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**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE CITIZENS' TASK FORCE ON
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS**

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Summary of Task Force Recommendations

MANAGEMENT

1) CMS should be divided into semi-autonomous geographic areas of approximately 40,000 students each for the purpose of school operations (p. 15).

2) Each area should be led by an area superintendent and supported by an area office that performs eight key functions (p. 15).

3) The role of the central office should be reduced and refocused on seven key support functions (p. 16).

4) High performing schools in each area should be given 'charter-like' autonomy (p. 17).

5) A centrally administered system of 'choice schools' should be established and expanded under the leadership of a fourth area superintendent. Each school in this system should offer a distinctive program and enroll a socio-economically diverse student body (pgs. 17–18).

6) The District should be led by a strong Superintendent/CEO with expanded authority to run the district; the Superintendent should be employed under a performance contract (pgs. 18–19).

7) CMS should intervene in low performing schools. Schools that are low performing for three consecutive years should be reconstituted and redesigned as new schools (p. 20).

8) To establish a greater focus on its core business of instruction, CMS should outsource non-instruction services such as transportation, food service, and printing (p. 20).

9) CMS should restructure its large 'comprehensive' high schools to create a portfolio of small, highly focused, personalized high schools (pgs. 21–24).

10) CMS should continue to modify its K–8 student assignment plan toward a fixed assignment plan based on residence. Student assignment for 9–12 should evolve to a system of open enrollment within areas as new, small high schools are developed (p. 26).

11) To ensure greater equity, CMS should replace its existing staffing standards method of funding schools with a weighed student-based budgeting system (p. 29).

12) The District should broaden its approach to its facilities capacity crisis through the development of new schools run by external providers and community partners in non-traditional venues (p. 31).

13) Underutilized elementary schools should be expanded to provide parents a K–8 option (p. 31).

14) Responsibility for school construction should be transferred from the Board of Education to a city-county planning agency for public infrastructure (pgs. 31–32).

GOVERNANCE

15) The current Board of Education structure consisting of district and at-large elected seats should be replaced with a *district represented*, *county elected* board (pgs. 32–36).

16) The Board of Education should be reduced in size from nine to seven members (p. 36).

17) One member of the Board should be appointed by Mecklenburg County Commissioners (p. 37).

18) To ensure greater continuity, all Board members should serve rotating 4-year terms designed to ensure that no more than three members are replaced at any time. (p. 37)

19) The Board should adopt a formal policy limiting its actions to that of a policy board (p. 37).

20) Current Board of Education electoral districts should be realigned to reflect growth and demographic changes (p. 37).

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

21) A Civic Commission on Excellence in Education should be established to support the reform of CMS (pgs. 38–39)

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I. Introduction

"If any place ought to have great schools, it should be this community." So said one participant expressing the sentiment of many Mecklenburg County residents during a recent focus group providing information and perspectives about Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Despite this widespread feeling and improved student performance across the system at the elementary and middle-school level, many participants also expressed dissatisfaction with and concern about the direction in which CMS is heading.

The focus groups that communicated this dual message—pride in and high expectations for the local school system on one hand and concern about its ability to continue meeting the needs of many students and families on the other hand—were part of a study conducted by the Citizens' Task Force on Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools convened through the Foundation For The Carolinas in the spring of 2005 to examine the district's management structure and governance system in light of growing public dissatisfaction with CMS.

Why the dual message? CMS has been recognized as one of the most successful large school systems in the country. At the same time, CMS has undergone rapid changes over the last several years with significant enrollment growth and diversification expected over the next decade. Enrollment is projected to grow by 54,000 students by 2015. The economy in Mecklenburg County has changed rapidly as well, placing new demands on schools and bringing an influx of new citizens who have changed the area's demographics and have added their own perspectives and values to the mix. "We are proud that our school system is recognized as one of the best metropolitan systems in the country," said Harvey Gantt and Cathy Bessant, co-chairs of the Task Force. "But given the growth and diversity in enrollment we expect in 10 years, we believe it makes sense to look hard at the future."

THE CITIZENS' TASK FORCE ON CMS

To that end, a Citizens' Task Force on CMS was convened by the Foundation for the Carolinas, made up of civic and business leaders from across Mecklenburg County (see Appendix 1). The Task Force formed in 2005 to examine the foundations of district governance and management around two questions:

1. What is the most advantageous governance model for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system?

2. What is the most advantageous management structure required to serve a rapidly growing Mecklenburg County?

The goal of the Task Force was to oversee a study that would address these two questions and develop recommendations that would serve as the basis for strengthening CMS to meet the emerging challenges of its core business: educating all children. The appointment of the Task Force was endorsed by elected officials and supported financially by private sector contributions.

CONSULTANTS

The Task Force retained the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and Cross & Joftus, LLC (CJ) to conduct the study, engage the community, assist the Task Force members in developing recommendations, and report findings and recommendations to the community at large. Smith + Harbrecht and the Lee Institute provided extensive management of the overall project that included a myriad of community meetings and activities.

AIR is America's leading nonprofit educational research, evaluation, and consulting organization known for its objectivity, independence, and nonpartisanship. Since its founding in 1946, AIR has been devoted to providing research, analysis, and technical assistance to school districts, states, and federal governments in an effort to improve the quality of education. CJ is a firm created in 2004 to provide education leaders with personalized, expert assistance in policy analysis and development, evaluation, executive coaching, planning, and communication strategies. CJ provides expert consulting services in the areas of No Child Left Behind, accountability, teacher quality, school reform, literacy, and program evaluation.

WORK PLAN AND PROCESS

To develop understanding of the complex issues facing CMS and provide the opportunity for all CMS stakeholders to provide input, the Citizens' Task Force designed and implemented a comprehensive work plan that spanned seven major tasks:

1) *Build Task Force knowledge of issues related to governance and management of school systems.* Throughout the course of this work, AIR/CJ provided informational sessions for the Task Force designed to build members' knowledge of issues related to governance and management of school districts. Topics included the state of school governance in the United States, district management models and the role of the civic and business community in school reform.

2) *Collect data regarding challenges and implications for future governance and management.* Data was collected that informs the current and emerging challenges facing the district. Stakeholders were engaged in identifying implications for changes in district governance and management. Input was collected from a diverse group of citizens and collection efforts included Spanish translated documents and Spanish interpretation at town hall meetings. Stakeholders included elected officials of constituent municipalities, county officials, state officials, students, School Board members, school administrators, teachers, social service providers, civic and business leaders, parents, and citizens.

3) *Synthesize, analyze, and interpret data collected in the performance of Task 2.* AIR/CJ synthesized, analyzed, and interpreted the data collected through activities outlined under Task 2 and provided the Task Force with a series of reports on these findings. These reports are posted in their entirety on the web site of the Foundation for the Carolinas (www.ffte.org).

4) *Identify implications for governance and management.* In the context of the data collected, the following were developed for consideration and discussion by the Task Force:

   ▪ An overarching theory of action for the district to respond to current and emerging challenges; recommendations concerning major strategies aligned with this theory of action;

   ▪ A set of implications for system governance; and implications for management systems.

5) *Develop and explicate promising alternative governance and management models.* Four alternative governance and management models that appeared to match the current and emerging needs of CMS were examined by the Task Force at a day-long retreat. Once refined by the Task Force, these models served as the basis for further consideration at a community-wide stakeholders' conference.

6) *Produce plan and recommendations.* Information and opinions derived from the stakeholders' conference and data extrapolated from previous activities were used to formulate recommendations. Specific recommendations concerning an improved governance model and organizational/management structure were developed.

7) *Communicate plan and recommendations.* AIR/CJ, working with Smith Harbrecht, assisted the Task Force in the development and implementation of a communications plan designed to widely disseminate and promote the report's recommendations.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

The intention of the Task Force is that the recommendations in this report, when implemented, will result in improved governance and management that empowers CMS to more effectively meet its current and future challenges.

II. Data Collection and Community Engagement

METHODOLOGY

On behalf of the Task Force, AIR/CJ collected data about CMS through focus groups, town hall meetings, interviews, surveys, and document review. More specifically, the study team collected data using the following methods:

1) Three *town hall meetings* taking place across the county with approximately 350 residents participating;

2) Twelve *focus groups* with approximately 90 people, representing parents, teachers, principals, district administrators, nonprofit managers, business and civic leaders, and local officials;

3) Forty-two individual *interviews with civic leaders*, including those from the faith, businesses, and government sectors, as well as district and school administrators;

4) Individual *interviews with CMS board members*;

5) Individual *interviews with state legislators* and *policy makers*;

6) Statistically representative *surveys of 1,500 parents* (338 responding) *and 500 teachers* (199 responding);

7) A *management review* of CMS that included interviews with senior CMS staff and collection and analysis of CMS documents and extant data; and

8) A *comparison study*, which included analysis of data and interviews from four districts having similar characteristics to CMS and having experienced large growth in student enrollment: Broward County, Florida; Clark County, Nevada; Duval County, Florida and Wake County, North Carolina.

The methods used to collect data were intended to solicit feedback from all CMS stakeholders and therefore provide analysis of CMS from a variety of perspectives. It must be emphasized that no single method of collecting data tells a full or accurate story. Despite using standard and well-respected research procedures, meaningful conclusions cannot be drawn from any one method. Taken together, however, the methods used to collect data paint an informed picture of CMS. By triangulating data and focusing on themes that emerge from several or all data sources, the results reported represent what is actually happening and reflect the views of the majority of Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents. The themes or findings reported emerged from several or all data sources. Readers who are interested in reviewing the data and findings from the nine individual collection methods may review the individual reports previously submitted to the Task Force. The reports are available in part in the appendixes and in full at **www.fftc.org**.

III. Research Findings

The findings from the data collection phase can be boiled down to the dual message that emerged from the focus groups: CMS has had success, but significant change is required if the district is going to meet the needs of a growing and rapidly diversifying student population.

This message has several nuances that are summarized by 10 major findings from a cross-cutting examination of all collected data. A detailed explanation of each finding including examples and some supporting data can be found in Appendix 2. The findings are listed below:

1. Student performance in CMS's elementary and middle schools is strong; performance in high schools is mixed or flat.

2. Most parents and teachers are satisfied with their local schools but are dissatisfied with the district as a whole.

3. The School Board is not perceived as providing effective leadership.

4. The district is facing a serious facility capacity crisis.

5. The district is guided by a managed instruction theory of action, i.e. it mandates a uniform curriculum in its schools and directly manages most aspects of the educational process.

6. While there is significant support for splitting up the district, more stakeholders favor keeping it together, but moving authority from the central office to sub-districts and schools.

7. The district's central office fails to communicate effectively.

8. There is widespread support for the central office to be run more efficiently by administrators with business management experience.

9. The composition of the district's student population is changing rapidly and dramatically. In addition, the demographics of individual schools have become quite different from one another.

10. There is significant dissatisfaction with the district's student assignment plan.

ANALYSIS

The findings above, summarized in Appendix 2, present a compelling case for change in the way CMS is organized and managed. Over the next decade, the system will confront a number of issues that will continue to strain its resources and require a new way of doing business. The major issues that will need to be addressed include the following:

a) A need for greater strategic policy leadership from the district's School Board;

b) A need for greater decentralization of some district functions and decision-making;

c) Poor student achievement and discipline at the high school level;

d) A capacity crisis in which the number of seats in schools is insufficient to serve the number of students in the district;

e) A student assignment plan that will become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to implement; and

f) Increasing differences between the student populations of individual schools, which place greater strain on the district's current approach to instruction and allocation of resources.

In addition to these major issues, the data collection/community engagement process identified that respondents differed in the degree to which they considered diversity in schools to be an important goal for CMS. Some stated their belief that it did not need to be a guiding principle for the school system, while others believed it had to be a top priority.

The findings summarized above are the basis for a conceptual framework that suggests how the CMS system should be organized to meet its emerging challenges.

IV. Framework for Recommendations

Our findings paint a picture of a district that is rapidly losing confidence in its Board of Education and central administration, is beset by a variety of divisive growth issues, and has outgrown its current management structure.

At the same time, it is important to remember that CMS, as one of a handful of large "metropolitan" school districts in the United States, is a model for what much of the nation would like to be. The disturbing story of urban/suburban education nationally is one of poor central city school districts surrounded by wealthy suburban districts with extreme disparities in resources (tax base), expectations, capacity, and outcomes between the two. The areas of Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago, and Cleveland are a few examples. As a metropolitan school district, CMS is in a much stronger position to ensure the achievement of all students, provide a wide range of opportunities, foster diversity, and utilize its county-wide tax base to achieve equity in funding schools. In fact, historically, CMS students have consistently outperformed their urban counterparts from many of these areas in national comparisons of student achievement.[1]

We believe that maintaining CMS as a metropolitan school district with all its advantages is critical to the continued economic development and quality of life of the region. It is toward this goal that our recommendations are directed.

Many Charlotteans today are what David Matthews described as "halfway out the schoolhouse door."[2] Despite a historical pattern of comparatively high levels of student achievement particularly in the elementary grades, a large portion of CMS clients, employees, and stakeholders are dissatisfied with the system for a variety of reasons. Overcrowding, high schools, discipline, student assignment and communications top a long list. While each of these issues is important, taken in aggregate, we believe that they are symptomatic of the need for deeper structural change.

In our view, the disconnect between the system and the community it serves will not be repaired simply by a better communications plan or a set of discrete policy changes. Re-engagement can only be accomplished by structural changes that enable leaders and followers, professionals and clients to form better relationships and engage in problem solving around a common vision and shared accountability for decisions.

We are convinced that the district at its current and growing size and complexity cannot be effectively managed centrally. Rather, the key to successful management in the future will be

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[1] Council of Great City Schools 2005; NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), 2005.
[2] David Matthews, Is There a Public for Public Schools? Kettering Foundation Press, 1996.

finding the right combination of "loose-tight" properties. In fact, our investigation of similar school districts found that all were divided into smaller segments for the purpose of management with each segment having varying degrees of autonomy within a set of common district parameters.[3] Moreover we do not believe that processes that were put in place and successful when the district was smaller, not changing so rapidly and operating under a desegregation court order, will be successful in the current environment. The current tensions will simply increase if CMS does not change or if change is too slow or incremental.

CHANGING STRUCTURE TO IMPROVE FUNCTION

CMS must do what Margaret Wheatley in her seminal work *Leadership and the New Science* defined as the critical challenge of every successful organization over time: change form to preserve and improve function.[4]

At one level, CMS as a public institution must change form in order to ensure its continued existence. A centralized "Managed Instruction" approach that was successful when the district was smaller and the student population in each school was balanced by a desegregation court order is no longer optimal for a district experiencing rapid growth and diversity among schools due to student assignment by residence. In the current environment, the district will appear increasingly remote and removed from its clients and autocratic to its school-based staff. The predictable outcome is a further loss of support and confidence manifest in an inability to gain voter approval for needed bonding for school construction and an intensification of "deconsolidation" sentiment. Here the critical question is, short of breaking CMS up into smaller school districts, how can CMS be structured and organized to make it more manageable, more personal and more responsive while maintaining accountability.

A parallel question exists relative to School Board governance. Can changes in the design of governance produce a School Board that is diverse and representative of different areas of a large district while assuming the presumptive portrait of a policy board focused on the strategic needs of the entire system?

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[3] Comparison districts in this study included: Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), FL; Clark County (Las Vegas), NV; Duval County (Jacksonville), FL; and Wake County (Raleigh), NC.
[4] Margaret Wheatley, Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organization from an Orderly Universe, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1994.

Two other issues are inherent in the data we have collected. Both are related to the first and also sourced in the district's changing operating environment: dealing with rapid growth and dealing with growing diversity of student needs.

DEALING WITH GROWTH

There is a serious crisis emerging from the gap between CMS enrollment and its facilities' capacity. Due to a number of demographic dynamics outside of CMS' control student enrollment has been subject to a rapid growth trend that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. This growth in student enrollment is already straining CMS's capacity to serve many of its students. The continuation of this growth trend over time will demand substantial new investments of capital to avert a crisis of capacity in the near future.

CMS projects that there will be significant enrollment growth in the district over the next 10 years, from 118,000 today to almost 172,000 by 2014–2015. We have tested these projections against population growth estimates from other sources and the CMS data appears to be credible. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Total CMS Enrollment
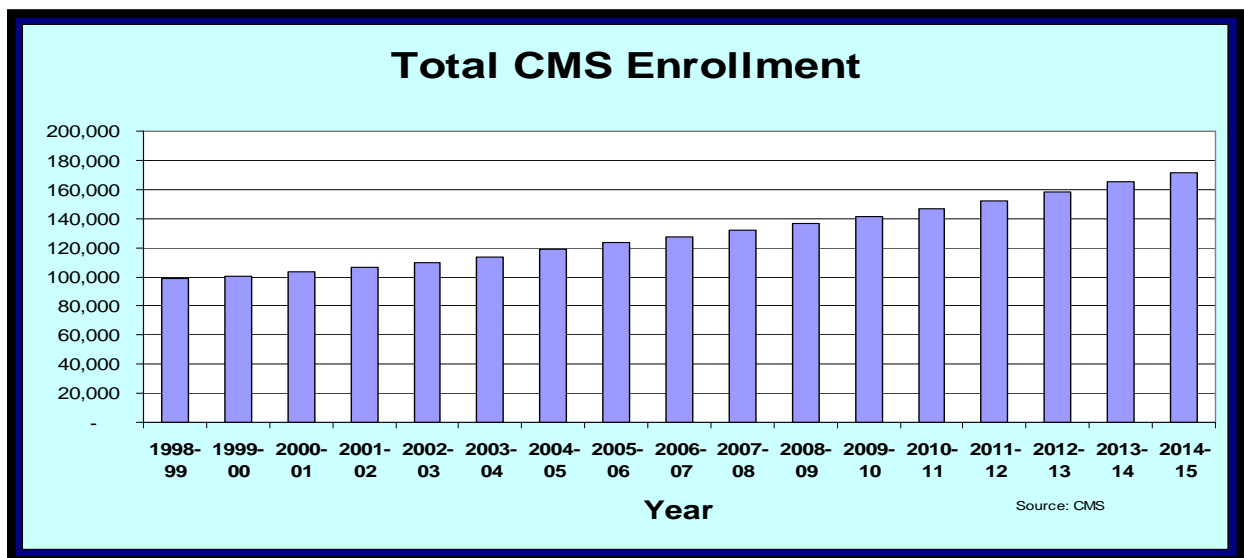
To address growth, CMS had in place an expansion plan that relied on local bond referenda for its funding: past CMS capital funding was approved in 1996, 1997, 2000 and most recently in 2002. However, the capital funding the district has previously received for facilities

expansion will be inadequate to meet the needs of its expanding student population. (See Figure 2.) Only a small portion of long-term capital needs are funded today. Under the current and funded capacity of CMS facilities, enrollment growth would place almost 60,000 students in mobile classrooms by 2014.

Figure 2. Existing and Currently Funded Expansion of Building Capacity
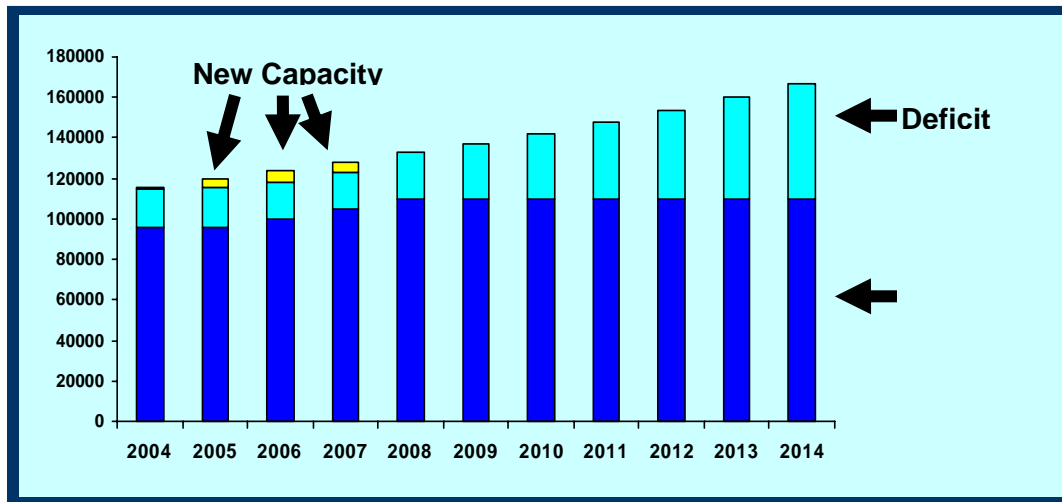
Looking forward, the district has built a similar funding cycle of "bond and build" into its long-term, 10-year capital plan to address its capital funding needs. This plan divides the district's proposed capital projects into three categories: "Lifecycle Renewal/Renovations," "Mandates and Initiatives," and "Growth Needs." The estimated cost of *new capacity only* (Growth Needs) in this plan is more than $1.3 billion. If the other two categories are also funded, the total capital need increases to $1.98 billion. (See Appendix 9: Proposed 2005 Capital Needs Assessment).

There are two major concerns to consider in connection with this plan:

1. Despite its magnitude, *the district's capital funding plan does not eliminate the facilities deficit by 2014, but rather maintains the deficit* at the current 2005 level. If the plan were to be expanded to fully fund the district's facilities deficit and eliminate the need for mobile classrooms, 2,800 permanent seats will need to be added every year between 2007 and 2014 at an estimated additional cost of more than $850 million. This brings the cost of addressing "growth only" to $2 billion. The cost rises

to almost $3 billion if proposed renovations and mandates/initiatives are also included.

2. Any unsuccessful voter referenda, as in the case of the November, 2005 referendum, will widen the facilities deficit, further overcrowding, and require the additional use of mobile classrooms to house "excess enrollment."

This alarming factual analysis leads to two critical questions addressed in our recommendations: What strategies should CMS use to address its facilities capacity crisis, and what might the best way be to manage a long-term, large-scale construction program, regardless of how it is funded?

DEALING WITH DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Beginning about 5 years ago, the district began to experience dramatic differentiation in the demographic compositions of student bodies on a school-to-school basis. Previously, the district had only moderate differences in student profiles from school to school. Now, a combination of demographic and policy changes have caused substantial differences in the student populations among schools. The intensification in this enrollment differentiation will require major changes in CMS management practices and operations as these trends continue into the future. Enrollment differentiation has been driven by two major factors:

1. Student assignment plan changes

The 1999 court ruling moving CMS away from a desegregation-oriented student assignment plan has resulted in significant differentiation in the composition of student bodies from school to school. The previous student assignment plan, through busing and choice, served to lessen differences in student demographic characteristics among schools. Under the current plan, schools reflect the local resident population which, in a large diverse system like CMS, means greater differences among schools.

The impact of the change in CMS's student assignment plan on the demographic composition of the district's schools has been rapid and dramatic. This differentiation has occurred across a number of student demographic characteristics, such as race, income, and immigrant status. However, one direct measure of this differentiation is in the polarization of

student enrollment by income; i.e., more "high-income" schools, more "low-income" schools and fewer "mixed-income" schools. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Differentiation of Student Enrollments

Elementary Schools	2001–02	2004–05
# of schools with >60% poverty	33	54
# of schools with between 30% and 60% poverty	70	43
# of schools with <30% poverty	31	37

2. Rapid rise in Latino enrollment

Mecklenburg County is currently experiencing an influx of Latino residents, which is creating an even more rapid rise in CMS Latino student enrollment (see Figure 4). This emerging Latino population is concentrated in a series of population clusters throughout the county.

Figure 4. Latino Share of Total Enrollment
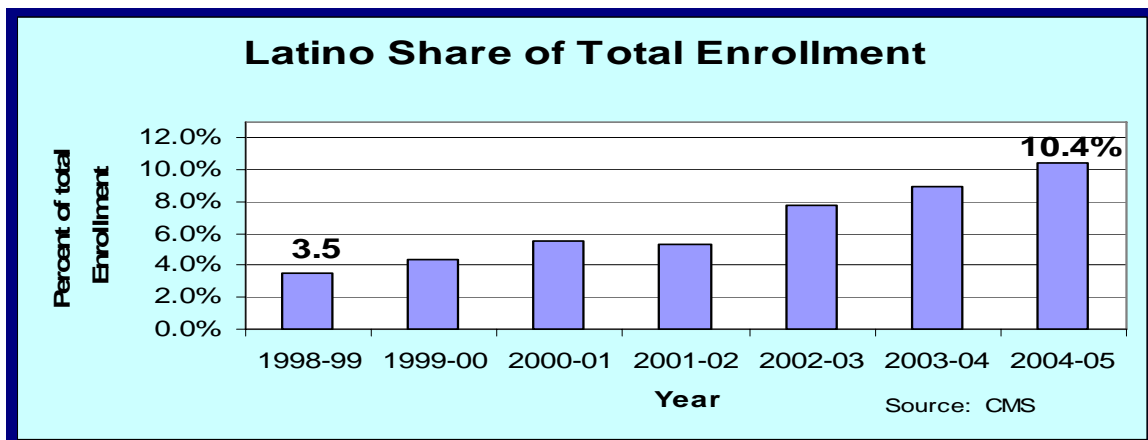
If the current rate of growth continues, it is likely that students of Latino origin may comprise approximately 25% of the enrollment of CMS within the next 10 years, many of whom will be recent immigrants and English language learners with a set of needs not widely addressed at this scale by the district in the past.

The phenomenon of diversity among segments of a larger metropolitan district raises another set of critical challenges: Do students with different needs require different approaches to achieving academic content standards, i.e. methods and materials? Who should decide this?

How is equity and adequacy achieved in the distribution of resources when the type and degree of student needs are significantly different among schools?

In our subsequent recommendations for reform and redesign of CMS management and governance, we attempt to balance these needs and address their inherent challenges.

V. Organizational/Management Model

DECENTRALIZATION: GEOGRAPHY, FUNCTION AND PERFORMANCE

The organizational/management model recommended for the future of CMS draws from elements of the three "single district" models presented at the Stakeholders Conference on September 24, 2005: *Strong CEO/Limited Board, Geographic Decentralization and Decentralization of Schools* (See Appendix 10). The Task Force selected design elements which would enable the district to address the emerging challenges of growth, student achievement and diversification of needs and preferences. This design holds the potential to create higher levels of client satisfaction, staff morale and stakeholder fidelity to the ideal of a metropolitan school district. These elements reflect ideas that were suggested or strongly endorsed by significant numbers of CMS stakeholders.

THEORY OF ACTION

As referenced in the literature on school reform, a theory of action for change is a bridge between values and specific goals. It is a set of beliefs and assumptions about what motivates people, how work can best be performed and the impact of organizational structure. For a school district, a theory of action is a coherent, aligned set of beliefs about what actions will lead to desired outcomes.

The systemic changes we recommend embody a *Blended Theory of Action*[5] enabling greater autonomy for geographic areas and high performing schools within district policy parameters and performance requirements. This theory of action is intended to balance the "loose-tight" organizational properties mentioned earlier. It attempts to modify a resistance-inducing "compliance culture." This culture has resulted from the District's adherence to a

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[5] Donald R. McAdams, Reform Governance: A Comprehensive theory of Action for Urban Schools. Teachers College Press, 2005.

centralized, managed instruction approach. At the same time, this 'Blended Theory' offsets the primary weakness of the competing "performance empowerment" theory: too much freedom to those schools that would fail due to insufficient leadership and capacity.

GEOGRAPHIC DECENTRALIZATION

Structurally, the district should be divided into three compact semi-autonomous geographic areas for the purpose of school supervision and support. While there are several ways to configure these areas, they are best formed around consideration of geographic proximity, municipal boundaries and natural boundaries. Our consultants would recommend three or four areas of approximately 40,000 students each that are socio-economically diverse to ensure an equitable distribution of resources. In this model, each of the eight municipalities are served wholly by a single area and each area serves a portion of the City of Charlotte.

Each area will be led by an Area Superintendent and supported by an Area Office which will provide leadership and services to a subsystem of K–12 schools. Areas would have a degree of instructional and operational autonomy within parameters set by the district and subject to system-wide performance requirements. Area Superintendents would be held accountable for performance and for involving local leaders in decisions within the purview of the Area.

DISTRICT AND AREA FUNCTIONS

Functionally, the Area Offices would assume a direct role in at least eight functional areas:

1. Supervision of principals

2. School improvement

3. Client relations

4. Curriculum and instruction

5. Professional development of staff

6. Aspects of human resources management

7. Aspects of student services including special education, and discipline support

8. Provision of central services to schools, e.g., transportation

In this model the operational role of the Central Office would be reduced and refocused on seven key functions:

1. Providing distributed leadership and vision for the future direction and development of a metropolitan district

2. Setting and assessing performance standards

3. Ensuring equity among diverse schools

4. Holding schools accountable for results and intervening in low performing schools

5. Authorizing schools of choice, including current and future magnet schools and new schools operated with community partners and external providers.

6. Building the capacity of Areas;

7. Providing a limited set of central services (either directly or out-sourced) to schools that could not be provided more efficiently or effectively by Area offices.

It is anticipated that this model would promote area administration that is more community focused and less institutionally flavored while the central office would place new emphasis on serving versus controlling areas and schools. However, the central office would also expand its operational role in two key areas: central management of a robust system of "choice" schools and intervention in and redesign of low performing schools.

The implementation of an Area Administrative Model requires the repurposing of current central office resources to create area offices of sufficient capacity. Given the current size of the CMS central office, we are confident that a robust area administrative structure can be created without additional cost and may in fact provide an opportunity for cost savings. We recommend a study of current central administrative resources to design central office and area office staffing plans to carry out the previously delineated functions. It can be anticipated that such a study may

produce a central office of approximately 40% its current size with the remaining 60% used to staff positions in area offices.

We further recommend that as a transition, one of three area offices be operationalized for the 2006–2007 school year with as full a compliment of staff and services as possible. This would serve as the basis for refinement before proceeding to establish the two remaining area offices for the 2007–2008 school year.

DECENTRALIZATION TO THE SCHOOL LEVEL

Schools within each area that demonstrated relatively high performance and/or a significant rate of improvement should be granted additional autonomy for virtually all instructional and personnel decisions and some operational options within parameters of state law, and receive the designation of "Independent School." These schools would be able to create their own path to student achievement of the North Carolina Content Standards and control their methods, materials, use of time and other instructional processes. School Councils, comprised of parents, teachers, and community members, would advise the principal on issues related to school improvement, program adoption, and resource allocation. These Independent Schools would have "charter-like" autonomy and the relationship of the area office with these schools would be one of providing service rather than supervision. Independent Schools would be subject to the same performance requirement as other schools and maintaining their status would depend on continued achievement above a certain threshold and/or a continuing rate of improvement.

A SYSTEM OF CHOICE SCHOOLS

In addition to the establishment of geographic areas and additional autonomy for high-performing schools, we are recommending the establishment of a robust system of choice schools that is diverse by design to be operated under the direction of a fourth Area Superintendent (Choice Area). Our investigation suggests that in many cases, the magnet schools as currently operated by CMS are not robust or diverse enough to provide an attractive and meaningful alternative to many CMS clients who would prefer a programmatic focus for their children in a diverse setting.

There are currently 20 full and 29 partial magnet programs operated by CMS. Of the full magnets, there are 13 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 2 high schools. Currently, many magnet programs do not differ substantially from other schools and many do not have diverse student bodies. As one measure, the percentage of low income students enrolled in full magnets currently ranges from 3% to 53%.[6]

We recommend that CMS discontinue its strategy of "partial" magnets in favor of accelerating the development of robust, full alternatives as a vehicle for fostering increased racial/socio-economic diversity for those who value it. Under the direction of an Area Superintendent, diversity and choice should be addressed through a system of choice schools expanded to include schools run by external providers and schools operated with community partners. By carefully designing the locations, programmatic offerings and assignment rules for the choice schools, CMS has the ability to create a group of schools that can provide a legitimate school choice for those families seeking a diverse setting for their children. We recommend that enrollment in each school in the choice system be balanced socio-economically at a target of 40% low income students.

VI. Management Implications and Strategies

This organizational model has implications for alignment of a number of management issues and strategies. We address seven of these in this report. These areas relate directly to the most pressing issues facing the district and were a strong focus of stakeholder concern during the community engagement phase of our study.

LEADERSHIP

In this model, the district would be led by a strong superintendent/CEO and a management team that included a formidable set of area superintendents (including one for the system of choice schools).

