

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

PDF versions can be found at www.ncforum.org

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State News

NC Schools Superintendent Race

June Atkinson has announced plans to seek a third term as state schools superintendent. She will face a Democratic Primary opponent as Rep. Rick Glazier, D-Cumberland, also announced plans to run. Another Democrat who had considered running, Rep. Tricia Cotham of Mecklenburg County, will not run now that Atkinson has announced plans to seek reelection. Cotham is seeking another term in her House seat. Atkinson said in an interview she doesn't want to leave office during what she calls a remodeling effort for the public schools. "It was a hard decision but there are quite a few things that we have under way," Atkinson told The Associated Press. Atkinson said she's pleased how the high school graduation rate has increased from 68 percent within four years to 78 percent. She noted that projects related to the state's federal Race to the Top grants are being carried out, including one that will expand the tracking of children's progress from infancy through 12th grade through digital record keeping. "I feel like we're in the middle of the game and I don't want to leave the game," she said. Atkinson raised no campaign money during the second half of 2011. She said she has had little money at the start of previous bids and won.

Glazier said he would use the office as a bully pulpit to talk about the value of public education. Losing public education means losing "a real foundation of democracy," he said. With data showing that 66 percent of students are not proficient in reading and the state is 49th in per pupil spending, "it's time to change what we're doing," he said. Like Cotham, Glazier had previously said he would stay out of the race if Atkinson sought another term. Glazier said Atkinson told him she would make a decision by Thanksgiving. Glazier said he agreed to defer a decision on his own bid if she made a decision by then. "Thanksgiving came and went and there was no Atkinson decision," Glazier said. "There comes a point at which you have to get prepared, you have to make a decision to move forward," he said.

Two Republicans have already announced plans to enter the race. David Scholl, a Union County businessman and a member of the Union County school board since 2008, has said he will run. As has Ray Martin, a teacher in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School System. Wake County School Board member John Tedesco, another Republican mulling a bid, said he will announce next week whether he will enter the race. (Excerpted from an article written by Gary D. Robertson, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS; THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 1/18/12).

UNC Study Supports Case for Early Education

The study is the latest report of findings in the long running Abecedarian Project, which is led by the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at UNC Chapel Hill. In the 1970's, researchers chose 111 babies from low-income families and randomly assigned them to two groups. Half of the children were enrolled in quality early childhood education from infancy to kindergarten; the other half, the control group, received whatever care their families could arrange. Researchers have followed the two groups for over 30 years, and have released various data along the way.

The latest findings, published this week in the online journal *Developmental Psychology*, will likely be cited in the ongoing battle over state-funded pre-kindergarten for low income children. Even if you are aware of the reasons cited by lawmakers for making the budget cuts to pre-kindergarten programs in 2011, and the counter responses from Governor Perdue, Superior Court Judge Howard Manning, education leaders, and various advocacy groups, these findings may provide a little more perspective.

Of the original 111 babies enrolled in the project, 101 took part in the age 30 follow-up. Earlier studies showed that throughout their K-12 school years, the child care group posted better scores on reading and math tests. They were more likely to pursue education beyond high school, and statistically less likely to become teenage parents.

The latest data show that the child care group was four times more likely to earn a college degree – 23 percent earned four year degrees compared with 6 percent from the control group. Seventy-five percent of the child care group also had worked (by age 30) for at least 16 of the previous 24 months, compared with 53 percent of the control group. This shows that the child care group participants were more likely to have consistent employment and less likely than the control group to have used public assistance.

In one of the earlier studies, researchers estimated that the Abecedarian program saved \$2.50 for every dollar spent to educate the participants. Dr. Frances Campbell, lead author of the recent study said, "Early intervention is less expensive than remediation when children fail in school later." Dr. Campbell went on to say, "It's a very complex problem. I'm not denying that it's expensive, but I don't think you can invest your money any more wisely." Her colleague and co-author, Dr. Craig Ramey, a professor at the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute said, "I believe the pattern of results over the first 30 years of life provides a clearer than ever scientific understanding of how early childhood education can be an important contributor to academic achievement and social competence in adulthood."

