

# OPINION

## Letters to the Editor:

# THE CHRONICLE

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### Most black children still not passing

The announcement last week that black students had made strides in reading and math proficiency on the state's end-of-grade testing program should be met with guarded optimism at best.

Yes, black students are closing the gap between their test scores and those of white students, but a vast number of black students still are not proficient in basic reading and math skills.

School officials want us to focus on the "closing of the gap" and the growth black students experience each year on the tests. But the most attention-grabbing figures are those that show that, despite all the hoopla, barely 50 percent of African American students are performing at a "proficient" level.

Even as school superintendent Don Martin and his staff applauded themselves, a huge number of black children are failing miserably. Projected figures for the school year that just ended show that 54.5 percent of rising fifth-graders and 50.8 percent of rising seventh-graders were not proficient. The majority of rising fourth-graders, sixth-graders and eighth-graders did not perform at a proficient level on the tests this year.

Taken at face value, the numbers do show that black students as a whole are doing better.

For example, the number of black third-graders and fourth-graders found to be proficient jumped more than 10 percent, the most significant improvement of any race at any grade level. White students in the same grades showed only a 6.4 percent increase in the number of students deemed proficient.

While on the surface the jump seems worthy of applause, a look at the total picture reveals that black students' performance still leaves much to be desired.

White students jumped from 78.9 percent proficiency to almost 86 percent proficiency from 1998 to 1999, which means that only 14 percent of white third-graders and fourth-graders were not proficient.

In 1998 only 35.1 percent of black third-graders and fourth-graders were proficient. This year, according to the figures released by Martin, that 10 percent increase in proficiency means that 45.4 percent of black third-graders and fourth-graders are actually proficient. While the jump in black students' scores is to be commended, less than half of black third-graders and fourth-graders actually "passed" the test.

If we were assigning letter grades, white students jumped from a "C" to a high "B," while black students only managed to move from a low "F" to a slightly higher but ironically still exceptionally low "F."

In layman's terms, almost 55 percent of black third-graders and fourth-graders still are not making the grade. Compare that with the 14 percent of white third-graders and fourth-graders who are not proficient.

And the numbers for black children overall reveal an even more startling picture.

While 84.28 percent of white students in grades 3-8 taking the test were found proficient, only 49.26 percent of black students in the same grades were proficient.

Less than half of our black children are proficient in basic reading and math skills in grades 3-8 in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System. (Scores for high school grades have not been released.)

Gains are good and news of racial gaps being closed are always indications that we are moving in the right direction. But true progress is always better than manufactured progress.

To the Editor:

Some say quietly and I agree that the city of Winston-Salem has made a big mistake and slap in the face of the King legacy. It should be corrected expeditiously. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive has been extended to Patterson Avenue. It shouldn't stop there. "Crossing 52" could help correct this grievous error by supporting the petition drive that Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. be extended on through Buena Vista Drive. When this happens, we will have really "Crossed 52."

Martin Luther King Jr. was an integrationist. He sought peace and understanding between all peoples throughout the city, state and nation. We should share this legacy and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive with our most affluent communities.

Shedrick Adams  
Winston-Salem

To the Editor:

Marie Roseboro accepted the job of executive director of the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem, hoping she could help large numbers of people in need of better housing. She needed time to adjust to her new job and assemble a staff of excellent and loyal workers.

However, this was not to happen. The politically-charged atmosphere would keep her off-balance much of the time. So much of what is said she did or did not do can be traced to the prior administrations. And the few mistakes



J. Raymond Oliver  
Winston-Salem

she did make indicate that, given time and the needed support, she would have become an excellent executive director. I think Marie would have put dedication to the need for more and better housing ahead of politics.

Thousands of community folk were shocked when Marie Roseboro was fired. We know Marie to be very intelligent, hard-working, compassionate and honest. All the politically motivated claims against Marie Roseboro have not

changed the perception or fact that she is credible and remains a person to be held in high esteem.

## Wanted: executive director



**Val Atkinson**  
**Jones Street**

Kevin Gwynn of Reidsville, state executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party, will trade his digs at the Godwin House on Hillsborough Street in Raleigh for more suitable quarters at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington, D.C.

Gwynn - a 25-year-old African American from Reidsville - has served as the party's ranking African American for almost two years.

Kevin's new job will allow him to rub elbows with Vice President Al Gore while he serves as the deputy director of the vice president's Office of Political Affairs.

And according to Barbara Allen, the current state Democratic Party chair, Kevin will be sorely missed.

While working with the state party as executive director, Kevin's main responsibilities were that of a business officer.

The executive director's position has considerable political responsibilities, but its main responsibility is to see that the daily operations at the party headquarters are effective and efficient.

Kevin obviously did a great job during his tenure, and all North Carolina Democrats should be thankful - but the real questions are what do we do now and how do we replace Gwynn?

There are several factors to be considered before naming a successor. The best man or woman for the job may have to take a back seat to the recommendations of a party powerhouse.

My question is: "Why can't the recommendation of a party powerhouse be acknowledged while, at the same time, seating the best person for the job?"

During his tenure as executive director, Everett Ward did a

fine job; as a matter of fact, his departure was premature. Many loyal Democratic supporters wanted to see Ward stay.

Tom Henderickson had the misfortune of captaining the ship when the Republicans took over the General Assembly as well as the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. Wayne McDivitt tried to handle the jobs of party chair and executive director simultaneously. That didn't work too well for him or the party.

Brock Winslow's tenure as executive director under chairwoman Libba Evans was rocky and short-lived.

Barbara Allen's promotion of Gwynn from political director to executive director was a good move. The position of N.C. Democratic Party executive director has been the object of considerable controversy during the past few years. Now is a good time to take a hard look at the executive director's post and bring some administrative skills to the position.

The best person to replace Kevin is someone who knows North Carolina, someone who is known by the major Democratic players and, of course, someone who wants the job for more than profiting purposes.

Who could this person be? you ask. It could be any one of a number of Democrats if the money and tenure are right. In politics, like the business world, you get what you pay for.

If the party funds the executive director position at clerical rates, you can't expect to get professional results. The executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party is, and should be, a position of considerable respect.

It shouldn't be a pawn in some ethnic, racial or gender chess game.

If the N.C. Democratic Party really wants to win - and win big - in 2000, they need to take a hard look at Kevin's replacement.

Val Atkinson is a columnist for the Triangle Tribune.

# VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY...

With more than a month of summer vacation left before school resumes, students across the area have had to find various activities to fill their care-free days of summer. We asked local students what type of activities they will participate most in this summer.



**Turner Battle**

"I'd say basketball. I've played it my whole life and I'm in AAU. And it goes on all summer and I've been so many places playing with AAU throughout the summer."



**Jessica Davis**

"I'll swim and skate a lot this summer. I like them both but swimming is my favorite and skating is ok."



**Christa Holland**

"I'll be playing basketball this summer more than anything else because I want to better myself. I plan to get a basketball scholarship to college."



**William Poe**

"I think I'll bowl a lot more. I really like bowling, and I think it's something that I'm good at. And I really will spend time at the Kemet Academy at Emmanuel Baptist Church."



**Monsha Lucas**

"Mainly I'll swim a lot. I love the water and I'm on the swim team."