High schools' challenge: Student achievement

Continued from page 1A

their students through End of Course testing. The reconstituted schools showed improvement for the 2005-2006 academic year, but none reached the 50-percent mark.

"We're not educating the kids well, and we're not doing what we need to do," said Gorman. "We have to begin doing something different. What will improve the scores at these schools is more effective teaching... and leadership."

Gorman explained on a national level, reconstitution usually means taking 10 teachers who are struggling at school A and moving them to school B, and School C...etc. However, that is not how this plan will work.

"We can not simply move under performing employees from one site to another," explained Gorman. "All that does is move an existing problem from one school to another. We have poorly performing students at all of our schools...we have to make sure we provide them with what is best."

Gorman's plan will measure principal and teacher effectiveness using established standards already employed by CMS. Principals, teachers and support staff who perform at a high performance level will be eligible for a merit-based salary supplemental bonus for next year.

Principals, teachers and support staff who do meet the standards will be given action plans that lay out specific areas of improvement. If they do not improve after working on the Action Plan this year, they will be considered for dismissal.

"Please understand this is just one component," said Gorman. "Students play a role, they must be held accountable. Parents must be held accountable. (But) I can't control the student piece or the parent piece. I have some control over the staff piece."

The plan will be implemented immediately with initial observations of teachers and staff through Oct. 20. By Oct. 31, individual growth and action plans will be completed for anyone needing improvement. Before the winter break, principals will complete a second observation, and mid-year appraisals will be completed by the end of January. In May and June, CMS will complete the non-renewal and dismissal process.

In addition, CMS mandated all four high schools must reach 55 percent on EOC composite scores by the end of this year and 60 percent by the end of next year. The state minimum is 60 percent; Judge Howard Manning, who is overseeing the Leandro case for funding low-wealth schools and threatened to shut down struggling CMS campuses, wants 55 percent.

"I don't want a situation where Judge Manning is telling us how to run our schools," said Gorman. "We need to get above that bar."

The principals of each high school were in attendance at a media briefing on Wednesday. West Charlotte's John Modest acknowledged the need for change.

"We have that challenge," he said. "We have eighty percent of our students on free and reduced lunch; student population about 95 percent African-American. I know those students can learn. I have extremely high expectations, and it's my job to help provide the type of environment to prepare them for the next level. Am I afraid of the challenge? No."

Modest

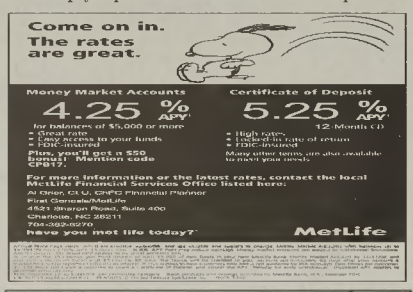
Each principal is aware that their job is tied directly to student achievement. Yet, Gorman also realizes the failure of his plan could mean the end of his job.

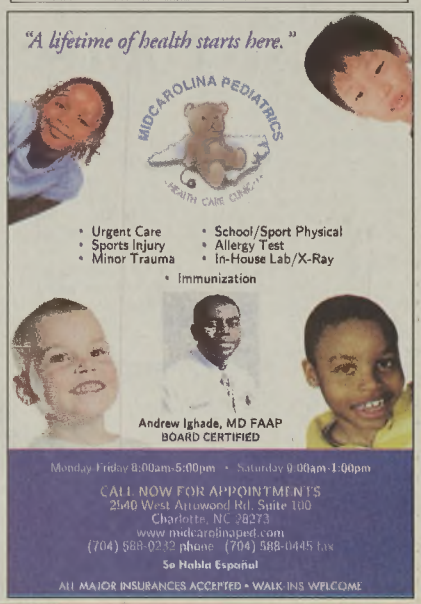
"It's my expectation that the board won't continue to have me as Superintendent if we are not successful with this," said Gorman.

"This is not a flexible target," said Gorman. "We can't afford to wait. If we don't act now more than 3,700 students will be in jeopardy of not being able to pass the state tests this year."

The reconstitution plan is only the first part of his reform initiatives.

"We are looking at performance-based pay and differentiated pay expanded well beyond these four schools. This is the first step."





Fight sparks CMS security upgrade

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Peter Gorman said stronger safety measures are being put in place at schools, but they can't do it alone.

"We must have help from the community," said Gorman, who urged parents to be more involved, especially with middle- and high school students.

Green

"You need to know who your child is [hanging out] with...where are they going...why are they going there...and know what your child is bringing to school."

He added that in addition to the incident at East Mecklenburg High School last week, there has been an increase of weapons, like knives and Airsoft pistols being brought to school.

"This has to stop," said Gorman. "These are not toys. Help us keep your children and our schools safe."

Chief Operating Officer Maurice Green and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Deputy Chief of Police Dave Stevens discussed ongoing and new security measures, as well as the status of the football incident.

"We have made one arrest for an assault of the two men," said Stevens. "However, we are not prepared at this time to give out the name. "This is an ongoing investigation...we are seeking one other suspect." Stevens added that police have reason to believe this was a gang related incident.

"We are very concerned about safety at schools, particularly at East Mecklenburg," Green said.

He outlined that while some security plans and actions will go into effect immediately, others may be put into place after further evaluations of current practices. Between 14-25 police officers will continue to be present at games. Beginning this Friday, all students attending Derita Alternative School due to behavioral and disciplinary problems will not be allowed into any games. Also, students who "display gang style behaviors," will be put on social restrictions, banning them from attending games.

"Going to athletic events is a privilege, not a right," said Green.

Also, more CMS staff will be employed at games, especially in the parking lots, to help identify those students that have been banned from games.

Schools will communicate with parents regarding restricted students.

"The policy to ban students from games is not new, but it has not been enforced as strong as it could be," Green said.

Banned students who are caught at games face the possibility of expulsion or trespassing charges.

"Fourteen-year-olds should feel safe going to a football game," said Gorman. "Students can govern their own behavior. These kids are old enough to be free-thinking and make positive decisions."