The new superintendent/CEO should have experience in managing large, decentralized operations and a defined skill set that emphasizes vision, communications, ability to engage

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[6] Low income students are defined here and elsewhere in this report as those students qualifying for free lunch.

multiple public groups and delegation. Moreover, the CMS Board should seek a candidate committed to implementing the management model recommended in this report.

The superintendent/CEO should have full authority to run the district in personnel and operational areas. While the board must focus on the "what" questions, the superintendent should have the exclusive ability to answer "how" questions with the context of the community. For example, the Board may set as a priority the improvement of student achievement in the six lowest performing high schools. The superintendent must be able to develop a strategy for accomplishing this, implement the strategy without interference and be able to reallocate resources to support the implementation.

We strongly recommend that the employment relationship between the board and the next superintendent, including evaluation and compensation, be defined by a performance contract containing mutually agreed outcomes that can be objectively measured. The type of contract contemplated is a cutting edge practice in district reform. In its development of a performance contract, the Board should consider assistance from national consultants versed in this area.

SCHOOL AUTONOMY/SCHOOL INTERVENTION

CMS should develop an Accountability Plan that categorizes schools for the purpose of differentiated supervision. This plan should be aligned to current state and federal measures and designations of relative achievement and progress, and published annually.

While it is anticipated that most schools would fall under the supervision of their area offices, the Accountability Plan should serve as the basis for differentiating the District's relationship with those schools at the extremes of the performance/improvement spectrum.

1) Schools in the highest category should be granted "Independent School" status.

2) Schools in the lowest category should be the focus of district intervention. The district must develop capacity in this function in the form of skilled intervention teams capable of diagnosing the causes of low performance and prescribing and monitoring changes in personnel, program, practices, professional development, and use of time.

3) Schools that are low performing and do not improve for three consecutive years should be reconstituted and redesigned as new schools with an instructional design reflecting promising practices and a staff committed to implementing the new design.

CORE BUSINESS

The District's ability to perform the key functions delineated earlier with competency is enhanced by its ability to focus on its core business, instruction. The energy of district management should be directed to the greatest extent possible on supporting the processes directly associated with student attainment of the North Carolina Content Standards. The provision of other services such as transportation, food service, cleaning, and printing, while necessary, invariably distract time from the core business. We feel they are best performed by those for whom a particular non-instructional service *is* the core business.

In our view, this issue of focus is a more compelling argument for outsourcing some non-instructional services than the potential for cost savings. We see the future success of CMS tied to its ability to perform a set of core competencies well and being small and flexible enough to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances.

We recommend that the District subject one major non-instructional service to competitive bid per year by Areas beginning with transportation (the largest non-instructional service currently offered by the district) for the 2007–2008 school year.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Despite increased attention to high school improvement, high schools remain the soft underbelly of the CMS. The community engagement phase of this study suggested that there is widespread dissatisfaction with high schools: weak student performance, wide variation in school quality and in some cases significant overcrowding. The *Leandro* case and Judge Manning have turned a harsh spotlight on the status of CMS's high schools and increasing pressure on the district's historic commitment to large, comprehensive high schools.

CMS has experienced strong gains in K–8 student performance over the period 1998–2004 in both reading and mathematics. Unfortunately, CMS high school student performance trends can best be described as "mixed" or flat. CMS student performance on the NC High

School Comprehensive Test has declined in both reading and mathematics from 2002–2003 to 2003–2004. CMS performance lags behind the State and Wake County in both skill areas.

CMS is committed to a high school instructional strategy centered on large comprehensive high schools as the dominant school model. Characteristics of this model include the following:

- Large (~2,000) student enrollment;

- Comprehensive programmatic offerings and course content differentiated by degree of rigor;

- Academic departmental structure;

- Common schedule—"A–B model;"

- Twelve district-wide courses of study;

- Approved textbooks;

- Pacing guides; and

- Aligned assessments.

In many ways, the district's high school instructional model is a natural progression from the "managed instruction" model that has been successful at the K–8 level. However, the rapid change in student enrollment that CMS is experiencing in its high schools will place increasing pressure on the district to differentiate its instructional program in high schools away from the "managed instruction" approach toward a "portfolio" approach that allows greater instructional differentiation from school to school. As highlighted by Judge Manning, CMS's high schools have a particular challenge in addressing the growing differences in student needs. Under its current "one size approach," CMS high school performance is highly correlated with the income level of students. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Variation in High School Performance
(NC Comprehensive Test—Reading and Math)

School Name	% Poverty	% at Levels III/IV Reading	% at Levels III/IV Math
West Charlotte	70.40	30.4	35.1
Berry	65.68	47.5	56.6
Garinger	62.57	24.8	36.5
West Mecklenburg	54.79	44.2	52.5
E.E. Waddell	51.61	39.3	35.9
Harding	44.29	68.0	73.6
Northwest	42.18	66.4	61.9
Independence	40.67	54.4	57.9
East Mecklenburg	36.88	67.2	66.5
Vance	36.15	57.4	56.4
Olympic	35.47	49.9	54.0
Myers Park	20.78	78.7	79.3
South Mecklenburg	19.49	74.1	78.4
North Mecklenburg	16.88	73.5	74.7
Butler	16.60	78.4	82.2
Hopewell	14.55	69.4	72.2
Providence	6.36	86.4	90.3

Over the last decade, a widespread body of research and practice has called into question the comprehensive "big box" high school model in serving the needs of all students in today's standards-based era. These schools were successful when the goal was universal education but the economy did not require that large numbers of students meet high academic standards. Today, more than 80% of all jobs in our economy require meeting standards like those developed by the State of North Carolina. Those that do not are low-paying service jobs. Many leading school districts across the nation are moving or have moved secondary education away from the comprehensive model toward creating smaller, more intimate "small school" learning environments for their students. However, a change in high school strategy need not be an all-or-nothing proposition; many districts combine small schools and comprehensive schools into their overall high school offerings.

A "small schools" strategy is built on a set of principles that are typically not present in large high schools:

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- A rigorous core curriculum for all students;

- Individualization (including variation in time) and support based on need;

- Close teacher–student/student–student relationships;

- Thematic, "focused" academic programs that serve as distinct paths to the standards and lead to college or other post-secondary preparation; and

- Choice based on interest and need.

These principles reflect a large body of research that links the degree of "academic press" (all students focused on the same core curriculum) and "social ecology" (the degree of student relationships with teachers and other students) to higher levels of student achievement and school completion, particularly for at-risk students. Small schools are important in that they are a structural condition which enables higher levels of academic press and social ecology.

The district has recently expressed a late and limited interest in the redesign of high schools. We feel a far more comprehensive approach is required. CMS should aggressively pursue a new school development effort that incorporates the principles of the high school reform movement. This effort should take multiple forms:

1) Creating small thematic high schools around topics such as the arts, sciences, technology, finance, etc.;

2) Developing new schools in alternative venues such as museums, banks, community colleges, etc.;

3) Breaking up some of the district's lowest performing schools into several semiautonomous academies;

4) Altering the design of new school construction to accommodate multi-school configurations;

5) Developing partnerships with external organizations regarding the development and management of new high schools. Potential partners could come from a variety of sources:

   a. Community organizations such as civic organizations, foundations, museums and banks;

   b. External educational providers such as charter school organizations and national school model vendors; and

   c. Higher education institutions such as community colleges, vocational-technical schools and universities for the development of "middle college" school models; and

6) Reorganizing CMS's central office to include support for the development of small, highly focused high schools and designing area offices to support these schools. While there are many implementation questions to address, these reforms would include changes in the district's current budget, human resources, school supervision, and leadership development operations.

In addition, CMS must commit to ensuring that the two high schools that have recently secured small learning community (SLC) grants have a successful implementation; CMS should also build on its recent involvement with the NC New Schools Project.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

CMS has a history of pursuing desegregation-oriented student assignment strategies. The 1999 court ruling moved CMS away from a desegregation-oriented plan, ostensibly toward elements of a choice-based assignment plan. However, the District's capacity crisis makes the execution of the choice provisions of the plan problematic, if not technically impossible. The inability to provide real choice in many parts of the district has created public anger and mistrust.

Choice-based student assignment plans require a district to have some level of excess facilities capacity in order to support the choice process. That is, in order to execute a choice-based plan, a district must have some "unassigned seats" from which students can choose.

Without excess seats, assignment is a zero-sum proposition; in order for one student to "choose in" to a school, another student must "choose out" of that school.

With CMS's current capacity deficit, the space available for students to choose is severely limited; in many parts of the district today there is no excess capacity to support choice. As the capacity crisis continues to grow, CMS is effectively forced into a pure fixed assignment plan district-wide that assigns students to a school based primarily on their residence. Outside of an alternative system of schools, choice will become a technical impossibility and fixed assignments will become inevitable. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6. Capacity Crisis = Choice Crisis
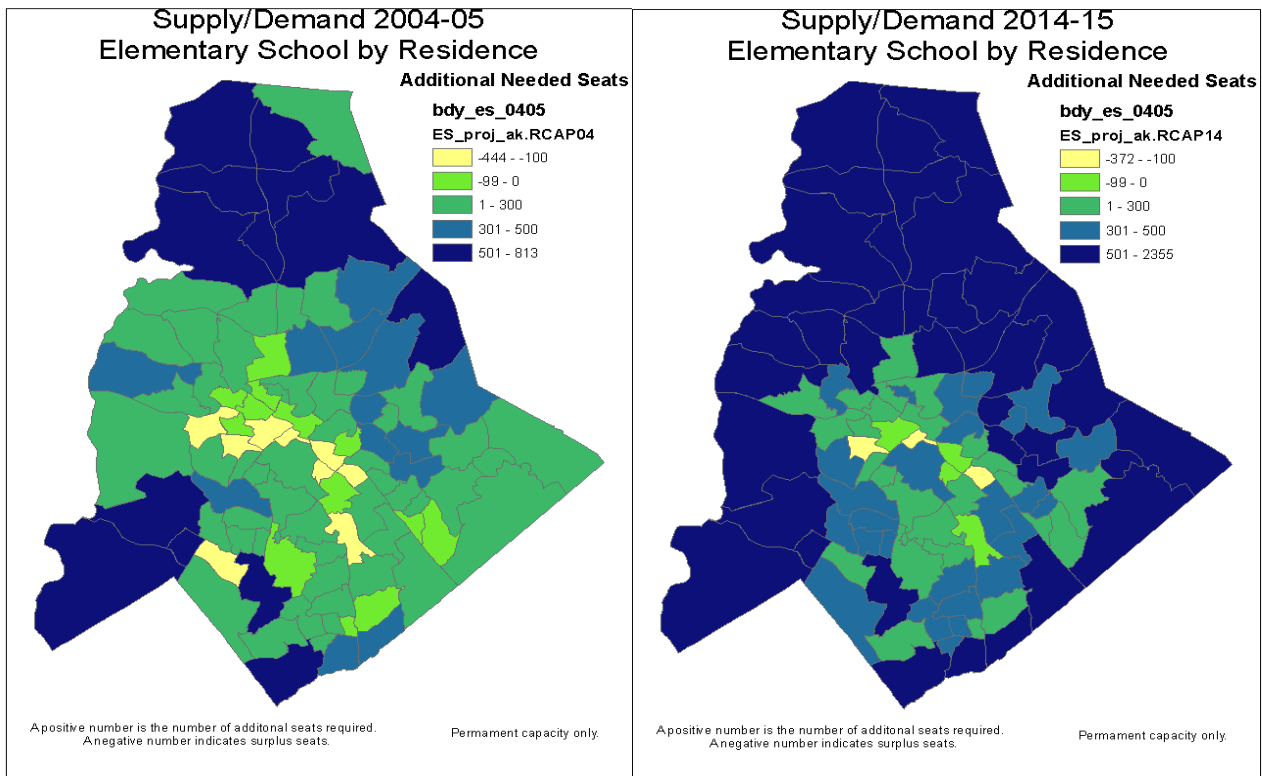
Student assignment is directly related to the issue of diversity, and the extent to which CMS stakeholders differ over its value. Many residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg are keenly aware of the history of desegregation in the area. They are proud of the progress, and concerned that the area may return to conditions of the past. For many of these constituents, diversity is an important outcome as well as a condition directly related to higher levels of achievement for some students. Other Charlotteans, believe schools will be directly associated with neighborhoods and subdivisions. They choose a home based on nearby schools, and there is a

tendency to expect the schools to reflect and be influenced by the particular community it serves as opposed to the larger community.

A paradigm shift is occurring where equity of outcome must replace diversity as a guiding principle for operational decision making. The desire for diversity of a significant number of CMS stakeholders must be addressed, but it must be addressed differently than in the past due to a new set of operating circumstances. In this environment of growth we feel that the best avenue to provide opportunities for diversity is an expanded system of choice schools that are socio-economically balanced by design.

CMS should continue to modify its student assignment plan for elementary and middle schools toward a fixed assignment plan in which students are assigned to the nearest school based on their residence. CMS should utilize existing and new choice schools as a means of providing opportunities for racial/socio-economic diversity. As previously recommended, under the direction of an area superintendent, diversity and choice should be addressed through a robust system of Choice Schools to include current and new "magnet" schools, schools run by external providers, and schools operated with community partners all socio-economically balanced at a target of 40% low-income students.

In contrast to our K–8 recommendation, and consistent with our previous recommendations regarding high schools, CMS should modify its assignment plan for high schools to allow for student choice of multiple high schools within a given geographic area/subdistrict. This should be done simultaneously with the development of a portfolio of small, highly focused, personalized high schools. Due to the capacity crisis, this recommendation will be challenging to implement in the near term; however, as additional high school capacity becomes available over the next few years and existing high schools are redesigned, CMS will have greater latitude to deliver on this "open enrollment" idea linked to the development of new, small high schools.

FUNDING SCHOOLS

Our recommendations have included a management system for holding schools accountable for results. At the same time, we have discussed the challenge to accomplishing this posed by the rapid diversification of the district. Achieving equity in the allocation of resources

to schools is critically connected to both. Equity is a precondition to accountability. A district cannot hold schools serving students with very different needs accountable for meeting the same standards without leveling the playing field. So, it is not possible to look at an improved management strategy for CMS without dealing with the district's resource allocation system.

The State of North Carolina provides approximately two thirds of funding to CMS for annual operations using three basic allotments: categorical, dollar, and position. Categorical allotments are designed to address specific pupil populations or disparities (e.g., limited English proficiency, students with special needs, and academically gifted). Dollar allotments allow districts to hire employees or purchase services for a specific purpose (e.g., teacher assistants, textbooks, and staff development). Position allotments, the bulk of state funding, are established for classroom teachers and instructional support personnel. No other adjustments or weights are included in the funding formula, aside from the student-to-teacher ratios that differ across grade levels and are built into the position allotment formulas. North Carolina is one of just a few states that fund districts based on a teacher allocation system. The position allotments serve as a foundation formula because the number of teaching positions required is statutorily mandated. Teaching positions are based on legislated student-to-teacher ratios for each grade level. Position allotments provide a district with funding for a specific position regardless of whether the teacher/instructional staff is low or high on the state salary schedule (so that districts with more experienced teachers, and thus higher salaries and benefits, receive more state dollars).[7]

Mecklenburg County government supplements state funds with an annual appropriation of approximately one third of CMS operating expenses and also pays debt service on bonds issued for school construction. Outside of adhering to state-mandated class-size ratios, there are few restrictions on how a school district can allocate its funds to schools.

Our analysis suggests that CMS's current method of funding schools is fundamentally inequitable and inadequate and does not deliver the degree of funding differentiation required by the differences in student needs among schools that exist now and will exist to an even greater extent in the future.

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[7] Overview of Public School Funding in North Carolina, NC Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, NC, 2004.

CMS's current resource allocation methodology is based on a fairly conventional staffing standards allocation algorithm. Funding differentiation between schools currently can be attributed primarily to salary differences caused by a lower level of teacher experience in the highest poverty schools. The major policy element of existing funding differentiation is through the Equity Plus or Focus Schools program, which provides a slightly richer staffing allocation for high-poverty schools. The system is, in effect, a "two sizes fit all" system that is incapable of adequately targeting resources based on the variety and degree of student need among schools. In essence, this issue is at the core of the *Leandro* case.

This problem of resource allocation is not unique to CMS. A number of leading schools around the country have responded to this challenge by replacing their existing staffing standards allocation system with a system based on a Weighted Student Budget (WSB) allocation model.[8] In a WSB allocation system resources are "attached to students" in dollar form and allocated to schools based on the demographic profile of their student body. This represents a paradigm shift from funding the institution to focusing funding on the child and the family. It is an allocation model that emerged as a new model in the late 1990s and is currently used by a dozen major districts nationally.

A WSB allocation system is built on a set of core principles:

- Expenditures per pupil are "weighted" according to a variety of student need factors or classifications.[9]

- The allocation of resources varies by the educational needs of each student.

- Resources follow the student to the school they attend.

- Resources are allocated to schools in dollars, rather than staffing positions; schools purchase staff based on average salaries.

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[8] William G. Ouchi and L.G. Segal, *Making Schools Work: A Revolutionary Plan to Get Your Children the Education They Need*, Simon and Shuster, 2003.
[9] A student in poverty might receive a weight of 1.5 in relation to a higher income student at 1.0; an English language learner may receive a weight of 1.3; a student who was both might receive a cumulative weight of 1.8; a gifted student might receive a weight of 1.25, etc.

- A school's budget is a function of the number of students it enrolls and the funding each student brings based on need.

- Each school develops a budget to fund the service needed by its students. The resources that schools have available to do this are in proportion to their students' needs.

One of the natural outgrowths of the development of WSB is an ongoing redistribution of resources among individual schools within the district over time based on the changing need of their students.

CMS should replace its existing staffing standards model for resource allocation with a Weighted Student Budget (WSB) allocation system. Based upon experience in other districts, CMS should be able to distribute 60%–70% of current operating expenditures to schools through WSB. The remaining 30%–40% would be allocated for the provision of area and central services. Through a WSB system, CMS will be much more able to increase equity and adequacy of resources based on the differential needs of the students that attend its schools.

To initiate this work, we recommend that the district conduct an adequacy study[10] with assistance from national experts to determine the categories of need to be weighted and the degree of weight assigned to each category, and then model the distribution of funds using various scenarios. Reorganization of CMS's central financial operations will be required to support the roll-out and ongoing implementation of the WSB model as well as a development program for principals and other school-based leaders so as to ensure that they have the skills to effectively lead and manage their schools within the capacity provided to them through the WSB system.

FACILITIES

In the *Framework for Recommendations* section of this report we discussed the projected growth of CMS enrollment and documented the district's facility capacity needs. Over the next 10 years, CMS enrollment is projected to grow by over 50,000 students. The cost of providing

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[10] Adequacy in school finance refers to the level of funding necessary to enable a student with particular needs to reach state content standards.

additional school space could reach upwards of $3 billion. It can be anticipated that the district will be in a continuous state of large-scale construction throughout the next decade. Our recommendations for facilities focus on two areas: broadening the district's approach to its capacity challenge and handling school planning and construction most effectively.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg community needs to come to a much deeper understanding of the urgency of CMS's facility capacity crisis and the importance of addressing it through approval of bonding for construction. In the wake of the failed November bond referendum, broad-based community leadership must convene with the CMS board to shape a multiyear public engagement process around the district's building capacity needs and the community's role in addressing it. Philanthropic sources should be tapped in this effort.

Given the opinions about the district held by many members of the public, we feel that this conversation and campaign could be more powerfully led by a group external to the district at this time. This Task Force and its successor organization offers to play a role in that effort.

However, we are also concerned that CMS's current capital facilities plan is too singularly and institutionally focused and must be broadened. Given the enormity of the challenge, we feel compelled to offer several suggestions, detailed below.

It is important to note that CMS's current capital facilities plan is completely focused on developing additional district-owned and operated school buildings. That is, CMS envisions that all of their schools will be district-owned schools housed in facilities built and operated by the district exclusively for pre-K–12 education. In comparison, many major school districts around the country have begun to incorporate a significant role for external partners/providers in the development of new school options, e.g. charter schools, contract schools, and partnerships with local community organizations. In some cases, these external partners utilize under-enrolled, district-owned facilities; in many other cases the partners provide space within their own facilities or other existing buildings to house a new school/program.

CMS needs to be far more aggressive in its development of new school models that do not rely on facilities solely owned and operated by the district. Many large school systems around the country have expanded their enrollment capacity by developing new school models in

unconventional locations, such as museums, warehouses, hospitals, banks, and shopping malls. This strategy will allow CMS to reduce its facilities deficit faster and less expensively compared to an exclusive reliance on freestanding school construction.

CMS should develop expertise in its executive team regarding strategies/tactics for creating new small schools in nontraditional, existing venues using community partners and external providers. The district could secure this expertise either by hiring experienced staff and/or contracting with an external consultant. The CMS superintendent with the assistance of the Task Force should convene a meeting with the leaders of major organizations around the county that may be potential partners with CMS on new school development. Potential organizations could include colleges, museums, banks, other businesses, civic organizations, Urban League, and YMCA. Members of this group may wish to travel to other cities to observe successful examples of partnership schools in action.

We also wish to address the issue of under-enrolled facilities in Charlotte's central city. While we are aware of differences of opinion over calculation assumptions in determining the exact extent of space available in these schools, it is clear that *some* space is available and should be utilized. CMS should explore the expansion of several in-city (and under-utilized) elementary schools into K–8 programs as a means of increasing their utilization and reducing the demand for middle-school capacity. This is one of the few facility transitions that can occur without disruption as schools can grow to K–8 through the natural process of students advancing to the next grade over a 3-year period. Many urban school districts in the United States have found the K–8 model to be attractive to parents seeking a middle-school alternative.

Finally, throughout the community engagement process of this investigation, we identified significant support for transferring responsibility for school construction from the Board of Education to another entity. The potential advantages included the following:

1) Using specialized expertise devoted exclusively to this large undertaking for greater efficiency and speed;

2) Developing a more comprehensive and integrated approach that could include all public buildings and joint use of facilities where feasible (community schools concept); and

3) Enabling the Board of Education and its senior management to focus to a greater degree on its core mission of educating students.

Although the specifics of this recommendation are outside the scope of our work, we feel that the concept has merit and should be seriously explored. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have effectively used the city engineering department to manage the construction of public facilities. A broader approach to the development of public infrastructure, that would include schools, holds the potential to be more cost effective and accountable. In this scenario, responsibility for planning, zoning, land acquisition, design, and construction management of new and renovated school buildings is coordinated. This recommendation creates an opportunity for an integrated approach to public infrastructure that aligns parks, roads, rail and safety projects with schools.

The role of the school district would be to provide educational specifications for schools aligned with program requirements. Such an agency may also be in a better position to advance new construction design techniques such as multi-school placement and schools integrated with housing development, as well as cost sharing and utilization of facilities with other public and non-profit service agencies. To ensure community-wide engagement on school facility issues an advisory board which includes representation from the School Board, the County Commission, the City of Charlotte and surrounding municipalities is recommended.

To pursue this proposal, the Task Force or its successor should convene planning discussions with county, district, and city leadership to examine the requirements of transferring responsibility for school construction from the Board of Education.

VII. Governance Model

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools are currently governed by a nine-member board, six are elected from districts, and three serve at-large. This hybrid system was implemented in 1993 and replaced a system where all members were elected at-large. While at-large elections are the

dominate model for selecting School Board members in North Carolina and throughout the nation, this system resulted in large areas and constituencies having a diminished representation on the CMS board.

Evidence from the data collection phase of the project suggests that there is a lack of confidence in the current board governance of CMS. While there was praise for the accessibility and problem-solving actions of some individual board members, there was strong sentiment that the board as a whole has not been effective and that individual agendas interfere with decisions regarding what is best for the District. In addition, there were concerns raised about a lack of clarity in defining the board's role, in relation to executive management. The current board is described by many stakeholders as dysfunctional.

While some have argued that this perceived dysfunction is a product of the players involved, we perceive the structure of the board as problematic and more likely to encourage parochialism and advocacy rather than strategic policy making. Through a mixed model of district and at-large representation, natural tensions exist. At nine members, the board is comparatively large in size and, of the metropolitan school districts studied by the Task Force, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg board is the largest. Typically, boards have either five or seven members.

CMS, like all districts in North Carolina, has no independent authority to raise revenue. Approximately two thirds of CMS revenue is provided by the state, but the district is fiscally dependent on the county for its local share (approximately one third of operating revenue) and for payment of principal and interest on construction bonds. This creates tensions between those responsible for the schools (the CMS board) and those responsible for raising and allocating funds (the County Commissioners). However, most CMS stakeholders do not believe that the Board should have taxing authority.

Having elected board members who represent a specific geographic area gives stakeholders in all areas a voice, but it also risks creating parochialism in board members. While those six members are elected from districts, they are responsible for the governance of the entire system, a responsibility that requires them to put aside the interests of their own constituents for the benefit of the entire region.

In studying the governance of the CMS system, we examined a number of other models, ranging from a board appointed by County Commissioners to the at-large model, to various combinations of governance systems. Many large urban districts in the United States have appointed boards, such as New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, and Baltimore. While there are many metropolitan elected boards, such as Los Angeles, Dallas, and Houston, there is no single model for metropolitan boards that universally prevails. In instances of large districts with appointed boards, generally the appointing authority has at least some measure of control over budgets and revenue. In cases where boards in large cities are elected, most have their own authority to raise revenue and establish budgets.

Having a board that is appointed by the County Commission would assure an alignment of interests between the taxing authority and the board of CMS. Returning to a board in which each member was selected by the entire district (at-large board) would be more likely to encourage the ideal of a policy board.

However, the input provided to us during the Data Collection/Community Engagement phase suggested that these alternatives were not consistent with the values of CMS stakeholders. While many stakeholders feel it is necessary to have a new governance model for the future of CMS, the majority do not favor having an entire board appointed by the County Commissioners and the vast majority feel that a new system should continue to ensure that the Board is made up of individuals from different areas.

Our challenge was how to create a structure for a policy board accountable to the entire system and closely aligned with its funding authority, while ensuring broad geographic representation. The Task Force arrived at a model that maintains the current six electoral districts, elects board members county-wide, reduces the size of the board, creates a link to the County Commission, and creates greater continuity. For purposes of identification, we refer to this model as the *district represented, county elected board.*

At the core of this model is a system in which all county voters are able to select a School Board from among two candidates from each of the six current electoral districts. Multiple School Board candidates run in each electoral district in a September primary. The top two candidates from each district are placed on the ballot for the November election with voters in

the entire county choosing which of those two candidates would represent that district. While this may seem a more complicated model, experience in those districts where it is used (San Diego, CA and Seattle, WA) demonstrates that it works well and is not complicated in practice. This model requires that the interests of electoral districts be balanced with the needs of the entire system.

A stronger connection to the County Commission would be achieved by having the Commission appoint a seventh board member. That member would also have the responsibility of serving as liaison to the Commission on budget matters.

We recommend that the board be reduced in size to seven members, with six representing the current districts and the seventh member appointed by the County Commission.

To ensure greater continuity, our model calls for rotating four-year terms to eliminate the potential for a majority of the board to turn over at one time, as in the current system.

Another issue that was clearly articulated in our data-gathering phase was the widely held perception that the Board has not established clear boundaries that define its role in relation to the superintendent/CEO. While we recognize that the board is taking action to address these issues, we believe that they must formally adopt procedures and polices that are consistent with those of the Center for Reform of School Systems and the National School Boards Association and that specifically preclude the Board from involvement, individually or collectively, in actions that are within the jurisdiction of the Superintendent/CEO.

To be effective—to attract and retain the leadership that CMS demands—the board must be a policy board. In the search for a new Superintendent of CMS, it is essential that the Board be absolutely clear about both its own role and authority and that of the superintendent. Reducing the size of the board is also consistent with this objective and in line with the trend that exists in the business world and with many notable non-profit organizations.

According to the Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS), essential elements of an effective reform board requires that the Board:

- Work as a whole and do not push the agendas of individual members or constituents,

- Hire an effective superintendent/CEO and establish a close relationship of trust,

- Govern by policy and eschew micromanagement,

- Reach out to its community to build public support and bring resources into the schools,

- Have a coherent theory of action for change and advance an agenda consistent with its theory,

- Focus on what is happening in classrooms, and

- Make decisions based on experience, research, and data.

While the Task Force is aware that the current Board has engaged CRSS to assist them with changing their operations, the Task Force urges the board to adopt these principles and elements as formal policy and to engage in an annual, external audit to determine adherence to these elements.

Finally, we feel that the rapid growth and changing demographics of the County may require a realignment of its six current electoral districts to ensure population balance and provide all voters with fair and equal representation. We call upon the CMS Board of Education to exercise its authority under NC General Statute 115 C-37 (i) to realign these electoral districts on the basis of the 2000 census.

KEY ELEMENTS

Our proposed governance model can be summarized in six elements:

Smaller Board

- Reduce the Board from 9 to 7 members

District Representation, At-Large Election

- Six members elected at large to represent current districts

Appointed Member

- The County Commissioners would select a seventh member who would also serve as liaison to county government on funding issues

Rotating Terms

- One half of the board is elected to four-year terms each two-year cycle

Policy Board

- The board would adopt policies limiting their actions to those that set policy and that are in line with definitions adopted by the National School Boards Association and the Center for the Reform of School Systems

Fair Representation

- Current electoral districts realigned to reflect growth and demographic changes

TRANSITION

The transition from the current management and government structures to the recommended structures will require a collaborative effort by multiple partners, beginning with the School Board. Certain aspects of this proposed model, however, will necessitate authorization by the North Carolina General Assembly in the form of a local act which modifies and supplements the general provisions for elections found in General Statute 115 C-37. In this case, such a local act would replace State Law 1993-167, which created the current governance system. Specifically, the new local act would authorize a "residency-district" system, reduce the board from nine to seven members, authorize the appointment of one member by the County Commission, and establish rotating terms. We will ask members of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg state legislative delegation to sponsor replacement of the local act.

Within the context of this enabling legislation, we recommend the least disruptive plan for transition:

Since the district has just held elections for its six district seats, transition would best occur in 2007 when the current three at-large terms expire. At that point the board would be reduced in size to seven members. The seventh member would be appointed for the first time in 2007 for a term of three years and may be reappointed or replaced by the County Commission every four years thereafter. This would place the appointed member on a reappointment/replacement cycle on even-numbered years.

The new "district represented, county elected" election process could be used for the first time in 2009. In 2009, three of the district elected seats would be elected for four year terms. The remaining three board seats would be elected for two year terms so that a staggering of board elections might be achieved. In 2011 the latter three seats would be up for election again, this time and thereafter for four year terms. From 2011 forward, three board seats would be elected in every odd-numbered year.

We anticipate that realignment of the six electoral districts can occur by the start of the Board election process in 2009.

VIII. External Support of Governance and Management

While it is the primary responsibility of the School Board to launch any school reform movement, a collaboration between the Board and civic partners is highly advantageous. Experience in other cities suggests that school district reform cannot be sustained without strong external support.[11] Without the influence of strong community support, it is unlikely that the recommendations of this Task Force will be implemented. In addition, at this time of change there is a significant need for the continuing presence of a strong, broad-based civic organization, to assist the District in achieving desired outcomes and holding it publicly accountable for improving its management and governance. We refer to this entity as *Civic Commission on Excellence in Education*. As a "critical friend" to CMS, such a commission would perform a number of key functions to support the improvement of CMS, including but not limited to the following:

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[11] Paul T. Hill, Christine Campbell, James Harvey, *It Takes a City: Getting Serious about Urban School Reform.* Brookings Institution Press, 2000.

1) Monitor and assist CMS in the implementation of the recommendations included in this report.

2) Initiate and assist the district in high leverage improvement activities.

3) Provide technical assistance to the district either directly or through national consultants.

4) Provide support and assistance to a strong Superintendent/CEO.

5) Encourage and support strong candidates for the School Board.

6) Conduct an annual assessment of CMS performance.

7) Monitor the progress of CMS in addressing key issues and challenges.

Models for this type of organization currently exist in Boston (Boston Compact) and Seattle (Seattle Alliance for Education).

We envision that this Commission will be formed as a business and civic leadership roundtable with a budget and small staff independently financed. The Commission would include research and fundraising capacity either independently or through a merger of existing advocacy and support organizations. Members of the commission would be drawn from corporate, civic, faith, political, and institutional leaders of the community.

