

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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NC Headlines Disheartening

Reading yesterday's Raleigh *News & Observer* was more than a little disheartening. The front page headline jumped off the page with the news that an independent audit of the SBI crime lab found 230 cases where shoddy lab work or intentionally misleading lab work led to guilty sentences and in some cases to death penalty. Going further into the paper, one could read about the head of the state's School for the Deaf being put on suspension for apparently covering up incidents of student abuse. And, last but not least, in the "Under the Dome" column, one could read that UNC's public TV station had fired a reporter after a series of stories about questionable reporting which culminated in the revelation that a researcher for the reporter had been paid \$3,000 by a special interest group with an interest in how the story was slanted.

The only thing missing was a continuation of the articles outlining questionable practices at the Election Board or more detailed coverage of the Department of Revenue's apparent attempts to avoid refunding tax payments to tax payers who had overpaid their taxes. It might be time for ethics and customer service training sessions within state government – from the top to the bottom of the personnel chain.

NC Colleges Fare Well in Rankings

Duke University was tied for number 9 in the "Top National University category of this year's *U.S. News & World Report* annual ranking of colleges and universities. That high ranking, however, was but one of several for North Carolina colleges.

UNC Chapel Hill was ranked number 1 in the "Best Value in Public Colleges" category. That category looks at both the quality and the cost of colleges and Chapel Hill's quality rating was extremely high, while its tuition remains one of the lower in the nation.

Elon College, located in Alamance County, was highly rated among small private schools in the southeast. This week's edition of *News & World Report* includes all of the rankings.

NC Students Top National ACT Test Average

NC students taking the ACT test, used for college admission in a number of states, scored above the national average for the first time. North Carolina ADC scores have improved sharply over the last five years.

While most North Carolina young people take the SAT college entrance exam, 16%, or 14,673, took the ACT this year. Nationally, 42% of high school graduates take the ACT exam. 30% of North Carolina ACT takers met or surpassed all four of the ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks (English, math, reading and science) compared with 24% nationally.

NC Broadband Initiative Gains Federal Funding Support

The U. S. Department of Commerce announced this week that MCNC, a Research Triangle Park-based nonprofit will receive \$75.75 million through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. That money combined with \$24 million Golden Leaf grant and additional private matching funds, will enable MCNC to expand the existing broadband network. Roughly 1,300 miles of new middle-mile fiber will be built throughout the state under this latest award.

According to Governor Perdue, "This investment provides North Carolina with a robust broadband infrastructure that will help deliver access to education, through NCREN, that is not defined geographically but is equitable for every student at every level of education." UNC President Erskine Bowles, said, "This award is truly a game changer for North Carolina."

Federal Jobs Bill Will Pump Millions into NC Schools

School systems will soon be receiving millions in federal aid as a result of the Jobs Bill which was passed by Congress last week. The federal aid, totaling nearly \$300 million, will arrive within the next 45 days. This week DPI released the formula showing how much each local school district will receive. The amounts range from \$27.7 million for Wake County to \$181,015 for Tyrrell County, respectively the largest and smallest counties in the state. The funds can be used to rehire teachers laid off due to budget cuts. Many districts intend to put the money into reserve to buffer deep anticipated cuts that are likely in the next Session of the General Assembly. For a complete listing of funding for North Carolina schools by county, [click here](#).

Accreditation Group to Conduct Review of Wake County

This fall, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) will be conducting a thorough review of the Wake County School System in response to a complaint filed in March 2010 by the state NAACP. The accreditation group, which is the regional organization for AdvancED (Advancing Excellence in Education Worldwide), is threatening to strip its credentials from Wake County's high schools unless the school board majority can justify all the major decisions they've made since December 2009.

AdvancED has given Wake, the 18th largest school system, until the end of the August to provide documentation for more than a dozen decisions the school board has made including the student assignment changes, requiring tickets for seats at board meetings, and the building of a high school in Rolesville instead of on already purchased land in northeast Raleigh,

If the answers don't satisfy the team, Wake's 24 high schools could lose the accreditation that makes it easier for students to get scholarships, loans and college acceptance. "What I'm hoping is that when the review is finished that we have some very straightforward words of advice," said Kevin Hill, former board chairman. "I don't think we can afford to lose accreditation."

According to Stephen Farmer, director of undergraduate admissions at UNC-Chapel Hill, many North Carolina universities recommend that applicants come from accredited high schools. "We see very few candidates, other than home-schooled candidates, who don't come from accredited schools," he said.

