

Survey Shows Candidates Divided on Voucher Issue

All five N.C. gubernatorial candidates say they support increased school funding and extended school years.

By JENNIFER HAGIN
Staff Writer

A recent education survey of Democrats and Republicans hoping to move into the N.C. governor's mansion after November's elections revealed similar stances on technology funding but not on school vouchers.

The N.C. Public School Forum survey asked five gubernatorial candidates several open-ended questions, including the educational initiatives they planned to pursue.

All candidates supported an increase in school funding for technology, an extended school year and additional capital to underfunded schools.

But using public money to support forms of private education, like a voucher system, split the candidates along party lines.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Leo Daughtry stated in the survey that he supported vouchers because they would reform the public school system.

Jay Warshaw, Daughtry's communications director, said, "The time for using competition to spur improvements is now."

Richard Vinroot, one of three Republican gubernatorial candidates, stated that he supported giving parents alternatives to public education, like magnet and charter schools.

Vinroot is the co-founder of one of the largest charter schools in the state.

"I believe the system exists for the benefit of children," he stated.

"It shouldn't exist for the benefit of a bureaucracy or a political apparatus."

Republican gubernatorial candidate Chuck Neely also stated that school choice would increase parental involvement and the accountability of public schools.

Mike Easley, one of two Democrat gubernatorial candidates, stated that he opposed vouchers but not magnet schools.

"Magnet schools and other speciality public schools offer parents diversity and choice within the public school system," he stated.

Democrat gubernatorial candidate Dennis Wicker stated that he favored charter and magnet schools but not vouchers or tax credits.

"Vouchers and tax credits are a disguised way to offer rich parents a break on their child's tuition," he stated.



Wicker also stated that he planned to create a program to give tuition scholarships to N.C. high school students who maintained a B average.

Mark Stinneford, a spokesman for Wicker, said Wicker planned to use proceeds from a state lottery to fund a scholarship program similar to Georgia's Hope Scholarship.

Daughtry also has a special program for high school students called "Finish Smart."

This program would require all high school graduates to have a 12th grade reading and writing proficiency instead of the current 8th grade requirement.

"If a student gets a diploma from North Carolina, we want to guarantee them a good job," Warsaw said.

UNC political science Professor Thad Beyle said education was a hot topic nationwide.

Beyle said vouchers were controversial because they were financed by siphoning money from public school systems.

He said the similarity of the candidates' education plans was largely due to the success of Gov. Jim Hunt's education programs.

"Jim Hunt has pushed education hard," he said. "No one wants to change much because there doesn't seem any reason to change things."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

GRASSROOTS



DTH-MARTHA HOELZER

Visiting Professor Bill C. Malone watches the bluegrass duo Alice Gerrard and Hazel Dickens perform in his American studies class. Malone is giving a speech titled "Take This Job and Shove It: Country Music and Work" at 7 p.m. today in the auditorium of the Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building.

Speaker Embraces Power of Women

By ALLISON FORD
Staff Writer

The Rev. Marcia Dyson enlightened students Tuesday night on the power of the feminine spirit and the strength of a woman's voice.

Dyson, who has published two books and is about to publish three more, addressed "Women and Spirituality in the 21st Century" as part of the third annual Carolina Women's Week.

"She is an engaging speaker with great insight into women's empowerment," said Chimi Boyd, associate director of Campus Y.

Dyson, wife of former UNC Professor Michael Dyson, a speaker during Race Relations Week, opened her speech by citing the work of Nostradamus in 1503. He was a visionary with great insight toward women, Dyson said.

"He said women would be the most powerful force on this planet," she said. "Along with patriarchy there must be a softer, gentler side."

She continued by saying his prophecy was true. "Women have shaken the

foundations of the world," Dyson said.

She cited women such as Gloria Steinem, Harriet Tubman and Joan of Arc as those who had raised their voices and surpassed unbelievable odds to get women where they are today.

Even after all this, Dyson said, "(Women) still sit upon a threshold of darkness."

