

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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What to Do with Nearly \$300M in Unexpected Federal Aid for Schools?

*"Luck's a chance, but troubles sure.
Therefore, I'd face it as a wise man would
And prepare for ill and not for good."*

A.E. Houseman

Those words from poet A. E. Houseman may be the best advice that can be given to school officials deciding how to use the nearly \$300 million in federal aid that was pushed through Congress in the last two weeks. With a projected \$3 billion deficit looming in the next fiscal year, state agencies and schools are bracing for deep cuts in the next fiscal year. The \$300 million, if largely unspent during this fiscal year, could provide local school districts a buffer in the upcoming budget deliberations. Fortunately, most North Carolina school systems are preparing to open school with few teacher layoffs having been made. There are exceptions, Charlotte-Mecklenburg being one of them, but for the most part schools have coped with budget cutbacks without deep reductions in staff. The new federal money can be used until September 2012, enabling districts that refrain from immediately committing the new funds to keep them in reserve in anticipation of funding cuts in the 2011 Legislative Session.

Across the country the use of the money will be mixed. In states like California that have experienced heavy teacher layoffs, it is anticipated that local schools will rehire teachers and restore programs that have been cut. Elsewhere in states that are not experiencing budget deficits, the funds will represent a windfall that will enable schools to initiate new programs like afterschool or summer offerings.

NC's Race to the Top Team Optimistic about Prospects

Governor Beverly Perdue, State Superintendent June Atkinson, State Board of Education Chair Bill Harrison, NCASA Executive Director Bill McNeal and NC State's Glenn Kleiman once again represented North Carolina as part of the formal review process being used in the competition for Race to the Top funds. This Tuesday, the North Carolina team traveled to Washington DC and met with grant reviewers. The team returned to North Carolina feeling positive about the meeting and the process. "I am optimistic that North Carolina's grant will be funded this round," said State Superintendent June Atkinson.

NC's Race to the Top Team (cont'd)

Only two states were awarded grants in the first round of the competition. It is expected that 10 states will win awards in the second round and North Carolina is one of only 19 states plus the District of Columbia that survived the initial screening process. Grant winners are expected to be announced during the first week of September. If successful, the grant could mean as much as \$400 million over a four year period of time.

An Update on Manning Schools

Many *Friday Report* readers will remember when Judge Manning, who presides over the Leandro case, singled out schools for committing what he called “academic genocide” and called on them and the state to redouble efforts to bring student performance levels up. Four years later, there has been noticeable improvement in a number of the schools; however, seven of them did not meet their growth expectations on ABC scores and only one met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mark under No Child Left Behind. The following chart shows where the schools stand today. Less than one-half of the students in four of the schools are performing at or above grade level; in another six over one-half, but less than 60% are at or above grade level.

LEA	School	Met Exp	Met High	Perf Comp	AYP
Alamance	H.M. Cummings	Yes	Yes	73.9	No
Anson	Anson	No	No	46.3	No
Bertie	Bertie	Yes	Yes	66.9	Yes
Mecklenburg	Garinger***	Yes	Yes	***	No
Mecklenburg	Waddell	Yes	Yes	71	No
Mecklenburg	West Mecklenburg	Yes	Yes	72.2	No
Mecklenburg	West Charlotte	Yes	Yes	72.2	No
Cumberland	E.E. Smith	No	No	79.9	No
Durham	Hillside	No	No	55.4	No
Durham	Southern	Yes	No	43	No
Forsyth	Carver	No	No	53.2	No
Halifax	Northwest Halifax	No	No	42	No
Halifax	Southeast Halifax	Yes	No	38.5	No
Hertford	Hertford County	Yes	Yes	78.8	No
Guilford	Dudley	Yes	No	57.5	No
Guilford	Ben Smith	Yes	No	57.5	No
Northampton	Northampton West	Yes	Yes	70	No
Washington	Plymouth	No	No	59.3	No
Wayne	Goldsboro	No	No	61.3	No

*** Garinger is now 3 schools. Composites were: 69, 72.4, 72.5

Diversity Battle Dominates Wake County Politics

Ever since the school board composition in Wake County shifted to a pro-neighborhood school majority, diversity and student assignment patterns have dominated the county's political landscape. School Board meetings have been packed with protesters. Demonstrators have been arrested. And, while no school board seats are up in November's election, school-related issues are creeping into virtually every political race in the County. It is not business as usual in Wake County.