Currituck Contends Funding Formula for NCVPS is Unfair

Currituck County education officials want the state to change a funding formula for an online classroom program that they contend is unfair to the small school district. The Currituck Board of Education voted unanimously last week to ask lawmakers and the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to change the formula that will require the Currituck County Schools to pay \$383,895 for the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) program. Superintendent Meghan Doyle said the current funding structure for the program, which is based on enrollment, is unfair. "Currituck County is one of the smallest school districts in the state of North Carolina, and we are the third highest in terms of our assessed amount of what we have to send back to the state (for NCVPS)," Doyle said.

According to school officials, 285 of Currituck's roughly 4,000 students are enrolled in semester-long virtual courses for the fall. Twenty students are enrolled in year-long courses. Another 25 students are on waiting lists for the online program. According to an email from State Superintendent June Atkinson to Doyle, the current formula could only be changed through legislative action.

CHAMP Survey Finds Need for More Physical Activity

The North Carolina Center for Health Statistics, this week released the results of their annual Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program (CHAMP) survey. CHAMP is the first survey of its kind in North Carolina to measure the health characteristics of children, ages 0 to 17. By collecting data on children, CHAMP contributes to a seamless health data system for all North Carolina citizens from birth to old age.

Key findings in this year's survey include:

- 90% of parents reported that their child was physically active one or more hours a day. Preschool age children are more likely to participate in physically active play for longer periods of time compared to elementary school age children and adolescents.
- 82% of children watch television for at least 1 hour a day; 46% watch television for 2 or more hours a day.
- 25% of teenagers eat fast food three or more times a week, compared to about 10% of preschoolers and elementary school aged children.
- About half of preschool age children, two-thirds of elementary school age children, and 80% of adolescents drink sweetened beverages on a daily basis.

[The CHAMP survey](#) was first developed in the fall of 2004 and has been implemented annually since January 2005. Conducted in both English and Spanish, the CHAMP surveys are revised each year to meet the child health surveillance needs of North Carolina.

This annual survey provides valid and reliable data on health issues of North Carolina children that can be used to monitor child health status and identify priority areas at the state level; help track progress of health programs over time and assist in altering programs to best meet the needs of North Carolinians; assist health professionals in making evidence-based decisions, policies and program strategies; and monitor progress towards selected health targets, such as Healthy Carolinians 2010 and 2020.

National News...

California Begins Massive Furlough Program to Cut State Costs

Roughly 150,000 California state employees face unpaid furloughs beginning this Friday after the California Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that temporarily blocked mandatory days off for state workers. Starting this week California's Department of Public Health, Department of Fish and Game and Department of Motor Vehicles will be closed for business this Friday and next.

Application Process Kicks off with New Teaching Fellows Video

This week the North Carolina Teaching Fellows released their recruitment video on Teacher Tube, an online community for sharing instructional teacher videos. The Teaching Fellows video highlights the program's 20+ year history and gives prospective fellows insight into the application process as well as fellowship experiences including the Discovery Bus Tour, Junior Enrichment, and Senior Conference. To view the video, [click here](#).

The video kicks off the 2010-11 application process for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program. The [2010-2011 application](#) for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program is now available online at www.teachingfellows.org. 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."

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.

Regional Afterschool Summits to Focus on Disadvantaged Youth

The North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP), with support from the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, and NC Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, will be convening regional afterschool summits this fall to bring together organizations and state agencies working to support disadvantaged youth within the following four communities: Health / Wellness, Dropout Prevention, Closing Performance Gaps, and Juvenile Crime Prevention. While these communities are serving the same demographic, they often operate in silos. By fostering dialogue among the communities, NC CAP aims to foster cross-sector collaboration to open up more opportunities for disadvantaged youth, to make better use of funds and grant dollars, and to increase awareness about the need for afterschool.

Regional Afterschool Summits (cont'd)

The events are scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with lunch provided, at the following dates and locations:

Goldsboro City Hall, September 13
Durham/RTP Sheraton Imperial, September 21
Salisbury Historic Train Depot, October 15
Wilmington Coastline Convention Center, October 19
Asheville Civic Center, November 4

NC CAP welcomes policymakers, business leaders, the philanthropic community, educators and school officials, local law enforcement, the faith-based community, and nonprofit leaders to attend.

NC CAP will also unveil a cross-sector data project that will identify a “Top 10” county list using high-risk indicators to identify the need for more services for disadvantaged youth, with the goal of building consensus around specific indicators and educating funders and other resource organizations about the needs.

The regional summits follow a successful December 2009 tri-state summit held in partnership with the Hunt Institute, and Georgia and South Carolina afterschool networks that explored efforts to expand access to out-of-school time programs.

For the *September* summits, please RSVP your attendance to Katie Biggerstaff before September 1, and for *October/November* summits, before October 1, by calling (919) 781-6833 ext. 132, faxing (919) 781-6527, or emailing kbiggerstaff@ncforum.org.

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