The report compiles teaching position vacancies from all of the state's 115 school districts. As of October 2009, only 559 teaching vacancies were reported. This is in sharp contrast to the previous four years where vacancies went from a high of 1,236 to a low of 934.

The sharp decline in vacancies may be testimony to the state of the economy. As a result of budget cutbacks many districts were forced to lay off teachers this fall and job prospects for teachers wanting to relocate were few and far between.

Introducing...National Board Certification for Principals

North Carolina was the first state in the nation to offer financial incentives for teachers who successfully gained National Board Certification. This week's announcement of a similar program for school principals raises questions about whether the state will follow suit and attempt to encourage principals to pursue National Board Certification.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the organization that sets and maintains the standards for teacher excellence, this week launched National Board Certification for Educational Leaders, which includes the development of National Board Certification for Principals. NBPTS was joined by U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, some of the nation's leading foundations as well as business and educational leaders at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. to publicly announce the design and development of this initiative.

National Board Certification for Principals, the first national certification program focused on principals, is also the first phase of an expanded umbrella program, National Board Certification for Educational Leaders, which builds on the National Board's 20-year program, National Board Certification for teachers and school counselors.

The National Board Certification for Educational Leaders initiative has been endorsed by policymakers, business leaders, administrators, principals and teachers. The Chicago Public Education Fund, a venture capital fund for public education, stands as lead investor with a \$1 million, multi-year investment made earlier this year. In addition, GlaxoSmithKline, a longtime supporter of National Board Certification for teachers, announced this week that it has joined the collection of supporters funding this project. Other funders include State Farm Insurance Companies, the National Policy Board for Education Administrators, The Wallace Foundation and the U.S. Congress.

Tri-State Summit Stresses Need for Afterschool Programs

Last week, a delegation of afterschool supporters convened at the *Tri-State Summit: Meeting the Needs of Disadvantaged Students in the Afterschool Hours*. The James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy sponsored this partnership of the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council, NC CAP, and the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance. The *Summit* brought together leaders and policymakers from all three states to examine the importance of cross-sector collaboration in meeting the needs of disadvantaged youth. Attendees represented the following communities:

- Health and Wellness
- Dropout Prevention
- Closing Performance Gaps
- Juvenile Crime Prevention

Tri-State Summit (cont'd)

The three states have much in common, including demographic challenges – especially as it applies to an abundance of low-wealth, rural counties experiencing declining economic opportunities, difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified educators, and large numbers of disadvantaged young people. The states are all heavily impacted by today's recession. State budgets have suffered grievously and social and educational programs impacting young people have been cut back.

Data shows that high school dropouts are more likely to commit crimes and less likely to have access to adequate health insurance, both of which cost tax payers millions of dollars a year. “The idea is, don't wait until these kids end up in that system,” Judith Rizzo, of the Hunt Institute, said. “What can we do to prevent that trajectory?”

In all three states the issues impacting disadvantaged young people tend to be the same. Increasing concerns about performance gaps and what to do with chronically low-performing schools now facing the consequences of No Child Left Behind under performance head the list of policymakers' concerns. Close behind is increasing concern about high dropout rates and the long-term impact of dropouts on economic development. An issue gaining in visibility is health and wellness as a result of issues like obesity attracting more media attention. Finally, juvenile crime and growth in gang membership remain areas of growing concern.

At the conclusion of the event, state teams left with an action plan to continue the discussions of the *Summit* upon returning home. The three states will continue to work together to advance efforts around policies supportive of expanded access to quality out-of-school programs for disadvantaged youth.

NC EPFP Fellow Named Beaufort County Superintendent

Congratulations to Dr. Don Phipps, 2008-09 NC EPFP Fellow, for being named by the Beaufort County Board of Education as their new superintendent this week. Dr. Phipps, who has spent 18 years in education, heads to Beaufort County Schools from Cumberland County Schools where he has served as Executive Director of Student Services.

