

# CMS recommendations draw criticism

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example, the number of board members would be cut from nine to seven, including one who is appointed, and candidates would be forced to run a more costly countywide campaign to be elected.

And at least one person said that, despite good intentions, the overall educational needs of all CMS students, regardless of socioeconomic background, still would not be met because the task force

## Nagin talks to evacuees

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planning to assess damage to their destroyed properties and decide if it is feasible for them to return. Lastly, New Orleans businesses may be encouraged to reopen and operate in New Orleans if given tax incentives.

"New Orleans is coming back, but it will take time. You cannot entirely fix a city that was entirely devastated in three or four months," Mayor Nagin maintained. "I'm trying to make it better. But I can only do so much. I need your help." He stressed the importance of writing letters to state and federal lawmakers to apply pressure.

"We're sitting around with anger, but we need to get more vocal and speak up. Washington is afraid that we're going to wake up and apply pressure!" he insisted.

The meeting that was scheduled for two hours stretched into five, as the mayor then opened the floor to questions. Two long lines formed immediately, with evacuees asking questions regarding environmental concerns, such as air quality, toxic fumes and contaminated topsoil, to Katrina flu rumors. Several wondered whether the hardest hit areas—New Orleans East and the Lower 9th Ward—would be rebuilt. Many in attendance felt that those areas will not be rebuilt and are being purposely overlooked.

"We demand that one of our members be in those planning meetings," stated Dorothy Stukes of the ACORN Katrina Survivors Association. "We demand that there be some form of public relations on behalf of the city to clean up the image of the New Orleans people. The media has portrayed us wrong."

Along with Nagin were FEMA officials who received heated words from several frustrated evacuees who felt they were being treated unjustly by the federal agency.

"There is no consistency when you phone FEMA!" shouted Danyell Santiago, who worked in the professional nursing field. She complained that she has constantly faxed and mailed her documents to FEMA only to have them lost.

neglected to implement black history in the curriculum.

Gantt and Bessant said the task force estimates it will take three years to implement all their recommendations, if they are accepted.

"I don't know if there's really all that much to get excited about at this point," said Gail Fowler, who lives off Tuckasee Road and has two boys attending CMS middle schools. "They can say all they want. I just don't feel good about it. We don't have a lot of money, like some of those people in south Charlotte, and I just worry about my child falling through the cracks. I still

have a hard time believing they're going to give my child the same amount of money as those kids in Myers Park.

"I'll believe it when I see it." Gantt said people like Fowler need not worry.

The task force's recommendation for school funding calls for basing the budget of each school on student needs. Low-income students, gifted students and students with other special needs (English as a second language and the disabled) would provide extra money for a school.

"This is designed to provide more money to the students who need it most," said Gantt, who has been working on the task force since

March. "If a student needs more money, he's going to get it. And if he leaves that school and goes to another, that money's going to follow him.

"Now, after that, the onus falls on the principals at each school and how they use the money to benefit the students. What we're trying to do is level the playing field for our students. And I believe this is something that really can work. We believe in it."

And there were plenty of advocates in attendance Wednesday.

Vanessa Johnson, the mother of sons age 15 and 12, heaped praise on the task force.

"This is the type of change our school system needs," Johnson said. "We couldn't go on the way we had been going, with students at one school doing well and students at another school doing poorly. I had to take one of my sons out of CMS and put him in a private school to improve his grades, and I shouldn't have to do that.

"The recommendations are good. CMS wasn't growing, and not enough people were being held accountable. This way, everyone would be held accountable. That has to be an improvement. I think (the task force has) done a great job."

