

Approved by the Charlotte-
Mecklenburg Board of Education
November 14, 2006
Regular Board Meeting



Charlotte, North Carolina

September 26, 2006

**REGULAR MEETING
of the
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education held a Regular Board Meeting on September 26, 2006. The meeting began at 5:45 p.m. and was held in Room 267 of the Government Center.

Present: Joe I. White, Jr., Chairperson;
Molly Griffin, Vice-Chairperson, (District 5);
Trent Merchant, Member At-Large;
Larry Gauvreau (District 1);
George Dunlap (District 3);
Tom Tate (District 4);
Ken Gjertsen (District 6)

Absent: Kaye McGarry, Member At-Large, and
Wilma D. Leake (District 2)

Also present at the request of the Board were Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent; Maurice Green, Chief Operating Officer; James G. Middlebrooks, attorney with Helms Mulliss & Wicker, PLLC, representing the Board; Carole Hamrick, Manager of Board Services; and Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board.

Upon motion by Ms. Griffin, seconded by Mr. Tate, the Board voted unanimously of those present for approval to go into Closed Session for the following purposes:

- **To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged, confidential, and not a public record;**
- **To consider the performance of specific employees; and**
- **To consult with and receive guidance from the Board's attorneys on matters covered by attorney-client privilege.**

The motion was made pursuant to Sections 143-318.11(a) and 115C-402 of the North Carolina General Statutes and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Chairperson White reconvened the Regular Board Meeting at 6:10 p.m. in Room 267 of the Government Center. CMS TV Channel 3 televised the meeting.

Present: Joe White, Chairperson;
Molly Griffin, Vice-Chairperson, (District 5);

Kaye McGarry, Member At-Large;
Trent Merchant, Member At-Large;
Larry Gauvreau (District 1);
Vilma D. Leake (District 2);
George Dunlap (District 3);
Tom Tate (District 4);
Ken Gjertsen (District 6)

Absent: There were no absences

Also present at the request of the Board were Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent; Members of Executive and Senior Staffs; James G. Middlebrooks, Attorney from Helms Mulliss & Wicker, PLLC, representing the Board; Carole Hamrick, Manager of Board Services; and Nancy Daughtridge, Clerk to the Board.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson White called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. Chairperson White welcomed everyone to the Board's second meeting of the month which will be conducted in a Work Session format. Chairperson White said he would not enforce the 3-minute, 2-minute, and 1-minute discussion ruling for this meeting.

A. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. McGarry moved that the Board approve the adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Merchant, and the Board voted 7-0 to approve the motion. Chairperson White, Ms. McGarry, Mr. Merchant, Mr. Gauvreau, Ms. Leake, Mr. Tate, and Ms. Griffin approved the motion. Mr. Dunlap and Mr. Gjertsen were out of the room at the time of the vote.

II. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Recommend approval of administrative personnel

Dr. Gorman presented the following transfers and appointment:

Transfers:

- Alicisa D. Johnson named principal of Harding University High School. She previously served as principal at Bradley Middle School.
- Carol C. Owen named principal of Bradley Middle School. She previously served as principal at Mountain Island Elementary School.

Appointment:

- Jeffrey W. Ruppenthal appointed principal of Mountain Island Elementary School. He previously served as assistant principal at Mountain Island Elementary School and Huntersville Elementary School, and principal intern at Blythe Elementary School.

Ms. McGarry moved that the Board approve Consent Item A., seconded by Ms. Leake, and the Board voted 9-0 to approve the motion.

III. REPORTS/INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Report/work session on High School Challenge

Chairperson White called upon Dr. Gorman to present the report. Dr. Gorman said the Board's Theory of Action is the district's strategic approach to improving student achievement and it drives the planning, goals, policies, budgeting, and administrative action for CMS. The Theory of Action is also a framework for the development of district policies. At the Regular Board meeting on September 12th, the Board presented the first reading for three new policies (Policy AE, AEC, and GC), and revisions to Policy BBD and Bylaw BBA that will drive actions in the future if approved by the Board at the October 10th Regular Board meeting. In the policy process, there comes a point when policy must then become action. For the reform initiative of CMS, that time is now and action on the High School Challenge Plan must be a high priority. Currently, there are three high schools in the High School Challenge Plan (Garinger High School, West Charlotte High School, and West Mecklenburg High School). Dr. Gorman said he would like to add E. E. Waddell High School as a fourth high school to be considered informally for this meeting's discussion. Dr. Gorman said Waddell would not be formally a part of the High School Challenge grant but informally part of the discussion for this meeting. Waddell's composite score for last year's End-of-Course (EOC) test was below 50% and it is one of the high schools under watch and review by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and Judge Manning. There are High School Challenge programs now in place at the three schools that are showing good results. These include the Truancy Program, the Performance Excellence for All Kids (PEAK) Training, and Content Coaches. Despite improvements, these schools are still not successfully teaching more than half their students. Dr. Gorman said more stringent action is required and tonight he is proposing reconstitution. That evaluation is based upon the EOC composite scores. Dr. Gorman said this is not saying there are not high-quality teachers, administrators, and support staff working hard at those schools or committed children and parents. The fact remains we are not reaching the levels we need to as it relates to student achievement. Dr. Gorman reviewed the EOC Composite results for the four high schools as follows:

	EOC Composite Results		
School	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Garinger	44	42.1	45.3
West Charlotte	30	35.7	40.4
West Mecklenburg	48	46.7	47.9
E. E. Waddell	40.7	48.5	49.2

The results show progress but not enough progress overall. When fewer than half the students in a school can meet the state minimum for academic performance, we are not educating the students well enough and we are not doing what is best for all students. Dr. Gorman said we must begin reconstituting the staffs of these schools. The Theory of Action states managed performance and empowerment begins with standards including high-quality staffing. What

will improve test scores at these schools are more effective teaching, more effective leadership, and many other things such as more parental involvement and a higher level of student engagement; however, CMS cannot control some of these factors. The proposed plan for reconstitution puts into practice the Board's goal of creating a performance-based culture. Under this proposal, we hold teachers, principals, and staff accountable for meeting clearly stated standards. This is supported by proposed Policy GC, Effective Teachers and School Administrators, and proposed Policy AE, School Accountability System. CMS has previously tried several other initiatives but they have not produced the necessary results. Reconstitution is a strong remedy that includes a few challenges that we will have to face but it will help us reach and teach the many students who are in danger of failing and not being educated to the level they need to be by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Dr. Gorman said we cannot stand by and watch this happen; dramatic action is required at this point in time. Dr. Gorman introduced Ann Clark, Regional Superintendent for High Schools; Charity Bell, principal at West Mecklenburg High School; John Modest, principal at West Charlotte High School; Jo Ella Ferrell, principal at Garinger High School; and Dr. Edward Ellis, principal at Waddell High School, to present the High School Challenge Plan. Ms. Clark said the proposed plan is an opportunity to be bold and courageous. It is important to know that staff believes it is the right thing to do. They also believe it shows principle and courage to bring it forward to the Board and community as a next step beyond the High School Challenge. Ms. Ferrell reviewed the history and the components of the program; Ms. Clark reviewed the carryover budget; Ms. Bell highlighted the three programs included in the continuation budget (Truancy, PEAK, and Content Coaches); Mr. Modest reviewed the recommendations for the reconstitution; and Dr. Ellis reviewed the teacher incentive and hiring process for the proposed initiative. The initiatives are aimed at dramatically increasing student achievement and high school reform. The \$4.9 million plan calls for sweeping changes in how schools are staffed, and holds teachers and principals accountable for how well students learn. Under the new plan, existing school staffs, including teachers, principals, counselors and support staff, will be evaluated on the impact their performance has on students. High performers will be asked to stay; low performers will be dismissed not only from the school, but from CMS. To recruit top performers to the district's most challenged high schools, CMS will offer a number of incentives, including:

- \$15,000 signing bonuses for fifteen EOC teachers per school;
- \$10,000 signing bonuses for five non-EOC teachers per school;
- A merit pay local supplement of 15% for all staff in place at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year; after year one, certified and non-certified staff may maintain this local supplement on an annual basis by meeting specific goals tied to student achievement and individual employee performance.

In addition to signing bonuses and merit pay, personnel at the four schools will receive additional benefits, including:

- Access to high quality professional development;
- Continuation of free master's degree program and other incentives for teachers in high poverty (FOCUS) schools;
- Summer or extended employment for assistant principals who are helping lead high school redesign efforts;

- Summer or extended employment for key certified staff; and,
- Monthly stipends for department chairpersons.

