

Camels hope to bring back past glory

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

Can Atkins Middle School become a high school again?

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board member Victor Johnson thinks so.

"I think it's a real possibility it could be because if you see the capacities of these middle schools in the city—they are all under capacity," said the 1953 Atkins graduate. "Atkins is the history of urban education. It makes more sense to have Atkins High School as an inner city school for black children."

Johnson and the Black Leadership Roundtable of Winston-Salem have made returning

Atkins to its former glory a mission.

N.C. Rep. Larry Womble, D-Forsyth, co-convenor of the Black Leadership Roundtable and 1959 graduate of Atkins says they are taking a look at the issue since there has been interest from the community.

"We're now in the process of seeing what is the best way to handle this," he said. "I'm getting calls from people who say 'I'm glad you all are looking into this, I'm a graduate of Atkins'. It's gathering more and more support."

"If we can garner the same kind of support we got for the cemetery, we can be successful. (Atkins) can be reverted back without a lot of interruption."

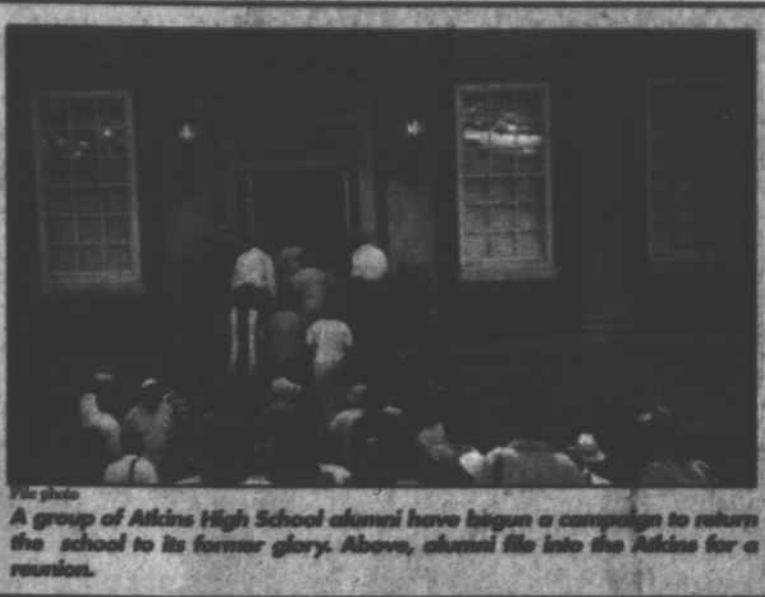
Atkins High School opened up in 1931 as the city black school. Those black students that lived in the county attended Carver High School.

By the late 60s and early 70s, integration swept through the south and in 1971 WS/FC schools went through changes to accommodate the new laws.

From 1971-1984 Atkins and Carver were one of several high schools that took in ninth and 10th graders only. Those schools that had grades 11-12 were called senior high schools.

County Commissioner Walter Marshall says that a push to change Atkins Middle

See Atkins on A12



A group of Atkins High School alumni have begun a campaign to return the school to its former glory. Above, alumni file into the Atkins for a reunion.

75 cents

WINSTON-SALEM GREENSBORO HIGH POINT

Vol. XXV No. 3

THE CHRONICLE

051100*****CAR-RT-SORT**C012
CHILDRENS PUBLISHING NC
FORSYTH CNTY PUB LIB
660 W 5TH ST # 6
WINSTON SALEM NC 27101-2755

The Choice for African American News and Information

e-mail address: wschron@netunlimited.net

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 1998

African Americans think Clinton should be forgiven

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

It's no secret that President Clinton sinned. But judging from the responses of members of Goler Memorial AME Zion Church Sunday, the president should be embraced, not impeached during his time of trouble.

During an emotional call for prayer, the Rev. Seth O. Lartey called members up to prayer not just for themselves but for a president facing a public scandal that threatens to divide not only a country — but a family.

Not an eye was left dry. Not a person was left on a pew.

Lartey says the response of his congregation was not surprising.

"I'm not really surprised," he said. "The people of Goler generally respond to the concerns of the community and of the world. Right now the fact that he is the President is minor. He's a human being that has to be burdened to have the images of his behavior scandalized as it has been. The role of the church is to be forgiving. That's what I asked my congregation to do."

Goler wasn't the only church to ask for clemency for Clinton. Across the nation, black churches and religious organizations spent at least a portion of their weekly services discussing Clinton and the graphic report of independent counsel Kenneth Starr.

And by and large, most African Americans are willing to at least forgive — if not forget.

During an emotional session at its annual board of directors meeting, members of the National Baptist Convention — still reeling from allegations of sexual impropriety against its leader, the Rev. Henry Lyons — asked for prayer and forgiveness for Clinton.

"I think we should forgive him for what he has done," says Betty Bennett, a member of Shiloh Baptist Church. "Censure him — do whatever they want to do and then forget about it and let him concentrate on his job."