But while Gyasi Foluke

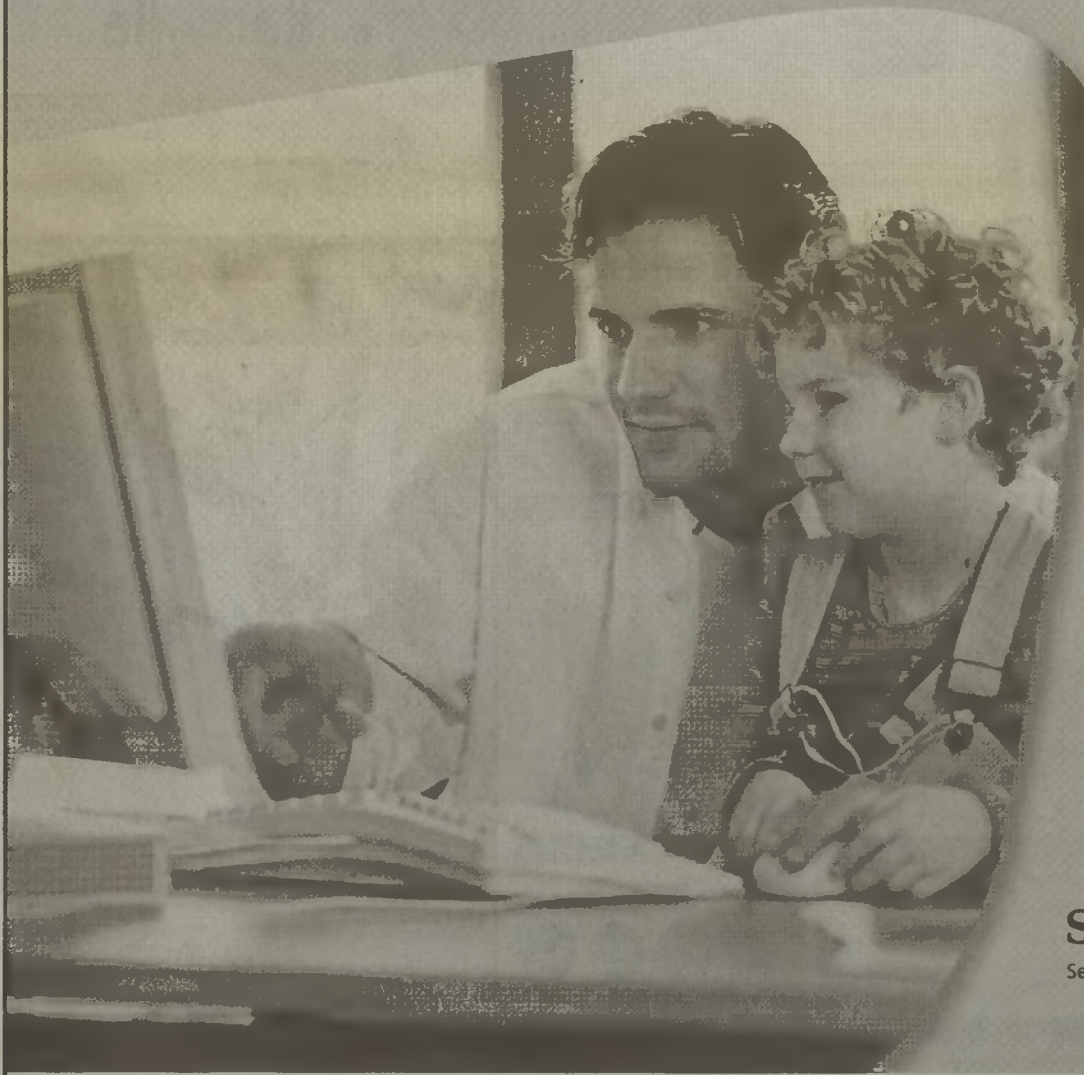
wasn't critical of any specific recommendations the task force put forth Wednesday, he was visibly upset by the absence of one thing.

"Nothing is going to be accomplished until they incorporate black history into the schools for these students," Foluke said. "We have to be serious about educating our youth—completely. Right now, they're getting education for assimilation, as opposed to education for liberation. And education for liberation is more important. That's why we need black history in the curriculum.

"Until the task force steps up and does that, none of this other stuff today really matters."

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