On one hand, supporters of the district's policies that use busing and student assignment to keep the level of low-income students below 40% in any given school contend that it would be a giant step backward if Wake returns to neighborhood schools. They predict that Wake, like Charlotte and other systems around the state, would immediately create schools dominated by low-income, largely minority young people that would soon become low-performing, hard-to-staff schools.

On the other hand, the new school board majority argues that by using a controlled choice plan they could avoid creating pockets of high-poverty schools while insuring parents that their children would attend schools close to where they live.

Because Wake is among the nation's largest school systems and one of the few that has sustained diversity policies overtime, the issue has attracted national attention – attention that local business leaders, especially in the real estate community, fear will tarnish the reputation of the County which has been one of the fastest growing in the nation.

With last week's release of ABC test scores, the debate has taken on a new dimension. Charlotte, which has invested heavily on its low-performing, high-poverty schools, appears to be doing a better job at closing achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students. Wake, on the other hand, has much higher test scores across the board, but critics are quick to point out that Charlotte schools are now over 50% minority/low-income while Wake's are only a third. Neighborhood school advocates are using the numbers to make the case that for all of diversity-supporters pleas on behalf of low-income and minority students, Wake has failed to do as good a job as Charlotte has with neighborhood assignment patterns.

Last Sunday, the *Charlotte Observer* and the *Raleigh News & Observer*, both owned by the McClatchy news corporation, teamed up to do a story on the situation. *Friday Report* readers wanting to see their analysis can follow [this link to the article](#). On Tuesday, the *Raleigh News & Observer* printed a thoughtful guest editorial written by Tony Habit, currently the Executive Director of the New Schools Project and formerly the Executive Director of the Wake Education Partnership. Habit describes what he has encountered working in systems that have adopted neighborhood assignment patterns and calls on both sides to find a positive middle ground. The editorial can be reached by [clicking here](#).

Diversity Battle (cont'd)

The only thing that can be said with certainty regarding the situation is that the controversy will not end any time soon. The Raleigh police department has already announced that it would need to seek additional funding for security provided at School Board meetings. In July alone the department spent \$14,000 on security at school board meetings that attracted large crowds and protesters.

Wake County Rated Number One on “Great Schools” List

Ironically, in the midst of the debate about going to neighborhood school assignment patterns, Great Schools, an organization that collects data on public and private schools, rated Wake County schools number 1 for public schools among U.S. cities with 300,000 or more people.

The rating, however, came with a warning. With its rating, the organization issued a caution saying, “But the future of this stellar district is in doubt. An election last fall changed the makeup of the school board, and the new board recently voted to end the diversity policy.”

Sunday's *NC Spin* Program Devoted to Wake Schools Debate

This Sunday's *NC SPIN* program will bring Dr. William Barber of the NAACP and John Tedesco, a newly elected Wake School Board Member and neighborhood school proponent, together for a debate/discussion of the pros and cons of returning to neighborhood school assignment patterns. In the Triangle area, the program airs at 8:30 AM on Sunday on Time Warner's Channel 13. In other areas, check local programming schedules. *NC SPIN* airs in most regions across the state, but times differ.

Golden LEAF Announces STEM Initiative

The Golden LEAF Foundation announced this month that it is seeking proposals for a special \$4 million initiative geared toward preparing North Carolina's youth for careers requiring skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Organizations receiving funding under the Golden LEAF STEM Initiative can receive up to \$750,000 for projects spanning a three-year period.

Golden LEAF (cont'd)

The Initiative will focus on supporting successful models that increase STEM education for students in grades 4 through 9 in rural, economically distressed and/or tobacco-dependent counties of North Carolina.

Priority will be given to projects that represent collaborative efforts aimed at preparing students to be college and/or career ready in disciplines that require strong STEM skills; have data demonstrating successful outcomes in student enrollment and achievement; represent collaborative arrangements among educational partners and industry targeting the current and future employment opportunities of a region or local area; and focus on rural, Tier I and Tier II, and/or tobacco-dependent counties that currently have low concentrations of STEM programs.

Competitive proposals will target under-represented minorities, females and limited resource students. For a full list of priorities, [click here](#).

Organizations must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit or governmental entity, serve the people of North Carolina, and be a local education agency, university, community college or direct provider of training in order to be eligible to apply. Letters of Inquiry are due September 7, 2010 and may be accessed by [clicking here](#).

CMS Debuts Summer Science Camp

An array of schools, colleges, nonprofits and businesses are using summertime to make sure teachers understand what science is really about, in the hopes they will take those lessons back to their classrooms. Charlotte-Mecklenburg (CMS) top science official, Cindy Moss believes that a hands-on approach to science can benefit both teachers and students alike. CMS offers a long menu of summer science training for teachers, but one of Moss's favorites is Camp Invention, which is ostensibly for kids.