Lartey agrees. "The nation as a whole stands at a precarious position," he said. "We're supposed to be a Christian nation and as such I think that means we should do the Christian thing...When someone repents, people should forgive him. That's what the Bible teaches us to do."

The specter of Starr's report also presents other concerns for country, says another local minister.

The Rev. Conrad Pridgen of Greensboro's Bethel AME Church says African Americans should think about why so much of Clinton's life has been made public.

"A lot of people who are asking for punishment, don't seem to take into consideration the historical way this situation has developed," Pridgen said. "Clearly, President Clinton is being treated differently than others in the past. No one is condoning what he did, but heretofore, the president's personal life has been out of bounds. It seems to me that since the independent counsel could not find something to prosecute Hillary Rodham Clinton through Whitewater, he dredged up the family's personal life."

Pridgen, who also asked members to pray for the first family Sunday, says he encouraged his congregation to think about what may be behind



Lartey



Martin

See Clinton on A5

Selling out schools? Board looks to Edison to cure system's ills

By KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

After numerous programs by school officials have failed to adequately educate at-risk students, some school board members are accepting defeat and are willing to pass the baton to a private company.

Over the next six weeks, the school board will decide whether to become only the second school system in the state to "partner" with the Edison Project, a for-profit, private company that operates 51 schools throughout the nation.

"We have done a very poor job of educating our at-risk kids. We can't continue to let these kids fall further and further behind," school board member Jeannie Metcalf said.

Metcalf became interested in the Edison Project after she was asked by Superintendent Don Martin to attend a seminar held by the company. Metcalf is now the company's biggest supporter on the board.

"I think it'll pass. A lot of parents are losing faith in public education, if these folks can come help these kids, we should let them."

The board has considered the possibility of bringing Edison to the city for the last two years, but only in the last year have talks with Edison staff members been serious.

If the board does agree to contract with Edison, Ashley Middle School and possibly Cook Middle School would be under the company's control for the 1999-2000 school year.

Although Edison officials say they hire 90-95 percent of all school staff from within the system and teachers remain on the system's payroll in order to qualify for retirement benefits, the schools do drastically differ from public schools in many ways.

Under the Edison model, the school year would expand to about 210 days. Traditional schools in the system have a 180-day school year. Students, teachers and staff at Edison campuses also spend more time at school; students from kindergarten to second grade have a seven-hour school day; and beginning in the third grade, the school day extends to eight hours.

The curriculum will also undergo a change. Using what staffers call "the best researched educational model in the history of education," Edison schools have fewer, but longer class periods. For example, every grade level, from kindergarten on up, will spend 90 minutes a day reading using Success for All, a reading program developed at Johns Hopkins University; the program uses a similar program for math developed by the University of Chicago.

But the most unique aspect of the Edison Project is that every student receives a home computer after their first year at a school. As well as Internet access, the computers all have