We see this new Citizens Commission for Excellence in Education as a partner in the initiatives that will contribute to making CMS the best metropolitan school district in the United States particularly in the eyes of its own clients, thereby assuring the continued economic vitality of the region.

The Task Force recognizes that it will take time to create the organization. The Task Force has committed itself to continue functioning until this new entity is in place and able to assume the role envisioned here.

Acknowledgement

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System is acknowledged nationally as a successful public education enterprise. At the same time, there is a growing awareness and opinion that rapid growth and shifting demographics require changes in its management and governance structure to ensure future success. For this reason, hundreds of citizens have spent countless hours in an extensive engagement process conducted by the Citizens' Task Force on CMS. The Task Force was appointed to determine the best management and governance structure required to meet current and future needs.

The intentionally inclusive process was launched by Foundation For The Carolinas under the chairmanship of Dr. Ruth Shaw, President of Duke Power Company. The study was financed by the private sector with generous grants from corporations and foundations. Particularly noteworthy is the support and engagement of every elected body in Mecklenburg County. Great appreciation is extended to members of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board and staff for embracing the effort with openness and integrity.

A high performing group of 16 volunteer Task Force members guided the process under the capable leadership of co-chairs Cathy Bessant and Harvey Gantt. After much discussion and debate, the Task Force reached consensus on the recommendations included in this report. Each recommendation is grounded in extensive community input and strong research methodologies. The best thinking of nationally acclaimed consultants and the aspirations of local parents, teachers, students and citizens at-large have been creatively woven into recommendations on management and governance. The report is a bold call for action.

Gratitude is expressed to the citizens of Mecklenburg County for their intense commitment to public education. With their support, these recommendations will move forward and excellence in education becomes the gift they give their children.

APPENDIX 1
THE CITIZENS' TASK FORCE
ON CMS

THE CITIZENS' TASK FORCE ON CMS

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APPENDIX 2
FINDINGS

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FINDINGS

Ten major findings emerge from a cross-cutting examination of all collected data. Under each theme, some examples of the supporting data are discussed along with the source of the data.

1. Student performance in CMS elementary and middle schools is strong; performance in high schools is mixed or flat.

From 1998 to 2004, CMS student achievement in elementary and middle schools increased significantly in both reading and math and can be considered strong both in absolute terms and in comparison to students from across the state of North Carolina. Moreover, achievement is improving across all student groups—including White, African American, Hispanic/Latino, low income, limited English proficient, and special education—and the achievement gap among all groups is narrowing (Management Review). It also appears that in 2002—the most recent year for comparable data—CMS performed well relative to its level of expenditures when compared to four similar districts from across the country (Benchmarking Study).

At the high school level, however, student performance in CMS can best be described as "mixed" or "flat" (Management Review), raising serious concern among community leaders (Civic Leader Interviews). CMS student performance on the North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test declined in reading and math between 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 and continues to trail state averages in both subjects. Similarly, End-of-Course Test results for key subject areas have remained relatively flat over time, although there is strong growth in English I. Although the years 1998–2003 saw a strong reduction in the dropout rate for grades 9–12 (the rate increased slightly in 2003–2004), the reporting method used by the district does not reflect the completion rate of a 9th- to 10th-grade cohort and should be read with skepticism (Management Review).

One reason for poor student performance in CMS high schools might be the way in which the schools are organized (Management Review). Over the last decade, a widespread body of research and practice has called into question the comprehensive high school model in serving the need of students in today's era of state content standards. Many leading school districts across the country are moving their high schools away from the "big box" model toward creating smaller, more intimate and rigorous learning environments for their students. A change in high school strategy, however, need not be an all-or-nothing proposition; many districts combine small schools and comprehensive schools into their overall high school offerings. CMS's commitment to the "big box" model will limit its ability to realize academic benefits as well as the community partnership and facilities capacity benefits (discussed in more detail below) of the small-school approach.

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2. Most parents and teachers are satisfied with their local schools but are dissatisfied with the district as a whole.

A majority of parents who completed surveys were satisfied with the schools attended by their children and chose to reside in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area because of the quality of its schools. Parents indicated strongest support for CMS's curriculum decision making (40.4% satisfaction) and transportation system (49.9% satisfaction), with strong support also given to the district's implementation of assessment standards and procedures and provision of professional development for teachers (Parent Surveys). A majority of teachers who completed surveys were also satisfied with the schools in which they work (Teacher Surveys). And, although the data are much less precise, the public at large appears to support its local schools as well: Most comments from all three Town Hall Meetings regarding individuals' best experience with the system's management and governance focused on the way in which individual schools responded to parents' concerns and students' needs.

Teachers, however, expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with and mistrust of the district administration and its treatment of teachers (Teacher Surveys). Most notably, sizable majorities of teachers believe that they do not have a voice in the district's decision making process (65.3%), do not trust district administrators to make decisions that are right for teachers (67.7%), and do not believe that only the most competent staff members are promoted to serve at the CMS central office (67.9%). Overall, nearly half of all teachers (49.2%) reported that they were dissatisfied with CMS district administration, especially with school discipline issues and teacher retention efforts.

Parents, according to the surveys, were most dissatisfied with the district's intervention in low-performing schools (47.1% dissatisfied), handling of school discipline issues (52.7% dissatisfied), making budget decision and distributing funds equitably (49.7% dissatisfied), providing adequate facilities for all students (52.5% dissatisfied), and school assignment plan (47.9% dissatisfied).

3. The School Board is not providing effective leadership. There is no agreement, however, about how to address the problem.

Although some parents participating in a Focus Group and some participants at the Town Hall Meetings described the School Board as responsive to their needs, every form of data collection—Focus Groups, Town Hall Meetings, interviews with civic leaders and state legislators, and surveys—found that the vast majority of CMS stakeholders view the board as ineffective at best and dysfunctional at worst. One Focus Group participant described School Board meetings as "a joke," with a lot of time spent on insignificant or "pet" issues rather than on more important business for the entire system. One interviewee described the infighting among board members as "an embarrassment to the City."

Almost half of parents (47.3%) and a majority of teachers (60.6%) surveyed described the CMS School Board as ineffective. Only a quarter of parents (24.4%), and even fewer teachers (15.7%) rated the board as effective. Civic leaders and state legislators who were

interviewed were virtually unanimous in their lack of faith in the ability of the current School Board to do its job.

Overall, the CMS School Board is widely recognized as having a low capacity for collaborating, and maintaining an appropriate policy-making role (Focus Groups). In addition, the School Board appears to lack a unifying vision and the leadership to rally a majority around a vision and agenda (School Board Interviews, Legislator Interviews, Civic Leader Interviews). Given this leadership vacuum, the board does not appear capable of effective strategic decision making. As a result, it is often reactive and tends to focus inappropriately on "how" rather than "what" questions (School Board Interviews, Legislator Interviews).

Although they are aware of the public's negative perception of them, most board members believe that the board is simply representing the views of constituents (School Board Interviews). Furthermore, most current board members believe that the board will become more effective thanks to current training by the Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS), but few community members, educators, or state legislators are aware of this effort (Parent Surveys, Teacher Surveys, Civic Leader Interviews, School Board Interviews, Legislator Interviews).

Clearly, the community wants change in the School Board but also recognizes that all proposals for reform—including electing all members at large, appointing the School Board, and giving the School Board taxing authority—carry both advantages and disadvantages to the current structure (Civic Leader Interviews, Town Hall Meetings, Legislator Interviews, Focus Groups). For example, although many civic leaders indicated that the change from all at-large representation to some district representation has led to greater polarization among the board and less qualified board members, those interviewed were sensitive to the need for board members to represent all areas of the community. Moreover, the recommendation receiving the most support from parents (57.3%) and teachers (53.6%) was that all School Board members be elected from districts (Parent and Teacher Surveys).

Some guidance, however, does emerge from the parent surveys. Parents clearly do *not* want School Board members to be appointed by elected officials—almost 71% oppose the idea. Rather, the majority of parents indicated that the School Board should be made up of representatives from each geographic area (80.2%), should represent the community's diversity (75.9%), and should include community members (69.0%).

4. The district mandates a uniform curriculum in its schools and directly manages almost all aspects of the educational process.

"Managed instruction" is the term used to describe an approach taken by a district in which the central office prescribes a uniform curriculum, instructional practices, time allocated to certain subjects, professional development activities, and other aspects of the schooling process and then closely monitors teachers and schools to ensure compliance. This approach contrasts most starkly with a "portfolio" approach, in which the central office sets student outcome goals, and provides assistance to individual schools as needed but otherwise allows schools to operate as they see fit. The approach that is taken by most districts fall somewhere between these two extremes.

CMS has clearly committed itself to a managed-instruction model. In most cases, the district requires its schools to implement a single instructional model and provides central office services to support that instructional model at the school level. CMS strives to promote equity and consistency across its administrative systems by supporting the instructional approach with common staffing patterns, providing leadership development in alignment with the instructional culture, and setting common performance standards, pacing instructions and assessments for schools (Management Review). The exceptions to this consistent instructional program are the magnet schools, which have greater latitude over their curriculum and instructional programs.

Those interviewed cited a number of reasons for why the district began implementing a managed-instruction approach. For example, before the district switched to managing instruction, many schools used ineffective reading programs and had difficulty addressing the high mobility rates of students and teachers. Most civic leaders interviewed indicated that the switch to a managed-instruction approach was necessary and that the increases in elementary students' test scores since that time speak to the benefits of this approach. Indeed, the management review found that the district effectively implements the managed-instruction approach, particularly at the elementary level.

Despite these successes, at least five problems with the managed-instruction approach are apparent. Many teachers and principals chafe at the highly prescribed approach to education, stating that their ability to tailor instructional practices to the individual needs of students is limited, especially at the high school level (Civic Leader Interviews, Town Hall Meetings, Teacher Surveys). The managed-instruction approach has also promoted a "culture of complaint." Teachers and principals do not own the work; they are able to criticize central office prescriptions without being accountable for their own decisions (Management Review). The district continues to struggle to provide tailored assistance to low-performing schools (Management Review). Many civic leaders noted that magnet schools and programs—which are largely exempt from the district-wide approach to managed instruction—are among the most desirable placements in the district (Civic Leader Interviews). Finally, as will be discussed in detail below, the district's managed approach is not well suited to addressing student needs when student enrollment and differences in student populations among schools are rapidly increasing (Management Review).

Of the three comparison districts providing information for the benchmarking study, all require schools to follow a common curriculum, though one of them offers schools a choice among district-approved options. Each district gives schools some limited choices in how to implement that curriculum, such as allowing the purchase of a reading program so long as it comes from school funds and supplements the adopted curriculum. In contrast to CMS, each comparison district also gives principals a high degree of autonomy in managing funds allocated to their schools and in hiring teachers.

5. While there is significant support for splitting up the district, most favor keeping it together but devolving authority away from the central office to sub-districts and schools.

Forty percent of parents favored and 44% opposed keeping CMS a single unified system (Parent Surveys). At the same time, 57% of parents favored and 23.5% opposed keeping CMS a

single system but creating "area administrative districts," which would remain part of CMS but be managed locally. Teachers expressed very similar views. In general, parents and teachers supported greater control by local school staff and parents, particularly in budget choices about how resources should be distributed, decisions about hiring and firing of teachers, and curriculum decisions about how to best enable students to meet state standards (Parent and Teacher Surveys). The School Board was divided on the issue of breaking up the system, with the majority favoring the current structure, but most board members support some degree of decentralization of district management (School Board Interviews).

There was more support in the Town Hall Meetings held in Cornelius and Matthews than in downtown Charlotte for breaking CMS into smaller districts. Nonetheless, far more participants in all three Town Hall Meetings expressed support for keeping CMS unified but decentralizing its management. Many called for granting area superintendents and principals authority for everything from hiring to developing and implementing curricula.

With a few exceptions, interviewed civic leaders opposed splitting CMS into independent school systems, but many supported the idea of dividing the system into regional sub-districts that continue to be part of CMS as one way to create more parent involvement as well as community enthusiasm and support. Regional superintendents and offices, according to many interviewees, can be used more effectively to drive improvements in schools and support student achievement than CMS's current central office. They added that the responsibilities for regional superintendents need to be clearly defined and include vertical oversight across elementary, middle, and high schools in their area.

Data from the benchmarking study suggest that the idea of decentralizing the district's management holds value. All four comparison districts studied have regional superintendents who oversee specific geographic areas and hold responsibility for selecting and evaluating principals. Regional superintendent offices in the comparison districts are physically located within their geographic area and maintain a regional office, typically devoted to special education, personnel, and student services within the region.

6. The district's central office fails to communicate effectively.

One of the major themes emerging from the interviews, Focus Groups, and Town Hall Meetings was the central office's poor communication with the community and schools. All Focus Groups, most civic leaders interviewed, and participants in all three Town Hall Meetings discussed examples of failed attempts to obtain information from and provide input to CMS. Limited and inconsistent communication may prevent the district from establishing a shared vision for the school system and maintaining credibility with its community (Focus Groups, Civic Leader Interviews).

Poor communication also leads to teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members feeling powerless, under-appreciated, and frustrated (Focus Groups). As a result, morale among teachers and administrators is low, and community members feel the need to go elsewhere—including the School Board—for answers to their questions or help with a problem, creating further inefficiencies in the system.

All the comparison districts emphasized the importance of communicating with the local community, especially about how students are assigned to schools. Due to their significant growth in student enrollment, these districts have had to change assignment zones for schools on a regular basis as well as raise revenue to build new schools. Before making any final decisions, these districts made a point of communicating strategically with the community through holding public meetings that share detailed explanations of the need for re-assigning students and building new schools, creating user-friendly Web sites for parents to understand the process and the criteria being used, and appointing citizens to study issues and make recommendations.

7. There is widespread support for the central office to be run more efficiently by administrators with business management experience.

Most Focus Groups expressed their view that the central office was "bloated" and overly bureaucratic. School district staff participating in a Focus Group noted that a large number of positions have unclear function and value partly as a result of their being filled by poor-performing colleagues moved from other positions. Parents and community members noted that they receive a range of conflicting responses to questions depending on whom they happen to ask in the central office. They also raised concerns about cost efficiency, productivity, and accountability, given CMS's large central office (Focus Groups).

Other data suggest that the district's central office is not operating at peak efficiency. For example, a majority of surveyed teachers *disagreed* with the statements that the size of the CMS central office is just right (68.0%) and the district's organizational structure operates efficiently (64.8%). Meanwhile, a majority of surveyed teachers (57.9%) *agreed* with the statement that district decision making is influenced by racial considerations. Most civic leaders and School Board members interviewed do not consider the Department of Human Resources to be operating optimally and are concerned about ramifications of the current high rate of teacher attrition and projected student population growth rates.

Many interviewed civic leaders and Town Hall Meeting participants indicated that the system could be better managed with a chief executive officer, who has knowledge and experience managing a large organization, as well as a chief academic officer, who has the educational knowledge and experience to improve student achievement across the school system.

8. The district is facing a facility-capacity crisis and has a risky strategy for generating revenue to address it.

Since 2001, student enrollment in CMS has increased 11%, one of the fastest growth rates in the country (Benchmarking Study). This growth has led to overcrowding in CMS's suburban schools and the rampant use of mobile classrooms, leading to decreased satisfaction among CMS stakeholders. Student enrollment growth is also expected to continue, from approximately 118,000 today to almost 172,000 in 2014–2015, creating a "capacity crisis" among CMS schools (Management Review). Under current scenarios, enrollment growth will place almost 60,000 students in mobile classrooms by 2014, which will likely increase dissatisfaction among students, parents, and educators (Management Review).

It appears that dissatisfaction with overcrowding does not stem from a lack of spending on the part of CMS. In 2002—the most recent year for which there is comparable data—CMS spent more per student on construction and transportation than any of the four benchmark districts (Benchmarking Study). Rather, many CMS stakeholders blame poor leadership. Participants in all three Town Hall Meetings criticized the School Board and central office for their lack of planning for or management of student enrollment growth. Both the School Board and central office were criticized for failing to project growth accurately and to build schools in the geographic areas of greatest need. For their part, most School Board members were found to be remarkably open-minded to the idea of outsourcing the construction of new schools and using additional methods for building or otherwise creating new schools as quickly as possible (School Board Interviews).

To address student enrollment growth, CMS relied on local referenda in 1996, 1997, 2000, and 2002 for funding additional classroom space. Looking forward, the district has built a similar funding cycle of local referenda into its long-term capital plan. This plan seeks to raise $1.3 billion through local referenda over the next decade. Two major concerns with this plan were identified by the management review. First, despite the magnitude of the plan, it does not eliminate the facilities-capacity deficit, but rather maintains it at the current 2005 level. The funding commitment envisioned in the capital plan will alleviate some of the capacity need, but it would still place more than 20,000 students in mobile classrooms by 2014. If the plan were to be expanded by 2014 to fully fund the district's facilities deficit and eliminate the need for mobile classrooms, 2,800 permanent seats will need to be added every year between 2007 and 2014 at an estimated additional cost of more than $850 million. The second concern with the plan compounds the first: any unsuccessful voter referenda will lead to growth in the facilities deficit and require the additional use of mobile classrooms.

At the same time, the majority of parents, teachers, and civic leaders opposed increasing property taxes, increasing local sales taxes, and giving the School Board taxing authority to raise funds for public schools (Parent and Teacher Surveys, Civic Leader Interviews). The concern was that property taxes are already driving people to leave the county. A majority of parents and teachers surveyed supported placing user fees on new developments. Similarly, a major recommendation coming out of the Town Hall Meetings was for developers to pay fees or donate land for new schools, as is required by one of the four comparison districts studied (Town Hall Meetings, Benchmarking Study).

CMS is not alone in its need to scramble to serve a growing student population. Facilities in all four comparison districts in the benchmarking study have been stressed by increasing student enrollment, and each has had to purchase new land, build new schools, renovate and build additions to existing schools, and maximize the use of portables in high-growth areas of the county to accommodate the growth (Benchmarking Study). Underutilization of some schools in 3 of 4 comparison districts has presented additional complications in allocating resources and student assignment.

The rapid growth in the four comparison districts has also required coordination with other government entities involved in development, zoning, roads, and water lines to select sites for school construction. These changes have required the districts to develop sophisticated expertise in construction and facilities planning, either in house or through national consultants

who specialize in space management issues, to conduct detailed analyses and produce results as quickly as possible. All the comparison districts maintain a master plan for facilities that is updated annually with board approval.

9. The composition of the district's student population is changing rapidly and dramatically. In addition, the demographics of individual schools have become quite different from one another, straining the district's current system of allocating resources to schools and prescribing academic programs.

In addition to growing in overall size, the CMS student population looks very different than it did only a few years ago. The proportion of Latino students has almost doubled and will grow further. Also, since the district received unitary status, schools have become more segregated by income (Management Review).

Historically, CMS has not had a large immigrant population relative to other big cities, so its capacity and resources for creating and supporting these programs are fairly limited. The rapid growth in the enrollment of Latino children, many of whom speak English as a second language or not at all, will therefore require CMS to dramatically expand its English as a Second Language (ESL) programs throughout the district based on the needs of students in individual schools (Management Review).

In addition to varying in their enrollment of Latino and ESL students, schools within CMS vary in terms of the income level of the students enrolled. This is particularly important as the achievement level of CMS schools is highly correlated with income. In other words, almost without exception, as student poverty increases in a CMS school, achievement falls (Management Review). Since more schools in CMS are serving ever greater numbers of poor children while being held to ever higher standards, schools face increasing pressure to diverge from the district's one-size-fits-all approach and tailor their instructional strategies to their students' learning needs (Management Review).

While it is true that more CMS schools are serving high concentrations of low-income students, it is also true that more CMS schools are serving smaller concentrations of low-income students because fewer schools are serving "average" concentrations of poor children. This increased segregation of low-income students means that additional pressure is placed on the system's method of allocating funds to schools. Currently, the way in which CMS allocates resources to schools creates minimal funding differences between schools. The district funds schools on a headcount basis, providing a certain amount of money for each of the students enrolled.

The major element of funding differentiation among schools is through the "Equity Plus" program, which provides additional staffing for high-poverty schools. Generally, any school with at least 50% poor students receives funding from Equity Plus, which currently provides $42 million in additional funds to 53 high-poverty schools. Besides Equity Plus schools, CMS also provides additional funds to schools based on their enrollment of special education students ($70 million) and ESL students ($8.5 million). Despite these efforts, as the demographics of the CMS

student population continues to change, there will be differing student "need profiles" at schools demanding significantly different levels of resources (Management Review).

10. There is significant dissatisfaction with the district's student assignment plan.

A majority of the community is unhappy with the district's student assignment plan, believing that it has caused overcrowding in the suburban schools and underutilization of the inner-city schools, exacerbated inequities among schools, and created uncertainty and unhappiness among parents unsure of where their child will go to school (Civic Leader Interviews, Focus Groups, Legislator Interviews). Indeed, overcrowding in the district's suburban schools negatively affects the public's view of the entire system and is one of the primary issues fueling support for breaking up the school system into smaller districts (Civic Leader Interviews).

The district's facilities-capacity crisis makes the execution of a choice-based plan problematic. The potential of a choice-based plan of student assignment is limited significantly by the facilities capacity crisis in CMS (Management Review). If all desirable schools are over-crowded, families are unable to actually choose the school that their children attend. This is currently the case, and the problem is expected to worsen significantly before it improves (Management Review).

Student assignment presents enormous challenges to all four comparison districts as well. All four districts have a well-respected magnet system originally created to avoid or get out from under desegregation orders, but all the districts have expanded their very popular magnet programs because race is no longer a required consideration. In contrast, CMS seems to have abandoned a number of its successful magnet schools once unitary status was declared (Civic Leader Interviews).

Other than magnet schools, student assignment in the comparison districts is primarily based on neighborhood schools (Benchmarking Study). One district examined, Clark County, Nevada (Las Vegas) School District, changes school assignment zones annually because it opens 12–15 new schools each year. Each year, this district's Attendance Zone Advisory Committee, comprising citizen representatives of the board, meets in public meetings to analyze detailed information and then makes recommendations to the board, which adopts or amends those plans. Particularly since it encompasses such a large geographic area, Clark County School District attempts to pair schools with nearby feeder schools and use natural boundaries such as dangerous or wide streets. The district has also made a commitment to protect high school seniors and most juniors from reassignment.

Another comparison district, Wake County, North Carolina Public Schools, revisits its attendance zones annually. In drawing school boundaries, the district annexes "nodes" into a school's attendance zones in order to maintain its policy of no school having more than 40% of its students qualify for reduced-price lunch and an achievement level of no less than 25% of students below grade level.

APPENDIX 3
DISTRICT MANAGEMENT REVIEW SUMMARY AND PROSPECTIVE ISSUES

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Methodology

Over the last two months, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted an extensive management review of CMS from an overall strategic perspective. The purpose of the review was to study the management of the district in very broad terms relative to attributes of the "theories of action" we have previously described to the CMS Task Force.

Given the timeframe and resources available, this review was neither comprehensive nor exhaustive; instead, its intent was to provide the CMS Task Force with an independent analysis of CMS's overall management strategy and a sense of the district's performance in executing on this strategy.

To complete this review of CMS, the consultants relied on three primary sources of information:

- Publicly reported data from both CMS and non-CMS sources
    - Student academic performance
    - Student enrollment and school capacities

- Existing CMS documents and materials
    - Budget documents
    - Academic documents and materials

- Interviews with senior CMS administrators
    - 11 interviews with key CMS senior staff were held
    - Lengthy sessions with both the outgoing and interim Superintendents

Our primary focus was the synthesis and integration of these data sets into a coherent picture of CMS's overall management strategy. The major findings of the district review are presented below.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1.   CMS has committed itself to a "managed instruction" theory of action and has successfully executed on significant elements of this theory of action.

CMS has clearly committed itself to pursuing a "managed instruction" theory of action. This commitment was clear throughout all of our interviews as well as from the various district documents we reviewed.

CMS exhibits many of the classic characteristics of a managed instruction district. The district is highly centralized in terms of an instructional model and curricular approach and provides central office services to support the instructional model at the school level. CMS promotes equity and consistency across its administrative systems supporting the instructional approach, leadership development in alignment with the instructional culture, and a common set of performance standards and assessments for schools.

Our review team used the district's execution of the managed instruction theory of action relative to the rubric provided to the CMS Task Force earlier this Spring. This rubric was used to assess the status of the district relative to a set of seven attributes associated with the theory of action. For each attribute there are three to four elements which we looked for in the district as demonstration of the district's alignment with the theory of action. We then "graded" the district's status relative to each element on a four point scale, from 1 "not good" to 4 "best". We then consolidated the "grades" for each of these elements into a single score for each attribute of the rubric.

The following figure summarizes our judgment of CMS's status relative to the seven attributes of the managed instruction theory of action. As you can see, CMS ranks very high on almost all of the attributes, having three 3's and three 4's within the seven attributes. This indicates that the district has demonstrated significant success in aligning its operations with the theory of action. From AIR's standpoint, this is an impressive accomplishment and a strong indication of the depth of the district's commitment to the theory of action.

Figure 1. Managed Instruction Theory of Action CMS District Review Scorecard

1. Common performance standards and assessments are applied to all students and all schools	**4**
2. Deep commitment to a powerful instructional model and curricular approach	**4**
3. District systems aligned with equity and consistency	**3**
4. District control of and support for curriculum and instruction activities at the school level	**4**
5. Strong district capability to intervene in low performing schools	**1+**
6. Central office services are fully aligned with the district's instructional model	**3**
7. Broad-based commitment to leadership development within a shared instructional culture	**3**

The one notably weak area identified in the review was associated with the ability of the district to intervene in the affairs of low performing schools. There was no any evidence of a rigorous and consistent framework for evaluating the performance of individual schools other than student performance results. The district did not utilize any instrument like a set of performance rubrics (like the Boston Essentials) for Regional Superintendents to monitor and evaluate schools. The only instruments identified were more informal and ad hoc in nature, and utilized by only one or two Regional Superintendents. This lack of an evaluative instrument weakens the district's position in identifying and intervening in low performing schools. No

CMS staff person was able to describe a robust process for this type of school intervention. This resulted in the 1+ justifiable score.

2. CMS student performance results are strong K–8, and are mixed/flat at the high school level

The performance of CMS students were reviewed on a series of publicly reported student performance measures with a focus on district-wide student performance, rather than individual school or school-to-school comparisons. In general, standards-based, criterion-referenced assessments which report the percentage of students at or above standards served as the basis for analysis. Wherever possible, we utilized multiple measures and disaggregated our analyses to multiple student groups.

The specific student performance data reviewed:

- K–8 Assessments
  - NC End-of-Grade Tests, Grades 3–8

- 9-12 Assessments
  - NC High School Comprehensive Test
  - NC End-of-Course Tests
  - Dropout Rates (9–12)

A. K–8 Student Performance Results

The following four observations regarding CMS student performance at the K–8 level can be made:

1. CMS has experienced strong gains in K–8 student performance over the period 1998–2004 in both reading and mathematics. These gains can be viewed as strong both in absolute terms and in comparison to the State of North Carolina.
2. Student achievement is improving across all student groups: African American (AA), Hispanic/Latino (H/L), Free and Reduced Lunch (F/R), Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Exceptional Children (EC).
3. The achievement gap is closing across all major student groups. The data clearly points to strong gap closure with African Americans, Latinos, students in poverty, and students with Disabilities, although somewhat less strong with English Language Learners.
4. CMS's strong performance K–8 has also been acknowledged in several major analyses of student performance in urban school systems around the country.
   - Council of the Great City Schools
   - Broad Prize Finalist

B. High School Student Performance Results

The following four observations regarding CMS student performance at the high school level can be made:

1. CMS high school student performance trends can best be described as "mixed" or "flat", not nearly as strong as K–8 performance.
2. CMS student performance on the NC High School Comprehensive Test has declined in both reading and mathematics from 2002–2003 to 2003–2004. CMS performance lags the State in both skill areas.
3. The End-of-Course Tests results for key subject areas have remained relatively "flat" over time, particularly in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Algebra I/II and Geometry, although there is strong growth in English I.
4. The years 1998–2003 saw a strong reduction in the dropout rate for grades 9–12. The rate increased slightly in 2003–2004.

3. The District's operating context is changing rapidly and dramatically

In the last few years, CMS has been confronted with several dramatic changes in the context within which it operates. These changes have fundamentally altered the district's operating landscape and may challenge the capabilities of the district's management strategy to effectively respond. There are (at least) two major changes to consider:

A. Demographic differentiation of school enrollments

Beginning about five years ago, the district began to experience dramatic differentiation in the demographic compositions of student bodies on a school-to-school basis. Prior to this time period, the district had only moderate differences in student profiles from school-to-school. Now, through a combination of demographic and policy changes, there exists substantial differences in the student populations in individual schools. The continuing growth in this enrollment differentiation will have major impacts on CMS across a wide variety of CMS practices/operations as these trends continue into the future.

This enrollment differentiation has been driven by two major forces:

i. Student assignment plan changes

The 2000 court ruling moving CMS away from a desegregation-oriented student assignment plan has resulted in significant differentiation in the composition of student bodies from school-to-school. The previous student assignment plan served to lessen differences in student demographic profiles from school-to-school. The new plan results in the student profiles at individual schools to be more reflective of the local resident population which, in a large diverse community like CMS, means greater differences in student profiles at individual schools.

The impact of the change in CMS's student assignment plan on the demographic composition of the district's schools has been rapid and dramatic. This demographic differentiation has occurred across a number of student demographic characteristics, such as race, class and immigrant status. One direct measure of this differentiation is in the polarization of low income student enrollment; i.e. more "high income" schools, more "low income" schools and fewer "mixed income" schools:

Figure 2. Number of Schools with High or Low Poverty Concentrations

	2001-02	2004-05
# of Elementary Schools with >60% Poverty	33	54
# of Elementary Schools with <30% Poverty	31	37

ii.   Rapid rise in Latino enrollment

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is currently experiencing a rapid influx of Latino residents, which is creating an even more rapid rise in CMS Latino student enrollment. This emerging Latino population is not evenly distributing itself throughout the county; instead it is concentrating into a series of population clusters throughout the region.

Figure 3: Latino Share of Total Enrollment
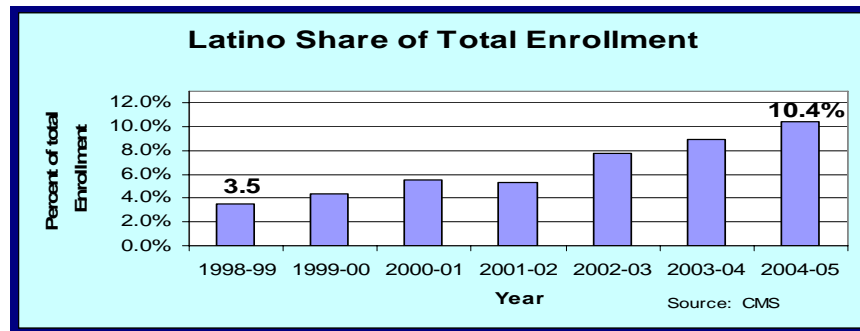
B. Growing crisis between student population and CMS capacity

Due to a number of demographic dynamics outside of the control of CMS, CMS student enrollment has been subject to a rapid growth trend that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. This growth in student enrollment is already straining CMS's capacity to serve these students. And, given the continued strength of this growth trend over time, it will require substantial new investments of capital to avert a crisis of capacity in the not too distant future.

CMS projects that there will be significant enrollment growth in the district over the next ten years, from 118,000 today to almost 172,000 by 2014–2015. While we have not independently verified these enrollment projections, we have tested their validity against population growth estimates from other credible sources and the CMS projections appear to be consistent.