Learn more about the Abecedarian program by visiting: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc/#home>

The North Carolina Public Charter School Advisory Council Considers “Fast Track” Applications

During the 2011 session of the General Assembly lawmakers amended statutes governing North Carolina Public Charter Schools. New language required the formation of the North Carolina Public Charter School Advisory Council which began work at its first meeting in Raleigh on October 19, 2011. The Council will serve in various ways from recommending policy to the State Board of Education (SBE) regarding operations of charter schools to criteria for accepting and approving applications for new schools. The council will also monitor existing charter schools and make recommendations to the SBE when the Council determines there are grounds for revocation of charters. Under the direction of the SBE other responsibilities may be assigned to the Council.

Further language from the 2011 session removed the existing cap of 100 for the number of Public Charter Schools which could exist in North Carolina. In order to allow for the opening of new schools for the 2012-2013 academic year the SBE voted in September 2011 to approve a “Fast Track” application and rubric for "fast track" charter applicants. The SBE defines "Fast Track" as a process whereby applicants must demonstrate to the SBE that they are capable of opening and operating a school successfully in August of this year. 27 “fast track” applications were submitted to the Office of Charter Schools by November 10, 2011.

The Council met in subcommittees to review applications in December and invited 11 applicants to return to Raleigh last week to give further input concerning their applications. Ten of the 11 applicants interviewed in an open meeting with the Council at NCDPI January 10th and 11th. The Council voted to move 9 of the 10 applicants to the SBE for approval at the February meeting.

Further information concerning the Office of Charter Schools, the North Carolina Charter School Advisory Council, and the “fast track” applicants may be found at:
<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/charterschools/>

NC Race to the Top Gets Positive Report from US ED

North Carolina is making great progress in its Race to the Top efforts, according to a Year One report from the US Department of Education. These efforts include stronger standards for learning and accountability, improved data systems, increased teacher and principal effectiveness, and further strengthening the state’s lowest performing schools. While federal officials singled out three states for struggles with implementing terms of the grant, NC was among nine states described as making tremendous progress and on target with its plan of work.

Read more about the report at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/newsroom/news/2011-12/20120110-01>

NC High School Named National Blue Ribbon School

At a school board meeting on Monday night, Mount Airy City Schools Superintendent Gregory Little, an alumnus of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program (UNC-W, entering c/o '93) unveiled a new permanent sign that will be placed in front of the high school as a reminder that the school received a most-prestigious award.

Mt. Airy High School was named a 2011 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. The school is the only North Carolina public or private high school to make the list of 304 schools honored nationwide. The award honors schools based on overall academic excellence, or significant success in closing the achievement gap.

27th Annual Emerging Issues Forum

This year's Emerging Issues Forum, "Investing in Gen Z: Guaranteeing Our ROI" is taking place February 6-7, 2012 at the Raleigh Convention Center. The forum will explore Gen Z's impact on NC's economic and workforce development; how increased connectivity raises the bar; and what can be done to ensure Gen Z's (and NC's) overall well-being. For a more detailed look at the agenda as well as to register for the event, [click here](#).

Kenan Fellows Applications Due MONDAY

Applications for 2012 Kenan Fellowships are due this coming Monday, January 23rd. The Kenan Fellows Program is offering 42 fascinating, new opportunities for study and advancement across the state this year. Fellowships will be awarded to "NC's best" educators! Teachers from all NC school districts are eligible and encouraged to apply. Interested candidates may apply now at www.kenanfellows.org

National News

N.J. Gov. Christie Signs "Urban Hope Act"

Last Thursday, leaders in New Jersey showed that bi-partisan spirit is still alive and well in some places in America. Governor Chris Christie, a Republican, signed a school reform measure passed by his Democratic controlled legislature. The bill entitled the "Urban Hope Act," was crafted with the input of legislators from both sides of the aisle, the Governor's office, local municipal and education leaders.

Urban Hope Act (cont'd)

“Last June, Mayor Redd and I announced an innovative public-private education project designed to turn around some of the most chronically failing schools,” said Gov. Christie who was joined at the press conference by Camden Mayor Dana Redd, a Democrat. According to a report posted on NewJerseyNewsroom.com, the Urban Hope Act allows three urban school districts – Camden, Newark, and Trenton - to partner with one or more nonprofits to construct as many as four “renaissance schools” in each district. The nonprofits must have experience operating schools in low-achieving districts and commit to both building a new school and offering a rigorous academic program designed to prepare every student for college, career, and beyond. The design of the new school programs could include things like after school programs, longer school days and/or school years, and extracurricular activities.

Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald (D-Camden) said, “The signing of this bill developed in cooperation with education experts represents a leap forward for New Jersey education reform... education progress is best built through consensus and not confrontation...”