The initiatives are focused on increasing student achievement. The overall composite EOC target for each of the schools for the 2006-2007 school year is 55% and 60% for the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. Gorman said the drive for this proposal is exemplary school leadership and highly competent teachers as they are the centerpiece for dramatic improvement in student achievement results. A discussion with Board members followed. Mr. Gjertsen asked for clarification on the \$4.9 million request. Dr. Gorman said this is to request \$4.9 million from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) as part of the High School Challenge Grant to prepare and enter into the program for next year. Without a commitment for those funds and those funds being approved now, staff does not feel comfortable moving forward with promises to individuals for joining this program at this point in time. There are other funds that are already built into the budget under the category of high school redesign in the August approved budget that will make up the balance. This request will provide assurance that this initiative will be funded. Mr. Gjertsen said is this request asking for \$4.9 million now that will not be spent until next year or is this money to continue the High School Challenge Programs that are already in place? Dr. Gorman said this is money from this year's budget that we want to encumber now for payments which will go out in the 2007-2008 year which we would like to receive now to ensure they are earmarked for the program before we proceed with the initiatives. Ms. Griffin said this is a bold and an innovative initiative which is something she has been looking for. Ms. Griffin asked does the timeline indicate that by February 2007 staff will have identified those teachers who will be dismissed? Dr. Gorman said staff will have identified the positions which are vacancies and a staff member could still work towards improvement. These are individuals for which staff has concerns at a high enough level that they are looked at for dismissal at that point in time. Ms. Griffin asked will those individuals be told that at that point in time? Dr. Gorman replied, yes, they will be told that at that point in time. The dismissal process is not complete until much later in the spring and there could be improvements. Those positions must be declared vacant, at that point in time, to allow time for the schools to start the search process. It is not our intention to have everyone improve and just be transferred to other schools. All staff is expected to be held to the same rigorous standard and, if improvement does occur, they will be considered for placement elsewhere. They are told upfront that they are being held to a higher standard and rigorous improvement is expected. Ms. Griffin expressed concern about moving teachers who are identified as inadequate to another school because that would defeat the purpose. Dr. Gorman said the majority of reconstitution efforts across the country agree with that statement. This component includes dismissal if an individual's performance is not up to the standard that the students deserve. Ms. Griffin encouraged that this process meet the requirements of North Carolina law. Dr. Gorman said all legal aspects have been reviewed. Ms. Griffin asked who will conduct the teacher and principal observations? Dr. Gorman said there would be multiple observations that will occur for the staff at the site and they will involve the principal and an observer. There will be multiple principal observations conducted by Ms. Clark; Ruth Perez, Chief Academic Officer; and Dr. Gorman. Ms. McGarry said the proposed plan is exciting. She said ideally, the High School Challenge program over the past two years has not worked and the public has expressed concern about the money that has been poured into the program. Ms. McGarry said how will this plan be implemented differently to ensure results? Ms. Clark said the plan for the High School Challenge is reconstitution and support of that effort with the

hiring, recruitment, and retention process. The majority of the dollars are dedicated to reconstitution. The only programs that have continued into year three are those programs included in the carryover budget which are individualized to each school and, based on track record, valued added and student achievement weaknesses. Ms. McGarry said how will this be evaluated because she believes the high schools record data in different ways? She expressed concern regarding consistency of the assessments and implementation. Ms. Clark said an evaluation document will be available when the EOC scores and the AP/IB scores are finalized for year two. Most of the measures in the High School Challenge are tied to those student achievement data points. Those scores will be available as soon as the Department of Public Instruction releases the official results. Dr. Gorman said the state and Judge Manning are evaluating CMS based on EOC scores. That is the gold standard for this program. Ms. McGarry said regarding reconstitution, have any of the principals been told their job is not secure? Dr. Gorman asked that one of the principals repeat what he had stated at a previous meeting held with the principals. Mr. Modest said Dr. Gorman was very clear. Not only are the staff at the school site being held accountable to a higher level, he and his staff are also being held accountable by the School Board. Mr. Modest said this is a team effort and if we do not make the grade, he will be unemployed. He said this is what we need to do. Mr. Modest said each principal must create the type of change that they need at their school and each plan may be different. Ms. McGarry asked what will success look like after reconstitution? Ms. Clark said it is focused on a quality teacher in each of the classrooms in each of these schools. In order for any of the employees in any of the schools to retain the 15% local supplement, the school must meet the required standards. The plan allows the schools to have bench strength and the programs will be evaluated on a continual basis. Ms. Clark said there is a strong nucleus of outstanding teachers already in place at each of these four schools and this is an opportunity to build on that strength. The bottom line is student achievement. The target is having 60% and beyond of the students on grade level and that is not a stretched goal when there is a quality teacher in every classroom. Mr. Dunlap expressed concern that CMS has continued to do the same thing expecting a different result. He said CMS has continued to give the least qualified teachers to the students who have the greatest needs. This has been done year after year expecting a different result. Mr. Dunlap said the Superintendent has presented a plan that will change the direction in which this district is moving. This is something we all should be proud of. He said there may be those who will challenge the budget and the reform measures, and there will be those who will talk about status quo. Status quo is continuing to do what we have always done and getting what we have always received. Mr. Dunlap looks forward to having the plan implemented. Mr. Dunlap said the fair treatment of employees is important to him. He expressed concern that the teachers at the four schools will be held to a different standard than the teachers at other schools. He believes the same set of standards should apply at all high schools. He asked that this be taken into consideration because it would be unfair to dismiss teachers at the four schools when there may be teachers at the other schools who are not as qualified as the teachers who may be dismissed. Mr. Dunlap said the target for the EOC composite scores is 55% which equates to a 14.6% gain for one school. He asked how can this target be reached when the highest gain thus far has been 5.7%? Dr. Gorman said Judge Manning made it very clear that anything below 55% was unacceptable and the school would be in his sights for closure. Judge Manning also made it very clear that this was the last chance to get there. Dr. Gorman said this is the number that Judge Manning set and it is an absolute. Judge Manning