Dyson used examples of atrocities against women such as spousal abuse in America, sexual slavery in China and genital mutilation in Africa to illustrate her point.

"We must continue a vision of enlightenment, hope and inspiration," Dyson said. "If we don't speak up, how is the change ever going to take place?"

Dyson also spoke about her belief that religious denominations could restrict women. "Christianity is a male-dominated ideology," she said.

She enlightened students by using Premenstrual Syndrome as an example.

"A greater PMS we all suffer from, including men, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day ... is patriarchy and misogyny," Dyson said.

"(Women) are the Midol in the patri-

archal society."

Dyson stated the women's movement had been successful but women must be careful not to abuse the feminine spirit. Otherwise it is just "male power in drag," she said.

To avoid placing a dress on patriarchy, Dyson said women must engage in social and political activism and express moral outrage for the atrocities in the world.

"Feminine spirituality is not replacing patriarchy with matriarchy," Dyson said.

"It takes more than our biology to identify our feminine spirit. What we are is energy, and energy causes friction and friction causes sparks and sparks cause light."

As she concluded her speech, Dyson passionately reinforced one point for the audience to think about for themselves. "Every place I stand is sacred and everything I do is a ministry," she said.

"If men and women of the world are to be made comfortable, the world of the world must be made comfortable."

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School Budget Hammered Out

By ERICA COLEMAN
Staff Writer

Board members of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City and the Orange County school systems discussed funding in schools with the Orange County Board of Commissioners in an annual joint meeting this week.

The main focus of Monday night's meeting was for education boards to keep the commissioners informed of what their major budgetary expenses will be for next year, said Neil Pedersen, superintendent for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City schools.

"We'll have a work session with them in June," he said. "They will give us an appropriation, and we will have to decide our budget based on that."

The need to allocate funds for raising teachers' salaries was one item discussed. Pedersen said next year would be the last of the four-year Excellent Schools Act, a N.C. program for boosting teacher salaries to meet the 8 percent shortfall of the national average.

"Some teachers are locally funded, and some are state-funded," he said. "That means we will have to cover the expense of raising the locally funded salaries that 8 percent."

Pedersen also said that in North Carolina there was a state schedule for teacher salaries and that was supplemented by local funds.

"We need to increase our supplement on teacher salaries in order to be competitive with other counties," he said. "We want to keep up with them. We'd really like to be better than them."

When the discussion moved to school-related construction, commissioner Barry Jacobs expressed the need for environmental awareness in building a new elementary school.

"I think we need to make sure that construction projects on our schools should be held up to the same standards that construction projects on private enterprises are held to, in terms of the protection of the natural environment," he said.

Steve Scroggs, interim superintendent for Support Services for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, said the system had started off with 11 possible sites for the new elementary school, but this list had been narrowed down to three.

He said the system needed to act as soon as possible, citing the example of a prospective site which had been taken off the market by the owner.

"Our prospects are dropping quickly," he said. "We need to go ahead and purchase land."

Scroggs said a site of particular interest was a 34-acre site off of Erwin Road. Part of this land, which was part of the New Hope Creek system, would be made into a park.

Budgeting for improvements of

school buildings was also discussed. Commissioner Alice Gordon expressed the need to ensure older buildings were not ignored.

"You have these beautiful new buildings, but I think we should do something for the old buildings as well," she said. "We need countywide minimum standards that all schools should meet, not just the new schools."

Orange County Board of Education member Keith Cook addressed concerns of other board members that exceptional education programs in the county took up too much space in schools. He said additional classroom space would alleviate the crowded program, which is nationally renowned.

"A lady moved here all the way from California for her child to be in our special education program," he said. "Parents come from all over the state because they hear of our exceptional programs through word-of-mouth. These programs won't get smaller, they will only continue to grow."

Orange County board member Susan A. Halkiotis said the three groups could provide a model for other school systems statewide.

"I hope that the way Orange County funds its schools will be an example for other counties to follow."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

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