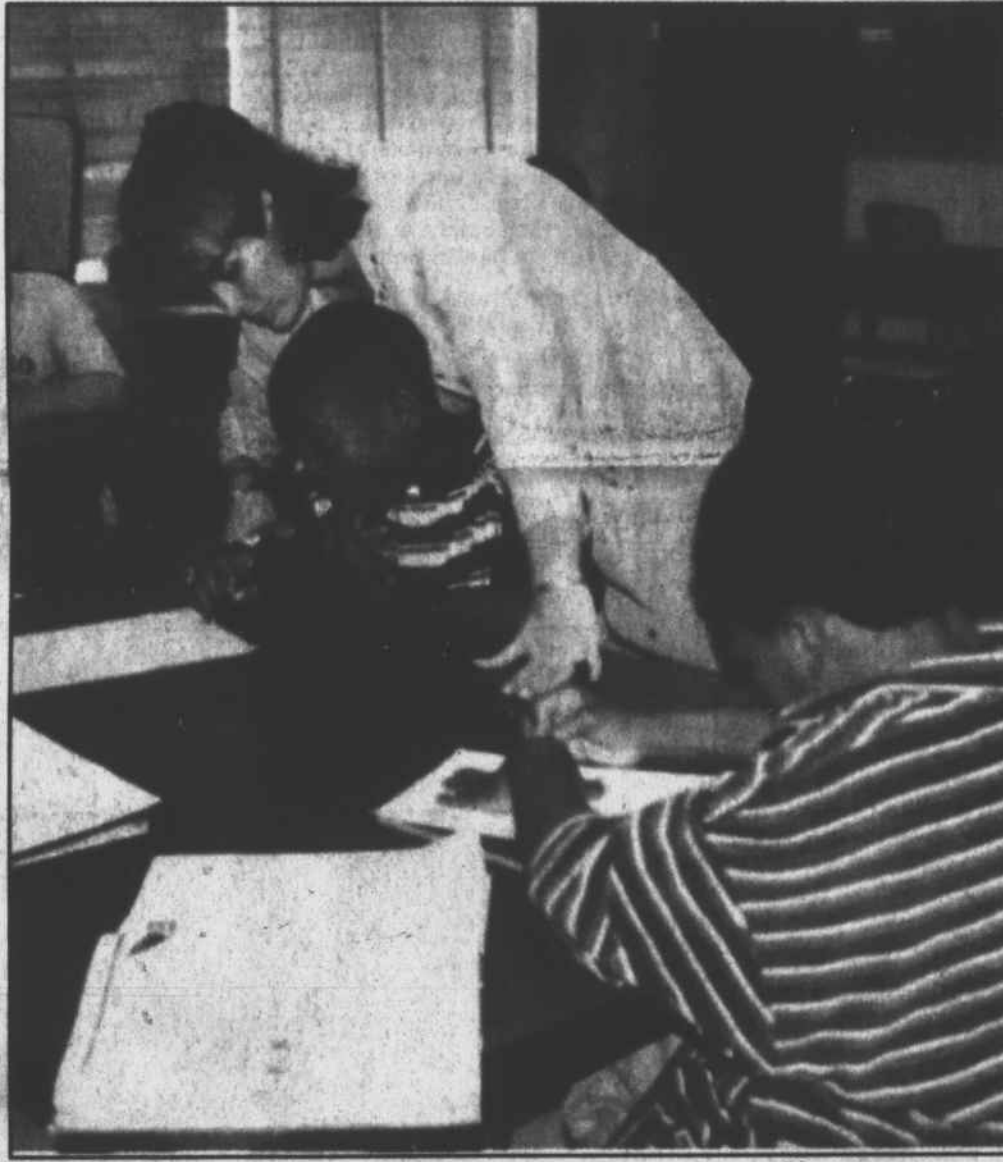


Photo by Jeri Young

In a move the Superintendent hopes will help achieve racial balance in inner city classrooms, school officials are studying a proposal to privatize two local campuses, including the former Ashley Middle School. If the plan is accepted, Ashley, which now houses L.E.A.P. Academy, will open in the fall as an elementary school. Above, L.E.A.P. Academy students work on projects during an afternoon class session. L.E.A.P. is slated to move to Kennedy Middle School next fall.

e-mail and are connected to the school, therefore, parents and teachers can communicate via computer.

Schools under the control of Edison will follow all the rules and guidelines set by the city-county school board. And if a contract is signed and Edison doesn't meet the school board's stipulations, the company has 90 days to pull out.

"We're changing everything they do and the way that they do it," says Rich O'Neill, an Edison employee who is working to sell the company to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school officials.

Edison has shown some success at improving test results and attendance at many schools with "at-risk" populations, an achievement that the local school system cannot boast.

Both schools being considered for the program are currently middle schools that will be converted to elementary schools for the upcoming school year. The schools also will have populations that are overwhelmingly African American and poor.

Martin said he would not only like to see

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Mel Watt holds upper hand in November

By Herbert L. White
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

Scott Keadle and Mel Watt have little in common.

Keadle is a Salisbury dentist and political newcomer. Watt is a Charlotte lawyer and an incumbent congressman.

One is an unabashed conservative. The other is a liberal.

They also offer voters clear choices as candidates for Watt's 12th Congressional District seat.

"The difference between Keadle and Watt is great. They disagree on many things," says Ted Arrington UNC Charlotte's political science chairman. "It's a sharp distinction. Voters are pretty inattentive, but they will know one is a Democrat and one is a Republican."

Watt, one of two black North Carolinians in Congress, defeated Ronnie Adcock in the Democratic primary with 84 percent of votes cast.

Keadle won the Republican primary Tuesday in a six-candidate field that included Mecklenburg county commissioners chairman Tom Bush and Charlotte City Council member Mike Jackson. Keadle took 28 percent of votes cast to edge fellow Rowan County resident Jim Cohen, which caught most political observers by surprise. Although Mecklenburg has the largest pool of Republican voters in the 12th, Bush and Jackson basically cancelled each other out while Keadle was strongest in Davidson and Rowan counties, where he finished first and second.

"Jackson and Bush split the vote here," Arrington said. "In Rowan, Keadle (and

Cohen) got all the vote there and he ended up winning. In retrospect, it was inevitable that Keadle was in an advantageous position."

Keadle, who has campaigned as the polar opposite of Watt, is likely to stay with that theme. The key will be to paint Watt as too liberal for the 12th without making the campaign seem racist. Thirty-four percent of district voters are black.

"That's going to be tough, but he's going to have to do it because if he doesn't convince white Democrats that they should vote for him, he'll lose," Arrington said. "The danger is that using the word 'liberal' sometimes can be construed in racist terms, and that could double the turnout of the constituency easily if 34



Mel Watt faces a tough campaign this November. Above, Watt bags groceries at Five-Star Supermarket.

See Elections on A12