Partnerships can be the key to spreading science opportunities, and many businesses are focusing on STEM education and helping to build skills needed in the modern workforce. Time Warner Cable's "Connect a Million Minds" math/science initiative paid to bring Camp Invention to Wilson Middle School for two weeks.

At Discovery Place's Protovation Camp, the partners are the science museum, Wingate and CMS. Twenty five teachers and aspiring teachers from Mecklenburg, Cabarrus and Union counties, all working on master's degrees, tapped into the expertise of the museum staff and university faculty and gained hands-on experience while working along-side kids from Highland Renaissance.

NC Students Get Warm Welcome in China

A team of North Carolina students represented the state in an international science competition in China thanks to support from the North Carolina Science, Mathematics & Technology Center (SMT). They didn't realize that they would get rock star treatment in a nation that places a high premium on science, but they did. Read about their experience by following [this link](#) to the most recent SMT newsletter.

National News...

Noted Economist Bemoans Cutbacks in Government Service

Paul Krugman, a Nobel Prize winner for economics and a columnist for the *New York Times*, this week came out strongly against those who would preserve tax cuts for the wealthiest at the cost of governmental services. He argues, “. . . the end result of the long campaign against government spending is that we've taken a disastrously wrong turn. America is now on the unlit, unpaved road to nowhere.”

Krugman contends that decades of anti-government rhetoric has convinced voters that a dollar collected in taxes is a dollar wasted and that we now face weakening the nation's foundation by even deeper cuts to public service, including education. The full editorial can be reached by [clicking here](#).

Federal Commission to Address Inequities in Schools

This week U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan promised to advance civil rights by announcing the formation of a federal commission to address inequities in our nation's public schools. The 15-member Equity and Excellence Commission will obtain broad public input about inequities in K-12 education and will examine how those inequities contribute to the achievement gap, ultimately submitting recommendations to Secretary Duncan on how to address those inequities.

In addition to the new equity commission, Secretary Duncan has promised to fight so that more than \$14 billion in the Title I program is advancing equity within school districts by providing effective teachers and other vital resources for students who need them most. “If we change the law and require schools to distribute resources more equitably, schools serving low-income students will have more money and better teachers,” Duncan said. “That money can buy more support for student and teachers, higher pay for college and another \$2 billion for community colleges, which serve a disproportionate share of low-income and minority students.

Forum News...

Thumbs up to the Teaching Fellows staff

The entire Teaching Fellows staff deserves recognition for all their hard work successfully completing the "summer road show".....which goes something like this:

- Six-day Discovery Trip for 500 rising sophomores plus 25 facilitators and staff (11 tour buses) the week of May 16th – 21st.
- One-day Freshman Orientation for 1,200 people (recipients, parents, and alternates) held June 19, 2010, at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh.
- Two-day joint meeting for 23 campus directors and staff, 7 state staff, and 11 Commission members held June 15th -16th, at the Renaissance, North Hills, Raleigh.
- One-day Commission meeting for 11 members and state staff held June 17th at the Forum.
- Junior Enrichment (30+ opportunities in the US and Abroad) for 500 rising juniors all summer.
- Four-day conference for 500 rising seniors and 20+ concurrent session/workshop presenters plus TF staff held July 16th -18th in Hickory at Lenoir-Rhyne University.
- Four-day conference for 500 rising juniors and 25+ concurrent session/workshop presenters plus TF staff held July 23rd-25th in Hickory at Lenoir-Rhyne University.

2010-11 Teaching Fellows Scholarship Applications Available for High School Seniors

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission has announced that the 2010-2011 application for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program will be available online at www.teachingfellows.org beginning August 13, 2010. The deadline for students to return completed applications to a Teaching Fellows Liaison Counselor in a high school is October 15, 2010, by the end of the school day.

Jo Ann Norris, Associate Executive Director for the Public School Forum and Administrator of the Teaching Fellows Program, states, "In order to meet the increasing demand for top quality teachers for North Carolina's public schools, the program was created by the General Assembly in 1986, upon the recommendation of the Public School Forum of North Carolina."

2010-11 Teaching Fellows Scholarship (cont'd)

Each Teaching Fellow receives a \$26,000 scholarship/loan from the state, payable in \$6,500 annual increments. The full loan is forgiven after the Fellow has completed four (4) years of teaching service in North Carolina's public schools. Additional program information is available online via the Teaching Fellows website at www.teachingfellows.org. Applications may be downloaded from this site.

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