

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

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## Administration Warning Budget Cuts Ahead

Speaking to the N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, a group representing the mayors of the state's 26 largest cities, Governor Beverly Perdue painted a bleak budget picture. Echoing the Governor's comments, Andy Willis, the Governor's governmental affairs adviser said, "Layoffs of state workers also looks likely . . . Two thousand to 3,000 employees will probably lose their jobs." The state projected a drop of 1.6 percent in revenue for this fiscal year which comes to an end on June 30. While current projections call for revenue growth of 2.8 percent in the coming year, revenue continues to come in at a slower pace than originally projected. Compounding the budget picture for the next fiscal year is the end of federal stimulus dollars which are scheduled to run out at the end of the next fiscal year.

## UNC-Greensboro Offers 3-Year Degree Program

Reflecting a trend that is picking up steam across the country, UNC Greensboro (UNCG) has become the latest college to offer students a pathway to a three-year degree program. Students who successfully complete the program will save about \$8,000 in tuition, fees, room and board by eliminating their senior year of college.

To be eligible for the program an incoming freshman will need 12 or more credit hours earned through Advanced Placement (AP) coursework in high school. With the boost in credits earned in high school, students can complete required college work in three years by carrying heavier credit loads each semester than they would otherwise have carried.

UNCG becomes the first public institution in North Carolina to offer the three-year pathway. Mount Olive College, a private institution, was the first in the state to offer a similar program.

## Collaborative Project's Leadership Institute Visits The Ron Clark Academy

Last Wednesday members of the Collaborative Project's Leadership Institute (principals, superintendents, central office contacts and CP staff) departed Raleigh at noon on a chartered bus to travel to Atlanta to visit The Ron Clark Academy, a private middle school in one of the poorest sections of Atlanta. They had the privilege of spending all day on Thursday at the Academy observing classes and interacting with teachers and students. Although the school is a model for creativity, it is grounded in a set of core beliefs and "rules for life" that everyone observes.

The school's founder Ron Clark is originally from Beaufort County, NC, a NC Teaching Fellow, graduate of East Carolina University, and winner of the prestigious Disney National Teacher of the Year Award. He fulfilled a dream by starting the private Ron Clark Academy, a middle school in one of the poorest sections of Atlanta, with funds from his book *The Essential 55* (the "rules for life" referenced above) endorsed by Oprah when he was a guest on her TV show.

Those who attended came away excited, invigorated and energized by the fact that much of what they saw can be replicated back at home in their schools with little or no additional funds. At the end of the day, the "take aways" shared by the group included the very high level of respect shown for and among the students and teachers, as well as, the high level of expectations for all students. All teachers in the school teach to the highest level of students with expectations for all students to succeed at that high level. All students, fifth through eighth graders, have exceptional communication skills that are learned from observing the "Essential 55" rules for life.

"It was wonderful to see teaching at such a high level with such enthusiasm. It was apparent that powerful relationships exist between the teachers and students and that students held themselves to higher expectations. It was refreshing to see a school with teachers and students who held the same high expectations and rules for behavior," shared Dr. Morgen Houchard, Personnel Director in Mitchell County.

## Metropolitan Mayors Introduced to NC Center for Afterschool Programs

On Thursday of this week, Jamie Knowles, the Director of the N.C. Center for Afterschool Programs (NCCAP), gave an overview of the Center and its programs to the N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, a group representing the state's 26 largest cities. With more and more cities seeking ways to curb juvenile crime and prevent the expansion of gangs there is growing interest in afterschool programs that provide positive alternatives for young people in afterschool hours.

## Metropolitan Mayors (cont'd)

On Friday, Knowles will be speaking to the annual meeting of N.C. Grantmakers, an organization composed of private and corporate foundations focused on North Carolina. There Knowles will be giving foundation funders an overview of NC CAP's work on developing high quality standards for afterschool programs.

## Regional Screening of Teaching Fellows Finalists Wrapping up This Weekend

368 high school seniors who are finalists in the Teaching Fellows award competition will be interviewed at four sites around the state this weekend. The interviews will take place at East Carolina University in Greenville, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Campbell University in Buies Creek, and Meredith College in Raleigh. Interviews have already taken place at 4 other locations for 487 high school seniors who are finalists.