Teaching Fellows News

TF Alum Invited to Attend State of the Union

North Carolina Central University Teaching Fellow Alumnus Jason Jowers has had a pretty big year. Last May, while teaching history in the School of Engineering at Southern Durham High School, Jason was named the Durham Public Schools Teacher of the Year. Shortly thereafter, Jason was tapped to be an assistant principal at Hillside High School and given the responsibility of leading the newly created Freshmen Academy. As impressive as those two achievements are for a young educator, neither achievement could have prepared Jason to expect the recent telephone call and invitation he received from U.S. Representative G.K. Butterfield – D (1st Cong. Dist).

Rep. Butterfield, in an effort to better connect with constituents in his newly drawn district, (which now includes Durham) thought that it would be a good idea to spend some time with an educator from the area. Through his research, Rep. Butterfield learned of Jason’s achievements and thought that his promotion was pretty impressive. He called Jason to invite him to be his guest in the House Gallery for President Obama’s January 24th State of the Union address. Before attending the address, Rep. Butterfield and Jason will spend time discussing issues affecting the Durham community over dinner.

State of the Union (cont'd)

Jason hopes to be able to share his experience in Washington with his future students. "If I was still teaching," he says, "what a story I would have to tell my students! As an assistant principal, maybe when teachers get to that subject in my school, I'll be able to go in and teach [students] about it from personal experience." If it weren't for the Teaching Fellows Program, Jason likely would not be in position to share this or any other story with North Carolina students. "My parents wanted me to go into something that would pay a lot more money," i.e. athletics. Jason was a good enough athlete to play football and compete on the track team while at NCCU. The Teaching Fellows Program offered an incentive to study "something I was interested in," said Jason, "and my mom was an educator."

Local Boards of Education Support Teaching Fellows

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission and staff continue to receive copies of resolutions passed by local boards of education in support of the restoration of the NC Teaching Fellows Program. NEW RESOLUTIONS received since last week's *Friday Report* are included in the list in **BOLD** type.

Alamance-Burlington Board of Education, Jackie Cole, Chair; Dr. Lillie Cox, Supt.

Alexander County Board of Education, Josh Lail, Chair; Jack Hole, Supt.

Avery County Board of Education, John L. Greene, Chair; David Burleson, Supt.

Brunswick County Board of Education, Shirley Babson, Chair; Dr. Edward Pruden, Supt.

Cumberland County Board of Education, Carrie Sutton, Chair; Dr. Frank Till, Supt.

Edenton-Chowan Board of Education, Ricky Browder, Chair; Dr. Allan Smith, Supt.

Elkin City Board of Education, James Freeman, Chair; Dr. Randy Bledsoe, Supt.

Greene County Board of Education, Patricia Lee Adams, Chair; Dr. Patrick Miller, Supt.

Guilford County Board of Education, Alan W. Duncan, Chair; Dr. Maurice Green, Supt.

Hoke County Board of Education, Hank Richards, Chair; Dr. Freddie Williamson, Supt.

Jackson County Board of Education, Ken Henke, Chair; Dr. Michael Murray, Supt.

Martin County Board of Education, Gene Scott, Chair; Dr. Ron Melchiorre, Supt.

McDowell County Board of Ed., Russell Neighbors, Chair; Dr. Ira Trollinger, Supt.

Boards of Education Support TF (cont'd)

Mt. Airy City Schools Board of Ed., Wendy Carriker, Chair; Dr. Greg Little, Supt.

Onslow County Board of Education, Pat Thomas, Chair; Dr. Kathy Spencer, Supt.

Person County Board of Educ., Gordon Powell, Chair; Dr. Larry Cartner, Supt.

Pamlico County Board of Ed, Reggie Hawkins, Chair; Dr. Wanda Dawson, Supt.

Richmond County Board of Education, Wiley L. Mabe, Chair; Dr. George Norris, Supt.

Robeson County Board of Education, Dr. Jo Ann Chavis Lowery; Dr. Johnny Hunt, Supt.

Surry County Board of Education, Sexton E. Coe, Chair; Dr. Ashley Hinson, Jr., Supt.

Vance County Board of Education, Gloria J. White, Chair; Dr. Ronald Gregory, Supt.

Watauga County Board of Ed., Deborah H. Miller, Chair; Dr. Marty Hemric, Supt.

Whiteville City Board of Education, James DiMuzio, Chair; Dr. C. T. Hager, Supt.

