

Are charter schools being derailed

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cans, who traditionally belong to the Democratic Party, has many black politicians worried.

"Conservatives have an agenda," said Warren "Pete" Oldham, who represents Forsyth County's District 67. "It appears to me ... that the conservative Republicans are using the African Americans."

"They are appealing to us and telling us that there is a need (for charter schools)," Oldham added.

Charter schools and its sibling issue, school vouchers, are often discussed under the umbrella of school choice. Called the "sleeping issue" of the decade by *Emerge* magazine, school choice is the one area where white conservatives and the African-American community don't agree to disagree: they just plain agree.

And there are some who claim to stand for both the conservative party and African-American interests.

Local attorney Vernon Robinson, the Republican candidate for state superintendent, was defeated by Democrat Michael Ward last fall. One of the state's more vocal charter school proponents, Robinson has continued to work as president of the N.C. Education Reform Foundation to assist the charter school process.

Since the federal government announced that the state could not use the \$1 million grant to create a loan pool for charter school start-up, Robinson has been soliciting private organizations and businesses for the funds. Seven North Carolina banks had previously pledged \$5 million for the loan pool; this fund depended on the initial federal grant to offset potential losses.

Democrats in North Carolina public office haven't pushed hard enough for charter school funding, charges Robinson, and some have openly attempted to thwart the charter school process.

"The Department of Public Instruction has never been engaged in good faith during the whole time," said Robinson, who said that state department failed to either solicit banks for the guarantee, or expend much energy to amend the grant application.

Not being able to tap into a larger source of money will hurt those charter schools that are not already operating as private or non-profit institutions, said Robinson. Most schools plan to open July 1.

"[It] hurts folks who need buildings the most, and that's the black charter schools," said Robinson. He believes that the superintendent should have lobbied the governor, both senators and all 12 congress people to rework the grant application.

Robinson believes that many of the legislators who are not working on behalf of charter schools don't understand the concept of alternative public schools.

"Flossie Boyd-McIntyre (minority house whip) said that [charter] schools are going to have to choose whether they are public or private," said Robinson. This statement, he said, illustrates a fundamental lack in understanding of charter schools, which are publicly funded, run by parents, community members and teachers, and must have 75 percent of the teaching staff certified by the state.

Boyd-McIntyre was not available for comment.

Oldham agreed that charter schools are public "in a technical way."

But, Oldham added, "They are not public in the same way schools under the jurisdiction of a school board are."

Oldham said he supports the concept of charter schools. "They offer an opportunity to innovate and experiment without involving a large number of people," he said. "But I am a strong proponent of public schools."

Oldham doesn't think the state should allow benefits to follow

teachers who move from traditional public schools to positions at charter schools.

"I think charter schools ought to make some provisions for the people they hire," Oldham said, adding that to do otherwise would allow a "free ride at the state's expense."

Without the loan pool, however, hiring any staff may be a giant leap for the fledgling charter schools.

"It's going to make it very difficult to hire an experienced staff," said Earline Parmon, director of LIFT Academy. "... People really thought that the legislation would deal with that."

As a Democrat, a Forsyth county commissioner and an approved charter school applicant, Parmon is a member of the dialogue in an unusual position. Her school already exists as a nonprofit institution that serves students who have been suspended or expelled from the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system.

Parmon said she was initially wary of the charter school concept, but supported her board of directors' desire to apply for a charter after the legislation passed. Though Parmon was not "gung-ho" about turning LIFT into a charter school, she saw the chance to make the academy financially independent.

As of now, LIFT's operation depends on grants from the federal government. Parmon judged the recent adjustments in charter school law relating to retirement and funding as the "bad legislation of the year."

Still, Parmon is hopeful for her school. "One of the things we have going for us is that we are in a facility," she said. Some of the charter applicants, such as the Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge, are starting from scratch, while others such as LIFT are making a transition.

"We're just taking it one day at a time and jumping through the hoops," said Parmon.

Documents from sheriff's department

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called the sheriff's office at 8:30 a.m., after she noticed the nature of the documents.

A few papers were blown as far as Second Street before an officer and an inmate sanitation worker were sent down to clean up the mess.

Officer L. Needham said she was not told what the papers were, and had assumed the papers belonged to the law office.

Needham and the inmate arrived at Mitchell's office around 10 a.m. Documents were still blowing down the street at 2 p.m. that day, said Mitchell.

Town Run Lane is less than one block from the sheriff's office, which is on Third Street. The dumpster for the sheriff's office is at the lower end of the parking lot, near Town Run Lane.

An unidentified woman from the sheriff's administrative offices said that the records department had transferred the documents onto microfilm, and had thrown away the hard copies. "They were accidentally dumped out instead of put in the dumpster," she said.

Another woman who works in records and did not wish to identify herself said that the papers had fallen out of the dumpster.

Because of the amount of papers handled by the records department, they usually do not shred documents when they

transfer the information onto microfilm.

"We had 26,000 reports, and it's kind of hard to shred that many," said the woman. She added that the reports are public record and thus no privacy was violated.

Danny Tuttle, press officer for the Forsyth Sheriff's Office, was not aware of the incident at 1 p.m. that day. He checked back an hour later to report that the documents had been properly disposed of in the dumpster.

"You can't control whether the wind would blow over a dumpster," said Tuttle. "[The documents] were disposed of the way they were supposed to be."

Tuttle agreed that the reports were public record. Mitchell said that she wanted to make sure nothing of a confidential nature was in the documents.

"When you see it (reports) lying in the street, you don't know if it's public record or private record," said Mitchell.