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Figure 4. Total CMS Enrollment
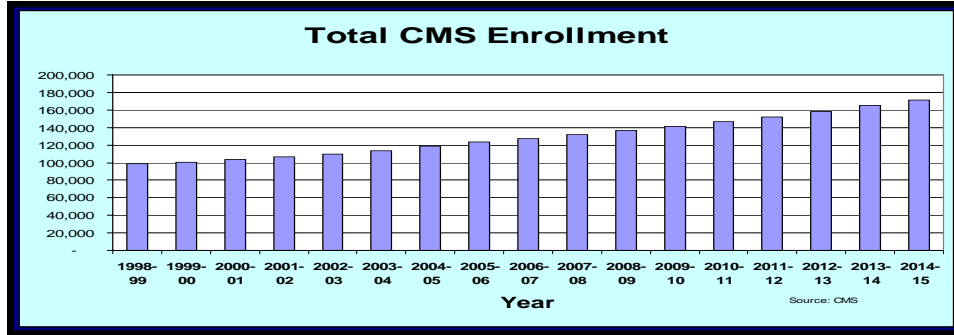
The capital funding the district has already received for facilities expansion is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of this expanded student population. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Existing and Currently Funded Capacity
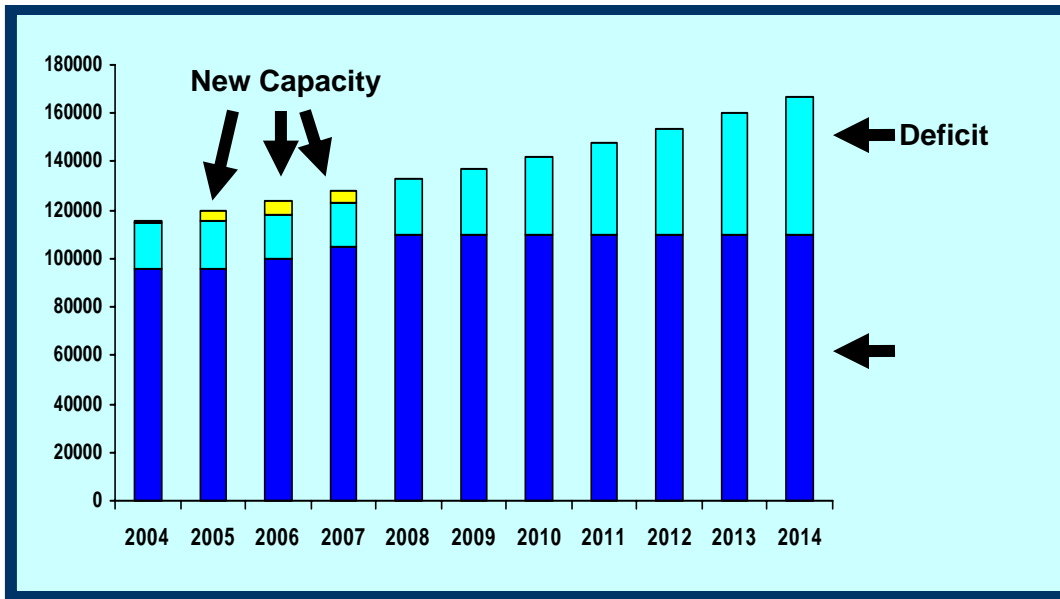
4. There are significant limitations on the capacity of CMS to change in response to this rapidly changing context

Several significant limitations on the capacity of CMS to effectively respond to this changing context were identified through this review. Importantly, these limitations are both internal and external to the CMS organization. As a result, these capacity limitations raise serious questions for both CMS and the Task Force to consider and respond to in the coming months. These limitations on CMS's capacity for change are:

- Change orientation, urgency and culture
- Leadership—Board, Superintendent, community

- Communication capabilities—both internally and externally
- Community capacity to support change

ANALYSIS

Looking backwards, it is clear that the district's performance can be characterized in generally positive terms. The district has pursued a very clear theory of action and has been largely successful in executing a management strategy based on this theory of action. As a result of this strong execution, CMS students have realized substantial gains in achievement over an extended time period, although K–8 gains are more significant than high school level gains. CMS and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community have much to be proud of in this history.

However, recent history has presented CMS with a series of dramatic and rapid changes in the district's operating context. In particular, the differentiation of school enrollments resulting from the district's unitary status combined with the emergence of the capacity crisis has fundamentally and deeply altered the landscape within which CMS operates. Unquestionably, this new context should and will call into question many of the basic principles of CMS's existing management strategy as it attempts to build on its historic success.

Our findings raise raises serious questions concerning the current capabilities of CMS and the Charlotte Mecklenburg community to respond effectively to the challenges inherent in this new context. We believe that the past success the district experienced has created a culture and climate within CMS that strongly predisposes the organization against the type of rapid and fundamental change that may be necessary to respond to these challenges.

The rigor with which CMS has committed to its theory of action is based on a long term focus and organizational structure which does not lend itself to the transformative changes that may be required by the district's new challenges. As a result, the transformative challenge of the coming years will deeply test CMS's leadership and communication capacity, as well as require a deeper commitment from the broader Charlotte Mecklenburg community in order to build a future as successful as the past.

PERSPECTIVE ISSUES
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Methodology

Over the last 2 months, a team of AIR professionals conducted an extensive management review of CMS from an overall strategic perspective. The purpose of the review was to study the management of the district in very broad terms relative to attributes of the "theories of action" we previously described to the CMS Task Force.

To complete this review of CMS, we relied on three primary sources of information:

- Publicly reported data from both CMS and non-CMS sources
    - Student academic performance
    - Student enrollment and school capacities
- Existing CMS documents and materials
    - Budget documents
    - Academic documents and materials
- Interviews with senior CMS administrators
    - Eleven interviews with key CMS senior staff
    - Lengthy sessions with both the outgoing and interim Superintendents

We reported on this review to the CMS Task Force in an August 15, 2005 report. That report summarized four major findings:

1. CMS committed itself to a "managed instruction" theory of action and successfully executed significant elements of this theory of action.
2. CMS student performance results are very strong at the K–8 level and are mixed/flat at the high school level.
3. The district's operating context is changing rapidly and dramatically.
4. There are significant limitations on the capacity of CMS to change in response to this rapidly changing context.

Major Findings

Upon further review and analysis of these earlier findings, we believe that there are a series of major issues that will define CMS's issue landscape over the next decade. CMS's performance in confronting and addressing these issues will fundamentally determine the long-term success or failure of the district. These "mega-issues" of the district review are presented below.

- Capacity Crisis—CMS has a significant facilities deficit that will be growing dramatically over the next decade without a major increase in capital funding.
- Student Assignment Plan—CMS's capacity crisis severely limits its ability to execute on a choice plan and will be driven increasingly toward a fixed assignment plan without further efforts to alleviate the capacity deficits.
- Differentiated Instructional Strategy—Due to the district's enrollment differentiation, CMS's managed instruction strategy will face increasing pressure to allow for greater school flexibility around curriculum and instruction.

- Differentiated Resource Allocation—CMS's current resource allocation methodologies do not provide the degree of resource differentiation needed to support the district's differentiated student population. Without this differentiation, schools with high concentrations of high-need students will be deeply underserved by the district.
- High Schools—CMS's large, comprehensive "big box" high school strategy significantly limits the ability of the district to realize major benefits of the current high school reform movement predicated on "small" schools.

1. Capacity Crisis—CMS has a significant facilities deficit that will be growing dramatically over the next decade without a major increase in capital funding.

The growing and changing student enrollment in the district are key drivers of the issues raised in this report. At the forefront of this change is significant student enrollment growth, which CMS projects to increase from 118,000 today to almost 172,000 in 2014–2015.

To address this growth, CMS had in place a capital funding plan that relied on local referenda for its funding: past CMS capital funding was delivered via local referenda in 1996, 1997, 2000, and 2002. Looking forward, the district has built a similar funding cycle of local referenda into its long-term capital plan to address its facilities deficit. This capital plan envisions the referenda totaling $1.3 billion dollars of additional capital over the next decade.

Two major concerns to consider in connection with this plan are (1) despite the magnitude of the plan, the plan does not completely eliminate the facilities deficit, but maintains the deficit at the current 2005 level; and (2) any unsuccessful voter referenda will lead to growth in the facilities deficit and require the additional use of mobile classrooms to house "excess enrollment."

Only a small portion of the total long-term capital plan is funded today. Under the current and funded capacity of CMS facilities, enrollment growth will place almost 60,000 students in mobile classrooms by 2014. The future funding commitment envisioned in the capital plan will alleviate some of this capacity need, but still place more than 20,000 students in mobile classrooms by 2014.

Figure 1. Planned Additional Capacity
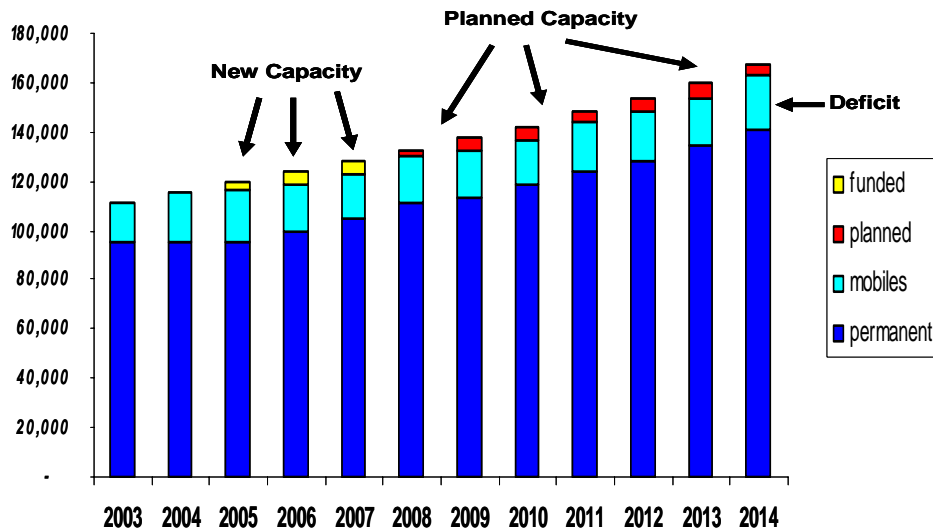
The estimated costs of new capacity provided by the CMS 10-year facilities plan is more than $1.3 billion. If the plan were to be expanded by 2014 to fully fund the district's facilities deficit and eliminate the need for mobile classrooms, 2,800 permanent seats will need to be added every year between 2007 and 2014 at an estimated additional cost of more than $500 million.

Figure 2. Capital Deficit

	Year 1–3 Budget Estimate	Year 4–10 Budget Estimate	10-Year Total
Added capacity based on the facilities plan	$345,184,000	$955,130,086	$1,300,314,086
Added capacity to require no mobile rooms by 2014			$515,246,000
Total estimated cost for permanent capacity			$1,815,560,086

Ironically, other factors that are generally positive indicators for public schools have a secondary negative effect on a district with a need for additional classroom capacity. A reduction in the dropout rate, for example, is a positive indicator for the district, but also adds to the capacity deficit requiring even more construction to meet the needs of an already growing student population.

A shift of students from private to public schools is another positive indicator for the district, but also adds to its capacity deficit. There may be public concern over the possibility of the opposite occurring—a migration from public to private schools. The market share of public school to private school enrollment is 73% in Mecklenburg County, which is in the expected range given the demographic profile of the county. However, our analysis has not identified any decrease in CMS market share over the last 5 years.

Figure 3. CMS Market Share

Charlotte-Mecklenburg 2000:
Percent Private School Enrollment
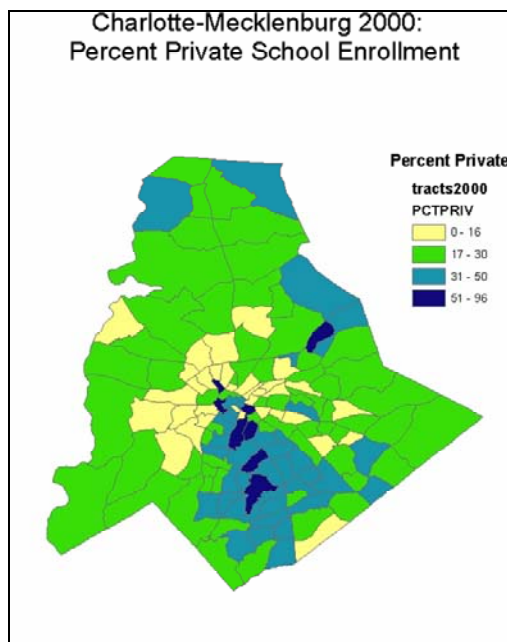
2. Student Assignment Plan—CMS's capacity crisis severely limits its ability to execute a choice plan and will be driven increasingly toward a fixed assignment plan without further efforts to alleviate the capacity deficits.

Broadly speaking, there are three approaches to student assignment that school districts commonly utilize:

1. **Fixed assignment plans**—Students are assigned to a school based on each student's residence.
2. **Demographic plans**—Assignments are made with the goal of equalizing the demographic composition of every school (e.g. desegregation plans).
3. **Choice-based plans**—Assignments are made in response to expressed student preferences.

CMS has a long history of pursuing desegregation-oriented student assignment strategies. The 1999 court ruling moved CMS away from a desegregation-oriented plan ostensibly toward elements of fixed assignment and choice-based plan. However, the district's capacity crisis makes the execution of the choice component problematic.

Choice-based student assignment plans require a district to have some level of excess facilities capacity in order to support the choice process. That is, in order to execute a choice-based plan, a district must have some "unassigned seats" from which students can choose. Without excess seats, assignment is a zero-sum proposition; in order for one student to "choose in" to a school, another student must "choose out" of that school.

With CMS's current capacity deficit, the space available for students to choose is severely limited. In many parts of the district today there is no excess capacity to support choice. Over time, as the capacity crisis continues to grow with the exception of a small number of

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magnet schools, CMS will effectively be forced into a fixed assignment plan district-wide that assigns students to a school based only on their residence. That is, choice will become a technical impossibility and fixed assignments will become inevitable. This runs directly contrary to the community's expectations of being offered choice among CMS schools.

Figure 4. Capacity Crisis = Choice Crisis
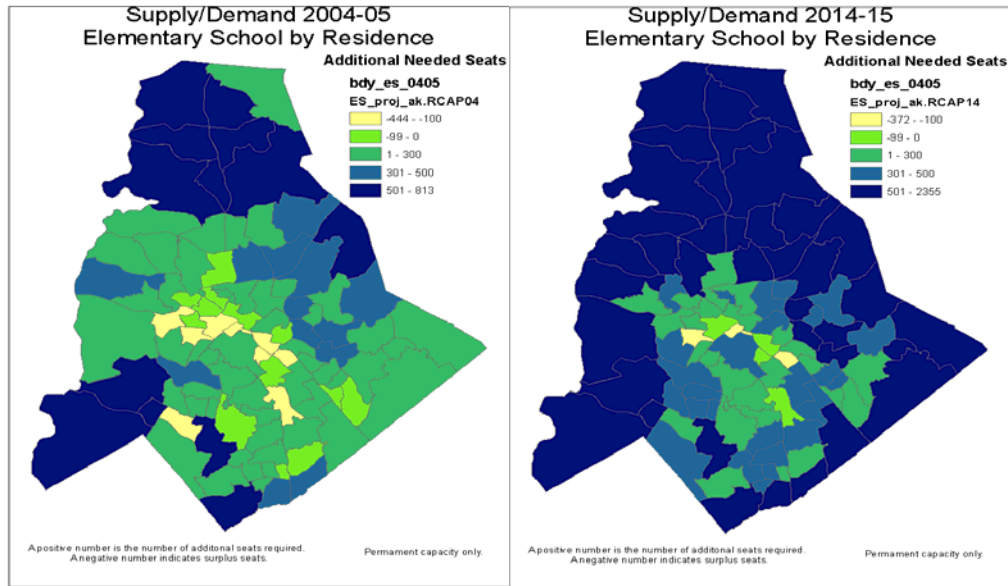
3. Differentiated instructional strategy—Due to the district's enrollment differentiation, CMS's managed instruction strategy will face increasing pressure to allow for greater school flexibility around curriculum and instruction.

As previously discussed with the CMS Task Force, CMS is pursuing a "managed instruction" strategy for its elementary, middle, and high schools. The district is highly centralized in terms of an instructional model and curricular approach and provides central office services to support the instructional model at the school level.

K–8 Schools: CMS's K–8 strategy centers on an aligned set of a curriculum packages, textbooks/other materials and assessments. The exceptions to this consistent instructional program are the magnet schools, which have greater latitude over their curriculum and instructional programs:

- Open Court literacy
- Saxon Math
- Corrective Reading

High schools: CMS is pursuing a high school instructional strategy centering on large comprehensive high schools as the dominant school model. Characteristics of this model include:

- Large (~2000) student enrollment
- Comprehensive programmatic offerings
- Academic departmental structure

- Common schedule—"A-B model"
- Twelve district-wide courses of study
- Approved textbooks
- Pacing guides
- Aligned assessments

However, the rapid differentiation in student enrollment that CMS is experiencing will place increasing pressure on the district to differentiate its instructional program across schools in the district. For example,

- Schools with high concentrations of high performing students may need greater AP/Honors courses.
- Schools with high concentrations of low performing students may need greater core competency courses.
- Schools with high concentrations of recent immigrants may need expanded English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.
- Schools with high concentrations of poverty may need greater social/health services.

CMS's high schools will have a particular challenge in addressing the growing differences in student needs.

Figure 5. Variation in High School Performance

(NC Comprehensive Test—Reading and Math)

School Name	% of Free and Reduced-Price Lunch	% at Levels III/IV Reading	% at Levels III/IV Math
West Charlotte	70.40	30.4	35.1
Berry	65.68	47.5	56.6
Garinger	62.57	24.8	36.5
West Mecklenburg	54.79	44.2	52.5
E.E. Waddell	51.61	39.3	35.9
Harding	44.29	68.0	73.6
Northwest	42.18	66.4	61.9
Independence	40.67	54.4	57.9
East Mecklenburg	36.88	67.2	66.5
Vance	36.15	57.4	56.4
Olympic	35.47	49.9	54.0
Myers Park	20.78	78.7	79.3
South Mecklenburg	19.49	74.1	78.4
North Mecklenburg	16.88	73.5	74.7
Butler	16.60	78.4	82.2
Hopewell	14.55	69.4	72.2
Providence	6.36	86.4	90.3

The rapid growth in Latino enrollment will require CMS to dramatically expand its ESL programs throughout the district. Historically, CMS has not had a large immigrant population relative to other big cities, so its capabilities/resources in creating and supporting these programs are fairly limited. CMS currently allocates only $8.5 million to its ESL programs, which will undoubtedly have to increase substantially and rapidly to meet the needs of this population. The development of these new programs will need to be a school-by-school proposition, given the geographic dispersal of the Latino population.

Accommodating any increase in school instructional flexibility will present significant changes in the existing cultural, political, and operational mindset of the district's managed instruction strategy. We believe CMS currently has limited organizational capacity to support either broad program changes or specific program changes, such as ESL.

4. Differentiated resource allocation—CMS's current resource allocation methodologies do not provide the degree of resource differentiation needed to support the district's differentiated student population. Without this differentiation, schools with high concentrations of high-need students will be deeply underserved by the district.

CMS's current resource allocation methodology is based on a fairly conventional staffing standards allocation algorithm with minimal funding differentiation between schools. The major element of funding differentiation within CMS's allocation methodology is through the Equity Plus program, which provides a richer staffing allocation for high-poverty schools.

Many of the demographic dynamics that exert pressure on CMS's existing instructional strategies will also cause concern over the district's resource allocation methodology. That is, there will be differing student "need profiles" at schools that demand significantly different levels of resources in order for CMS to adequately serve students. Student demographic changes are impacting the needs of students in such a way that schools may not be able to meet their students' needs simply with the additional resources provided by the Equity Plus program.

CMS's current resource allocation system is woefully inadequate to accomplish this funding differentiation based on student need. The system is, in effect, a "two sizes fit all" system that is incapable of targeting resources based on student need. In many ways, this premise is at the core of the Leandro case.

Student assignment changes since 2001–2002 increased the number of schools with very high and very low concentrations of poverty. These schools have differing student needs that require targeting and re-allocation of resources:

Figure 6. Differentiation of Student Enrollments (Change in Student Assignment Plan)

Elementary Schools	2001–02	2004–05
# of schools with >60% poverty	33	54
# of schools with between 30% and 60% poverty	70	43
# of schools with <30% poverty	31	37

Additionally, Latino enrollment has become an ever-increasing share of enrollment, rising from 3.5% in 1998–1999 to 10.4% of the total enrollment in 2004–2005. ESL and other resources need to be effectively targeted to schools with this growing population in order to best serve students.

As previously discussed with the CMS Task Force, there are two primary methods that school districts utilize to distribute resources to individual schools:

1. **Staffing Allocation Formula**—Resources are allocated to schools in the form of FTE staff based on the enrollment of the school.
2. **Weighted Student Formula (WSF)**—Resources are "attached to students" in dollar form and allocated to schools based on the demographic profile of the student body.

To accomplish a higher degree of resource differentiation, CMS will need to pursue a significant revision of the staffing standards and/or the development of a WSF model for the district. In either case, the process of differentiating resources to schools based on student need will create an internal redistribution of resources from school-to-school.

5. High Schools—CMS's large comprehensive high school strategy significantly limits the ability of the district to realize major benefits of a "small school" strategy.

There is widespread dissatisfaction with CMS high schools: weak student performance, wide variation in school quality, and significant public dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction is creating an urgent need for fundamental change in CMS's high schools and putting increasing pressure on the district's historic commitment to large comprehensive high schools.

Over the last decade, a widespread body of research and practice called into question the comprehensive high school model in serving the needs of all students in today's standards-based era. Many leading school districts across the nation are moving or have moved their high schools away from the "big box" model toward creating smaller, more intimate "small school" learning environments for their students. However, a change in high school strategy need not be an all-or-nothing proposition; many districts combine small schools and comprehensive schools into their overall high school offerings.

A "small schools" strategy is built on a set of principles that are typically not present in "big box" high schools:

- Connectedness, and relationships (Social Ecology)
- Thematic, "customized" academies
- Rigorous college preparatory work for all students (Core Curriculum)

In our review of CMS we did not see any significant interest/movement toward this "small schools" strategy. Instead, we saw substantial evidence of a deep commitment to the "big box" strategy for the foreseeable future.

CMS's commitment to the current high school model will limit their ability to realize three major benefits of the small school approach:

1. **Academic Benefits**—Research has shown significant academic gains in small schools, particularly by students typically not well-served by comprehensive high schools.
2. **Community Partnership Benefits**—Small schools are commonly based on a tight relationship with one or more community partners, who bring substantial energy and support to the school.
3. **Facility Capacity Benefit**—Many small schools are developed within the facilities of a sponsoring partner organization, thereby lessening the facilities needs of the school district.

The "large" vs. "small" schools question is particularly relevant in light of the district's facilities development plan. CMS's current capital facilities plan is completely focused on developing additional large district-owned and -operated high schools. CMS has the opportunity to augment this "big box" strategy with a set of new "small schools." Potential community partners for new small school development include the following:

- Museums
- Community colleges
- Universities (Early college)
- Building trades (Career-technical centers)
- Banks
- Military
- Community organizations
- Shopping malls
- Arts organization

Analysis

CMS will confront a series of deep and fundamental challenges over the course of the next decade. CMS's performance in confronting and addressing these challenges will ultimately determine the long-term success or failure of the district in serving the students of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

Building on our review of CMS's management strategy, we identified the critical issues of capacity, student assignment, instructional approach, resource allocation, and high schools that the district will face. On one level, each of these issues can be viewed as a discrete challenge for the district; however, we believe these issues are best viewed as pieces of a puzzle that come together and are deeply intertwined.

Rapid enrollment growth and changing student demographics are the driving forces underlying many of these issues. These forces create the need for additional capacity within the school system. How well the capacity need is met by the district will directly impact student assignment; with no excess capacity, all efforts to create a choice program will effectively result in a fixed assignment plan and reduced diversity regardless of expectations or values. Changing demographics impact the ability of schools to meet student needs. These changes require added flexibility in resource allocation and in instructional strategies that can accommodate a wide range of student characteristics.

Ultimately, these issues come to a focal point at the high school level. The widespread dissatisfaction with CMS high schools creates an urgent need for fundamental change in the design of secondary education.

Our previous analysis highlighted the district's relative success in raising student performance and closing the achievement gap, particularly at the elementary level. However, in the current environment, conditions in which the district operates are rapidly changing. CMS leadership will need to raise their eyes from the "dashboard" to the "windshield" to steer a successful future course.

APPENDIX 4
SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW DATA:
CIVIC LEADERS, SCHOOL BOARD,
STATE POLICY MAKERS

CIVIC LEADERS
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Methodology

Overall, 42 members of the community—including religious leaders, education advocates, business leaders, local government administrators, and CMS educators—were interviewed using a semi-structured process guided by a protocol. After interviews were completed, researchers identified major findings, presented below, that emerged.

Major Findings

Findings are divided into two sections, Governance and Management, to reflect the charge of the Task Force.

GOVERNANCE

Six major findings about governance emerged from the interviews.

1. Interviewees do not consider the current School Board to be effective.

Interviewees were virtually unanimous in their lack of faith in the current School Board's ability to do its job. Many interviewees cited the structure of the School Board as a major problem. Concern was voiced about the distribution of representation between district and at-large representatives—many interviewees expressed the belief that district seats, while ensuring representation from all parts of the county, lead to greater division and increased self-interest among board members and limit the pool of candidates. Interviewees expressed particularly strong concern about the lack of communication and collaboration between the School Board and County Commission, given the structural division of responsibilities between the two.

Apart from structural issues, most interviewees also cited the personalities and skills of current School Board members as a major cause of the School Board's ineffectiveness. Many interviewees viewed some members as interested in their own causes or political careers rather than focused on what is best for CMS as a whole. This self-interest, according to some interviewees, led to infighting among the board members that is, in the words of one resident, "an embarrassment to the city." The majority of School Board members are seen as disorganized and unqualified to handle the magnitude of responsibilities assigned to them. Interviewees frequently noted the lack of a coherent plan, strategy, or agenda put forth by the School Board as well as the members' lack of business knowledge or experience. Finally, the current School Board members' lack of communication with community members and inability to motivate them to support and improve the schools was noted as a major deficiency.

2. Interviewees are divided about the best type and distribution of School Board representation.

The majority of interviewees voiced concern over the current School Board representation. The major concern with the current system of district representation was the polarization that has occurred among board members. Interviewees indicated that the polarization is a result of both race and economic divisions within the community.

From those interviewees who were unhappy with the current system of district representation, one recommended solution was to revert back to an all at-large board. Many believed that the board functioned more effectively when all members were elected at-large, but some voiced concern over the lack of representation of various communities under that system. Alternatively, some interviewees discussed the possibility of redrawing district boundaries. Several interviewees described the current districts as "gerrymandered" and as a major reason for the difficulty in board members working together, and noted that district lines had not been revised or updated in a number of years.

3. Interviewees remain open to considering an appointed School Board but are unsure of who or what entity should do the appointing. Some interviewees are willing to consider elimination of the board altogether.

The concern about board representation and lack of effectiveness was further evidenced by the willingness of some interviewees to consider appointing the School Board or eliminating it altogether. These interviewees conveyed interest in the possibility of an appointed board or in combining the responsibilities of the board with the responsibilities of the County Commission. Despite the willingness of many interviewees to consider an appointed board, there was no consensus over whom or what entity should have the power to appoint members.

An interviewer-suggested idea of not having any School Board—elected or appointed—with a superintendent reporting directly to the County Commission met with significant concern among interviewees that the County Commission has enough issues to monitor and govern already, preventing commissioners from paying adequate attention to schools. One proposal to address those concerns was the creation of an education subcommittee of the Commission who would hire the superintendent. Another proposal was to add some of the commissioners to the School Board to increase accountability and oversight. A number of interviewees, however, expressed their concern that the governance of CMS would not necessarily improve if the County Commission were given control of the schools because political issues would similarly arise in that venue as seen under the current system.

Some interviewees suggested an alternative structure that would include the county's seven mayors or mayoral appointees on the School Board, but interviewees were divided as to whether increasing the mayors' participation in CMS would be beneficial. One argument made for increased mayoral participation was that the mayors affect student enrollment and school capacity when they make decisions about housing or economic development, and another was that their constituents hold the local mayors responsible for conditions in the schools within their jurisdiction. Other interviewees indicated that it was unnecessary to involve the mayors in CMS in that they have no authority over the schools and limited amounts of time to manage their own responsibilities.

A few interviewees offered another alternative to the current board structure that would involve mayors as well as county officials. Under their plan, either a School Board oversight committee would be developed or the board's responsibilities would be reduced to developing policy, leaving fiscal responsibility to a committee. This committee could report to the city council and County Commission. It was noted that this option would allow the mayors as well as county officials to play a role in governing the school system, integrating the municipal and

county structures to provide an official venue through which to hold local leaders accountable for working together to improve the system.

4. Some interviewees express concern about the disconnect between the County Commission appropriating funds for the CMS budget while the School Board is held responsible for how those funds are spent. Most interviewees are uncomfortable, however, with the idea of giving the current School Board taxing authority, although many are willing to consider such authority if the board were configured differently.

Many interviewees noted that the current system of the County Commission providing money to the school system in isolation from the School Board, which makes spending decisions, hindered accountability for effective use of funds. Most acknowledged that giving a School Board taxing authority could provide more transparency regarding school funding and might attract a higher caliber board member. Almost all interviewees agreed, however, that giving the current School Board taxing authority would be a grave mistake. Further, while this concept seemed plausible to some interviewees, a few raised concern that the CMS area already has two taxing authorities and adding yet another, solely focused on schools, might make the situation worse for other publicly funded systems.

Alternatively, some suggested holding the County Commissioners accountable for the use of funds by giving them more responsibility in governing the school system. Short of those proposals mentioned above, one suggestion was that County Commissioners participate in developing and promoting a strategic plan for CMS. Another was that commissioners hire an independent auditor for the school system and report back directly to the county.

In terms of the process, most interviewees were very interested when asked about a weighted student formula concept. They do not see anything like it existing currently in CMS and they see value in having this put in place as long as it accurately reflects the cost of educating all students. Overall, the impression among most interviewees asked is that a weighted-student funding formula could help take much of the politics out of the school funding process. One interviewee mentioned that the chair of the County Commission recently proposed using a funding framework based on a student formula and that county staff had developed a specific formula to do so, but the commission voted not to adopt it. This interviewee nevertheless emphasized that the concept had potential and would be worth revisiting.

5. Interviewees are concerned about the way in which the district generates revenue.

Many interviewees raised the issue of a funding source for CMS, and they agreed that alternatives to the property tax need to be developed. The concern is that property taxes are already driving people to leave the county so that raising them would be politically infeasible. It was noted, however, that the current use of frequent bond elections is a risky and unstable source of income. Many interviewees insisted that local leaders need to develop long-term strategies. Suggested alternatives included payroll taxes or impact fees to be paid by developers doing business in the area. Many noted that continuing to rely on bonds over time could jeopardize the district's capacity to address its projected growth.

6. Most interviewees oppose splitting CMS into independent systems but are willing to consider creating partially autonomous regions.

With a few exceptions, interviewees opposed splitting CMS into several independent school systems. However, given the current size of CMS and the projections for growth, many interviewees see the possibility of dividing the system into regional mini-districts that continue to be part of CMS as one way to create more parent involvement as well as community enthusiasm and support. Almost all these interviewees acknowledged the importance of creating regions that represented the economic and racial diversity of CMS as a whole.

MANAGEMENT

Nine major findings about the management of the school system emerged from the interviews.

1. All interviewees familiar with the operations of the district agreed that CMS currently has a "managed-instruction" approach to managing its schools. Most of these interviewees stated that this approach has helped raise student achievement at the elementary school level, but should be modified for high schools.

"Managed instruction" is the term used to describe a theory of action taken by a district in which the district prescribes a uniform curriculum, instructional practices, time allocated to certain subjects, professional development activities, and other elements of the schooling process and then closely monitors educators' implementation fidelity. This theory-of-action contrasts most starkly with that referred to as a "portfolio" approach, in which a district sets student outcome goals, contracts out with third-party service providers, and provides assistance as needed to individual schools, but otherwise allows schools to operate as they see fit. In reality, the theory of action taken by most districts falls somewhere between these two extremes.

CMS appears to be very close to the managed-instruction end of the theory-of-action spectrum, according to all interviewees familiar with the district's approach. Interviewees cited a number of reasons that Dr. Smith switched to a managed-instruction approach, such as some schools' use of ineffective reading programs, the high mobility of students and teachers, and the district's inability to support schools effectively. Most of these interviewees indicated that the switch to a managed-instruction approach was necessary and that the increases in elementary students' test scores since that time speak for themselves.

