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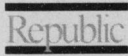
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DTH FILE PHOTO/BRIAN CASSELLA

In her first month in office, Shirley Carraway filled a \$1.2 million budget gap. Carraway said she now will tackle the minority achievement gap and raise schools' performance as measured by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Schools' leader sees success

BY ELIZABETH SHERMAN
STAFF WRITER

It's been a hectic but productive first month for the Orange County Schools' new superintendent.

In Shirley Carraway's first month in office, she and Orange County Schools Finance Director Sandra Tinsley managed to fill a \$1.2 million gap in the school system's budget by transferring funds from last year's budget and from current state and federal programs into the local budget.

Carraway, who has a doctorate in educational leadership, said she became accustomed to facing challenges about 25 years ago as the first principal in Pitt County who was a woman or a minority.

"I have always been prepared for whatever was going to come next," Carraway said her biggest advantage is that she was able to experience a variety of roles before becoming superintendent.

"I feel very fortunate that I had some of the experiences that I had," she said. "The more roles you've had in a school district the better prepared you are."

Carraway's selection in June as

superintendent brought to a close four months of controversy surrounding the process of filling the position.

One of the candidates dropped out of the running in April after he was contacted about contentiousness in the board's discussions. But Carraway said working with the school board has gone well so far.

Since taking office Carraway has spent most of her time meeting with students, principals and parents to familiarize herself with the school district and its specific needs.

"It's so easy to come in and say 'I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that', but I want to make sure that I'm providing the type of leadership that needs to be achieved," Carraway said.

Carraway's biggest goals for the 2003-04 school year are to increase student achievement and parent involvement; close the achievement gap between minority students and majority students; and better meet the requirements of special needs students.

One of Carraway's next challenges will be to help Orange

County schools meet the new federal regulations of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act.

Last year only two out of 11 Orange County schools achieved the Adequate Yearly Progress goal set by federal guidelines.

Carraway said that such statistics can be misleading. "One of our schools didn't meet AYP because they had less than 95 percent of the students take the test. The scores of the students who did take the test were more than high enough to meet the AYP."

Carraway said a lack of information may have contributed to low scores as well, and that officials at many Orange County schools were not aware of how No Child Left Behind scores would be determined.

"A number of schools didn't know about the ramifications and nuances of the program," she said. "There is a possibility that if some of the information had been provided they would have been able to influence a more positive outcome."

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