At the regional screenings each finalist undergoes an interview with a team of adults nominated by a number of educational and business organizations including the North Carolina School Administrators Association, Association of Educators, School Boards Association, State Chamber, Center for Advancement of Teaching and others. All told, nearly 700 adult volunteers will take part in the screening process.

“We are very indebted to the organizations that annually nominate members to serve on screening committees and to the individuals who volunteer to give up a Saturday to help with the screening,” said Kerry Mebane, Director of the Teaching Fellows Program. “While it takes real commitment to give up a weekend day to be part of this, we hear over and over that seeing the applicants is a real validation of the quality of young people coming out of North Carolina's high school and that makes the sacrifice of a day worthwhile.”

## State Board to Meet in Halifax County

The State Board of Education will hold its March meeting in Halifax County at William R. Davie Middle School in Roanoke Rapids as part of its ongoing effort to hold some of its meetings in parts of the state outside of Raleigh. While in Halifax, Board members will also tour schools and meet citizens and leaders in Halifax County. For more information, including the Board's agenda and audio streaming capabilities, [click here](#).

## State Board (cont'd)

In addition, the North Carolina General Assembly's Committee on Dropout Prevention will meet next Thursday, March 4, from 10am – 4pm, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Board Room, Education Building, 301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh. Tentative agenda items include the interim evaluation of 2008 dropout prevention grant programs and a presentation by Jenni Owen on challenges and strategies for addressing poverty and dropping out of schools. For additional information, contact Debora Williams at 919.807.3712 or [dwilliams@dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:dwilliams@dpi.state.nc.us) .

### More Systems Employing Drastic School Turnaround Plans

Under the consequences provisions of the federal government's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation failing schools – those not meeting NCLB standards – are offered a menu of “turn around” options. Those options range outright closure of a failing school to replacing the leadership and teaching faculty of the school to converting the school to charter status and bringing in a new management team, to employing new and different approaches to teaching.

Thus far, most systems with schools labeled as failing have used the least extreme turnaround strategy – employing new and different approaches to learning. That appears to be changing, however, as more systems are opting to replace faculties of failing schools and bringing in a new team to manage the school.

A Rhode Island school system was highly publicized this week as a result of its dismissal of 88 teachers at the Central Falls High School in the Central Falls School Districts. The high school is one of the lowest-performing schools in Rhode Island. Presumably the teachers will be replaced by an entirely new teaching faculty in the coming school year.

In Philadelphia at least half of the teachers at 14 of the city's worst performing schools could be gone and the school day, school week and school year in the 14 schools could be longer beginning next fall. The Philadelphia plan is the result of a negotiated agreement between the city schools and the teacher union representing teachers in Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia turnaround effort, labeled Renaissance Schools, however, comes with a number of strings attached. While the plan requires all teachers in the failing schools to reapply for their jobs, up to one-half of the faculty in the 14 buildings may be rehired and all that are not hired are guaranteed placement in another school within the city. Additionally, in exchange for agreeing to the Renaissance Schools plan the teachers' union negotiated raises for all district teachers, possible performance bonuses and the guarantee of placement elsewhere for teachers not rehired in one of the failing schools.

Not surprisingly, some are criticizing the plan for simply redistributing teachers from failing schools into other schools around the system.

## More Systems (cont'd)

Taking another approach the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education opened up the management of 12 low-performing schools as well as 18 new schools up to a competitive process and invited charter school operators, nonprofit school organizations or teams of educators from within the system to compete for the right to manage the schools.

Winners of the competitive process were announced this week and the overwhelming majority of the 30 schools, 22 in all, will be managed by teams of teachers from within the system. Four of the schools will be managed by charter school operators and the remaining three will be run by a nonprofit group called Partnerships for Los Angeles Schools.

### *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>.

## Jay Robinson Award Nominations Due Monday

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.

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.

## Jay Robinson (cont'd)

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](mailto:cancelet@ncforum.org)) at 919-781-6833 or you can download a copy at [www.ncforum.org](http://www.ncforum.org).

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