Some teachers and principals, however, said that they chafe at the highly prescribed approach to education, stating that their ability to develop creative lessons and to tailor instructional practices to the needs of individual students is limited. This tension seems to be especially acute for high schools, where leaders have felt unable to innovate in order to serve students most effectively. Several interviewees noted that the current administration is appropriately loosening the reins somewhat for high schools and will hopefully continue to do so.

2. Almost all interviewees consider the lack of effective communication to be a significant problem in CMS, amplifying the problems the district is encountering.

Credibility is a major issue for CMS, which is viewed by many in the community as unresponsive to their needs or concerns. Most interviewees discussed their frustration with the school system's neither strategically addressing issues raised in the media in a timely manner, nor being proactive in promoting the accomplishments of its students and schools. The majority of interviewees agree that a professional communications or public relations department is vital to help CMS repair its current image and build a trustworthy and responsive one. Many noted that they had learned of some positive developments in the schools through national publications and venues that were never reported locally, nor disseminated by CMS. A number of interviewees said they could not emphasize the importance of the need for communication enough and expressed doubt whether the upcoming bond referendum would pass without a concerted public relations campaign on the part of the Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders in the community.

In addition to the need to effectively communicate through the media, a number of interviewees also noted the lack of willingness of CMS to communicate with external organizations. These comments ranged from unresponsiveness to requests for information from other government entities, including county and city officials as well as the police department, to unanswered calls from parents to the district remaining. Interviewees emphasized a need for CMS to become more open in providing information externally as well as developing a willingness to partner with other entities in the community, particularly in light of the projected growth of its student population.

Another example of CMS's lack of communication was the absence of outreach or materials to parents in languages other than English despite the growing population of those with limited proficiency in English. While it was noted that the district had recently appointed a liaison to the Hispanic community, it appeared that this new staff person did not have any staff or resources devoted to him and had therefore not been as effective as possible in helping meet the needs of that community.

3. Most interviewees are unhappy with the outcome of the school choice/student assignment plan and see transportation as a hurdle for CMS.

The most common complaints about the school choice plan are that it has:

a) re-segregated the school system,
b) exacerbated inequities among schools,
c) caused both overcrowding in the suburban schools and underutilization of the inner-city schools,
d) created instability among parents unsure of where their child will go to school,
e) destroyed some previously outstanding schools,
f) resulted in more parents leaving the school system if their children do not receive placement in one of the system's magnet schools, and
g) cost the school system significantly more money in transportation than was required under the busing plan.

In the eyes of many interviewees, the existing district boundaries contribute to both the re-segregation and overcrowding in CMS schools. Many interviewees seem concerned that, in the current system, there is "no opportunity for cultural exchange which benefits everyone" so that children grow up going to school only with others who look just like them and have no opportunity to learn about others. One resident suggested adopting a plan developed by an earlier commission called "SPUD," which stands for the criteria of stability, proximity, utility, and diversity in student assignment.

Others expressed the need for high-quality neighborhood schools wherever they are located and their increasing concern over the instability of the system with parents not knowing in advance where their child would attend school. Many expressed regret over the demise of a number of outstanding schools that had existed under busing but were dismantled when the new assignment plan was put into place. Almost all interviewees expressed support and admiration for the magnet schools in the district, and many mentioned that they knew of parents who would keep their children in the system only if they received a slot in one of the magnets.

In addition, some interviewees expressed concern that transportation costs under the current student assignment plan are greater than they were under busing. Apart from changing the assignment plan, many see transportation as an area where CMS can become more efficient. Increasing the use of depot stops was suggested as one remedy. Another alternative was to outsource transportation to another agency, possibly the county, as it already runs a successful transportation system.

4. Most interviewees believe that CMS is failing to manage student population growth effectively.

Almost all interviewees agreed that overcrowding in the schools in the outer suburbs is a problem within CMS and negatively affects the public's view of the entire system. Some interviewees noted that this overcrowding had resulted in increased flight, either to private schools or to other counties, as well as increased community tension over the location of new schools.

One group of interviewees would like to see CMS take a proactive rather than reactive approach to growth, emphasizing the impact of a good school on a community. They suggest that CMS put more effort into working with the county so that the system's projected school sites take into account the areas the county is targeting for development. Further, these interviewees believe that the public should be made to understand that, if the projection of 4,000 new students a year is correct, it will take "more than five elementary schools to house those students." This growth would mean that CMS has to build and open at least that number of schools each year for the next 10 years just to keep up with the projected population.

5. Most interviewees are concerned about student performance in the district.

The performance of all students is a concern for most interviewees. One interviewee cited a Charlotte Advocates for Education (CAE) study that shows CMS graduates are not performing as well as other local systems' graduates in the state colleges. Additionally, the needs of particular populations—including students who are attending Equity Plus schools, those who are from immigrant families and those who are homeless—are of special concern to interviewees.

Interviewees also noted the impact of teachers on student performance. A concern that most of the best teachers are teaching the strongest students in the system, and not those who need the most help, was raised repeatedly. School structure was also raised as a possible way to affect student performance. For example, two interviewees suggested creating more K–8 schools, which they believe to have a positive influence on middle schoolers' behavior and academic performance.

6. Most interviewees see flaws in the current human resources system and professional development that will increasingly harm the district as its student population increases.

Most interviewees do not consider the department of human resources to be operating optimally, and are concerned about the ramifications given the impact of teachers on student performance and projected growth rates. Some interviewees raised concerns over the teacher recruiting process. In particular, interviewees knowledgeable about the process believe that open teaching positions are announced too late to attract the best teachers and that an inordinate amount of funds and personnel time are used to search for staff internationally.

Some interviewees also identified professional development for teachers—one of the primary levers available to the school district to help increase student achievement— as a real area of weakness for CMS. Concern was expressed that professional development is poorly planned and implemented, not leveled to the experience of teachers, and not funded to the extent necessary to ensure that high-quality training is delivered to CMS educators. If this belief is true, a key strategy of the managed-instruction approach—ongoing and effective professional development with support from instructional coaches—is severely undermined.

7. Most interviewees consider safety to be an issue, both in terms of the public's perception of the quality of the school system and the system's capability to address increasing gang-related activity.

On the heels of recent local newspaper reports, interviewees mentioned safety was an issue CMS needs to address, both in the media and in its schools. Many raised a question about the accuracy of the reporting of data related to violent incidents as well as the categories used to report weapons brought into a school. Some mentioned a perception that principals may be modifying the data because of a fear that it will reflect poorly on their schools. Principals who were interviewed suggested that reports about violence in the school were overblown and that problems with the accuracy of the data were related to the ambiguities inherent is such incidents.

A second safety-related topic raised was gangs. According to one interviewee, several fairly violent gangs in the schools recruit children as young as 11 years old, yet neither the schools nor the district have responded to this issue. It was noted that while the Charlotte police have developed an initiative to address the increasing gang violence, the schools have not participated.

8. A majority of interviewees see problems with the organizational structure of CMS.

The majority of those interviewed believe that the organizational structure of CMS is not optimal for managing student enrollment growth and increasing student achievement. Most insisted that a single leader cannot promote the system and oversee daily operations while

simultaneously developing and leading the implementation and monitoring of CMS's educational goals. Many who were knowledgeable about the central office indicated that the system could be better managed with a chief executive officer, who has knowledge and experience managing a large organization, and a chief academic officer, who has the educational knowledge and experience to improve student achievement across the school system. Other suggestions provided by interviewees included outsourcing or privatizing food services, transportation, and maintenance of schools.

Further, many interviewees said that regional superintendents can be used more effectively to drive improvements in schools and student achievement than CMS's current structure. The current regional superintendents are seen as either completely absent from schools or as enforcers rather than motivators or resources for principals, teachers, and community members. These interviewees said that the responsibilities for regional superintendents need to be more clearly defined, and ideally, these interviewees would like to see the regional superintendent positions connected to geographical regions within CMS. Most of these interviewees emphasized the importance of vertical oversight across elementary, middle, and high schools, and would prefer a regional superintendent to be responsible for all the schools in a certain area of the district who could serve as a contact for residents and leaders of that area. It was also acknowledged that the regional superintendents need to have offices sufficiently staffed with people who can help meet the needs of the schools within their region.

Interviewees were on the whole much less concerned about governance on a local school level than at the higher levels within CMS. Two issues that did arise in the interviews were the role of principals and school-based management teams. The importance of the principal in setting a tone for academics, discipline, and the treatment of teachers in a school was raised in relation to the need to hire principals who are skilled educators and care about kids and pairing them with managers with a background to support the other aspects of running a school. One interviewee would like to see the local school-based management teams regain some autonomy and legitimacy after appropriate and necessary training.

9. Some interviewees are concerned about the timing of the release of the report and the likelihood that the Task Force report would produce real improvement.

One interviewee raised a concern that the public is becoming frustrated with and tired of CMS's repeated need for additional funds while nothing seems to improve. The opinion of this resident is that the public needs to see that there is a plan developed before asking for more money, so it is important for the Task Force to release its report to the public in advance of the bond referendum in November.

In addition, several interviewees expressed some skepticism about the ultimate success of the work of the Task Force. They noted that there had been a number of previously conducted studies that had failed to successfully change the governance and management of CMS. Other interviewees expressed hope that the right group has come together at the right time, and that progress may be made.

Analysis

The picture that emerges of CMS from interviews with civic leaders is that the district and the community have a great deal going for them but have entered a period of significant change and challenges. While the district has many strengths—including a community passionate about its children and schools, a number of well-respected magnet schools, and a well-implemented approach to centrally managing instruction—and has been recognized for its gains in student achievement, the district must manage student growth, address a problematic student assignment plan and uncertain funding, improve community relations, and increase student achievement (especially among high schools), all with a School Board viewed as ineffective and a central office considered poorly structured.

After decades, court-ordered busing has come to an end in CMS, and the district must decide for itself the optimal way to assign students to schools. As districts across the country struggle to do, CMS is facing the challenge of creating high-quality neighborhood schools, providing some public school choice, and ensuring equity. At the same time, the student population is growing considerably and is projected to continue to grow at a rate that will strain the current system.

As it works to address these needs, the district is dependent upon a separate elected entity to provide the local share of its budget and upon the public's passage of multiple bond referenda over the coming years to support its facilities. The district is led by a board that has lost the respect and trust of the community and which is perceived to lack the skills and knowledge necessary to manage an annual budget of almost $1 billion. The community wants change in the School Board, but it is uncertain how to get it as all proposals for reform carry both advantages and disadvantages to the current structure.

Regardless of the structure and composition of any future board, it will have to address the fact that the district is serving an ever-increasing number of students and families who speak limited English than it has in the past. The population growth has also created a larger urban community with attributes typical of "inner cities," and the system appears to have reacted slowly to these changes, implementing an ineffective choice plan that has placed significant stress on schools in the outer ring of the county, emptied schools in the inner core, and fueled the perception that the district is serving few students well. At the same time, as the wealth of the region has grown, increasing numbers of parents can opt out into more private schools than were previously available, and housing development in surrounding counties has begun to provide other options to families willing to move.

The organizational structure of the central office and its management of schools appear to serve as an impediment, rather than a facilitator, of improvement. Moreover, the central office has not been effective in communicating with its public about successes or weaknesses. At best, the system has been reactive to criticism in the local media and risks losing continued support of the community.

SCHOOL BOARD
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Methodology

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board is comprised of 9 members, 6 representing specific geographical areas (electoral districts contiguous with those of County Commissioners) and 3 at-large. All School Board members were interviewed individually by Dr. Loretta Webb and Dr. Steven Adamowski of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) using a semi-structured process guided by a protocol. Interview data was analyzed to identify the findings presented below.

Major Findings

Findings are divided into two sections, Governance and Management, relevant to the charge of the CMS Task Force.

GOVERNANCE

Five findings related to Governance emerged from the interviews:

1. The Board lacks a unifying vision and the leadership needed to eventuate it.

Board members had difficulty identifying a shared vision for the district or a set of strategic goals. Those who could speak to this issue tended to identify their personal vision and beliefs.

The interviewers did not perceive a "natural leader" on the Board who has the influence to rally a majority around a vision, agreed-upon core beliefs, and/or to deal effectively with outliers. The current titular leadership of the Board can be categorized as facilitative and tactical rather than strategic. This leadership issue is further compounded by the current absence of strong, visionary leadership from a Superintendent/CEO.

Given this vacuum, the Board does not currently appear capable of effective decision-making at a strategic level. As a result, it is often reactive and tends to focus on "how" rather that "what" questions.

Several Board members, as well as many Board observers, contrast the current situation to the leadership and vision previously provided by long-term board member and chair, Arthur Griffin and former superintendent Eric Smith.

2. Relationships between and among School Board members distract or delay decision-making necessary to address the needs of the school district as a whole.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board is aware of its negative image as perceived by the majority of citizens interviewed and surveyed. Several blame the behavior of other Board members for this perception. However, most members feel the Board is not dysfunctional but rather is representing the views of constituents. Other members feel they are not working together effectively but think that training by the Texas-based Center for the Reform of School Systems (CRSS), to which they have committed themselves, will assist them in improving both

the form and substance of the governance process. As participants in this nationally recognized training and development process, members of the CMS Board are currently refining their core beliefs and mission. Reform governance, whole-systems change, and theories of action for change are the major themes of the CRSS training.

3. Most Board members believe that the current method of electing the Board of Education is best.

While a few Board members think it would be better for the entire Board to be elected at-large, the majority think it is important to keep the current hybrid structure of geographic representation with a few at-large seats. The opposition to an all at-large Board is rooted in concern for a potential lack of representation for African Americans and many feel that an appointed Board would be more "political." Despite their support for district representation, most Board members recognize a responsibility to promote the welfare of all students in the district, not just of those in their area of representation.

There is a general sense, among Board members, that the current School Board governance structure does not need fixing. Rather, a couple of members need to be replaced while more cooperation and collaboration is developed between and among the rest of the Board.

4. The Board is divided on the issues of deconsolidation and fiscal autonomy, with the majority favoring the current structures.

Most Board members think that CMS does not receive sufficient funding from the state and county to address the current needs of the system and that the "flat funding" provided by the County Commissioners during the past several years has placed the district in a vulnerable position relative to the growth it is experiencing. Many Board members appeared indifferent to the successive increases in state funding during the same period. Most Board members believe that the city, county, and/or state should consider impact fees, special taxes, and lotteries to provide additional funds to support growth.

Although the majority of CMS board members are conceptually in favor of School Board taxing authority, most feel it should not occur at this time. Several feel that taxing authority would be more appropriate for an all at-large elected Board. Others view taxing authority in relation to the quality of Board members and would not grant taxing authority to the members of the existing Board. Most acknowledge that greater coherence and accountability could be derived from a system in which one elected body was responsible for both raising and allocating local revenue.

The Board holds sharply divided views on the issue of "deconsolidation" as a route to improvement and higher levels of client satisfaction. The majority is strongly against the concept on the premise that it will create inequity and that further economic and racial division has the potential to increase operating expense and "balkanize" the region. One or two advocates argue that it can be a comprehensive structural solution to the multiplicity of challenges and level of dissatisfaction the district is experiencing and reduce bureaucracy. Proponents also argue that multiple districts can be designed in a manner that is inclusive of and/or beneficial to students in the urban core as well as suburban areas. However, at this time there is an absence any thought-out proposal that can serve as a basis for a definitive study and analysis and can factually inform

any position. The Board has not examined or considered this or any other alternatives to the current organizational structure of the district.

5. The population growth of the area has brought with it a significant number of people who do not share the values or history of Charlotte regarding diversity and integration. This tension is reflected in the current membership of the Board of Education and its constituents.

Several members of the Board perceive that Charlotte-Mecklenburg citizens appear to be moving away from each other although not necessarily all see this as a concern. School Board members acknowledge that CMS is currently a majority/minority system. Even with the influx of families and students causing very overcrowded schools, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg White student population has decreased and the Hispanic population has increased significantly. The city schools are comprised mainly of African American, Latino, and Asian students, many of whom live in low-income areas. Increasingly, middle class families of all races and ethnic groups are moving or have moved to the county's suburban areas. Some Board members expressed anxiety about the reality that many middle- and upper-income constituents are placing their children in private and charter schools at an increasing rate.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg population shifts and growth present more than budgetary and facility challenges for the School Board. The value of diversity and its relationship to academic excellence is a fundamental underlying policy question for a district free of court-ordered integration, which has not yet been explicitly addressed. Symptomatic of this underlying issue are three current, contentious policy discussions:

- Debate over whether capital funds should be focused on growth (new schools in suburbs), renovations (primarily to central city schools), divided equitably, or be designated for new construction rather than renovations;
- Revisions to the student assignment plan; and
- Raising student achievement in the lowest performing schools.

MANAGEMENT

Six findings relevant to the management of the school system emerged from the interviews:

1. Most Board members are concerned about the proposed CMS construction plan.

The district's current strategy for dealing with growth rests almost exclusively on the construction of "big box" schools in suburban areas where under capacity is projected to be the greatest. It relies on passage of a Bond Referendum every other year for the next ten years. Many Board members are uncertain of sustained public support for these measures and others doubt the capacity of the school district staff to implement the plan effectively. One Bond Referendum failure would delay construction and result in a disastrous situation for the school district in addressing its growth requirements.

For this reason, most Board members are remarkably open-minded to outsourcing the construction of new schools and are open to considering additional methods for building or otherwise creating new schools as quickly as possible. To date, the District Administration has

not presented the Board with new school creation strategies outside of the traditional construction process.

Most Board members do not favor the use of COPS for funding schools construction because (a) County Commissioners would have greater involvement in determining where schools should be built and (b) COPS is financed at a higher rate than conventional Bonds.

2. Board members feel that CMS administration should consider more flexibility, coupled with accountability in the supervision of schools.

Board members are cognizant of the "managed instruction" approach the district has utilized. Most feel that it has been successful in raising student achievement at the elementary level particularly when greater uniformity in student population existed at each school. However, most Board members recognize the need to modify this approach for high achieving schools in general and secondary schools in particular. Most Board members think a new superintendent should create a management structure that allows more flexibility in how curriculum and instruction are implemented in low-achieving versus high-achieving schools and in elementary versus secondary schools. These Board members believe more freedom is needed for schools that are doing well and that schools should have greater autonomy to address the unique needs and qualities of the communities they serve.

3. Board members are open to greater decentralization of district management.

Most Board members believe there should be a carefully designed medium between centralized and decentralized management. Although they generally favor some form of regional administrative decentralization, they perceive the current regional system is not working. Board members recognize that decision-makers, such as regional superintendents, should be geographically located closer to schools and should have staff that can relate to and support school-based administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Some Board members, however, are concerned that decentralization could result in inequities among schools. Some perceive that in the previous era of "area geographical configuration," the strong superintendents got what they wanted and the weaker superintendents did not always request what was needed for their schools. An accountability system, an equitable system of resource allocation, and ways to deal with inequities would be required for a viable, regionally decentralized management system.

There is less support for decentralization to the school level given concerns already expressed relative to the capacity of low performing schools. The Board is largely unaware of the implications for the central office bureaucracy inherent in decentralization alternatives.

4. Board members concede that the current student assignment plan is problematic and await recommendations for modifications from the CMS administration.

Board members generally reflect dissatisfaction with the current student assignment plan expressed by many constituents. While there is a perceived need to address specific issues relative to the current plan, members recognize that even minor changes in the "rules of the game" are disruptive and disconcerting to parents who may have made residence decisions based on their understanding and expectation of attendance areas.

There are a wide variety of opinions among Board members on this issue. Some members of the Board feel that the student assignment plan should focus on low-performing students. Others feel that the system needs more magnet programs and that school choice should be expanded. Others are intrigued by the Wake County system that insures that no school has a low-income student population of more than 40%. Moreover, there is a need to reach a fundamental community consensus on explicit assumptions and fundamental goals underlying a student assignment plan before further changing details of the plan. The future of the plan would be an appropriate topic for a community task force study.

Finally, a strong sentiment exists among some Board members that district management must find creative ways to ensure that the most effective and most experienced teachers are placed in the schools with greatest need.

5. The Board desires specific characteristics and experience in a new superintendent and senior managers.

Many Board members remarked that the most important characteristics of a new superintendent must be that of visionary leader and excellent communicator. They desire a superintendent who will reach out to the community and establish relationships and partnerships with business, civic, and community leaders. Here the Board seeks leadership of management and a voice and face for the district that can inspire confidence in a time of change and uncertainty.

Several Board members also think the new superintendent must provide leadership that ensures highly functional central office departments regardless of the degree of centralization or decentralization that is implemented. The Human Resources area is a particular concern given the district's high rate of staff turnover and the current attitudes of its teaching staff toward the Board and district administration.

Many Board members expressed a desire for the chief financial officer and the chief information officer to be hired from the business sector.

6. CMS must develop and implement more effective communication and public relations strategies to better inform and engage CMS employees and clients.

The lack of a viable strategic communications plan and the media's perception that the school system is unwilling to share accurate information on a timely basis are real concerns for members of the School Board, and the district's communications problems are widely perceived as a serious management issue. This broad communications issue is recognized by the Board to extend to both internal and external constituencies and involve issues of transparency, timing, public relations, and strategy.

As a result, CMS success stories are seldom highlighted and instead, negative images are portrayed by the media and internalized by both the public and CMS staff. Board members acknowledge that few people are thinking strategically or working with management to solve the system's communication problems. In addition, several Board members feel it is difficult for them to get accurate information from CMS staff.

Many Board members recognize that poor communications may have a negative impact on recruiting highly qualified teaching candidates, impact the search for the next CMS superintendent, and have negative implications for the upcoming capital bond referendum.

Analysis

As expected, the Board of Education's perception of itself is more positive than its perception by the general public and the Board appears more satisfied with the current governance and management of CMS than most observers. Most board members see the Board's current problems as a "people problem" and/or one that can be solved through training. Many see management solutions in the form of modest incremental changes to the existing organization. At the same time, individual Board members are open to new approaches, and many have concrete ideas for improvement. Most recognize the need for change although their sense of urgency is less than that felt by many segments of the community. Although skill levels vary, all members are well intentioned and fundamentally committed to the welfare of students.

School Board members who represent electoral districts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg are scheduled for reelection in November, 2005. To date, one member has resigned, another has decided against running for reelection, and several new candidates have announced their intention to seek election. Even though the composition of the Board will change in the near future, there is no way to determine if a change will make a difference in the ability of Board members to unify around a new direction for the district. It is essential for the Board to work together effectively to make important decisions pertinent to student growth, resource allocation, new school creation, the student assignment plan, curriculum and instruction, and the improvement of high schools. Moreover, it is essential that these decisions not be made in isolation from each other but rather be guided by a coherent and consistent theory of action and organizational framework. Some Board members express hope that the CRSS training will pull them together, although this perspective is not shared by members of the community at large, which is largely unaware of the Board's effort to improve itself.

There are however, several reasons for optimism:

1. In the near future, members of a "new" Board will have the opportunity to engage around specific proposals for changes in the district's management structure and consider complimentary governance models as well as other recommendations designed to help the district address the challenges of a changing environment. It is hoped that this new structure and adoption of a theory of action designed to address current circumstances will contribute to a more effective governance model and management system regardless of the players.

2. In its pursuit for a new superintendent, the CMS Board will have an opportunity to select someone who has the executive and educational background required to lead the school district through a transition that will address the challenges of CMS's changing environment and reestablish it as premier metropolitan school system in the minds of its clients as well as the nation.

3. Given the community's current concern and dedication to the welfare of the region and its children, it is anticipated that the business and civic communities of Charlotte-Mecklenberg will play a more active role in encouraging and supporting high-quality Board candidates and members who have the experience, skill, and background to provide effective policy direction to an organization the size and scope of CMS. The issue of leadership of the Board is particularly important in this regard and may require a different selection process.

STATE POLICY MAKER
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Methodology

Nine members of the North Carolina legislature, representing the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, including several in House and Senate leadership positions, were interviewed for this study using a semistructured process guided by a protocol. Interviews were conducted in Raleigh and by telephone by Dr. Steven Adamowski and Dr. Anthony P. Cavanna of the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Discussions with the executive directors of the Public School Forum of North Carolina and the North Carolina New Schools Project provided additional perspectives and important context on issues related to North Carolina state education policy.

These interviews were intended to serve three purposes:

1. Clarify for legislators the work of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Task Force.

2. Gain the perspective of individual legislators and their constituents on the challenges and opportunities currently facing CMS.

3. Explore specific solutions to CMS's challenges that may require changes in state policy and/or legislative action.

Reflecting the charge of the CMS Task Force, findings are divided into several sections: legislators' attitudes toward CMS, governance issues, and management issues. Other findings include comments and advice from legislators to the CMS Task Force. Although the discussion and the comments by necessity focused on the district's current problems and challenges, several legislators felt that the school district had much to be proud of in spite of recent critical media coverage.

Major Findings

LEGISLATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CMS

Four themes emerged from the interviews regarding legislators' perceptions of CMS.

1. Interviewees perceive a lack of communication and shared accountability in CMS.

Several interviewees expressed concern that parents' and community members' expectations of CMS are not being met by schools under the current system. Constantly changing school-district lines are causing discontent within the community. Some argued that the present centralized system obstructs communication among all constituencies. A related issue was the need for improved media relations. Parental and community access to central office personnel, particularly the superintendent and senior management, was a major concern of constituents.

2. Interviewees discussed the implications for race relations and questions of equity connected with the return to neighborhood schools.

While opinions vary among legislators regarding the efficacy of CMS's return to neighborhood schools, they each understand this change as a catalyst for immense transformation within the district. One interviewee conceptualized this as a black/white issue, where the racial makeup of students determines who gets the best teachers, who rides the bus, etc. He speculated that the future will bring about two systems—one black, one white. Another interviewee shared this viewpoint when he explained that busing magnifies the problems of the district.

Interviewees were not only concerned with how neighborhood schools impact high minority and low socioeconomic student populations, but were also concerned with their effect on middle-class students from more affluent backgrounds. For example, one interviewee noted that the population of white students has dropped to 37 percent because these students cannot gain admission to the postsecondary schools they want to attend, so they choose private schools instead. Another legislator felt that diversity adds to the current problems in CMS.

3. Interviewees shared concerns over classroom conduct and school size.

Legislators discussed issues concerning day-to-day school functioning, such as the breakdown in classroom discipline that must be restored in order for teachers to be effective. One interviewee suggested that the removal of school prayer contributed to the deficiency in classroom discipline. Another legislator pressed the need to retain competent teachers and pay them well, since, under the current compensation system that pays all teachers the same, based on years of experience and degrees, the best teachers move to schools with fewer problem students.

Related to the issue of discipline is the matter of school size, which was addressed by several interviewees. These legislators feel that some CMS schools are too large and thus more challenging. One interviewee maintained that smaller schools are especially necessary for lower income populations. Another legislator cited the district's return to neighborhood schools, as the cause of overcrowding. Another perception widely shared was that suburban schools are overcrowded and urban schools are underutilized.

4. Interviewees discussed their concerns about politics within CMS.

Several legislators stated that the School Board is dysfunctional and lacks leadership and that school politics have negative consequences for student achievement throughout the district. Others reiterated this point, mentioning that bad politics overshadows achievement. It was also suggested by one legislator that the superintendent's position should be filled by a leader from the business community, not an educator.

GOVERNANCE

1. School Board Selection, Leadership and Capacity

Legislators expressed mixed views as to how to select Board members—some were focused on keeping the current electoral process intact, and others were partial to appointing Board members. Several interviewees expressed a sense that School Board members should focus more on setting policy and less on constituent concerns and advocacy. Several felt that if governance moves to an appointed Board, then the County Commissioners should be the appointing authority for Board members.

Several interviewees felt that an appointed Board may increase the quality and focus of Board members. On the other hand, at least one legislator argued that Board members should be elected at large and not appointed, but felt that in this scenario minority representation would be an issue.

Interviewees were also asked about their perceptions of the leadership capacity of the current Board and what could be done to improve the Board's functioning. Legislators expressed concern that the politics of getting reelected takes away from the ability of Board members to effectively lead. There was a general consensus among the legislators that the Board delves too deeply into too many subjects and that Board members should stay focused on policy issues without becoming involved in individual school issues. Legislators generally agreed that the functional responsibilities of the Board should be reduced until the Board sufficiently builds its leadership capacity. Legislators were open to the possibility of placing personnel and operational issue decision making authority with a Superintendent/CEO so that the Board can focus on policy and accountability issues.

2. Fiscal Responsibility and Autonomy

Legislators were asked if the district should have fiscal autonomy, be able to set a tax rate, and raise the local share of school revenue. At least one legislator stated that local fiscal autonomy was reasonable, and another legislator was open to trying local fiscal autonomy as a pilot. A third legislator maintained that there needs to be alternatives to the current system of funding for the schools.

All other legislators were disinclined to support local fiscal autonomy. One interviewee claimed that the Board should not have taxing authority because he perceived that it would continually raise taxes unchecked. Another legislator doubted that the Board could properly manage local fiscal autonomy since in his view it lacks the capacity to handle its current responsibilities. Yet another legislator felt that giving taxing authority to the Board is the wrong direction to proceed in, and another argued that the current state and county funding systems achieve funding equity in schools.

Legislators in leadership positions tended to feel that fiscal autonomy for School Boards ran counter to the framework of state education policy and another raised the issue of its legality under the North Carolina Constitution.

Finally, one interviewee felt strongly that good education has less to do with money than things that do not carry a price tag.

MANAGEMENT

1. School Facilities

The current plan to deal with growth in student enrollment is to submit for public approval five bond issues for school construction and renovation over the next 10 years. Several legislators questioned the capacity of CMS to handle this volume of construction and supported the idea of some type of separate school facilities authority At least one felt that a different system should be created where the County Commission would be responsible for all aspects of school construction. As with the issue of local fiscal autonomy, most legislators felt that the Board should have less responsibility in this area with its primary role being the provider of educational specifications.

No support whatsoever was ascertained for the state to fund school construction in the district. One legislator emphasized that a new source of income was necessary to support school construction. Others relayed the historic framework of North Carolina educational funding in which the State assumes a major role in funding for operations while county government would take less of a burden in return for funding school building. However, several legislators conceded that this arrangement did not anticipate high growth situations now occurring in the Charlotte and Chapel Hill areas.

Underlying the interviewee's perceptions of school facilities issues was the understanding that County Commissioners have a vested interest in finding creative, alternative ways to fund school construction. The commissioners are naturally concerned about the potential for enormous debt service for CMS in the absence of funding from other sources.

2. Chartering Authority

The legislators where asked if granting the School Board the authority to charter schools could be a way to generate additional new schools to relieve overcrowding and to improve student achievement. Some enthusiastic support exists for a pilot allowing the School Board to charter schools, but legislators would need more convincing evidence before offering greater support for this idea.

At least one legislator felt that several small schools built around a campus model would ensure that schools are not too large and overcrowded, but this sentiment only supports the concept of small schools, not necessarily charter schools. One legislator perceived charters simply as a way to use school dollars to support private schools.

3. Administrative Leadership

When asked what perceptions legislators held of the type of administrative leadership needed by CMS, the general consensus was that a great deal could be accomplished if the right leadership was in place—that a strong leader is the pivotal element of overall success and student achievement. The majority of the interviewees were in favor of enabling legislation that would

give certain personnel and operational oversight to the superintendent, including more discretionary decision making.

4. District Organization

Legislators were asked to share their perspectives on whether the district should be broken up into smaller districts and regions or remain a single, consolidated entity.

Some responses from interviewees included:

- "Never going to break up the school system into separate school districts."
- "School based models get everyone involved."
- "A regional organizational model is more desirable."

One legislator stated that he does not support deconsolidation because it would result in two districts—one white and one black. However, the sponsor of deconsolidation legislation insisted that his intent was to design several "balanced" districts as opposed to separating city from suburb. Another legislator stated that he would not be opposed to schools exclusively attended by minority students. However, another legislator felt that regional organization would better address the concerns of parents and the community. It was suggested that three or four regional school areas would foster community ownership in the schools.

Although legislators had widely varying opinions on this matter, it seems that considerable support exists for the creation of three or four administrative regional districts, but it was cautioned that these administrative regions not be drawn according to existing political boundaries, for School Board and County Commission districts.