said growth is fine but if a school does not pass the criteria, other actions will be taken by him. Dr. Gorman said he does not want Judge Manning taking actions with our schools. He wants the Board and Superintendent taking actions with our schools. Mr. Dunlap said this did not happen in one year and he does not expect CMS to be able to come out of a hole in one year. He believes it would be more realistic to set incremental goals. Mr. Merchant said this is what Dr. Gorman was hired to do and is a great first step. Mr. Merchant said this is a short timeline for the evaluation process. He asked is there some consideration for those teachers whom staff already has an indication that they are not achieving? Dr. Gorman said everyone will participate in the formal observation and evaluation process which has been defined. They will all be dealt with in a fair manner following that evaluation. Each case will be reviewed with Human Resources and Counsel. Staff has not formally targeted anyone. Each principal has some concerns regarding historical performance data with individuals at their sites but no individual or group of individuals have been targeted. Ms. Clark said a teacher can be placed on an action plan at any point during the school year. We actually have teachers returning to all of our high schools on an action plan from the end of last year so that the targets that are in this particular timeline reflect any new additions to the action plan format. Teachers can come on and off an action plan at any point during the year based upon improvement in classroom instruction. Mr. Merchant asked what types of development opportunities does this include? Ms. Clark explained the professional development process and opportunities which included observing other teachers, working with content coaches, and training. Mr. Merchant said the hiring process will require a strong Human Resources Department and without talent and commitment from Human Resources this plan will not get off the ground. He expressed concern that the Human Resources Department hired some of those individuals who are currently not performing to expectations. Dr. Gorman said part of his responsibility is to strengthen the departments of CMS and this includes the Human Resources Department. A nationwide search is being conducted for a Human Resources Assistant Superintendent, and staff from the Broad Foundation and the Council of the Great City Schools will visit CMS in October to perform a full assessment of the Human Resources Department. Ms. Leake expressed concern that CMS is in this situation because of the failure of children. This is not only a concern for CMS but it is also occurring in school districts across the country. Ms. Leake expressed concern that the school system has provided the weakest teachers to the weakest children. She believes CMS should provide the best teachers to educate the weakest children. She said it is better to spend \$7,000 now to educate children than spend \$34,000 later to have them incarcerated. Ms. Leake said these children have a different learning style and CMS must do whatever it takes to educate the weakest children in the system. She believes everyone must be responsible and held accountable to educate and this includes the parents. She expressed concern about dismissing a teacher because they do not fit at these schools. She believes CMS should find the right school for each teacher. Ms. Leake encouraged the Board to support this request. Mr. Gauvreau said the plan shows desire which is good. He expressed concern that reconstitution may just be a method to dismiss teachers because there are other strategies that have not been tried such as decentralizing the district, ending busing, and extending the length of the school day. He is concerned this may be a method to just pay teachers more money. He said dramatic change is important but incremental steps could get the same results and the Board would not have to ask the BOCC for \$7 million. He said it is important to know and would like it reflected in the minutes that CMS is a compliance-driven public education system and the CMS results are not what they