Dr. Mike Priddy, retired superintendent and NC Teaching Fellows Commission Chair stated, "Having had the privilege of hiring the first Teaching Fellows graduate and many more since then, I personally know their value to our children, classrooms, and schools. I also know that every principal, superintendent, and school board member in NC appreciates the quality that is so very predictable. Even though there are many important, even competing, educational priorities, we must remain diligent in seeking support for the re-instatement of the Program."

Forum News

It's the Teachers

(An editorial written by John E. Burris, President of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund,
after participating in the PSF/CIU Finland Study Tour
published in the January 13, 2012 edition of *Science Magazine*)

The poor performance of U.S. students on international measures of Science and Math has been bemoaned by everyone from the President to concerned parents. The first Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) results were released in 1995 and the first Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results in 2000. The education reforms that they helped to motivate have had little impact on U.S. performance, and the country continues to hope for a simple solution that will miraculously turn the tide. But there are no quick fixes in the world of education. Instead, the United States must commit to the laborious task of improving the teachers we train and the environment in which they teach, while providing teachers with a respect and trust commensurate with their critical societal roles.

It's the Teachers (cont'd)

The U.S. education system has methods at its disposal to improve science and math education, such as inquiry-based learning, collaborative problem-solving, and exciting and timely curricula. But no approach can be successfully sustained without bright, well-prepared, and well-supported teachers. Finland has scored near the top of the PISA examinations for the past decade, and the lessons of its success are simple: Recruit the best and the brightest to be teachers, and train them extensively and well. Give them the freedom to develop teaching skills, independence from centralized authority, and ample time to prepare lessons and to interact with peers and students outside the classroom. And as I discovered on a recent visit there, Finland acknowledges the central role of teachers in society, as demonstrated by the respect accorded teachers and the high demand of young people to be teachers, despite salaries at the national average.

This approach is radically different from what happens in the United States, where the brightest are often not recruited into teacher education. Many U.S. colleges and universities provide substandard training, focused on methods classes to the exclusion of rigorous education in the disciplines that many will teach. Future teachers are educated only through the bachelor's degree level, in contrast to Finland, where all teachers must have a master's degree. Unlike Finnish teachers, U.S. teachers are on the treadmill of teaching to endless standardized tests, and there is little recognition of the importance of time spent with peers or participating in professional development. Most importantly, society does not give teachers the respect they deserve as professionals. So what should the United States and other nations struggling with similar problems do? It took Finland decades to change its learning environment. Every change was initially opposed, but it now has one of the best educational systems in the world. The United States can start by raising the bar for acceptance into teacher education (Finland accepts only about 1 in 10 applicants for teacher training). We must also rigorously train teachers not only in pedagogy but in subject matter. Much of the high turnover rate of U.S. math and science teachers is due to inadequate professional development and limited classroom autonomy, so in addition to improving training, it is critical to change the work environment in schools.

The United States is a large, diverse country, and a federal mandate to implement such changes is impractical and unrealistic. But many states have centralized funding and certification practices. States can close down underperforming teacher training and certification programs, reduce standardized testing, and recognize excellence in teaching, just as they now help to ensure quality textbooks and curricula. As Finland has shown, the answer to the problem that beleaguers many nations is a straightforward commitment to both value and trust the most important part of any successful educational system—the teacher.

Apply for SYNERGY Leadership Institute or Year-Long Afterschool STEM Initiative

This year's SYNERGY brings two special opportunities for afterschool providers to further their professional development and bring exciting new resources to their programs and communities. Programs may apply to one of the following new, year-long initiatives:

NC CAP Leadership Institute

The NC CAP Leadership Institute is a new program created by North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP), the Graduate Programs in Family Life and Youth Development (offered by the Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences at NC State University), and the NC Afterschool Professional Development Work Group. This effort will bring together our state's leading afterschool providers to build a network that addresses the afterschool program issues of program and professional development, leadership, partnerships and collaboration and advocacy. This program aims to enhance afterschool professionals' abilities to manage and lead quality afterschool programs.

The NC CAP Leadership Institute will:

- Develop cohorts of afterschool professionals to leverage existing and cultivate new assets for afterschool programs.
- Build the capacity of afterschool professionals to create and sustain high quality afterschool programs by developing a network of support on both state and local levels.