5. Centralization vs. Decentralization

Curriculum and instruction in CMS is currently highly centralized. Legislators were asked to share their feelings about moving to a more decentralized system in which schools can decide their own path to the North Carolina Core Curriculum Standards. Almost every interviewee was dissatisfied with the present system of managed instruction, which is prescribed from the central office with the perception of very little support. There was strong support for school autonomy in the areas of instruction and resource allocation for schools that could demonstrate capacity.

OTHER FINDINGS

Interviewees were invited to discuss any issues which were not included in the interview protocol.

Legislators spoke to the connection between the district organizational structure and the lack of effective communication mechanisms. For example, it was said that the central office operates in isolation, limiting cross district communication, coordination, and support for school efforts. A possible reason for this is that the present managed instruction system prevents community and parental input into the decision making process by prescribing a uniform plan which does not allow adjustments based on the unique characteristics and needs of individual

school communities. This organizational structure inhibits collaborative decision making with schools, parents, and communities. In addition to concerns over community collaboration and input, legislators shared their perceptions of the community tension surrounding busing and diversity in the schools, the results of which may be low socioeconomic schools in some neighborhoods and high socioeconomic, albeit overcrowded schools in other neighborhoods. Some legislators suspect that the business community may see the Task Force effort as a means to keep white students in the public school system as private school attendance is perceived to have increased, reducing the number of white students in the district's public schools. A sense of distrust toward the business community and a suspicion that civic leaders have no other stake in the public schools other than business interests was present in varying degrees in the interviews with several legislators.

In addition to concerns over communication and community input and collaboration, legislators discussed the challenges of CMS as a metro system, which includes urban and suburban regions.

Finally, interviewees offered comments and advice to the CMS Task Force. Individual comments are paraphrased as follows:

- Use your influence to get the Board of education in line with the recommendations to come from this study.
- Realize that the elected body (Board) is in charge of the school district, not the CMS Task Force.
- Use your influence to get people on the Board of a high caliber with proper skills.
- Have a plan to follow-up after the recommendations are made public.
- Keep it simple so that everyone understands the changes.
- Stop the school boundary lines from constantly changing.
- Get the right people to sell the changes especially in the African-American community.
- Make sure future schools are smaller.
- CMS Task Force members should send their children to the public schools.
- Parents and educators should be on the CMS Task Force rather than exclusively business leaders.
- Insure a superintendent is hired who can change perceptions regarding the current invisible leadership.
- Recognize that a one-size-fits-all solution is not going to work because of the tremendous diversity in the district.
- Be aware sustainable change is needed to get the private school students back into the public schools.

Analysis

The views of legislators representing the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County regarding CMS are diverse and reflective of the diversity of opinions and interests of their constituents. Divergence of viewpoints was associated with the geographical area of representation (city versus suburb), political party, and race. Members serving in legislative leadership positions tended to express broader, historical perspectives on state education policy issues as they relate to the governance and management of CMS.

Although unanimity did not exist on the solutions to CMS challenges, there are a number of areas where there was a general consensus among legislators.

1. Community discontent with CMS and the recent change in the public's attitudes toward the district is perceived by several legislators in large part as a leadership issue. Opinions range on the degree of each, but clearly a leadership vacuum is perceived currently at the Board level, at the superintendent level, and externally, particularly in the business community as it relates to the school system.

2. Virtually all legislators interviewed perceived that the district is too centrally managed and this high degree of centralization is linked to constituent perceptions of bureaucracy, complexity, unresponsiveness, and distance. While support for specific decentralization models varies, all agree on the need to decentralize the management of the district. The method that receives the greatest support from legislators is a form of organizational or administrative decentralization by geographic area within a single district. In this approach the district would be divided into several administrative areas each containing several school feeder patterns with an area superintendent and a staff that would provide support to schools in functions such as human resources, professional development, discipline, accountability, and school supervision. These area offices would be formed by repurposing and reducing the current central office in size and scope. The administrative areas would be semiautonomous and able to make decisions regarding the allocation of resources, instructional programs, and school policies within a set of district-determined parameters. Several legislators see this form of organization as an opportunity to increase community engagement and communications by forming ''Area Councils'' comprised of mayors, parents, and civic and business leaders who would be involved in advising the area superintendent on issues central to the needs of the area.

3. In terms of state education policy issues, the majority of legislators are not supportive of deconsolidation of CMS or fiscal autonomy for the Board of Education for a variety of reasons. Both propositions run counter to current state policy direction. Opinions on providing the CMS Board with school chartering authority as a new school creation strategy is strongly divided along party lines. However, most legislators are open to pilot legislation that would transfer statutory authority from the Board of Education to a strong superintendent/CEO in areas such as personnel. . Many legislators also support transferring the school construction function to county government or a joint city/county agency.

All legislators were genuinely concerned about the future of CMS and have indicated a willingness to approach Task Force recommendations with an open mind. Many can be counted upon to step forward to offer support as solutions are crafted.

APPENDIX 5
SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DATA

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Methodology

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Task Force requested a focus group process to engage a diverse cross-section of local stakeholders in a conversation about the emerging challenges and implications for management and governance of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). These conversations were guided by two basic overarching questions related to these challenges:

1. What is the ideal CMS management structure?
2. What is the ideal CMS governance structure?

Twelve focus groups were conducted over a 2-week period in July 2005. The groups represented the following constituencies:

Stakeholder Group	Number in Attendance[12]
Parents	20
CMS Teachers	16
CMS Principals	6
CMS academic administrators	11
Non-profit service organizations and child advocates	6
Mecklenburg County business/civic leaders	8
Local elected officials	
County Commissioners	6
City council members	5
Mayors	4

American Institutes for Research (AIR) facilitated all of the focus groups and conducted additional individual sessions for interested participants who were unable to attend the group meetings. AIR gave each group an overview of the purpose and goals of the district study, and all participants were asked to respond to the two overarching questions posted on a chart display.

To assist participants in distinguishing between the two questions, the facilitators described the management structure in terms of the daily operational functions of the school district and defined by roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, central office administrators and school administrators. The governance structure was described in relation to the roles and responsibilities of elected officials, such as the School Board members, County Commissioners, members of the city council, mayors, and state officials.

Additional framing questions for each category included:

1. From your perspectives/experiences, what is working well (strengths and accomplishments) in the district?
2. What is not working well (concerns and issues)?
3. What are your suggestions/recommendations for addressing concerns?

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[12] These numbers do not include individual make-up interview sessions.

At the conclusion of each session, participants were invited to town hall meetings and encouraged to remain engaged with the ongoing community involvement process. Most participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the discussion sessions.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The major themes that surfaced most consistently across all groups as perceived challenges and issues of concern relative to CMS's current management and governance structures include the following.

Ineffective communication

Ineffective or poor communication with constituents—both internally and externally—is viewed as a fundamental barrier to overall CMS effectiveness. All groups discussed examples of multiple failed attempts to obtain information, problem solve, and make contact with CMS. Lack of access to appropriate levels of authority and to timely retrieval of data for informing decisions is problematic given the existing multiple layers of bureaucracy. According to many focus group participants, limited and inconsistent communication within the school district prevents the district from establishing ownership and commitment to a shared vision or core values for the entire system.

Closely related to concerns with poor communication is a lack of transparency in how the district organizes itself and justifies its decisions. There appears to be confusion and tremendous overlap of roles and responsibilities within the central office. Perhaps as a result, some stakeholders expressed as much frustration with unclear points of contact as with the slow responses to their inquiries for help. In a few instances, participants conveyed the belief that this is all a function of a deliberate lack of responsiveness on the part of CMS.

> "Nobody at the school level asks for help. Communication is very one-way. A lot of prescription from central office makes schools and principals take a 'prairie dog mentality.'"

Most of the focus groups discussed the poor communications between the school sites and central office as well as poor communication between the various departments and divisions in the central office. The result, according to most focus group participants, is that teachers and administrators often feel that their opinions are not heard and their expertise is not valued.

Most parents and other community members expressed similar dissatisfaction with communication processes in CMS and with lack of access to appropriate contacts for information gathering and problem solving. Some indicated that the lack of decision-making authority at the school level has sometimes forced them to go to other levels of the organization, such as the School Board, to solve problems. They described a lack of understanding about the district's organizational structure and frustration with its frequent changes. One administrator explained that "…parents are confused with the structure…and don't know how it works." A parent stated that "I have had to fight to get to the right person…I'm lucky if I do."

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Low levels of trust

Inadequate central office communication and political leaders' perceived partisanship have resulted in a breakdown of credibility and trust in the school district. One central office administrator conveyed the sentiments of many in stating that the district "…is an unhealthy environment and not mission-driven."

One participant described School Board meetings as "a joke," with a lot of time spent on insignificant or "pet" issues rather than more important business for the entire system.

> "One reason people entertain the idea of breaking up the system is (CMS) has a credibility problem."

Stakeholders recalled instances of poor planning and spending decisions by the School Board and several cited the building of an elementary school in a location with few students, creating an underutilized facility. This is an example of ineffective decision-making by disconnected CMS governance and management leaders, which contributes to the ongoing erosion of public confidence and trust in CMS's capacity to operate efficiently.

Lack of accountability in a bloated bureaucracy

The perception of an excessive bureaucracy with a "bloated" central office was expressed by most focus groups. Some focus group participants at the school level, for example, described how this bureaucracy impedes access to support services and creates conflicting demands on staff. One participant explained that school system employees are often frustrated in their attempts to get help in the human resources office—which is perceived as having too few staff—while the curriculum and instruction department, for example, appears overstaffed.

> "From a teacher's perspective, the Central Office seems bloated, with a lot of titles, to justify people's job…"
>
> "Even if it's not large and bloated, it appears that way."

The excessive bureaucracy also seems to conflate the number of directives and requests that come down to the school level from the central office, adding to many focus group members' frustration with unclear authority and resources to make decisions at the appropriate level. To illustrate this point, one teacher described the lack of coordination between the CMS curriculum and instruction department (which creates the curriculum pacing guide) and the assessment department (which sets up the system's testing schedule). According to some, neither appears to have been designed to support the other. For example, the dates and times are not coordinated so teachers and principals reported that they resort to their own interpretations and implementation strategies.

Further discussions from staff participants indicated concerns with the large number of positions that have unclear functions and value and with the practice of creating central office positions for poor-performing colleagues moved from other positions. This practice reflects a lack of performance accountability based on meaningful criteria and appropriate consequences.

From parent and community perspectives, some participants stated that they could receive a range of conflicting responses to issues depending on whom they happen to connect with in the central office. Community participants also indicated concerns with cost efficiencies,

productivity, and accountability, given CMS's large central office. The current layers of multiple reporting relationships reflect an organizational structure that clouds understanding of who makes what decisions and who is responsible for what. They also contribute to stakeholders' impressions that the system is unresponsive to them. One community participant stated, "No one is truly accountable. They hide behind the large bureaucracy…it's frustrating to the public." Another offered, "CMS has become an ivory tower construct, telling us what and when we are going to do something, but not necessarily 'how.'"

A recommendation from all focus groups is to decentralize functions and reallocate resources and support to the school level with fewer prescriptions from the central office. Generally, stakeholders expressed a preference for aligning authority with accountability at the school level. To provide more responsiveness to the school sites, most focus group participants favor reinstating the former area configurations with a K–12 feeder pattern and a support staff including curriculum content and instructional expertise assigned to the area office. A few central office participants, however, expressed preference for maintaining the current structure of regional superintendents responsible for elementary and secondary levels. Some stakeholders also suggested that some system-wide functions—such as transportation and food services— should be outsourced to private vendors to improve efficiency.

"It's a very bifurcated system of responsibility and authority."

Lack of authority and autonomy

The focus groups expressed equal levels of concern with the lack of autonomy and accountability within the district's various governance structures (e.g., School Board, commissioners, and mayors). Discussion of the governance structure identified a bifurcated system with various governmental levels that could be consolidated for greater efficiency and accountability. Many participants observed that the multiple governance layers diminish the School Board's autonomy, responsibility, and ultimate accountability for their actions. The CMS budget approval process was often cited as an example of transferring responsibility and attributing blame to either the County Commissioners or the CMS School Board.

There is a strong feeling that both of these bodies are highly political with interests that are not necessarily aligned.

The focus groups' major recommendation to address accountability and authority issues is to establish more decision-making authority and autonomy at the school level. Other specific recommendations include the following:

- Align system leaders' and administrators decision-making authority with accountability expectations;
- Re-establish the area-based reporting structure with dedicated curriculum and instruction support services within each area;
- Give taxing and budget authority to the School Board and eliminate the need for the County Commissioners to interfere with CMS operations (there was widespread support for this recommendation);
- Avoid School Board interference in non-policy-related matters; and
- Vest more authority in the Superintendent for daily operations.

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One contrary view suggested by an elected official is simply to eliminate the School Board and integrate the functions with the County Commissioners. This view raised concern for the already extensive responsibilities of the County Commissioners who would not have sufficient time to manage education.

Dysfunctional and disconnected School Board

According to some focus group participants, members of the School Board are primarily focused on special interests or, in the worse cases, are simply mean-spirited and following personal agendas. Although some parents described feeling more connected to the School Board than other elected bodies, the board was described as fostering divisions with their infighting and narrow, constituent-based approach. Overall, the CMS School Board is widely recognized as having a low capacity for listening, collaborating, or maintaining an appropriate policy-making role. Nearly all stakeholders participating in the focus groups offered encouragement for more cooperation among School Board members and between the School Board and other elected bodies and CMS. While School Board members are known for championing their constituents' interests, they are not widely recognized as "present" in the schools or particularly knowledgeable about what is going on and what is needed at the school level. One stakeholder cited the example of "one group that (I'm) a part of that submits recommendations to the School Board that ultimately become CMS policy… that's great for our group, but frightening for CMS." For this reason, stakeholders challenged their leaders to spend more time in the schools where they can gain better understanding and knowledge of schools' needs and operations.

In addition to recommending that the School Board act more cooperatively and cease micromanaging, focus group participants explored the issue of an ideal election process for the board to more adequately capture the representative interests of the entire system. Overall, participants tended to favor the current configuration of six elected area representatives and three at-large representatives, recognizing the history, benefits, and problems with the current design. However, some stakeholders identified and discussed various options for School Board elections and questioned whether the high levels of politicization might be decreased by establishing (1) all-district-based representation, (2) all at-large representation, (3) an appointed board, or (4) some hybrid mix of these models. Several individuals indicated that perspectives tend to divide along racial or economic lines. For example, it was suggested that African-American residents would likely resist any attempts to return to an at-large election process given their need to be adequately represented. On the other hand, a few individuals questioned the fairness of one representative for each geographic area because they vary considerably—racially and economically—across the county.

Overall, focus group participants strongly agree with one administrator's statement of the problem: "It is not the governance structure… it is the players."

After suggesting that system leaders work to establish a common vision, one group of stakeholders suggested local replication of successful structures in other cities with demographics similar to Mecklenburg County. Some stakeholders spent time exploring the type of training and/or preparation that should be required for both the School Board and a superintendent. These stakeholders cite other district models of choosing CEO-type leadership,

dual leadership structures (e.g., systems with a CAO and a COO), and requirements for system leaders to have more extensive financial and management training.

Lack of shared vision and values

Many focus group participants also expressed doubt that the CMS School Board and CMS administration are focused on meeting students' needs. Participants consistently described a School Board that is embattled with individual political agendas and has no unifying vision for CMS, The administration is also perceived as failing to cultivate a commitment to a shared vision and core beliefs for student learning in CMS.

The absence of a shared vision and values leads to concerns raised by some community leaders and advocates for students with special needs. They relayed instances of obstruction or being ignored by individuals within the CMS administration.

OTHER THEMES

The focus groups raised other issues with less frequency that also have implications for the design of ideal governance and management structures, as noted below.

Growth and poor planning

Stakeholders widely acknowledge the strong effect that rapid local growth has had on the school system. Given this fact, a lack of communication and regional planning coordination between the cities, county and school district has resulted in conflicting enrollment projections and sometimes inappropriate or inadequate development of facilities according to some focus groups. Many staff participants complained that school construction designs are replicated in a cookie-cutter fashion with no attempts to solicit input and feedback from school staff that might lead to better environments for teaching and learning. The method for projecting student growth also varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction with no common formula.

One participant suggested that there has been a deliberate design to segregate students by race and socio-economic status. Several participants decried the lack of limits placed on local real estate developers, which has inevitably resulted in pressures on the school system.

Many agree with the need to adapt the system's governance and management structures to this rapid growth as well as to the complex set of conditions facing the school system, including the persistent achievement gap, increased poverty, more special needs and language minority students, and significant immigration.

> "Mecklenburg County never developed a growth plan. The County lacks infrastructures. (They) often build without consideration of these things."

Some stakeholders consistently called for more coordinated planning among CMS, the School Board, and the County Commissioners. Several participants cited a need for more resources to accomplish this and also recommended the establishment of a staff working committee representing CMS, the respective municipalities, and county planners to collaborate on designing, planning, and executing future developments.

Student assignment plan

Many participants expressed unhappiness with the current school choice plan. Some described the plan as "forced choice" or, since many preferred schools are already overcrowded, "no choice." The unintended outcome of resegregation exacerbates the inequities between schools. Changing boundaries for school attendance has created insecurity and instability for student attendance; parents complained that it is difficult to anticipate and plan ahead in a situation where mandatory school assignments shift as frequently as every 2 years. Stakeholders suggested balancing student assignment according to something other than race (such as poverty status) and implementing the program equitably across schools.

School safety and discipline

Many staff and some parent participants described the difficult process of removing disruptive students—especially those with a history of dangerous behaviors—to create safe learning environments. Their frustration with CMS is targeted at an office perceived to be unresponsive and where one administrator has sole authority for determining student placement over the objections of staff and parents. Representatives from the judicial system and other community-based student-support organizations expressed similar frustrations with CMS access and responsiveness to student concerns. In a desperate action, one particular team of teachers revealed that they resorted to going to the press to expose the disciplinary issues affecting their schools, an action that recently attracted significant local media attention. The teachers explained that they needed to resort to using the media because they felt that they had been stymied in their efforts to get acknowledgement and support from the central administration.

Inconsistent or unclear policies and processes

Several focus groups expressed concerns with inconsistent district practices and policies. Similarly to the lack of coordination between curriculum and assessment described earlier, teachers questioned the wisdom of requiring new teachers to attend "boot camp" during the first 2 weeks of school—a critical time for planning and orientation for school staff. Several teachers explained that this example was not offered as a challenge to the legitimacy of the program but rather the wisdom in implementation. These teachers suggested a need to establish a rubric for decision-making that asks, in every instance, "how does this affect children, classrooms, and schools?" If such a rubric already exists, participants added, it should be made available to all stakeholders.

Because there is lack of clarity throughout the system, stakeholders suggested that various schools and principals are acting somewhat independently, resulting in some cases in real "pockets of excellence," where teachers, principals, and parents are in better communication with and more accountable to each other. Conversely, one elected official described how a community-based program in his town faced problems in obtaining access to space in school facilities, adding that "good initiatives may end up getting axed in one place, but approved in another… it's either more about who is the leader of the school or who the program is that wants access." Her suggestion for a solution to this problem included (1) establishing functional "advocates" (not their School Board representative) for their respective districts within the

system, and (2) uniformly allowing principals to make decisions about the programs within their buildings.

MATRIX OF COMMON THEMES ACROSS FOCUS GROUPS

The following figures capture the broad, common themes identified as concerns by the various stakeholder groups.

Figure 1. Common feedback themes as expressed across functional constituencies.

Parents	Teachers	Principals	CMS administrators
Communication and trust			
Poor communication	Ineffective communication		Poor, ineffective communication
Lack of customer focus			Team-based decision-making results in slow responses
Excessive bureaucracy and lack of accountability/authority			
CMS bloated and unresponsive	CMS bloated and unresponsive	Bloated system	Perceptions of bloated CMS related to impact of region's growth
		Uneven power structures	
SB lack of autonomy/authority	SB/CMS lack of autonomy/authority	SB/CMS lack of autonomy/authority	SB lack of autonomy
Lack of principal autonomy	Lack of principal autonomy	Lack of principal autonomy	
Dysfunctional, disconnected leadership and lack of shared vision			
Disconnected leadership (SB)	Out-of-touch leaders		Tension/competition between SB and commissioners
Dysfunctional SB; SB that micromanages	Dysfunctional SB		
Excessive politicization of leadership (SB)		Excessive politicization of leadership	Excessive politicization of leadership
Disconnected leadership	Ineffective superintendent(s)	Disconnected leadership	
		Lack of shared vision for entire system	Lack of shared vision, priorities for entire system
Poor (growth) planning			
	Poor planning	Lack of planning and collaboration	Lack of collaboration
	Poor allocation of funds	Unjustified spending	
Inconsistent or unclear policies and processes			
Lack of clear processes/policies	Inadequate processes/policies	Lack of clear processes/policies	
Inconsistency of implementation and quality, no oversight		One-size-fits-all implementation	

Figure 2. Common feedback themes as expressed across constituencies.

Elected official	Mayors	Child advocates/non-profit organizations	Business leaders
Communication and trust			
	CMS is reactive, not proactive; lack of customer focus		Lack of customer focus
Credibility problem at CMS			
Excessive bureaucracy and lack of accountability/authority			
	Excess/unresponsive bureaucracy	Unresponsive bureaucracy	Excessive bureaucracy/bloat
	Lack of accountability	Lack of accountability	Lack of accountability
SB lack of autonomy/authority	SB lack of autonomy/authority		SB lack of autonomy
Lack of school-level/principal autonomy		Superintendent lacks proper authority	Lack of school-level/principal autonomy
		Lack of alignment between authority and responsibility	
Dysfunctional, disconnected leadership and lack of shared vision			
Tension/competition between SB and commissioners			Tension/competition between SB and commissioners
Weak leadership capacity/preparation			Weak leadership capacity/preparation
		Excessive politicization of leadership	Excessive politicization of leadership
			Leaders foster divisions
Disconnected leadership	Disconnected/unresponsive leadership; ineffective superintendents	Dysfunctional and ill-informed (to govern effectively) (SB)	
Lack of vision for entire system	Lack of vision for entire system		
Value context unclear	Misconception of equality vs. equity	Singular focus on academics at CMS	Unclear purpose, priorities—"what business is CMS in?"
Poor (Growth) Planning			
Failure to adapt structures to growth	Lack of coordinated planning, especially with Mayors	Lack of collaboration, including with community-based organizations	
	Impact of regional growth, uneven resources between communities		Poor allocation of funds
Inefficiencies, no economies of scale	Inefficiencies, no economies of scale		
Inconsistent or unclear policies and processes			
Lack of clear processes/policies	Inadequate processes/policies	Lack of clear processes/policies	
Inconsistency of implementation and quality	Inconsistency of implementation and quality	Inconsistent policies	Inconsistency of implementation and quality

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ANALYSIS

A number of recommendations for improving the governance and management systems of CMS, listed in Figure 3, emerged from the focus groups.

Figure 3. Focus Group Participants' Recommendations

	Recommendations

Governance	• Develop a collective vision and clear priorities for the system.
	• Establish more collaboration between mayors, School Board, County Commissioners, city council and CMS.
	• Collaborate and co-plan—especially relative to the area's growth.
	• Establish a working system of accountability; align leaders' authority with accountability.
	• Give the School Board budget and taxing authority.
	• Adopt a better representative model for the School Board:
	    a. Eliminate district representation; all at-large with residency requirement.
	    b. Establish a hybrid board—part appointed, part elected.
	    c. Add teachers to the School Board.
	• Create staggered terms on the School Board.
	• Insist that School Board accept its role as policy-making body.
	• Maintain clear roles for governance and administration.
	• Provide processes for inclusion of all voices to ensure equity and social justice.

Management	• Establish more transparency by evaluating programs critically; establish a rubric for every decision within CMS. • Develop and implement more consistent policies. • Provide more regular broad communication. • Manage the school system like a large business. • Hire a CEO who has the business management skills to execute an effective and efficient multimillion-dollar operation. • Create market-driven program competition to provide choices and options for students/families. • Do what works! Replicate others' best practices. • Decentralize operations to empower and establish authority with accountability at the school level. Give principals more autonomy and authority. Central office provides support. • Restore the area-based superintendent structure. • Provide management training for school and system leaders. • Identify and focus on implementing the core mission. Consolidate non-core functions with other agencies and/or eliminate them through outsourcing. • Establish performance standards, goals, and benchmark outcomes. • Provide incentives and consequences to drive performance accountability. • Increase teacher compensation and eliminate tenure and poor performers. • Focus on client satisfaction and demand responsiveness. • Provide more targeted resources.

	Recommendations
	• Treat parents, child advocates, and other community-based organizations as partners in the educational process, and work together with CMS to promote programs and services for all students. • Promote and provide social, emotional, health, and other support services that are directly connected to successful learning experiences.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It is noted that a few participants used the terminology of decentralization and deconsolidation synonymously. Clarification was made to define decentralization as a reference to organization functions and deconsolidation in reference the physical break-up of CMS.

Some school staff participants also explained their resentment with the term "Equity," which has become more of a derogatory term in labeling schools to convey a problem school with lower expectations.

Many focus group participants also identified positive themes, including the following:

- Historically strong achievement results;
- Examples of some outstanding schools and programs (International Baccalaureate and Magnet programs in particular);
- Business/community commitment and investment in quality public education for all students;
- Available resources and stable sources of support (e.g., community-based); and
- Understanding of and addressing the need for equity.

The greatest strength for CMS is the common acknowledgement of issues facing CMS. The need, desire, and commitment to improvement and to creating change for the benefit of students were consistently expressed. The willingness to continue investment and support for CMS by all stakeholders was evident in the representative stakeholders' focus groups. As one participant put it, "If any place ought to have great schools, it should be this community."

APPENDIX 6
SUMMARY OF MAIL SURVEY DATA: CMS HOUSEHOLDS AND EMPLOYEES

Table of Contents

METHODOLOGY

American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted two mail surveys during July, 2005. The purpose of the surveys was to obtain a scientifically valid portrait of the opinions and attitudes of CMS parents and teachers.

SAMPLES

With the assistance of the CMS Research Office, AIR drew simple random samples of 1,500 CMS student households and 500 CMS teachers. The student household survey was mailed out the 1st week of July, and the teacher survey was mailed out the 2nd week of July. A follow-up reminder postcard was sent to all respondents a week after the mailing of the initial survey. Typically, a mail survey involves several follow-ups to boost response rates, but because of the constrained timeline, AIR was able to conduct just one follow-up reminder.

A total of 338 student household (parent) surveys were returned. Seventy-four envelopes were returned as undeliverable by the post office. Our net response rate for the parent surveys was 23.7% (338/[1500−74]). According to the CMS Web site, there are 121,640 students enrolled in CMS; with this population size, a sample n of 338 gives us a margin of error of +/− 5.3%.

A total of 199 teacher surveys were returned, for a 39.8% response rate (199/500). According to the CMS website, there are 7,739 full-time teachers employed by CMS; with this population size, a sample n of 199 gives us a margin of error of +/− 6.9%.

These margins of error assume the responders are NOT different from the non-responders and that the sample is representative. Because the response rates on both these surveys are lower than desired, one cannot assume that the samples are completely representative of their respective populations. This caveat should be kept in mind in reading and interpreting the results of these surveys.

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Each of the two surveys contained 10 sections:

- Views about CMS
- Satisfaction with how CMS handles various functions
- Satisfaction with one's school
- Perceptions of the CMS School Board
- Opinions on how the district should be structured
- Opinions on School Board membership and selection processes
- Preferences for district or local control over various decisions
- Support of different strategies for increasing school funding
- Support of different strategies for distributing school system funds
- Demographic information

Copies of the parent and teacher surveys are included in Appendices A and B.

FINDINGS

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents to the parent survey tended to be affluent and college educated. The respondents were racially diverse, with 5.9% reporting being of Latino heritage. The majority of respondents had one or more children in elementary school (62.1%). Over 40% of the parents had children in middle school (44.4%) or high school (43.5%).

Education Distribution of Parent Data

- 4-yr college graduate or advanced degree: 55.7%
- Some college: 27.1%
- No college: 17.2%

Race Distribution of Parent Data

- Other 6.5%
- Asian 2.8%
- African American 29.0%
- Native American 0.6%
- White 61.1%

Income Distribution of Parent Data

- Greater than $75K: 49.2%
- $35,001 to $75K: 31.6%
- Less than $35K: 19.1%
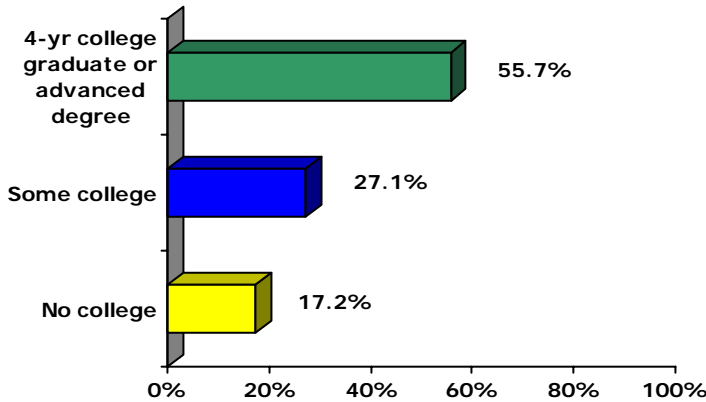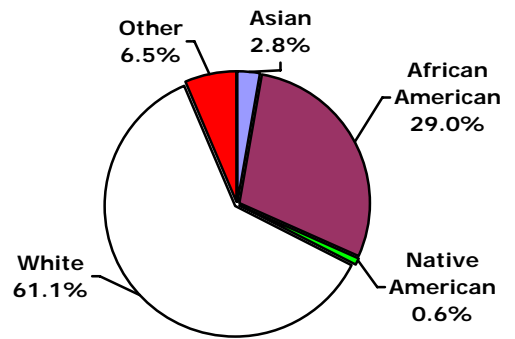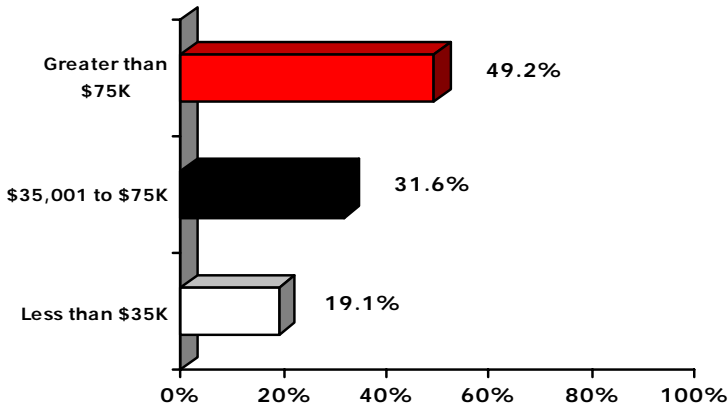
CMS District Distribution of Parent Data

- District 5,6: 12.6%
- District 4,6: 8.1%
- District 4,5: 3.2%
- District 3,4: 23.0%
- District 2,6: 0.3%
- District 2,5,6: 2.6%
- District 2,4,5: 0.3%
- District 2,3: 3.6%
- District 1,2,3: 3.6%
- District 1,2: 4.2%
- District 6: 5.2%
- District 5: 6.5%
- District 4: 3.2%
- District 3: 4.5%
- District 2: 5.5%
- District 1: 13.6%
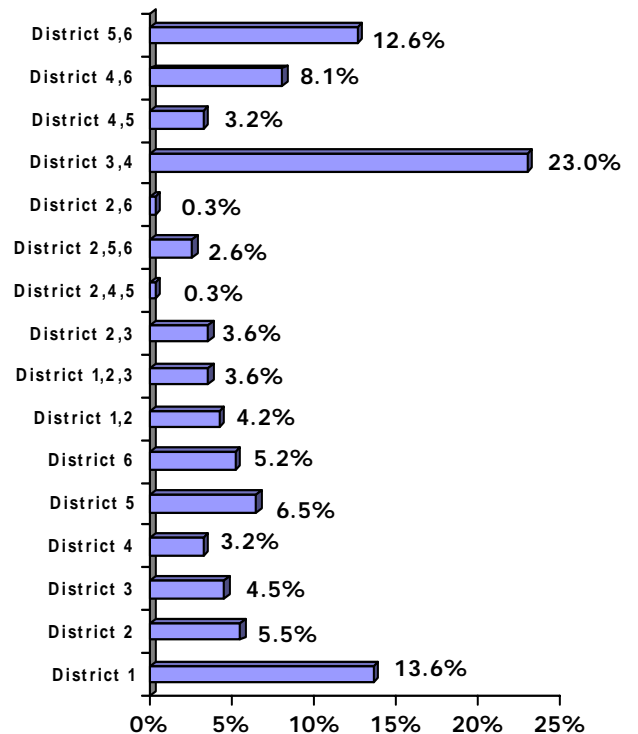
Views about CMS

This set of questions was asked to get a sense of parents' general views of CMS. As the responses indicate, the majority of respondents chose to reside in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area because of the quality of its schools. Most have been paying close attention to the CMS system, and are interested in how school policies are decided. Although most did not associate CMS with tax burden, the majority did not consider CMS as giving taxpayers their money's worth.