appear. He believes it would be a bolder step to remove these schools from Board policy and make them charter schools. He will not support this motion because he believes there is a better way to get results. He said CMS should have reform issues on the front end and he does not believe changing teachers will get the expected results. He said this is not firing teachers; it is just repopulating schools. He asked Dr. Gorman to respond to his comments. Dr. Gorman said he chooses not to make comments. Mr. Tate appreciates the questions from the Board members. He thanked the four principals for putting their lives on the line and for the serious manner for which they are taking the initiatives to maximize student achievement. Mr. Tate said the components of the plan involve individual achievement and total achievement. He believes this is a great plan for moving CMS forward and maximizing student achievement. Chairperson White thanked Dr. Gorman for being bold and deciding to lead this school system rather than allowing Judge Manning to lead the school system. To do this is going to cost money and it is going to be expensive. Some people may refer to the plan as bloated. Chairperson White encouraged the Board to provide the Superintendent their support because it will help to educate all the children in the community. The plan will treat the staff members who choose to stay in these schools differently because they will be able to receive rewards if they are successful. He believes if they are going to take the rewards they also must take the risks. Chairperson White said he has been a teacher in the CMS system and he does not believe this plan is an assault on teachers. The plan impacts teachers because teachers are where the rubber meets the road. The plan is focused on the “main thing” and the “main thing” is student achievement and test scores which will be easy to evaluate. The hard thing to determine will be who is a good teacher because credentials do not necessarily make a good teacher. Ms. McGarry said students and families cannot wait another year but because of the continued failure of the High School Challenge they have to wait another year. The student must also be responsible. Students must learn and they must be at school to learn. Judge Manning said this is not about the money. She said Dr. Gorman developed a plan prior to asking the BOCC for money. She said that was smart and shows fiscal responsibility. She believes it is reasonable to ask for a budget for the 2007-2008 school year. She said the High School Challenge initiatives have potential to move the district from good to great. She said she senses a commitment and urgency from Dr. Gorman that he wants to move on this now. She will support the motion and expects dramatic results. Mr. Merchant said credentials do not make a teacher great and he hopes Human Resources will pay attention to that during the recruitment process. He said this is not where the bloat is and he supports the initiatives. Mr. Merchant said it is fiscally responsible to target the funds where they are needed. Ms. Griffin said the initiatives of the plan follow the Board’s Theory of Action which includes charter-like autonomy. She asked will there be a transition program for 8th graders who are not ready for 9th grade? Dr. Gorman said, yes. He will present information on this at a later time. Ms. Griffin said she was disappointed the uniform program was not successful and would like it reassessed. Ms. Griffin asked will all staff members be included in the 15% merit pay? Dr. Gorman replied, yes. Ms. Griffin supports the concept of holding everyone responsible and believes Board members should also be held responsible.

Mr. Dunlap moved that the Board approve the High School Challenge Grant request of \$4.9 million from the BOCC, seconded by Ms. Griffin, and a discussion followed.

Mr. Gjertsen said CMS has a \$1 billion budget and it is bloated. The High School Challenge

failed and this initiative puts the nails in the coffin. He likes the plan and he is very supportive of salary increases for teachers. He expressed concern about the bonus initiative because one was provided last year and only three teachers chose to participate. He believes the plan has pitfalls and execution could be the biggest one. Mr. Gjertsen will support the motion. Ms. Leake asked what are the bonus incentives for secretaries, cafeteria employees, custodians, and bus drivers? She said this information could be provided to her at a later time. She believes these employees should also participate in the same bonus opportunities. The evaluation process must be implemented properly and the timelines promptly followed. Ms. Leake stressed that the people evaluating the teachers must ensure there is fairness in the process. Ms. McGarry is concerned about safety issues in these schools. She encouraged Dr. Gorman to follow North Carolina State Statute guidelines which allows a superintendent to expel students rather than just exclude students. She said CMS receives state funding and the Board should work to get the state to give flexibility on issues such as merit pay, tenure, longevity bonuses, and raising the cap on charter schools. Ms. McGarry will support the motion. Mr. White said the greatest reward is the opportunity of bringing on a winning team and doing something with a group of students that no other district across the country has been able to do.

The Board voted 8-1 to approve the motion. Chairperson White, Ms. Griffin, Ms. McGarry, Mr. Merchant, Ms. Leake, Mr. Dunlap, Mr. Tate, and Mr. Gjertsen approved the motion. Mr. Gauvreau voted against the motion.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

A. Recommend approval of High School Challenge

This item was approved in the discussion for agenda item III.A. (Report/work session on High School Challenge).

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Leake moved that the Board adjourn the Regular Board meeting, seconded by Mr. Dunlap, and by consensus, the Board agreed to adjourn the meeting.

The Regular School Board Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Chairperson, Joe. I. White, Jr.

Clerk to the Board, Nancy Daughtridge