

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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Volume 12, Issue 33

March 5, 2010

NC is Finalist in Phase 1 of Race to the Top Competition

Thursday the Department of Education announced that 15 states and the District of Columbia will advance as finalists for phase 1 of the Race to the Top competition. Race to the Top (RTTT) is the Department's \$4.35 billion effort to dramatically re-shape America's educational system to better engage and prepare our students for success in a competitive 21st century economy and workplace.

The phase 1 finalists are:

- Colorado
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Massachusetts
- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Tennessee

Now, these finalists will each assemble a five-person team that will come to Washington the week of March 15 to make a presentation to the peer reviewers. At the conclusion of the presentations, the reviewers will meet again to discuss each application, finalize scores and comments, and submit them to the department. Winners will be announced in early April.

Speaking on the announcement, Governor Perdue said, "I'll be traveling to D.C. later this month to speak to Secretary Duncan and the selection committee and tell them why North Carolina needs, and deserves, the Race to the Top funds. Thank you to all of the educators, state and community leaders and other who have supported these efforts."

SYNERGY Unites Afterschool Community

225 afterschool providers, community leaders, and elected officials attended NC CAP's annual statewide SYNERGY conference in Greensboro from March 1-2. The two day conference, which focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) topics, was sponsored by the NC Department of Public Instruction and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, with special vendor sponsors, Time Warner Cable and Socci Sport. Nationally renowned Foundations, Inc hosted a pre-conference workshop on incorporating STEM into afterschool programs. SYNERGY featured over 30 workshops on STEM, diversity, capacity building, student achievement, and more. Opportunities for networking and visiting vendors were also provided.

During a Youth Forum on afterschool, a panel of 7 children and youth from across the state shared with elected officials their vision of a high quality afterschool program. "The Youth Forum empowered youth to address their elected officials about the importance of keeping quality afterschool programs available during these tough economic times, when parents and communities need extra support," said NC CAP Director Jamie Knowles. "Over forty thousand of North Carolina's youth depend on afterschool programs that keep them safe after school, promote learning, and help working families." NC CAP would like to thank our special visitors who attended: Senator Katie Dorsett, Rep. Laura Wiley, Rep. Beverly Earle, Rep. Alma Adams, Rep. Maggie Jeffus, Mayor Joe Benett of Thomasville, County Commissioners Peggy Covington and Bobby Stanley of Richmond and Rockingham Counties respectively, Tom Lambeth of Z Smith Reynolds, and Carla Freemyer of Asheboro City Schools.

Keynote speakers included:

- Dr. Robert Panoff, Executive Director of the Shodor Foundation, keynote speaker, addressed the importance of better preparing students in the fields of math and science for college and future careers.
- Felicia Arriaga, student at Duke University and Boys & Girls Clubs of America's 2008-2009 Southeast Regional Youth of the Year, moderated the Youth Forum.
- Jermaine Walker, graduate of Eastern Carolina University and former Youth of the Year for Boys & Girls Clubs of Lee County, shared his powerful story about how afterschool helped him succeed through high school and graduate from college.

SYNERGY connected those working in, partnering with, or advocating for afterschool programs with the most recent research and tools. SYNERGY is held in collaboration with the NC Department of Public Instruction, NC Department of Health and Human Services, NC Department of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, Boys & Girls Clubs, and Communities in Schools of NC.

Wake County Takes First Step in Reversing Diversity Policy

The new Wake County School Board continues to garner wanted and unwanted publicity as media outlets from Raleigh to New York City watch to see if the new majority of the Board will reverse Wake's long-standing policy of using economic diversity in their student assignment plans. In the weeks following the election, reporters have not lacked for stories.

Wake County's Superintendent, Dr. Dale Burns, two weeks ago announced that he would be retiring effective June 30th adding that he "could not in good conscience" continue in his position. He elaborated on that to the press the following day and clearly staked himself out against the direction of the new board, sparking an immediate call for his resignation by supporters of the new board majority.

Since then the Wake Board has had two closed-door meetings to decide whether to do an early buyout of the Superintendent's contract and failed to reach a decision. At the moment, the Superintendent is still on the job but the issue is far from resolved.

More important, the new board members have remained fixed on living up to pledges they made during the election campaign. At their first meeting, for instance, they reversed a policy giving teachers planning time on Wednesday afternoons which resulted in students being sent home early on Wednesdays. That policy was labeled "wacky Wednesdays" by opponents and the new board abruptly ended it at their first meeting.