Dr. Phipps' career spans both public schools and the university arena. Phipps has worked as a school psychologist, assistant principal and principal. He has also served as a university professor. He will take office on January 11, 2010. For the entire 2008-09 NC EPFP class, “Congrats Don! Make us proud!”

Forum Board Member Elected Commission Chair

Congratulations to Dr. Max Walser who last week was elected Davidson County Board of Commissioners Chairman for 2010 in a 5-2 vote. Walser, the lone Democrat on the board, was nominated by Commissioner Billy Joe Kepley, who praised Walser's work with spreading awareness of the needs of Davidson County. Commenting on his new role, Walser said, "I promise to do my best for this county while in this role and try to include everyone in the discussion. I believe we are a good county government, and we've got good leadership, and I'm pleased with what we've got here."

North Carolina Superintendent of the Year Named

Dr. Donna C. Peters, Superintendent of Montgomery County Schools, was named the 2010 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year. The award was presented jointly by the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA) and the North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA) at an awards presentation and reception in Greensboro on November 17th.

Since 2006, Dr. Peters has been superintendent of Montgomery County Schools, a rural district comprised of 11 schools with a diverse student population of approximately 4,350 in grades K-12. Prior to coming to Montgomery County Schools, Dr. Peters served as superintendent of Rutherford County Schools in Forest City, N.C.

Under Dr. Peters' leadership, Montgomery County Schools has made tremendous progress over the last three years with the implementation of a five-year strategic plan, which has greatly impacted student achievement. The school district is recognized at the state level for participation as a pilot for the North Carolina Virtual Public High School. Dr. Peters' leadership style reflects the needs of the community as demonstrated through her regular and systematic meetings with school district staff and her active involvement in community organizations.

As the 2010 A. Craig Phillips North Carolina Superintendent of the Year winner, Dr. Peters will go on to compete for the National Superintendent of the Year honor, which will be presented at the American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education, held in Phoenix, Arizona, February 11-13, 2010.

NCREN Celebrates 25 Years!

"Connect. Innovate. Lead" was the theme for a two-day event held last week at SAS to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN). Launched as part of MCNC (Microelectronics Center of North Carolina, first funded in 1980), NCREN was a means of linking universities, schools and other institutions in real time.

NCREN (cont'd)

Former Gov. Jim Hunt, a driving force behind the launch of so many high-tech initiatives such as the N.C. Biotech Center, MCNC and the School for Science and Math, was the keynote speaker at the NCREN event. Awards were presented by NCREN during the two-day event to recognize members of its Community. [Click here](#) for more information on all awards.

TFA Alumni to Open Charter School

Eric Sanchez and Carice Cantelupe inspired by their experiences serving on the faculty at KIPP Gaston College Preparatory (GCP), a charter school in Northampton County founded by Teach for America alumni, have worked for the past year to open their own charter school in Henderson, NC.

Henderson Collegiate, a free public charter school, was recently awarded a charter from the State of North Carolina, and is scheduled to open with just a fourth grade in the fall of 2010. "It's our hope that Henderson Collegiate will enrich the community by cultivating leaders and problem-solvers who can help Vance County progress in the years to come," said Eric. To learn more about Henderson Collegiate, visit the schools website by [clicking here](#).

NCCC Board to Rule on Undocumented Immigrants

Earlier this year the NC Community College Board voted to move forward on the rule making process for approval of a policy change that would allow undocumented immigrants to attend community colleges, as long as they are qualified and pay out-of-state tuition.

There are several steps before final approval of the rule change and as part of the process, an opportunity is given for both written and oral comments. This week the NC State Board of Community Colleges issued a notice indicating that a public hearing will be held on Friday, December 18th, from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm in Raleigh at the Archives and History/State Library Building. Written Comments are due by end of day on December 18th as well, and can be sent by email to publiccomments@nccommunitycolleges.edu or by standard mail to:

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