

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Forum Board Chair Receives 2010 Legacy Leader Award

Phil Kirk, Chair of the Forum Board of Directors, was among 15 people receiving a 2010 Legacy Leaders award, jointly given by the *Triangle Business Journal* and *Boom! Magazine*. Nearly 500 people attended yesterday's award ceremony held at the North Raleigh Country Club.

The award winners represented a real cross section of leaders in the Research Triangle Park Area. Other award winners included Bob Greczyn, former CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield; Lawrence Wheeler, the President of the North Carolina Museum of Art; Stephanie Fanjul, the Executive Director of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, and Smedes York, head of York Properties and former Mayor of Raleigh.

While the winners represented a diverse range of corporations and organizations they all shared one thing in common. They, like Kirk, have not only been successful in their chosen careers, they have left behind a legacy of service to the people of North Carolina.

Editorial Comment

Can't We Find Some Balance in Our Teaching of History?

The recent flap over proposed changes to North Carolina's history curriculum has been disheartening. If you haven't followed the media coverage on this, the Department of Public Instruction announced that it was considering changes that would increase the focus on current history and events and make changes in the curriculum being taught today. That immediately sparked reactions from a variety of sources contending that North Carolina's young people would be shortchanged when it came to learning about the history of the United States, our founders, the basis for the constitution, etc. Some of those being critical came as no surprise. The Locke Foundation, for instance, whose very name implies a bias toward remaining fixed in the 1700 and 1800's, was among them. Others, however, including Senator Mark Basnight, voiced legitimate concerns based on the information DPI had presented. DPI, in response to the firestorm that had been sparked, quickly announced that they are going back to the drawing boards and the issue will be reconsidered.

Balance in Our Teaching History (cont'd)

Two things about this controversy lead it to be labeled “disheartening.” First, this is not the first time that possible changes in the teaching of history have sparked similar responses. DPI has had more than adequate time to prepare information that would have assured the public and policymakers that the changes would strengthen the state’s teaching of history, not water it down. Second, more and more criticism is being launched at schools because our young people have a woeful lack of knowledge about current events that are shaping our lives. The majority, for instance, can’t find Afghanistan on a world map much less explain the historical roots of tension between the Muslim and the Christian worlds.

If we want young people to leave high school with a solid grasp of the historical events that we now confront, our history curriculum is going to have to place more focus on the history and forces that are shaping the world we live in. We can’t presume that more time on our founding fathers and the drafting of our constitution will put today’s economic crisis, much less two war fronts, in perspective. After all, when the constitution was drafted women were denied the right to vote. Slavery was legal and widespread. The world in 2010 is a far cry from the world of 1776 and our teaching of history needs to keep up with the world as it is today.

Is it too much to ask that DPI officials attempt to find a reasonable mid-point to this discussion? As long as it remains “either/or” as it is today, the issue will end up with one side or the other in the debate feeling short changed (i.e. too little focus on foundation history; or, too little on current history). Why not add another year of required history in high school and attempt to do a better job teaching both?

State Budget Picture Remains Cloudy

The General Assembly’s Fiscal Research Division reported this week that state revenues through January were running \$35 million under those projected. This is after the state received \$272 million more than expected as a result of a program aimed at collecting overdue corporate taxes.

As troubling, a new report on the state prison population finds that the number of prisoners is growing far faster than projections. That growth threatens to swamp the current prison population capacity. The new report projects that the state will have 42,776 inmates by the end of the fiscal year. However, the current capacity for prisoners is 39,332. This report on prison capacity adds one more budget problem to the growing list of problems lawmakers will confront when they return in May.

For the Record . . .

A shortfall in prison capacity is not an insignificant issue. It currently costs \$136,500 to build one maximum security prison bed and just over \$80,000 for a minimum security slot. That is on top of the \$27,000 cost of maintaining one prisoner for a year.

Website for Constitutional Tales Launches

On February 15, 1868, Reverend Samuel S. Ashley introduced on the floor of the North Carolina Constitutional Convention an amendment to the Declaration of Rights. That amendment articulated education as a fundamental right of the people of this state. We continue to benefit from his bold action as it became a foundation for our North Carolina Supreme Court's interpretation of a right to an equal opportunity to a sound, basic education.

You are invited to visit <http://constitutionaltales.net/> and see what engages you in the initial offering. You might be interested in the video clip from the state capitol presentation on the Freedmen's Convention and the contributions of African Americans in the pursuit of free public schools (go to the link for "presentations"). In addition, the website includes "resources & links" and a "blogging" section which addresses future Constitutional Tales and connecting the need to promote creativity in public education with the North Carolina Constitution.

Greene County Teacher Recognized by LEARN NC

Greene County Middle School science teacher Jose Garcia is the subject of a recently published feature article by K-12 outreach group LEARN NC. The article, the fifth in a series spotlighting teachers who employ inventive instructional techniques – explains how he covers all of Grade 6, 7, and 8 NC Standard Course of Study requirements two months ahead of end-of-grade exams, assigns no homework, and has plenty of time to help struggling children one-on-one while guiding his students to a 98% EOG pass rate.

Mr. Garcia, a 2009 Apple Distinguished Teacher, calls his approach "challenge-based instruction" and defines it as a combination of project-based instruction and inquiry-based instruction. "Students guide their own learning, work in teams, and share what they learn with each other," he explains. "And my job is both easier and more rewarding than it was when I used traditional teaching methods".

LEARN NC's goal for the series is to allow outstanding teachers to present, in their own words, successful instructional practices for the benefit of not only other teachers but also policy-makers, school administrators, and education researchers.

