

## Legislators Mull School Policies

One of the four education subcommittees will examine how UNC-system schools teach foreign languages.

By JOSHUA BASSINGER  
Staff Writer

Members of two education oversight subcommittees met this week to discuss ways to prevent public school violence and how to raise English proficiency among immigrant students.

There are two additional subcommittees examining broad issues affecting the public school system — school personnel, teaching and the improvement of school facilities and technologies. The subcommittees will determine if the N.C. General Assembly should take any action on these issues when it reconvenes in January.

Legislators said the decision to form the subcommittees was rare and only happened this year because of an unusually large number of issues facing the whole committee.

"We discovered that there was so much work to do in the full committee that more focus was needed on the broader topics," said Rep. Gene Rogers, D-Washington.

Two subcommittees on safe schools

and school personnel and teaching met this week.

The two other subcommittees have yet to meet. The subcommittee for student performance will research methods to improve student grades and increase their overall performance.

The subcommittee for improving facilities and technologies also will discuss new technology that could be implemented in education.

Each subcommittee will report back to full committee in December.

Sen. Howard Lee, D-Orange, said one of the reasons for the foundation of the safe schools subcommittee was a response to the series of bomb threats in public schools last year.

"The threats interfered with class schedules and daily operations," said Lee, who co-chaired the education oversight committee.

The safe school subcommittee plans to build on the Safe Schools Act of 1998, which established legislation that allowed each public school to design its own safety plan to protect the students and the facilities.

But Lee said North Carolina ranks high in school safety compared to other states.

"We have a large number of incidents but not a great number of violent acts," he said. "The goal is to act more in a preventive way than in a reactive way."

Lee added that to prevent school violence, officials will be tougher on students who bring threatening devices to school.

Rep. Verla Insko, D-Orange, said one of the roles of the school personnel and teaching subcommittee is to focus on the expansion of the foreign language curriculum in N.C. public schools, especially for immigrant students.

Insko said that to fulfill this plan, the schools will need more funding and resources.

"There are 37,000 children across the state with limited English proficiency," Insko said. "The state needs an additional \$1,000 per student to fill this void."

Insko said she wants to move the focus of foreign language and English proficiency to the elementary and middle school level.

Now the focus is in the high school curriculum, she said.

"The best opportunity for students to learn language proficiency is between the ages of 5 and 12," Insko said.

The subcommittee focusing on the foreign language curriculum also will discuss the ways UNC-system schools teach foreign languages.

Starting in 2006, the 16 system universities will require at least two years of a foreign language to be considered for admission.

Lee said, "The goal is to make the education experience as seamless as possible."

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### MASTER PLAN

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hoods," said Anne Seymour, who lives in the Whitehead Circle area.

Town Council member Joyce Brown said the council will continue to monitor the progress of the plan.

"It does put some of the burden on the council to help protect the neighborhoods," she said. "I think there were still some questions in the minds of some citizens."

Elaine Barney, who lives in the Whitehead Circle neighborhood, said the plan raises more questions than just those about a transportation corridor.

"I think we had several concerns about the Master Plan in general as it affects the neighborhoods surrounding campus, especially Mason Farm and Whitehead Circle," she said.

Barney said there is already a problem of noise and light pollution in the areas surrounding campus. She said more growth at UNC will add to these problems.

"There was still concern about continued growth — when would it end? (The plan) raises a lot of fears and anxieties," she said.

Betty Cloutier, co-president of

Chapel Hill Preservation Society, said she is concerned about the historical integrity of many campus buildings that would be affected by the plan.

"It's our mission to preserve the character of Chapel Hill — that includes the University," she said. "You can't separate the town and gown."

"The big thing we all need to be concerned with is thousands of new square footage of buildings and thousands of new students and new cars — all of which will affect all the neighborhoods."

UNC spokesman Jonathan Howes said all the concerns brought by the residents will be evaluated before a final draft of the Master Plan is sent to the BOT.

"We have heard some of these concerns in the past and tried to address them," Howes said. "We have done it in the past and will continue to do it."

Cloutier said that while the town relied heavily upon UNC, the University needed to respect the neighbors' wishes.

"Chapel Hill wouldn't be here without the University, but you can't separate the University from Chapel Hill either. These old buildings need to be protected and saved."

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### FESTIFALL

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"Even though we're Chapel Hill, we're still Southern," Anderson said. "We have people serving barbecue, pork chops, cole slaw and mashed potatoes and gravy."

Despite the wide variety of food offered on the streets, restaurants along Franklin Street also are preparing for the crowds.

"We will be open our normal hours with extra waiters," said Rebecca Cage, associate manager of McAlister's Deli. "We're new, so we don't know what to expect. We're hoping it will be busy."

Other Franklin Street stores also are gearing up for the festival.

"The vendors of West Franklin Street know the drill," Anderson said. "Some will shut down to allow employees to enjoy the fair, and some will stay open to get business."

Anderson said he expects Festifall 2000 to be another in a long line of successes.

"It's a great family event," he said. "It's a tradition in Chapel Hill."

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### HEARING

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struggling students. "I knew that Michael Trinh had volunteered to initiate and lead a study group," he said. "I encouraged that to Michael in person."

"Voluntary study groups, in this case, went over to the dark side and did more than they were supposed to."

Some students from Coggins' spring class came to hear their classmates' cases. "We were supposed to work in groups, but he didn't specify how," said one student.

And a number of professors came to the hearing to show their support.

Sanjoy Baruah, a computer science professor, said many faculty members in the department, including department Chairman Stephen Weiss, were sympathetic to the charged students. "It was a very atypical course," Baruah said. "I find it hard to believe many of these students would be dishonest in any way."

Stacey Geyer and Blake Rosser contributed to this article. The University Editor can be reached at [udesk@unc.edu](mailto:udesk@unc.edu).

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