

School district discovers challenges and progress

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many of the students in Charlotte, North Carolina's most diverse school district, continue to struggle to master basic skills and course material.

"Our schools went up in virtually every area, however some schools didn't make it in subgroups," Gorman said.

The number of subgroups measured at a school range from one at Oaklawn to 29 at East Mecklenburg and Independence high schools.

With less than a month until the first day of school, the N.C. Department of Education has not made subgroup data available, so CMS is unable to report results for specific groups, such as minorities and poor students or those receiving special education or English as a Second Language services.

The AYP results released on Wednesday may change later this fall, as North Carolina releases mathematics scores. Schools that fail to meet AYP four years in a row are placed on a plan for corrective action, ranging from providing tutoring for students, to closing a school.

Five middle schools and one elementary school in CMS were placed on corrective action: Cochrane, Eastway, Spangh, J.T. Williams, and Wilson middle schools plus Shamrock Gardens Elementary.

"The state gives you plans of action you can take, but doesn't tell you exactly what to do," Gorman said of N.C. involvement with Title 1 schools.

"We've put corrective actions in place already, and the state will review what [we] do."

Corrective actions have already been underway at Shamrock Gardens, which debuts a new magnet plan for gifted and talented students when school starts. In accordance with No Child Left Behind, parents with students in CMS Title 1, or high poverty schools that don't meet AYP standards may request change in placement for their children for the '06-

'07 school year. According to Gorman, about 5 percent of parents are currently transferring their students out of CMS schools not meeting requirements.

The district mailed letters this week to parents of students enrolled at Lincoln Heights, Irwin Avenue, and Winterfield Elementary schools, which were unable to participate in the spring lottery. But with the way SBC is going, or rather not going, a parent's choice on where to transfer their child may be limited.

"Some schools may be closed, in that they can't accept more students," said Gorman, "so this does have an impact on things."

As far as the commissioners and SBC, Gorman was tight lipped about details, but optimistic.

"I am hopeful that a resolution will be made," he said. "The acceptable standard increases every year. No school can rest on their laurels. It's only a matter of time before every school should be worried about the threshold level."

Gorman offered a four-step plan of action.

"Step one is to take responsibility," he said. "Step two, and this is the hard one, develop a plan. Step three implement the plan, and step four evaluate the plan."

Subgroup data is expected from the state by August 4, but probably won't be available until August 11, two weeks from the start of the school year.

School begins on a Friday this year, due to legislation that the academic year can't start before August 25, and must end by June 10, the school board voted to start the school year on August 25.

An estimated 128,300 students are enrolled in CMS schools an increase of 4,400 from last year. CMS Chief Operating Officer Maurice Green gave an update on progress, saying five new schools — including Audrey Kell, Marshall, Winget, Highland Hills, and Washam — are slated to open on open-

ing day. As far as mobile units, they planned to have 163 moved by opening day, and 145 are in place. To join those units, 34 restrooms

must be moved, and 28 have been relocated thus far.

Over 16,800 employees are projected for the school year, but Green said, "CMS is not

quite fully staffed yet."

CMS has 215 teacher vacancies, including, 31 in math, 50 for exceptional children, eight in science, and 12

in ESL. There are also 75 bus driver vacancies to be filled, but Green said there will be enough drivers on the first day.



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Mecklenburg Mills

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said that hasn't happened.

"I don't even know who's officially handling the cases anymore," he said, adding that some items he was forced to leave behind aren't in his possession and his computer was damaged as well as some art work.

Mayor Pro Tem Susan Burgess, who is chair of City Council's Housing and Neighborhood Development Council Committee, said she hadn't heard about Mecklenburg Mills — or from residents — in a month.

"The last time I heard, nearly everyone had been placed," she said.

In May when a group of Mecklenburg Mills residents demonstrated in front of the Government Center, Burgess answered questions and expressed outrage over their removal. She compared their eviction and treatment to the displacement of Hurricane Katrina victims last year along the Gulf Coast.



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