How closely does each of the following statements come to <u>your own views about CMS schools</u>?	
a. For the most part, I am comfortable leaving school policies for educators to decide.	• 34.2% agree, 35.1% disagree, 30.7% neutral • No differences by race, income, or level of education
b. Taxpayers in my community get their money's worth when it comes to public education.	• 30.7% agree, 46.0% disagree, 23.3% neutral • No differences by race or income • Those with no college education are more likely to agree with this statement.
c. One of the main reasons I live in this community is the quality of its schools.	• 42.1% agree, 40.7% disagree, 17.2% neutral • No differences by race, income, or level of education
d. Unless there's a controversy or something unusual happening, I rarely pay close attention to the CMS system.	• 16.6% agree, 70.1% disagree, 13.3% neutral • White, more affluent, and more educated respondents were <u>less</u> likely to agree with this statement.
e. In general, taxes are the first thing that come to my mind when I think about CMS.	• 19.2% agree, 61.8% disagree, 18.9% neutral • No differences by income • White and more educated respondents were <u>less</u> likely to agree with this statement.

Satisfaction with how CMS handles various functions

The areas of greatest parental satisfaction were in CMS's **curriculum decision-making** and with its **transportation system**. Satisfaction levels in these two areas were consistent across race, income, and education levels.

The areas of greatest parental dissatisfaction were in **intervention in low-performing schools, handling of school discipline issues**, and its **school assignment plan**. Dissatisfaction with CMS's intervention in low-performing schools was consistent across race, income, and education levels. Although there were no racial differences in dissatisfaction with the way CMS is handling school discipline issues, more affluent and more educated respondents were even more dissatisfied. There were great disparities in levels of dissatisfaction with the school assignment plan. White, more affluent, and more educated respondents were much more dissatisfied.

Some of the items may have been more difficult for parents to answer, because they may not know much about topics such as implementing assessment standards and procedures and building capacity/teacher-related activities (e.g., recruiting, professional development). These

particular items had proportionately more "Neutral" responses, so the relatively low levels of satisfaction reported for these items should be interpreted as being due to lack of knowledge rather than dissatisfaction.

Parents' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

Making curriculum decisions: Dissatisfied 29.4%, Neutral 30.3%, Satisfied 40.4%
Implementing assessment standards and procedures: Dissatisfied 30.8%, Neutral 30.2%, Satisfied 39.1%
Intervening in low-performing schools: Dissatisfied 47.1%, Neutral 26.6%, Satisfied 26.3%
Handling school discipline issues: Dissatisfied 52.7%, Neutral 18.6%, Satisfied 28.7%

Parents' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

Making budget decisions & distributing funds in ways that are equitable to all students: Dissatisfied 49.7%, Neutral 26.3%, Satisfied 24.0%
Providing adequate school facilities for all students: Dissatisfied 52.5%, Neutral 19.7%, Satisfied 27.8%

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Parents' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied

	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
Recruiting & selecting teachers	32.9%	30.8%	36.3%
Retaining teachers	39.5%	30.7%	29.8%
Providing professional development to teachers	27.3%	32.9%	39.8%
Evaluating teacher performance	29.8%	36.1%	34.2%
Providing compensation packages that attract & keep talented educators	44.7%	29.2%	26.1%

Parents' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied

	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
Having in place an effective transportation system	26.6%	23.6%	49.9%
Having in place an effective plan for assigning students to schools	47.9%	20.1%	32.0%

Satisfaction with one's school

Despite some dissatisfaction with how CMS handles decisions, the majority of parents were satisfied (64.2%) with the schools attended by their children.

No racial or income differences were found in local school satisfaction. Parents with some college (compared to those with no college or those with bachelor's degrees or higher) tended to be slightly less satisfied with the schools attended by their children.

Parents' satisfaction with local school
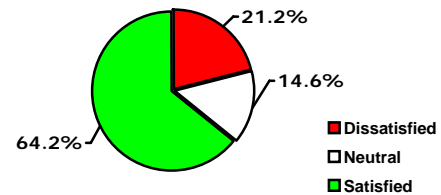
Perceptions of the CMS School Board

The majority of parents considered the CMS School Board to be **ineffective**. There were substantial disparities in School Board effectiveness ratings between race, income, and education subgroups. White, more affluent, and more educated respondents were much more likely to perceive the board as ineffective.

Parents were also asked what they considered to be the main cause of the School Board's difficulties. Overwhelmingly, they saw the problems as being due to **the people who are on the School Board**. There were racial and education level differences, where White and more educated respondents endorsed in greater numbers, "the people on the School Board" as the main cause of the School Board's difficulties.

The majority of parents (54.3%) agreed that **the size of the board should remain at about 9 members**. Just over a third (35.4%) thought there should be more members on the board. Only 10.4% supported having fewer members on the board. There were no subgroup differences in these data.

Parents' Ratings of CMS School Board Effectiveness

Parents' Perceptions of the Main Cause of the Board's Problems
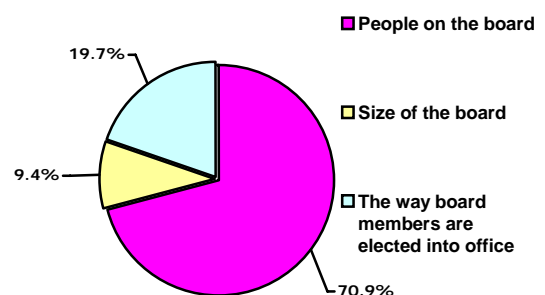
Opinions on how the district should be structured

The district structure that was endorsed most highly by parents was keeping **CMS a single system with area administrative districts**. The second-most favored structure was **breaking CMS into two or more smaller systems**. However, there were racial and income differences in respondents' support of these two strategies. White and more affluent respondents

were much more likely to consider these strategies as beneficial for CMS. By the same token, White and more affluent respondents were much less likely to support keeping CMS a single, unified system. There was some support for giving high-performing schools more autonomy and less district control, with White respondents slightly more likely to consider this approach as positive for CMS.
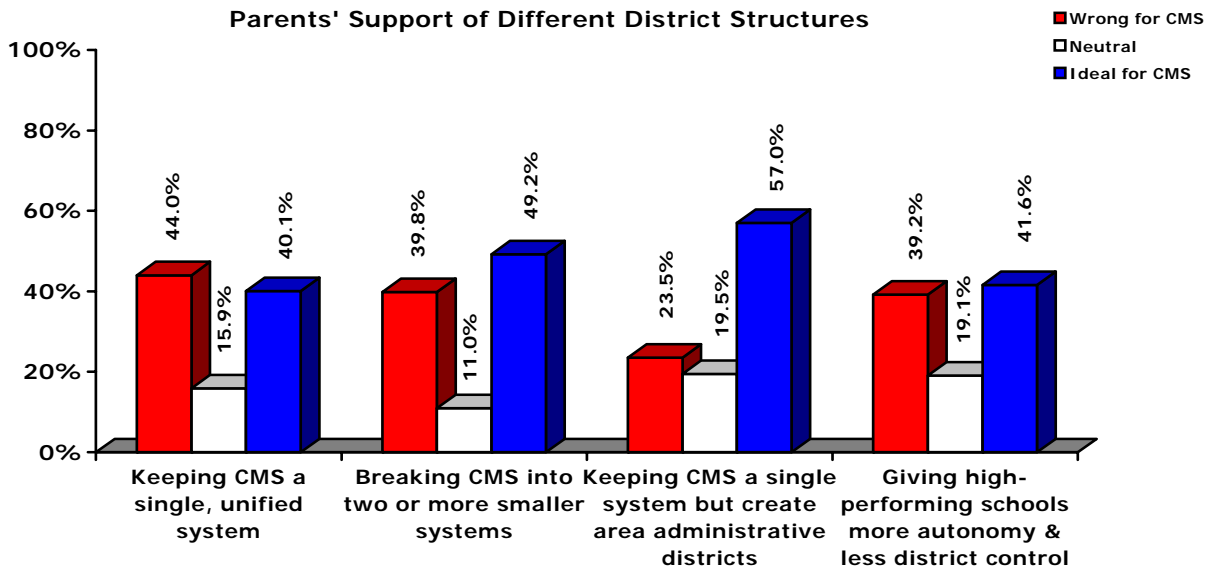
Parents' Support of Different District Structures

Legend:
- Wrong for CMS
- Neutral
- Ideal for CMS

Keeping CMS a single, unified system: 44.0%, 15.9%, 40.1%
Breaking CMS into two or more smaller systems: 39.8%, 11.0%, 49.2%
Keeping CMS a single system but create area administrative districts: 23.5%, 19.5%, 57.0%
Giving high-performing schools more autonomy & less district control: 39.2%, 19.1%, 41.6%

Opinions on School Board membership and selection processes

The School Board selection process most highly endorsed by parents was **electing School Board members from districts** (57.3%). While there were no racial or education differences, more affluent respondents tended to be less supportive of this approach. School Board members being elected at large, School Board members elected in a mix of at large and from districts, and a mix of elected an appointed were strategies that were endorsed, but not overwhelmingly so (31.5%, 39.7%, and 30.6%, respectively). The majority of parents (70.7%) **opposed the prospect of all School Board members being appointed by elected officials**. White, affluent, and more highly educated respondents were much more likely to reject this approach.

There was **little disagreement in parents' views on the membership of the School Board.** The majority agreed that the School Board should be made up of representatives from each geographic area (80.2%) who represent the community's diversity (75.9%) and include community members (69.0%) and business owners (44.5%). There was less support for having a School Board made up solely of parents (33.8% agree, 45.6% disagree, 20.5% neutral). White, more affluent, and more educated respondents were more likely to oppose the idea of an all-parent School Board.

Parents' Support of Different School Board Selection Processes

Legend:
- ■ Ideal for CMS
- □ Neutral
- ■ Wrong for CMS

Some SB members are elected & some are appointed
- Ideal for CMS: 30.6%
- Neutral: 15.8%
- Wrong for CMS: 53.6%

All are elected, but some elected at large & some elected from districts
- Ideal for CMS: 39.7%
- Neutral: 23.0%
- Wrong for CMS: 37.3%

All SB members are appointed by elected officials
- Ideal for CMS: 16.6%
- Neutral: 12.7%
- Wrong for CMS: 70.7%

All SB members are elected from districts
- Ideal for CMS: 57.3%
- Neutral: 21.0%
- Wrong for CMS: 21.6%

All SB members are elected "at large"
- Ideal for CMS: 31.5%
- Neutral: 16.2%
- Wrong for CMS: 52.3%

Preferences for district or local control over various decisions

In general, parents supported greater control by local school staff and parents over district control, particularly **budget choices about how resources should be distributed** (64.6%), **decisions about the hiring and firing of teachers** (65.2%), and **curriculum decisions about how to best enable students to meet NC standards** (56.9%). White, more affluent, and more educated respondents were much more likely to endorse local control over the hiring and firing of teachers. Parents' views were more mixed regarding control over the hiring of school principals: 46.1% supported local control, 31.3% supported district control, and 22.6% were neutral.

Support of different strategies for increasing school funding

Parents were asked to rate their support for different strategies for increasing school funding. The approaches that received the highest support were **bond referendums** (for school renovation and expansion: 61.6%; for new school construction: 62.5%) and **placing user fees on new developments** (56.8%). There was some modest support for using a **tax on the sale of land** (38.5%). The majority of parents opposed increasing property taxes (60.8%), increasing local sales taxes (55.9%), and giving the School Board taxing authority to raise funds for public schools (50.4%). In particular, white, more affluent, and more educated respondents were more strongly opposed to giving the School Board taxing authority.

Parents' Support of Different Strategies for Increasing School Funding

Chart legend:
- ■ Support (blue)
- □ Neutral (white)
- ■ Oppose (red)

Giving the school board taxing authority to raise funding for public schools: Support 30.4%, Neutral 19.1%, Oppose 50.4%

Issuing a bond referendum enabling new school construction: Support 62.5%, Neutral 21.8%, Oppose 15.7%

Issuing a bond referendum enabling school renovations & expansion: Support 61.6%, Neutral 21.6%, Oppose 16.8%

Placing user fees on new developments: Support 56.8%, Neutral 18.5%, Oppose 24.6%

Using a tax on the sale of land: Support 38.5%, Neutral 19.4%, Oppose 42.1%

Increasing local sales taxes: Support 23.9%, Neutral 20.2%, Oppose 55.9%

Increasing property taxes: Support 18.1%, Neutral 21.1%, Oppose 60.8%

Support of different strategies for distributing school system funds

While the majority of parents supported **providing funds to high-need schools** (59.1%), White, more affluent, and more educated respondents supported this strategy in lesser numbers. Just under half supported funding each child (49.8%) or specific programs (49.5%), rather than the school as a whole.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents to our teacher survey were predominantly White (75.1%), of non-Latino descent (99.0%). Nearly half of the teacher respondents held master's or doctoral degrees (47.5%). AIR deliberately limited the number of demographic questions on the teacher survey to prevent the possibility of identification of teachers. This greater anonymity was also intended to help teachers feel "safer" in responding candidly to our questions.

Views about CMS

Teachers were asked to respond to 16 statements regarding their attitudes and perceptions of the district. Teachers' responses indicated that there is a high level of dissatisfaction and mistrust of the district administration and its treatment of teachers.

	Disagree (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Agree (7,8,9,10)
a. The district is responsive to teachers' needs and concerns.	59.3	27.6	13.1
b. The district values its teachers.	52.8	28.1	19.1
c. The district's decision-making process is clear.	60.2	24.0	15.8
d. District decision-making is influenced by racial considerations.	19.5	22.6	57.9
e. Teachers have a voice in the district's decision-making process.	65.3	23.6	11.1
f. Teachers trust district administrators to make decisions that are right for students.	57.8	22.6	19.6
g. Teachers trust district administrators to make decisions that are right for teachers.	67.7	22.2	10.1
h. Communication within CMS departments is effective.	52.3	30.2	17.6
i. Communication between CMS departments is effective.	64.1	23.7	12.1
j. Policy and other important decisions are communicated effectively to teachers and principals.	37.4	25.8	36.9
k. CMS administrators share the same vision for the goals and future of the district.	34.7	33.2	32.1
l. The lines of accountability are clear within the district's organizational structure.	42.4	31.3	26.3
m. Policies are implemented consistently within the district.	52.5	31.3	16.2
n. The district's organizational structure operates efficiently	64.8	24.6	10.6
o. Only the most competent staff members are promoted to serve at the CMS central office.	67.9	16.3	15.8
p. The size of the CMS central office is just right	68.0	19.3	12.7

Satisfaction with how CMS handles various functions

Nearly half of all teachers reported that they were dissatisfied with CMS district administration (49.2%). This negative view of the administration was reflected in teachers' high levels of dissatisfaction with specific district actions. Teachers were particularly critical of the way CMS is handling **school discipline issues** and in its **teacher retention efforts**.

The lowest levels of dissatisfaction were in the areas of providing **professional development to teachers**, and in **evaluating teacher performance**.

Teachers' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied

	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
Making curriculum decisions	52.0%	28.8%	19.2%
Implementing assessment standards and procedures	51.3%	26.1%	22.6%
Intervening in low-performing schools	47.4%	31.6%	20.9%
Handling school discipline issues	72.1%	20.9%	14.7%

Teachers' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied

	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
Making budget decisions & distributing funds in ways that are equitable to all students	54.3%	25.1%	20.6%
Providing adequate school facilities for all students	59.6%	19.7%	20.7%

Teachers' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

Teachers' satisfaction with CMS' actions regarding:

Satisfaction with one's school

Similar to the parent data, although teachers reported dissatisfaction with the district administration and its handling of different issues, the majority of teachers (57.9%) were satisfied with the administration at their local schools.

Teachers' satisfaction with local school administration
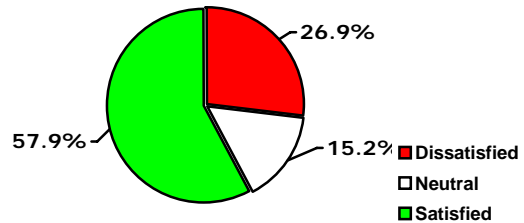
Perceptions of the CMS School Board

The majority of teachers perceive the School Board as **ineffective** (60.6%). As in the parent data, teachers consider the **main cause of the board's problems to be its members** (74.8%), and that the **size of the School Board should remain at about 9 members** (64.5%). About a fifth of the teachers thought there should be more members on the board (21.3%). Only 14.2% of teachers supported having fewer members on the board.

Teachers' Ratings of CMS School Board Effectiveness

15.7%

23.7%

60.6%

■ Ineffective
□ Neutral
■ Effective
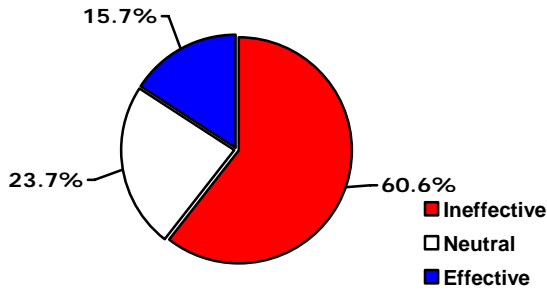
Teachers' Perceptions of the Main Cause of the Board's Problems

15.0%

10.2%

74.8%

■ People on the board

□ Size of the board

□ The way board members are elected into office
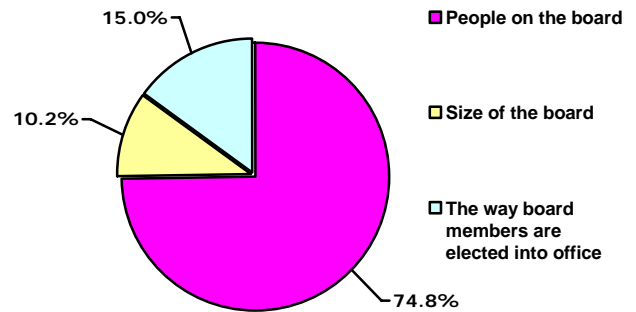
Opinions on how the district should be structured

Although none of the four structures emerged as a clear-cut favorite over the others, the district structure that was endorsed by more teachers was **keeping CMS a single entity with area administrative districts** (49.2%). Although keeping CMS a single district was the least supported option (47.2% opposed), a sizeable proportion of teachers endorsed this structure (39.1%). Teachers were similarly divided in their views on breaking CMS into two or more smaller systems, and in giving high-performing schools more autonomy and less district control.

Teachers' Support of Different District Structures
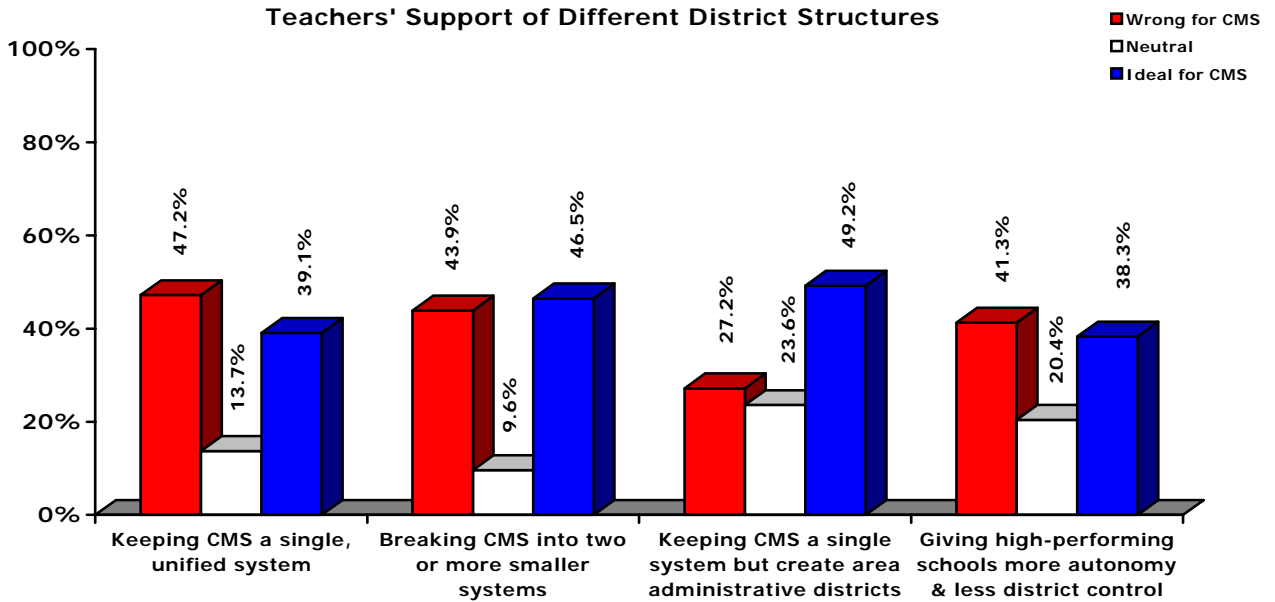
■ Wrong for CMS
□ Neutral
■ Ideal for CMS

Structure	Wrong for CMS	Neutral	Ideal for CMS
Keeping CMS a single, unified system	47.2%	13.7%	39.1%
Breaking CMS into two or more smaller systems	43.9%	9.6%	46.5%
Keeping CMS a single system but create area administrative districts	27.2%	23.6%	49.2%
Giving high-performing schools more autonomy & less district control	41.3%	20.4%	38.3%

Opinions on School Board membership and selection processes

The School Board selection process most highly endorsed by teachers was **electing School Board members from districts** (53.6%). Teachers tended to oppose School Board members being elected at large, School Board members elected in a mix of at large and from

districts, and a mix of elected an appointed were strategies that were endorsed, but not overwhelmingly so (49.0%, 38.5%, and 54.1%, respectively). The majority of teachers (82.7%) **opposed the prospect of all School Board members being appointed by elected officials**.

There was **little disagreement in teachers' views on the membership of the School Board**. The majority agreed that the School Board should be made up of representatives from each geographic area (79.0%) who represent the community's diversity (77.6%) and include community members (62.6%) and business owners (42.3%). Teachers strongly **opposed having a School Board made up solely of parents** (79.1%).

Teachers' Support of Different School Board Selection Processes

Legend:
- Ideal for CMS
- Neutral
- Wrong for CMS

Some SB members are elected & some are appointed: 24.7%, 21.1%, 54.1%

All are elected, but some elected at large & some elected from districts: 34.9%, 26.6%, 38.5%

All SB members are appointed by elected officials: 6.3%, 11.0%, 82.7%

All SB members are elected from districts: 53.6%, 18.8%, 27.6%

All SB members are elected "at large": 28.6%, 22.4%, 49.0%
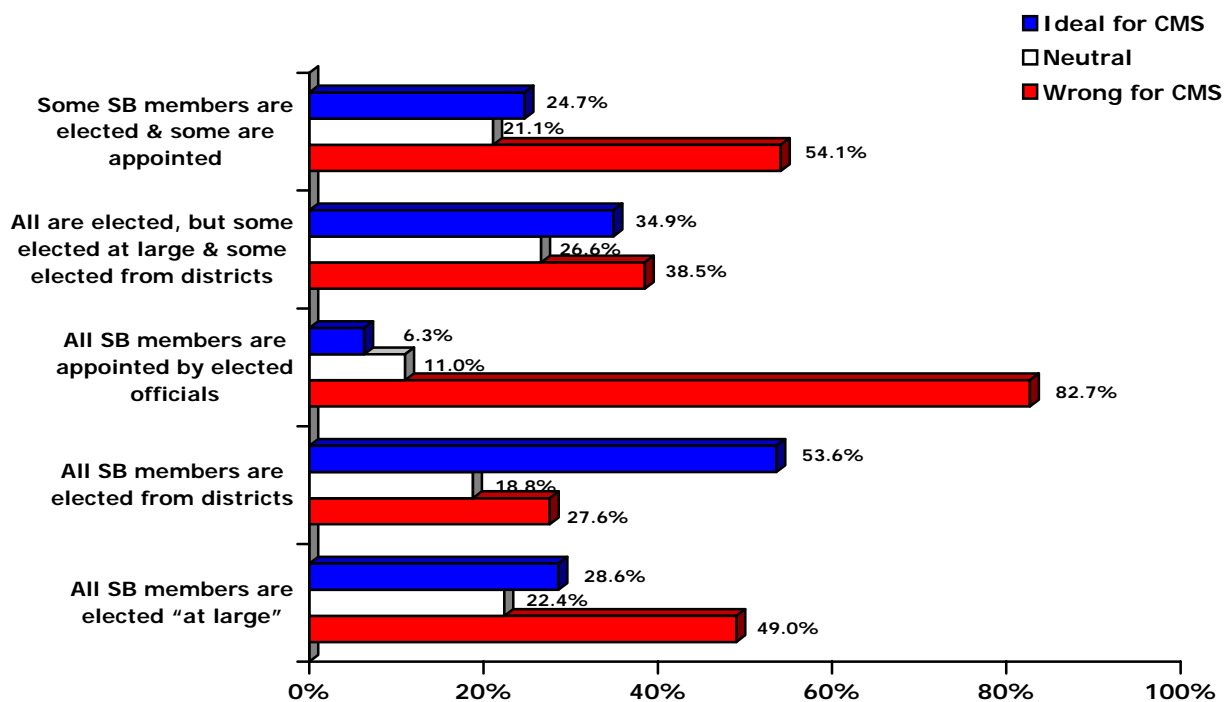
Preferences for district or local control over various decisions

In general, teachers supported greater control by local school staff and parents over district control, particularly **budget choices about how resources should be distributed** (65.5%), **decisions about the hiring and firing of teachers** (60.4%), and **curriculum decisions about how to best enable students to meet NC standards** (67.9%). Teachers' views were more mixed regarding control over the hiring of school principals: 35.5% supported local control, 39.6% supported district control, and 24.9% were neutral.

Support of different strategies for increasing school funding

Teachers were asked to rate their support for different strategies for increasing school funding. The approaches that received the highest support were **bond referendums** (for school renovation and expansion: 64.1%; for new school construction: 63.6%) and **placing user fees on new developments** (58.9%). There was some modest support for using a **tax on the sale of land** (37.9%). The majority of teachers opposed giving the School Board taxing authority to raise funds for public schools (61.2%), increasing property taxes (58.7%), and increasing local sales taxes (52.6%).

Support of different strategies for distributing school system funds

The same pattern of responses was observed for both the parent and the teacher data. The majority of teachers (62.2%) favored providing more funds to high-need schools, and just under half supported funding each child (47.4%) or specific programs (42.0%) rather than the school as a whole.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

GENERAL

- The majority of parents (46.0%) think that taxpayers are not getting their money's worth when it comes to public education.
- Teachers are highly demoralized, reporting high levels of dissatisfaction and mistrust of CMS district administration and its policies.
- Despite dissatisfaction at the district level, the majority of parents and teachers were satisfied with their local schools.
- Nearly all of the subgroup differences found in the data (e.g., between parents and teachers; between parents of different races, incomes, or education levels) were **differences in magnitude rather than in kind**. For example, the majority of each of the subgroups viewed the members of the School Board as the main cause of its problems. However, proportionately greater numbers of teachers, White parents, more affluent parents, and more educated parents identified School Board members as the cause of the problems.

GOVERNANCE

- The majority of teachers and parents consider the CMS School Board to be ineffective.
- The overwhelming majority of all respondents attributed the School Board's difficulties to the people who serve on the board.
- The majority of all respondents agree that the size of the School Board should remain at about nine members.
- The district structure favored by the majority of parents and teachers was keeping CMS a single system with area administrative districts.
- Responses in both the parent and teacher data were polarized for the other three options: approximately forty percent opposed and forty percent supported these structures (keeping CMS a single district; breaking CMS into two or more smaller districts; and giving high-performing schools more autonomy).

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- White and more affluent parents were more likely to favor breaking CMS into smaller systems.
- The School Board selection process most favored by both parents and teachers is electing board members from districts.
- The School Board selection process least favored by both parents and teachers is appointment of School Board members by elected officials.
- There was little disagreement in respondents' views of the composition of the School Board: the majority agreed that the School Board should represent each geographic area, reflect the diversity of the community, include community and business members, and not be solely comprised of parents.
- Over sixty percent of all parents and of all teachers supported the use of bond referendums.
- There was little support for giving the School Board taxing authority. White, more affluent, and more educated parents, as well as the majority of teachers, strongly opposed giving the School Board taxing authority.

MANAGEMENT

- The areas of greatest parental satisfaction were in how CMS handles its curriculum decisions and its transportation system.
- The areas of greatest teacher satisfaction were in provision of professional development for teachers and evaluation of teacher performance.
- The area of greatest dissatisfaction, for both parents and teachers, was in the way CMS is handling school discipline problems.
- Teachers also reported high levels of dissatisfaction with CMS's efforts to retain teachers and in providing compensation packages that attract and keep talented educators.
- The majority of parents and teachers supported local school-level control over budget and curriculum choices and in the hiring and firing of teachers.
- Parents and teachers were equally divided in their views over who should make decisions regarding the hiring of principals: approximately forty percent endorsed district control, and an equal number endorsed school-level control.
- The majority of respondents supported providing more funds to high-need schools.

APPENDIX A:

CMS TASK FORCE

Survey of CMS Teachers

July 2005 Mailout

RESULTS
August 8, 2005

Response Rates

- 500 surveys were mailed out; 199 were returned, for a 39.8% response rate

- According to the CMS website, there are 7,739 full-time teachers employed by CMS; with this population size, a sample n of 199 gives us a margin of error of +/- 6.9%

- This margin of error assumes the responders are NOT different from the non-responders and that the sample is representative, which we of course, cannot guarantee

The following questions are about your attitudes toward CMS and its actions.

1.   <u>How much do you agree</u> with the following statements about the CMS system? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you completely disagree, and a "10" means you completely agree with the statement.

		Disagree (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Agree (7,8,9,10)
a.	The district is responsive to teachers' needs and concerns	59.3	27.6	13.1
b.	The district values its teachers	52.8	28.1	19.1
c.	The district's decision-making process is clear	60.2	24.0	15.8
d.	District decision-making is influenced by racial considerations	19.5	22.6	57.9
e.	Teachers have a voice in the district's decision-making process	65.3	23.6	11.1
f.	Teachers trust district administrators to make decisions that are right for students	57.8	22.6	19.6
g.	Teachers trust district administrators to make decisions that are right for teachers	67.7	22.2	10.1
h.	Communication <u>within</u> CMS departments is effective	52.3	30.2	17.6
i.	Communication <u>between</u> CMS departments is effective	64.1	23.7	12.1
j.	Policy and other important decisions are communicated effectively to teachers and principals	37.4	25.8	36.9
k.	CMS administrators share the same vision for the goals and future of the district	34.7	33.2	32.1
l.	The lines of accountability are clear within the district's organizational structure	42.4	31.3	26.3
m.	Policies are implemented consistently within the district	52.5	31.3	16.2
n.	The district's organizational structure operates efficiently	64.8	24.6	10.6
o.	Only the most competent staff members are promoted to serve at the CMS central office.	67.9	16.3	15.8
p.	The size of the CMS central office is just right	68.0	19.3	12.7

2. **How satisfied are you with <u>the way CMS handles the following activities</u>? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you are completely dissatisfied, and a "10" means you are completely satisfied with CMS' efforts in that domain.**

	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
Instruction and School Environment			
a. Making curriculum decisions	52.0	28.8	19.2
b. Implementing assessment standards and procedures	51.3	26.1	22.6
c. Intervening in low-performing schools	47.4	31.6	20.9
d. Handling school discipline issues	72.1	13.2	14.7
Ensuring Equity			
e. Making budget decisions and distributing funds in ways that are equitable to all students	54.3	25.1	20.6
f. Providing adequate school facilities for all students	59.6	19.7	20.7
Building Capacity			
g. Recruiting and selecting teachers	31.8	34.3	33.8
h. Retaining teachers	68.8	21.1	10.1
i. Providing professional development to teachers	30.2	26.1	43.7
j. Evaluating teacher performance	28.8	23.7	47.5
k. Providing compensation packages that attract and keep talented educators	65.2	17.2	17.7
Aligning Central Services			
l. Having in place an effective transportation system	32.0	29.4	38.6
m. Having in place an effective plan for assigning students to schools	53.3	30.5	16.2

3. **Overall, how satisfied are you with <u>the CMS district administration</u>? Please circle a number from 1 to 10, where "1" means completely dissatisfied and "10" means completely satisfied.**

Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
49.2	29.6	21.1

4. **Overall, how satisfied are you with <u>the administration of the school at which you teach</u>? Please circle a number from 1 to 10, where "1" means completely dissatisfied and "10" means completely satisfied.**

Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
26.9	15.2	57.9

The following questions for your opinions about the CMS School Board, specifically.