Via its [Web site](#), LEARN NC, an agency of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education, delivers – every day and at no cost – lesson plans, best practices, and classroom content to more than 30,000 educators and students throughout North Carolina, the nation, and the world.

Time Warner Cable Broadcasts STEM & Afterschool Coverage

In the coming months, Time Warner Cable will be devoting weekly air time to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) initiatives in schools and afterschool programs across North Carolina. NC CAP has been working with News 14 Carolina to identify high quality STEM afterschool efforts and connect afterschool programs with Time Warner Cable STEM regional coordinators.

The link below previews the initiative, including footage on afterschool programs, as well as the recent Public School Forum of NC / Center for International Understanding study of education in Singapore.

Visit http://news14.com/triangle-news-30-content/top_stories/622024/news-14--time-warner-cable-work-to-promote-stem to view the news clip. The footage will be aired statewide on News 14 Carolina, as well as highlighted on the News 14 and Connect A Million Minds websites.

To nominate afterschool programs featuring STEM initiatives for News 14 coverage, email a brief summary along with full contact information to News 14 at camm@news14.com and NC CAP at jknowles@ncforum.org.

Forum News...

NC Teaching Fellows Opens Invitation for Workshops

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program staff would like to extend an invitation for individuals to propose a workshop for the 2010 Senior Conference and/or the 2010 Junior Conference to take place in July on the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, NC. Selections will be based on various criteria, including relevance to the conference theme and description and type of workshop. Response forms are due no later than March 15, 2010. To view the invitation, go to <http://www.ncforum.org/doclib/InviteforWorkshops.pdf>. To access the response form, visit: <http://www.ncforum.org/doclib/WorkshopPresenterResponseFormSubmit.pdf>.

Last Weeks to Register for SYNERGY Conference!

The NC Center for Afterschool Programs' 2010 SYNERGY afterschool conference, *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: STEMulate Your Afterschool Program*, will be held at the Joseph S. Koury Center in Greensboro on March 1-2, 2010. Join hundreds of afterschool directors, front-line staff, state administrators, and funders from across the state for two days of workshops, engaging keynote speakers, networking opportunities, and a special Youth Forum on Afterschool before an audience of elected officials.

Sample workshops include:

- **Easy, Fun and Inexpensive STEM Activities**, *Thomas Ray, 4-H Youth Development*
Program participants will enjoy hands-on participation in a variety of STEM activities, including curricula and resources that are free or low-cost. For each activity, participants will receive a materials list, instructions and experiential learning model framework for the activity.
- **TechXcite: STEM in the Afterschool Setting**, *Dr. Paul Klenk, Duke University*
TechXcite, a partnership between Duke University and 4-H, is a successful afterschool engineering program replicable nationwide. This workshop will introduce the program and basic activities for introducing engineering to an afterschool setting. To illustrate these concepts, coordinators will facilitate a few of the activities from the TechXcite Wireless Burglar Alarm module.
- **Mission Critical: REAL Students, REAL Problems, and REAL Solutions**, *Kenston J. Griffin, Dream Builders Communication, Inc.*
This session is designed to support and motivate afterschool educators, while sharing successful techniques to avoid "Burn-Out", reduce stress, and demonstrate effective strategies to get the most out of students after school until the end of the academic year. The areas of focus will be how to empower students, manage the workload, and emotions, as well as provide strategies on getting and staying on task with class work, homework, and testing.

For a special deal, register 4 staff members to receive the 5th registration free. Book your hotel room by contacting the Sheraton Four Seasons/Koury Center Hotel at 1-800-242-6556. Be sure to mention "NC CAP SYNERGY" when booking to receive the low \$124 rate for rooms that can accommodate up to 4 people at this low rate

Registration forms and vendor applications are available on www.nccap.net. For more information, contact Katie Biggerstaff at kbiggerstaff@ncforum.org or (919) 781-6833 ext 132.

Seeking Jay Robinson Award Nominations

The Jay Robinson Leadership Award was established by the Public School Forum Board of Directors in recognition of outstanding leaders in the field of public education. The award may be given to anyone who has displayed innovative, creative, effective leadership for the public schools of North Carolina.

Jay Robinson Nominations (cont'd)

Past winners include Laura Bilbro-Berry, the first Teaching Fellow to be named North Carolina Teacher of the Year; Tom McNeel, superintendent of Caldwell County schools; Jim Causby, two-time state Superintendent of the Year and executive director of the NC Association of School Administrators; Robert Bridges, former superintendent of Wake County Schools and former chair of the state's Raising Achievement and Closing Gap Commission; Superior Court Judge Howard E. Manning, Jr., the trial court judge in the *Leandro* school finance case; Dr. Ann Denlinger, former superintendent of Durham Public Schools and Wilson County Schools and currently President, Wake Education Partnership; Phillip J. Kirk Jr., Director, Brady Energy Services, Bill Harrison, former superintendent Cumberland County Schools and Chairman of the State Board of education; and Dr. Dudley Flood, retired educator and consultant.

The nominations must be postmarked by March 1, 2010. Nominations postmarked after that date and nominations delivered in person will not be accepted. The award ceremony will be held on June 21, 2010, at the Raleigh Crabtree Marriott Hotel. Admission will be by invitation only. The honor includes a cash award sponsored by BB&T.

To obtain an application, contact Claire Ancelet (cancelet@ncforum.org) at 919-781-6833 or you can download a copy at www.ncforum.org.

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.