The NC CAP Leadership Institute will follow a cohort model, in which up to 25 afterschool professionals will be admitted yearly. Admitted participants will take classes with their cohort during the 2012 program year. The 2012 NC CAP Leadership Institute cohort will begin their classes during the SYNERGY Conference (April 15th – 18th, 2012, in Charlotte, NC). During the conference, participants will take part in 16 hours of dedicated program development seminars and workshops with one additional take-home assignment – a professional portfolio (approximately 30 hours of work is expected to be completed re: the portfolio by December 2012). *4.6 CEU's will be given to participants who complete the entire program. CEU's will be issued through the McKimmon Center, NC State University.

This model assists afterschool professionals in preparing an effective program of study by scaffolding learning throughout the year and provides immeasurable support to the participants as they create networks with their peer-colleagues for professional study and enhanced afterschool program development and delivery.

SYNERGY/ Afterschool STEM Initiative (cont'd)

Interested afterschool professionals (mid- to upper-level career afterschool professionals are strongly encouraged to apply) should complete the application packet and submit a sample of their writing and at least one (1) letter of recommendation from a current supervisor. Please understand that by completing the NC CAP Leadership Institute Cohort Application it does not mean you have been accepted to the program. **Applications must be received by February 20, 2012.** Applicants will be notified via email of their admittance to the program the week of March 5th, 2012.

[Click here for more information and the application for the Leadership Institute.](#)

STEMulate Your Afterschool Program with NC CAP!

NC CAP is partnering with the state's key leaders in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to advance opportunities for STEM education in afterschool programs and other out-of-school time settings. During the pilot phase of this multi-year initiative, NC CAP will build innovative regional Afterschool STEM hubs in the Charlotte, Triad, and Triangle to bring together a diverse group of state and local community STEM partners to infuse STEM programming, professional development, and mentorships into afterschool programs in these regions.

To kick off this initiative, NC CAP is partnering with the NC Museum of Natural Sciences to host a statewide annual **Youth STEM Summit** on **April 28, 2012** to empower and inspire youth from across the state to return to their communities and develop STEM projects that involve strong museum, school, and community partnerships, as well as connections with college-aged community mentors and apprenticeships. Joan Higginbotham, Former NASA Astronaut, will keynote the Youth Summit to share her inspiring story as one of the first female African-American astronauts in space. This event will be part of the Grand Opening of the Museum's Nature Research Center, as well as part of the NC Science Festival.

Participating programs must apply to be part of this pilot initiative. NC CAP and its partners will provide afterschool programs accepted into this initiative with extensive training and professional development on how to implement STEM projects, as well as stipends for equipment, field trips, and other expenses. Afterschool students and their families will learn more about STEM opportunities within their own communities and how to turn STEM into a college major and/or career. Resources and support will be provided through partnerships with state and local museums and STEM stakeholders. Once projects are completed, students will present their work and compete for college scholarships and other awards. Upon completion of the pilot phase, NC CAP will continue to expand the regional afterschool STEM hubs across the state.

[Click here for Frequently Asked Questions, an application, and information on STEM!](#)

SYNERGY/ Afterschool STEM Initiative (cont'd)

See links for more information and note application deadlines for both opportunities are in February! **Applications must be received by February 20, 2012.** Applicants will be notified via email of their admittance to the program the week of March 5th, 2012.

Participation at SYNERGY is required for both opportunities.

For more info., contact NC CAP at kbcrumpler@ncforum.org or call 919-781-6833 ext. 132.

Nominations Open for Jay Robinson Leadership Awards

Nominations for the Forum's Jay Robinson Leadership Awards are now open. The original award was established by the Public School Forum Board of Directors in honor of Dr. Jay Robinson, former Superintendent Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, UNC Vice President and Chair of the State Board of Education. In 2011 the award was expanded to two awards; Exemplary Educator with statewide impact in K-12 education and Exemplary Leadership in Public Service with statewide impact in K-12 education. The awards may be given to anyone who has displayed innovative, creative, effective leadership for the public schools of North Carolina.

The nominations must be postmarked by March 1, 2012. Nominations postmarked after that date and nominations delivered in person will not be accepted. The award ceremony will be held on June 11, 2012 at the Raleigh Crabtree Marriott Hotel. Admission will be by invitation only. The honor includes a cash award sponsored by BB&T.

To obtain a nomination form, contact Pat Franklin (pfranklin@ncforum.org) at 919-781-6833. You may also use the form in the Winter 2011 edition of the *Forum Report which was released over the holidays.*

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OF NORTH CAROLINA