This week, the board took the first vote on eliminating economic diversity as a factor in determining student assignment. The vote to eliminate passed with a 5-4 majority with the newly elected board members all voting in favor of elimination. The meeting attracted a large crowd of supporters and opponents of the policy and, following the vote, opponents of removing the diversity requirement held an impromptu rally.

It is widely anticipated that the policy will be eliminated by the Board at its next meeting; however, voting to eliminate the policy may prove to be the easiest challenge the new board has to face. Drawing up new assignment policies for Wake's 140,000-plus students will not prove to be an easy task. The task is made more difficult as a result of Wake's extensive (and popular) magnet school program and the existence of year-round schools. What new board members are discussing is the creation of twenty-plus attendance zones which new board members say will all maintain year round and magnet options.

Wake is the 18th largest school system in the nation and one of the only that has utilized economic diversity in student assignment planning. Whatever the outcome of the new board's policies, it will be heavily scrutinized by local and national media. Critics of the new direction claim that the new board is going to create a self-fulfilling policy that will result in the creation of a large number of low-performing schools.

Five North Carolina Teachers Receive a \$175,000 Career Boost

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund, a private foundation, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, announce the inaugural recipients of the Career Awards for Science and Mathematics Teachers. The \$175,000 award provides career support for outstanding North Carolina science and mathematics teachers. The recipients include four high school teachers and one elementary school teacher from school districts across the state. They are:

William Hendrickson
Warren New Tech High School; Warren County Schools

Matthew Sears
Hillside New Tech High School; Durham Public Schools

Tamica Stubbs
E.E. Waddell High School; Charlotte/Mecklenburg Schools

Claudia Walker
Murphey Traditional Academy; Guilford County Schools

Jennifer Williams
Brevard High School; Transylvania County Schools

The award provides \$175,000 over five years to these N.C. public primary and secondary teachers who have demonstrated solid knowledge of science or mathematics content, and have outstanding performance records in educating children. The North Carolina State Board of Education has provided salary support to ensure the teachers receive a 12-month contract.

"The Burroughs Wellcome Fund is providing an outstanding opportunity to support five excellent teachers and their collaboration with other educators in our state and nation," said State Superintendent June Atkinson. "I congratulate these five recipients, and we look forward to seeing the excellent work they will continue to do in our state to benefit mathematics and science education."

In addition to salary support, the award provides \$10,000 per year to be used at the discretion of the teacher for professional development activities, travel and registration to meetings or conferences, hiring substitutes, networking with colleagues, and capacity building opportunities at the school or school district. The teachers will have opportunities for professional development and collaboration with other master science or mathematics teachers.

The teachers will also have \$10,000 per year to purchase needed equipment and supplies for that teacher's classroom or laboratory, or be shared with the teacher's school or school district.

Guest Editorial...

***By: Kerry Crutchfield
Finance Director
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools***

The below is an excerpt taken from this week's guest editorial. To read the editorial in its entirety, [click here](#).

Important Legislative Issues

Issue #1 – Lack of State Revenues

The 2009-10 Session of the General Assembly could be the most crucial one in the history of North Carolina. If the General Assembly takes no action, or less than adequate action, to restore state revenues, governmental services, including education, will face unprecedented reductions. This is not only bad for those in need of the services, but it is disastrous for the overall recovery of the state's economy.

Issue #2 – Prioritization of Expenditures

The 2009 Session of the General Assembly, in its biennial budget adoption, increased the retirement matching rate on state salaries from 8.75% to 10.53%, a whopping 20% increase! We all know that the Retirement Systems have taken a hit. We all agree that they need to stay well-funded. However, the latest accounting shows that the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System has gone from 104.7% fully (over) funded to 99.3% fully (very slightly under) funded. Since that accounting, the stock markets have recovered further. (See link above for full editorial)

Regional Teachers of the Year Named – 2 Teaching Fellows!

This week the 9 teachers selected to represent their regions and charter schools as regional Teachers of the Year were named. Both Vann Lassiter, a 4th year teacher in Edenton-Chowan Public Schools and Courtney Davis, a 12th year teacher in Randolph County Schools are North Carolina Teaching Fellows.

North Carolina's Regional Teacher of the Year are:

- North Central Region: Rene Herrick, Combs Elementary (Wake County Schools);
- Northeast Region: Vann Lassiter, John A. Holmes High (Edenton-Chowan Public Schools);
- Northwest Region: Joy Jenkins, Cleveland Elementary (Rowan-Salisbury Schools);
- Southeast Region: Jennifer Facciolini, Midway High (Sampson County Schools);

Regional Teachers of the Year (cont'd)

- Southwest Region: David Dahari, Marvin Ridge High (Union County Schools);
- Sandhills/South Central Region: Amber Watkins, Scotland Early College High (Scotland County Schools);
- Piedmont-Triad/Central Region: Courtney Davis, Randleman High (Randolph County Schools);
- West Region: Dorothy Case, North Henderson High (Henderson County Schools);
- Charter Schools: Stuart Miles, Evergreen Community Charter (Asheville).