Attorney Michael Grace, who specializes in criminal law, said that autopsy records for routine deaths are usually the property of the hospital and are not public record. However, said Grace, the autopsy report may become accessible if charges were filed as a result of wrongful death.

"It becomes public record when it is supplied to the court," said Grace.

Still, he added, autopsy reports are frequently difficult to acquire.

Ministers Conference wants policies added

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Other areas that the ministers want covered in the Baptist proposal are:

- Urgent care services for East Winston,
- Transportation provided for indigent patients,
- Increased African-American medical professional presence, in both Bowman Gray faculty and the student body,
- Job security for current Reynolds Health Center employees and
- Protection against a market raid on Medicare/Medicaid-covered patients who are now seen by independent black physicians.

Asking for these additional policies does not mean that the Ministers Conference supports the Baptist proposal.

"I don't think we're going to be boxed

into that question," said the Rev. Carlton A. Eversley of Dellabrook Presbyterian Church. Last month, Eversley's church hosted two forums where both Baptist Hospital and Reynolds Health Center staff presented proposals to the community.

"We are continuing that public conversation," added Eversley.

Reynolds Health Center's advisory committee submitted an eight-page action plan to the county earlier in the year. The action plan addresses many of the facility's financial and management problems identified in a 1996 consulting report conducted by Towers Perrin, and pledges to decrease county support to \$3-3.3 million by 2001.

Gerald Finley, Baptist Hospital's vice president for operations, was unavailable for comment. He is out of his office until April 21.

Webster defines

TREASURE

as a collection of precious things

... and this community's most precious treasure is our little children!

This week, communities all across America are celebrating the Week of the Young Child.

Please join us as we salute those special people in whose care we place our little treasures!

They are the early childhood educators and child care providers of Forsyth County.

They are treasures, too!

EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES:
Good or bad, they last a lifetime!

The care and education a preschool child receives makes a lasting difference in learning and behavior. Therefore, selecting preschool experiences are some of the most important decisions a parent will ever make. The quality of the time and attention a child receives in the earliest years is critical to later success. We must make sure that those who teach and care for young children:

- Are well educated
- Understand child development
- Are paid well enough to choose early childhood education or child care as a career



Friday is Smart Start Teacher Appreciation Day!
Show your child's teacher and/or child care provider just how much you appreciate them!

Here are some suggestions:

- ♥ Together with your child, write her a thank-you note.
 - ♥ Send him a thank-you card; let your child sign it, too.
 - ♥ Surprise her with a flower or mylar balloon.
 - ♥ Bake him some cupcakes or cookies.
 - ♥ Let your child paint her a picture.
 - ♥ Volunteer to help with the class for a day.
 - ♥ Take him a toy or book for the children to enjoy.
- And - much better than anything else - is a simple sincere, "Thank you for the care you give my child."

Parents Join Us!

1st Annual **Smart START**

CELEBRATION OF THE YOUNG CHILD

CORPENING PLAZA
100 West 2nd Street • Winston-Salem
(Rain location: Millennium Center)
Saturday, April 19, 1997
FREE PARKING NEAR THE PLAZA!

FREE! Funded by Smart Start in collaboration with local organizations and professionals.

Main Event: 9:00 a.m.
CHILDREN'S PARADE
Young children from across Forsyth County will march with the YWCA "Empowering Family Center Marching Angels"

Other Events: 10:00 - 12:00 Noon
Interactive Activity Booths for Children Ages 2-5

Information for Parents and Child Care Providers

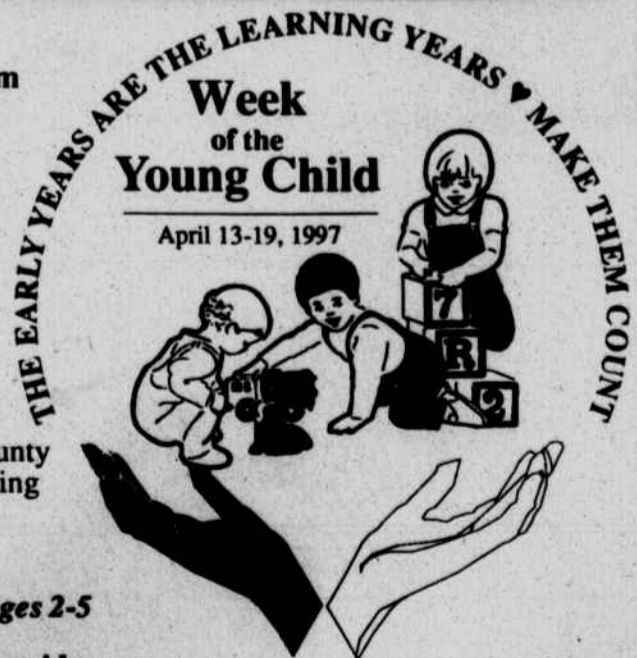
Central Stage with On-Going Entertainment

Free Immunizations (only if you bring your child's health record)

Bookmobile and Other Large Vehicles

Hispanic and Sign Translators

YOUR CHILD CAN MARCH IN THE PARADE!
Dress up in a costume! Bring instruments to play! Decorate trikes, training wheel bikes, or wagons! (No big or motorized bikes, please!)



Sponsored by: **FORSYTH EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP**
Fostering those important first steps

For information about quality child care, call the Smart Start Technical Assistance Center at 722-1642 or Work/Family Resource Center at 761-5100.

To know more about SMART START, call Forsyth Early Childhood Partnership at 725-6011.

Your child's caregiver may spend more waking hours with your child than you do. Therefore, you'll want to feel as confident about her - in terms of moral, educational and social values - as if she were a member of your family.