The nine Regional Teachers of the Year will now compete for the title of 2010-11 North Carolina Teacher of the year. The winner will succeed the 2009-10 ATT&T North Carolina Teacher of the Year, Jessica Garner, a Spanish teacher at Porter Ridge High School (Union County Schools). The 2010-11 NC Teacher of the Year will be announced May 5 at a dinner and awards ceremony in Raleigh.

Teach for America NC Alumni Summit

North Carolina Teach for America alumni will gather together on Saturday, March 6 to hear and learn from each other in addition to other leaders in education, policy, and a variety of professional arenas. The day will provide a forum for alumni to reconnect with colleagues, access skills and knowledge in specific fields of expertise, and network with hundreds of professionals who are deeply committed to our mission and education reform in North Carolina.

Panels and sessions will allow alumni and other leaders to discuss issues central to closing the achievement gap and equip themselves with the tools they need to put ideas into action. Featured Speakers and panelists include:

- Barnett Berry, President and CEO, Center for Teaching Quality
- Dan Gerlach, President, Golden LEAF Foundation
- William Harrison, Chairman, North Carolina State Board of Education
- Tim Hurley, Executive Director, Teach For America – Charlotte
- Howard Manning, Jr., Superior Court Judge, North Carolina Court System
- Erin Swanson Oswald, Exec. Director, Teach For America – Eastern North Carolina
- Timothy B. Tyson, Senior Research Scholar, Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University and author of the acclaimed book *Blood Done Sign My Name*

The Teach for America North Carolina Alumni Summit will welcome hundreds of the organization's teachers, alumni, and community leaders from across the state to provide a forum for those committed to education reform in North Carolina and Teach for America's mission to end educational inequity. For more information, please visit www.teachforamerica.org/alumni/summits/north_carolina/north_carolina_summit. To ensure entry to the Hilton Durham, all media must RSVP no later than 3 p.m. on Friday, March 5 to Emily Del Pino at emily.delpino@teachforamerica.org or 917-202-4241.

Inquiry Based Learning Article Features Mitchell Co. Teacher

In a recent article by LEARN NC's Dan Lewandowski, first-grade teacher Kishia Moore shares some of the strategies she uses to bring inquiry-based instruction into the elementary classroom. Ms. Moore teaches in Mitchell County and is a member of the 2011 cohort of the Kenan Fellows Program and participant in the Forum's Collaborative Project. For more information on inquiry based learning, and to read the article in its entirety, [click here](#).

National News...

Achieve Report Shows College & Career Readiness the 'Norm'

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the "Closing the Expectations Gap" report, which Achieve has conducted annually since 2005 when it launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network at the National Education Summit to challenge states to work together on a college- and career-readiness agenda. The 50-state survey, released this week, measures the same five areas of reform each year, as listed below, and reveals the following changes over the last five years:

- *Standards:* At the time of the National Education Summit, only three states had end of high school standards aligned with the demands of college and career. Today, 31 states have developed and adopted high school academic standards in English and mathematics that are aligned with college- and career-ready expectations.
- *Graduation Requirements:* In 2005, only three states had established college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Today, 20 states and the District of Columbia require all students to complete such a curriculum to earn a high school diploma.
- *P-20 Data Systems:* In 2005, only three states had operational P-20 longitudinal data systems that link states' student-level K-12 data with similar data from their postsecondary systems. Today, 16 states are matching such data annually.
- *Assessments:* Five years ago, three states administered college- and career-ready high school assessments. Today, 14 states have such exams.
- *Accountability:* In 2005, no state had a comprehensive reporting and accountability system that valued college and career readiness. While progress in this area has been slowest, 22 states have now incorporated at least one of four accountability indicators that Achieve has identified as critical to promoting college and career readiness, with only one state making full use of all of the indicators in its accountability system.

Achieve Report (cont'd)

Based on this year's report, while North Carolina has aligned high school standards with the expectations of college and careers and has aligned high school graduation requirements with college and career ready expectations, it has still not developed college and career ready assessment systems, P-20 longitudinal data systems, or accountability and reporting systems that promote college and career readiness. To see a full copy of the report, go to www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2010.

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.