5. **Overall, how <u>effective</u> is the CMS School Board? Please circle a number from 1 to 10, where "1" means completely ineffective and "10" means completely effective.**

Ineffective (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Effective (7,8,9,10)
60.6	23.7	15.7

6. In recent months, there has been much discussion about the CMS School Board. In your opinion, what is the **main cause** of the difficulties the board is having? Please select one of the following options.

74.8	The people who are on the School Board
10.2	The size of the board
15.0	The way School Board members are elected into office

7. Currently, nine (9) members are elected to the CMS School Board. Do you think there should be **more, fewer, or about the same number of School Board members** than there are currently? Please select one of the following options.

21.3	More members on the board
14.2	Fewer members on the board
64.5	About the same number of members on the board

8. There has been much discussion about how CMS should be structured. Please rate **how effective** you think the following options would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.

	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
a. Keeping CMS a single, unified system	47.2	13.7	39.1
b. Breaking CMS into two or more smaller systems	43.9	9.6	46.5
c. Keeping CMS a single system but create area administrative districts	27.2	23.6	49.2
d. Giving high-performing schools more autonomy and less district control	41.3	20.4	38.3

The following questions ask for your opinions about different ways school systems may operate and be structured.

9. There are many different ways a School Board may be structured. Please rate **how effective** you think the following selection processes and membership characteristics would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.

	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
School Board Member Selection Process			
a. All School Board members are elected from districts	27.6	18.8	53.6
b. All School Board members are elected "at large" (elected to represent an entire group of voters rather than those in a particular district)	49.0	22.4	28.6
c. Some School Board members are elected at large, and some are elected from districts	38.5	26.6	34.9
d. All School Board members are appointed by elected officials	82.7	11.0	6.3
e. Some School Board members are elected, and some are appointed	54.1	21.1	24.7
Membership of School Board			
f. School Board that is made up solely of parents	79.1	8.7	12.2
g. School Board that includes community members	13.8	23.6	62.6
h. School Board that includes local business owners or business representatives	30.6	27.0	42.3

i.	School Board whose membership reflects the diversity (racial, socio-economic) of the community	6.1	16.3	77.6
j.	School Board whose membership includes representatives of each geographic area	5.6	15.4	79.0

10. **In your opinion, how much autonomy in decision making should <u>local school staff and parents</u> have over the following? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe control should be at the district or other level, and a "10" means you think control should be in the hands of school staff and parents.**

		Control should be at the district or other level (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Control should be at the local school level (7,8,9,10)
a.	Budget choices about how resources should be distributed	15.2	19.3	65.5
b.	Decisions about the hiring and firing of teachers	21.3	18.3	60.4
c.	Decisions about the hiring of school principals	39.6	24.9	35.5
d.	Curriculum decisions about how to best enable students to meet NC standards	14.8	17.3	67.9

The following questions are about different ways a school system may use its funds.

11. **Please tell us how much you support the following <u>strategies CMS might use to deal with a rapidly-growing school system</u>. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you strongly oppose this strategy, and a "10" means you strongly support this strategy for increasing school funding.**

		Oppose (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Support (7,8,9,10)
a.	Increasing property taxes	58.7	23.5	17.9
b.	Increasing local sales taxes	52.6	23.5	24.0
c.	Using a tax on the sale of land	33.3	28.7	37.9
d.	Placing user fees on new developments	18.2	22.9	58.9
e.	Issuing a bond referendum enabling school renovations and expansion	16.9	19.0	64.1
f.	Issuing a bond referendum enabling new school construction	15.4	21.0	63.6
g.	Giving the School Board taxing authority to raise funding for public schools	61.2	16.8	21.9

12. **How should CMS <u>distribute funds to schools</u>? Please tell us how much you support the following strategies for distributing district funds by circling a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you strongly oppose this strategy, and a "10" means you strongly support this strategy for distributing school system funds.**

		Oppose (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Support (7,8,9,10)
a.	Provide more funds to high-need schools	18.9	18.9	62.2
b.	Fund each child, not the school	26.0	26.5	47.4
c.	Fund the cost of specific programs offered at each school, not the school	28.5	29.5	42.0

The following questions are about your background and personal characteristics. This information will be used only to look at how different groups of people share or differ in opinion. Responses will be used at the group level. To protect your confidentiality, individual responses will <u>never</u> be reported.

13. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent?

1.0	99.0
Yes	No

14. What is your race? Select one.

2.1	18.7	0.5	75.1	3.6
Asian	Black/ African American	Native American	White/ Caucasian	Other

15. What is your highest academic degree? Select one.

52.6	45.4	2.1
Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree

16. What was your total household income last year before taxes?

0.5	Less than $25,000	**23.5**	$50,001 to $75,000
16.0	$25,000 to $35,000	**22.5**	$75,001 to $100,000
13.9	$35,001 to $50,000	**23.5**	Greater than $100,000

APPENDIX B:

CMS TASK FORCE

Survey of CMS Student Households
July 2005 Mailout

RESULTS
August 8, 2005

Response Rates

- 1500 surveys were mailed out; 338 were returned, 74 were returned as undeliverable, for a 23.7% response rate

- According to the CMS website, there are 121,640 students enrolled in CMS; with this population size, a sample n of 338 gives us a margin of error of +/- 5.3%

- This margin of error assumes the responders are NOT different from the non-responders and that the sample is representative, which we of course, cannot guarantee

The following questions are about your attitudes toward CMS and its actions.

1. How closely does each of the following statements come to your own views about CMS schools? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means the statement does not reflect your views, and a "10" means the statement accurately captures your position.	Does not describe me (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Describes me (7,8,9,10)
a. For the most part, I am comfortable leaving school policies for educators to decide	35.1	30.7	34.2
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	36.2	28.4	35.5
White	34.4	32.3	33.3
Household income $35,000 or less	28.3	36.7	35.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	38.8	28.6	32.7
Household income greater than $75,000	34.0	31.0	35.9
No college education	29.8	28.1	42.1
Some college	33.7	38.2	28.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	36.4	28.3	35.3
b. Taxpayers in my community get their money's worth when it comes to public education	46.0	23.3	30.7
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	46.6	23.4	29.8
White	45.4	23.2	31.4
Household income $35,000 or less	43.3	23.3	33.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	54.6	20.6	24.7
Household income greater than $75,000	42.5	22.9	34.6
No college education	38.6	22.8	38.6
Some college	60.2	18.2	21.6
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	40.8	26.1	33.2
c. One of the main reasons I live in this community is the quality of its schools	40.7	17.2	42.1
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	36.9	21.3	41.8
White	43.4	14.3	42.3
Household income $35,000 or less	40.7	13.6	45.8
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	41.4	19.2	39.4
Household income greater than $75,000	39.6	16.2	44.2
No college education	31.6	17.5	50.9
Some college	41.1	20.0	38.9
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	42.4	16.3	41.3
d. Unless there's a controversy or something unusual happening, I rarely pay close attention to the CMS system	70.1	13.3	16.6
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	63.4	10.6	26.1
White	75.0	15.3	9.7

1. How closely does each of the following statements come to your own views about CMS schools? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means the statement does not reflect your views, and a "10" means the statement accurately captures your position.	Does not describe me (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Describes me (7,8,9,10)
Household income $35,000 or less	53.3	10.0	36.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	69.7	15.2	15.2
Household income greater than $75,000	78.6	13.0	8.4
No college education	40.4	19.3	40.4
Some college	71.1	14.4	14.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	78.9	11.4	9.7
e. In general, taxes are the first thing that come to my mind when I think about CMS	61.8	18.9	19.2
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	54.2	23.2	22.5
White	67.3	15.8	16.8
Household income $35,000 or less	50.0	21.7	28.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	64.6	19.2	16.2
Household income greater than $75,000	68.2	15.6	16.2
No college education	43.9	19.3	36.8
Some college	61.1	21.1	17.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	68.1	17.3	14.6

2. How satisfied are you with the way CMS handles the following activities? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you are completely dissatisfied, and a "10" means you are completely satisfied with CMS' efforts in that domain.	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
Instruction and School Environment			
a. Making curriculum decisions	29.4	30.3	40.4
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	27.5	28.2	44.4
White	30.8	31.8	37.4
Household income $35,000 or less	23.3	33.3	43.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	34.3	29.3	36.4
Household income greater than $75,000	27.5	30.1	42.5
No college education	33.3	28.1	38.6
Some college	25.6	33.3	41.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	28.8	30.4	40.8
b. Implementing assessment standards and procedures	30.8	30.2	39.1
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	31.0	26.1	43.0
White	30.6	33.2	36.2
Household income $35,000 or less	25.0	33.3	41.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	39.4	28.3	32.3
Household income greater than $75,000	26.6	30.5	42.9

2. How satisfied are you with the way CMS handles the following activities? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you are completely dissatisfied, and a "10" means you are completely satisfied with CMS' efforts in that domain.	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
No college education	28.1	31.6	40.4
Some college	30.0	35.6	34.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	31.4	27.6	41.1
c. Intervening in low-performing schools	47.1	26.6	26.3
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	51.1	21.3	27.7
White	44.2	30.5	25.3
Household income $35,000 or less	36.7	26.7	36.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	57.6	24.2	18.2
Household income greater than $75,000	44.9	27.2	27.9
No college education	35.1	26.3	38.6
Some college	50.0	25.6	24.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	49.4	27.5	23.0
d. Handling school discipline issues	52.7	18.6	28.7
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	49.3	18.3	32.4
White	55.1	18.9	26.0
Household income $35,000 or less	35.0	15.0	50.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	57.6	21.2	21.2
Household income greater than $75,000	55.8	18.2	26.0
No college education	33.3	15.8	50.9
Some college	52.2	26.7	21.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	58.9	15.7	25.4
Ensuring Equity			
e. Making budget decisions and distributing funds in ways that are equitable to all students	49.7	26.3	24.0
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	50.0	21.4	28.6
White	49.5	29.9	20.6
Household income $35,000 or less	35.0	26.7	38.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	59.8	23.7	16.5
Household income greater than $75,000	49.3	28.3	22.4
No college education	44.6	21.4	33.9
Some college	51.7	24.7	23.6
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	50.3	29.0	20.8
f. Providing adequate school facilities for all students	52.5	19.7	27.8
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	47.5	16.3	36.2
White	56.2	22.2	21.6
Household income $35,000 or less	30.0	21.7	48.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	61.9	16.5	21.6

**Percentages are reported. Figures may not total to 100% because of rounding.
Cells highlighted in yellow indicate statistically significant differences between groups.**

2. How satisfied are you with <u>the way CMS handles the following activities</u>? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you are completely dissatisfied, and a "10" means you are completely satisfied with CMS' efforts in that domain.	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
Household income greater than $75,000	55.6	20.9	23.5
No college education	35.7	16.1	48.2
Some college	55.6	21.1	23.3
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	55.2	20.8	24.0
Building Capacity			
g. Recruiting and selecting teachers	32.9	30.8	36.3
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	33.8	26.1	40.1
White	32.3	34.4	33.3
Household income $35,000 or less	33.3	15.0	51.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	38.5	34.4	27.1
Household income greater than $75,000	30.0	33.3	36.7
No college education	29.8	22.8	47.4
Some college	36.0	30.3	33.7
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	32.4	33.5	34.1
h. Retaining teachers	39.5	30.7	29.8
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	38.0	24.6	37.3
White	40.5	35.3	24.2
Household income $35,000 or less	25.0	25.0	50.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	47.9	27.1	25.0
Household income greater than $75,000	40.4	36.4	23.2
No college education	29.8	19.3	50.9
Some college	39.3	30.3	30.3
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	42.2	35.0	22.8
i. Providing professional development to teachers	27.3	32.9	39.8
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	29.7	26.1	44.2
White	25.4	38.1	36.5
Household income $35,000 or less	23.3	23.3	53.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	30.9	35.1	34.0
Household income greater than $75,000	27.0	36.9	36.2
No college education	23.2	19.6	57.1
Some college	23.9	42.0	34.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	30.2	33.1	36.7

CMS TASK FORCE

2. How satisfied are you with the way CMS handles the following activities? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you are completely dissatisfied, and a "10" means you are completely satisfied with CMS' efforts in that domain.	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
j. Evaluating teacher performance	29.8	36.1	34.2
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	28.3	32.6	39.1
White	30.9	38.7	30.4
Household income $35,000 or less	23.3	28.3	48.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	40.9	29.0	30.1
Household income greater than $75,000	26.2	42.6	31.2
No college education	21.8	21.8	56.4
Some college	30.3	38.2	31.5
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	32.0	39.6	28.4
k. Providing compensation packages that attract and keep talented educators	44.7	29.2	26.1
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	43.2	23.0	33.8
White	45.9	33.9	20.2
Household income $35,000 or less	30.5	23.7	45.8
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	53.7	27.4	18.9
Household income greater than $75,000	44.1	34.3	21.7
No college education	28.6	23.2	48.2
Some college	46.0	27.6	26.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	49.1	32.4	18.5
Aligning Central Services			
l. Having in place an effective transportation system	26.6	23.6	49.9
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	25.5	24.8	49.6
White	27.3	22.7	50.0
Household income $35,000 or less	18.3	16.7	65.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	30.9	24.7	44.3
Household income greater than $75,000	25.5	25.5	49.0
No college education	25.0	17.9	57.1
Some college	26.7	25.6	47.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	25.7	25.1	49.2
m. Having in place an effective plan for assigning students to schools	47.9	20.1	32.0
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	38.7	23.2	38.0
White	54.6	17.9	27.6
Household income $35,000 or less	28.3	18.3	53.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	53.5	25.3	21.2
Household income greater than $75,000	52.6	18.2	29.2

**Percentages are reported. Figures may not total to 100% because of rounding.
Cells highlighted in yellow indicate statistically significant differences between groups.**

2. How satisfied are you with the way CMS handles the following activities? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you are completely dissatisfied, and a "10" means you are completely satisfied with CMS' efforts in that domain.	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
No college education	38.6	12.3	49.1
Some college	46.7	26.7	26.7
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	50.8	20.0	29.2

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the school(s) attended by your child (children)? Please circle a number from 1 to 10, where "1" means completely dissatisfied and "10" means completely satisfied.	Dissatisfied (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Satisfied (7,8,9,10)
Overall	21.2	14.6	64.2
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	26.2	14.2	59.6
White	17.5	14.9	67.5
Household income $35,000 or less	21.7	11.7	66.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	28.9	16.5	54.6
Household income greater than $75,000	15.7	15.0	69.3
No college education	25.0	12.5	62.5
Some college	31.5	13.5	55.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	15.2	15.2	69.6

The following questions for your opinions about the CMS School Board, specifically.

4. Overall, how effective is the CMS School Board? Please circle a number from 1 to 10, where "1" means completely ineffective and "10" means completely effective.	Ineffective (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Effective (7,8,9,10)
Overall	47.3	28.3	24.4
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	30.4	29.7	39.9
White	59.3	27.3	13.4
Household income $35,000 or less	15.3	35.6	49.2
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	46.9	33.7	19.4
Household income greater than $75,000	57.6	25.2	17.2
No college education	28.6	28.6	42.9
Some college	40.4	30.3	29.2
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	56.6	27.5	15.9

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5. In recent months, there has been much discussion about the CMS School Board. In your opinion, what is the <u>main cause</u> of the difficulties the board is having? Please select one of the following options.	The people who are on the School Board	The size of the board	The way School Board members are elected into office
Overall	70.9	9.4	19.7
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	64.6	7.1	28.3
White	75.9	11.3	12.8
Household income $35,000 or less	59.2	12.2	28.6
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	70.8	11.1	18.1
Household income greater than $75,000	78.8	8.0	13.3
No college education	58.5	9.4	32.1
Some college	65.0	11.7	23.3
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	79.4	8.1	12.5

6. Currently, nine (9) members are elected to the CMS School Board. Do you think there should be <u>more, fewer, or about the same number of School Board members</u> than there are currently? Please select one of the following options.	More members on the board	Fewer members on the board	About the same number of members on the board
Overall	35.4	10.4	54.3
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	40.3	11.5	48.2
White	31.7	9.5	58.7
Household income $35,000 or less	39.0	11.9	49.2
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	42.3	12.4	45.4
Household income greater than $75,000	39.9	9.5	60.5
No college education	37.5	10.7	51.8
Some college	44.4	7.8	47.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	29.4	11.9	58.8

7. There has been much discussion about how CMS should be structured. Please rate <u>how effective</u> you think the following options would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
a. Keeping CMS a single, unified system	44.0	15.9	40.1
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	25.0	19.3	55.7
White	58.3	13.4	28.3
Household income $35,000 or less	25.0	25.0	50.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	41.5	18.1	40.4
Household income greater than $75,000	54.1	9.5	36.5
No college education	26.8	19.6	53.6
Some college	44.8	14.9	40.2
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	49.4	14.6	36.0
b. Breaking CMS into two or more smaller systems	39.8	11.0	49.2

7. There has been much discussion about how CMS should be structured. Please rate how effective you think the following options would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	49.6	16.5	33.8
White	32.4	6.9	60.6
Household income $35,000 or less	44.1	16.9	39.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	41.1	13.7	45.3
Household income greater than $75,000	37.6	5.4	57.0
No college education	39.3	17.9	42.9
Some college	44.2	10.5	45.3
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	37.4	9.5	53.1
c. Keeping CMS a single system but create area administrative districts	23.5	19.5	57.0
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	12.2	21.6	66.2
White	31.7	18.0	50.3
Household income $35,000 or less	5.2	19.0	75.9
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	20.8	21.9	57.3
Household income greater than $75,000	30.7	18.7	50.7
No college education	16.1	21.4	62.5
Some college	18.8	18.8	62.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	27.6	19.9	52.5
d. Giving high-performing schools more autonomy and less district control	39.2	19.1	41.6
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	40.0	25.0	35.0
White	38.6	14.8	46.6
Household income $35,000 or less	32.2	25.4	42.4
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	36.8	24.2	38.9
Household income greater than $75,000	42.7	14.0	43.3
No college education	33.9	28.6	37.5
Some college	44.8	16.1	39.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	37.8	18.3	43.9

The following questions ask for your opinions about different ways school systems may operate and be structured.

8. There are many different ways a School Board may be structured. Please rate how effective you think the following selection processes and membership characteristics would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
School Board Member Selection Process			
a. All School Board members are elected "at large" (elected to represent an entire group of voters rather than those in a particular district)	52.3	16.2	31.5
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	44.0	21.3	34.8
White	58.3	12.5	29.2
Household income $35,000 or less	39.7	27.6	32.8
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	52.0	16.3	31.6
Household income greater than $75,000	59.2	10.5	30.3
No college education	28.6	32.1	39.3
Some college	42.7	18.0	39.3
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	65.6	10.4	24.0
b. All School Board members are elected from districts	21.6	21.0	57.3
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	19.4	23.7	56.8
White	23.3	19.0	57.7
Household income $35,000 or less	11.9	28.8	59.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	17.7	36.0	56.3
Household income greater than $75,000	28.2	15.4	56.4
No college education	14.3	21.4	64.3
Some college	18.2	25.0	56.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	25.0	18.9	56.1
c. All School Board members are appointed by elected officials	70.7	12.7	16.6
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	53.9	17.0	29.1
White	83.2	9.5	7.4
Household income $35,000 or less	36.2	15.5	48.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	75.5	12.2	12.2
Household income greater than $75,000	82.7	10.7	6.7
No college education	37.5	21.4	41.1
Some college	66.3	13.5	20.2
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	86.4	9.9	6.6

8. There are many different ways a School Board may be structured. Please rate how effective you think the following selection processes and membership characteristics would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
d. All are elected, but some School Board members are elected at large, and some are elected from districts	37.3	23.0	39.7
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	35.5	22.0	42.6
White	38.6	23.8	37.6
Household income $35,000 or less	34.5	24.1	41.4
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	34.0	26.8	39.2
Household income greater than $75,000	42.0	21.3	36.7
No college education	23.2	28.6	48.2
Some college	40.9	25.0	34.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	39.8	21.0	39.2
e. Some School Board members are elected, and some are appointed	53.6	15.8	30.6
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	44.3	18.6	37.1
White	60.5	13.7	25.8
Household income $35,000 or less	33.9	18.6	47.5
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	58.3	18.8	22.9
Household income greater than $75,000	60.0	12.0	28.0
No college education	32.1	23.2	44.6
Some college	53.4	17.0	29.5
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	61.1	12.8	26.1
Membership of School Board			
f. School Board that is made up solely of parents	45.6	20.5	33.8
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	32.6	22.0	45.4
White	55.3	19.5	25.3
Household income $35,000 or less	15.3	18.6	66.1
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	41.2	28.9	29.9
Household income greater than $75,000	61.6	15.9	22.5
No college education	12.5	25.0	62.5
Some college	37.9	26.4	35.6
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	60.4	15.9	23.6
g. School Board that includes community members	9.7	21.3	69.0
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	5.7	20.7	73.6
White	12.7	21.7	65.6
Household income $35,000 or less	11.9	15.3	72.9
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	7.3	26.0	66.7
Household income greater than $75,000	8.7	21.3	70.0

Percentages are reported. Figures may not total to 100% because of rounding.
Cells highlighted in yellow indicate statistically significant differences between groups.

8. There are many different ways a School Board may be structured. Please rate how effective you think the following selection processes and membership characteristics would be for serving the needs of CMS. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe this structure would be completely wrong for CMS, and a "10" means you think this system would be ideal for CMS.	Wrong for CMS (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Ideal for CMS (7,8,9,10)
No college education	8.9	10.7	80.4
Some college	8.0	28.7	63.2
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	11.1	21.1	67.8
h. School Board that includes local business owners or business representatives	29.4	26.1	44.5
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	28.4	29.8	41.8
White	30.2	23.3	46.6
Household income $35,000 or less	27.1	22.0	50.8
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	30.9	34.0	35.1
Household income greater than $75,000	30.0	21.3	48.7
No college education	23.2	26.8	50.0
Some college	34.1	29.5	36.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	28.9	24.4	46.7
i. School Board whose membership reflects the diversity (racial, socio-economic) of the community	9.0	15.1	75.9
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	5.7	13.6	80.7
White	11.5	16.1	72.4
Household income $35,000 or less	10.2	13.6	76.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	4.1	15.5	80.4
Household income greater than $75,000	10.5	13.8	75.7
No college education	5.5	14.5	80.0
Some college	7.9	19.1	73.0
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	10.4	12.6	76.9
j. School Board whose membership includes representatives of each geographic area	6.0	13.8	80.2
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	5.0	14.2	80.9
White	6.8	13.5	79.7
Household income $35,000 or less	11.9	11.9	76.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	3.1	16.5	80.4
Household income greater than $75,000	4.6	11.8	83.6
No college education	8.9	19.6	71.4
Some college	5.7	13.6	80.7
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	5.5	12.0	82.5

9. In your opinion, how much autonomy in decision making should <u>local school staff and parents</u> have over the following? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe control should be at the district or other level, and a "10" means you think control should be in the hands of school staff and parents.	Control should be at the district or other level (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Control should be at the local school level (7,8,9,10)
k. Budget choices about how resources should be distributed	14.4	21.0	64.6
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	15.5	32.2	61.3
White	13.6	19.4	67.0
Household income $35,000 or less	15.0	21.7	63.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	13.5	21.9	64.6
Household income greater than $75,000	14.4	19.6	66.0
No college education	19.3	19.3	61.4
Some college	12.5	25.0	62.5
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	13.7	19.8	66.5
l. Decisions about the hiring and firing of teachers	18.0	16.8	65.2
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	29.8	19.9	50.4
White	9.4	14.6	76.0
Household income $35,000 or less	35.0	15.0	50.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	18.8	22.9	58.3
Household income greater than $75,000	10.5	14.5	75.0
No college education	25.0	19.6	55.4
Some college	25.3	21.8	52.9
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	12.5	14.1	73.4
m. Decisions about the hiring of school principals	31.3	22.6	46.1
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	33.8	19.7	46.5
White	29.4	24.7	45.9
Household income $35,000 or less	30.0	16.7	53.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	29.6	25.5	44.9
Household income greater than $75,000	33.3	24.2	42.5
No college education	19.3	26.3	54.4
Some college	37.1	22.5	40.4
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	32.1	22.3	45.7
n. Curriculum decisions about how to best enable students to meet NC standards	22.2	21.0	56.9
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	18.4	23.4	58.2
White	24.9	19.2	56.0
Household income $35,000 or less	18.3	18.3	63.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	19.8	25.0	55.2
Household income greater than $75,000	24.2	19.0	56.9

9. In your opinion, how much autonomy in decision making should <u>local school staff and parents</u> have over the following? Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you believe control should be at the district or other level, and a "10" means you think control should be in the hands of school staff and parents.	Control should be at the district or other level (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Control should be at the local school level (7,8,9,10)
No college education	12.3	21.1	66.7
Some college	21.3	25.8	52.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	25.8	18.7	55.5

The following questions are about different ways a school system may use its funds.

10. Please tell us how much you support the following strategies CMS might use to deal with a rapidly-growing school system. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you strongly oppose this strategy, and a "10" means you strongly support this strategy for increasing school funding.	Oppose (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Support (7,8,9,10)
a. Increasing property taxes	60.8	21.1	18.1
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	66.2	21.6	12.2
White	57.0	20.7	22.3
Household income $35,000 or less	66.7	21.7	11.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	64.6	21.9	13.5
Household income greater than $75,000	55.3	22.4	22.4
No college education	67.9	16.1	16.1
Some college	72.4	14.9	12.6
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	53.0	25.7	21.3
b. Increasing local sales taxes	55.9	20.2	23.9
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	57.2	20.3	22.5
White	54.9	20.2	24.9
Household income $35,000 or less	61.7	26.7	11.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	56.8	17.9	25.3
Household income greater than $75,000	50.0	21.7	28.3
No college education	58.9	16.1	25.0
Some college	60.5	19.8	19.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	51.9	22.4	25.7
c. Using a tax on the sale of land	42.1	19.4	38.5
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	42.0	21.7	36.2
White	42.2	17.7	40.1
Household income $35,000 or less	40.0	31.7	28.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	36.5	19.8	43.8
Household income greater than $75,000	46.0	15.3	38.7
No college education	48.2	23.2	28.6

10. Please tell us how much you support the following strategies CMS might use to deal with a rapidly-growing school system. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you strongly oppose this strategy, and a "10" means you strongly support this strategy for increasing school funding.	Oppose (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Support (7,8,9,10)
Some college	42.5	20.7	36.8
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	40.3	17.7	42.0
d. Placing user fees on new developments	24.6	18.5	56.8
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	28.5	25.5	46.0
White	21.9	13.5	64.6
Household income $35,000 or less	27.6	31.0	41.4
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	25.8	25.8	48.5
Household income greater than $75,000	20.7	11.3	68.0
No college education	32.7	25.5	41.8
Some college	31.8	27.1	41.2
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	18.6	12.6	68.9
e. Issuing a bond referendum enabling school renovations and expansion	16.8	21.6	61.6
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	13.7	24.5	61.9
White	19.1	19.6	61.3
Household income $35,000 or less	18.3	31.7	50.0
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	14.6	19.8	65.6
Household income greater than $75,000	17.0	19.6	63.4
No college education	21.4	28.6	50.0
Some college	12.6	25.3	62.1
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	17.4	18.5	64.1
f. Issuing a bond referendum enabling new school construction	15.7	21.8	62.5
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	14.5	23.2	62.3
White	16.6	20.7	62.7
Household income $35,000 or less	18.3	30.0	51.7
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	12.6	20.0	67.4
Household income greater than $75,000	15.8	19.1	65.1
No college education	25.0	17.9	57.1
Some college	8.1	31.4	60.5
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	15.8	19.1	65.0
g. Giving the School Board taxing authority to raise funding for public schools	50.4	19.1	30.4
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	32.9	23.6	43.6
White	63.1	15.9	21.0
Household income $35,000 or less	30.0	26.7	43.3
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	52.6	16.5	30.9
Household income greater than $75,000	57.1	18.2	24.7

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10. Please tell us how much you support the following strategies CMS might use to deal with a rapidly-growing school system. Please circle a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you strongly oppose this strategy, and a "10" means you strongly support this strategy for increasing school funding.	Oppose (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Support (7,8,9,10)
No college education	**33.9**	**23.2**	**42.9**
Some college	**36.4**	**25.0**	**38.6**
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	**61.6**	**15.7**	**22.7**

11. How should CMS <u>distribute funds to schools</u>? Please tell us how much you support the following strategies for distributing district funds by circling a number from 1 to 10. A "1" means you strongly oppose this strategy, and a "10" means you strongly support this strategy for distributing school system funds.	Oppose (1,2,3,4)	Neutral (5,6)	Support (7,8,9,10)
a. Provide more funds to high-need schools	**17.9**	**23.0**	**59.1**
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	**9.4**	**15.1**	**75.5**
White	**24.1**	**28.8**	**47.1**
Household income $35,000 or less	**8.3**	**10.0**	**81.7**
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	**12.8**	**25.5**	**61.7**
Household income greater than $75,000	**21.7**	**27.6**	**50.7**
No college education	**10.7**	**1.8**	**87.5**
Some college	**13.8**	**19.5**	**66.7**
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	**21.5**	**30.9**	**47.5**
b. Fund each child, not the school	**26.3**	**23.9**	**49.8**
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	**33.8**	**23.0**	**43.2**
White	**20.7**	**24.5**	**54.8**
Household income $35,000 or less	**33.3**	**21.7**	**45.0**
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	**24.0**	**32.3**	**43.8**
Household income greater than $75,000	**23.6**	**22.3**	**54.1**
No college education	**30.4**	**26.8**	**42.9**
Some college	**31.0**	**21.8**	**47.1**
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	**23.0**	**24.7**	**52.2**
c. Fund the cost of specific programs offered at each school, not the school	**27.8**	**22.6**	**49.5**
Asian, Black, Native American, or Other	**25.4**	**18.1**	**56.5**
White	**29.6**	**25.9**	**44.4**
Household income $35,000 or less	**20.0**	**18.3**	**61.7**
Household income $35,001 to $75,000	**28.0**	**25.8**	**46.2**
Household income greater than $75,000	**28.7**	**24.0**	**47.3**
No college education	**21.4**	**21.4**	**57.1**
Some college	**30.2**	**22.1**	**47.7**
4-year college graduate or advanced degree	**29.6**	**22.9**	**47.5**

APPENDIX 7
SUMMARY OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS: JULY 16TH, JULY 27TH, AND JULY 28TH

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Methodology

Three town hall meetings were held over a 2-week period in July. The first was held on July 16th at the convention center in Charlotte, NC, the second on July 27th at the Cornelius Town Hall, and the third on July 28th at the community center in Mathews.

In total, about 350 people attended, with approximately 100 at the first meeting, 120 in Cornelius, and 130 in Mathews. All meetings were open to anyone who wished to attend. Therefore, the meetings were not representative of the community, and it is possible that certain groups, opinions, or organizations were either underrepresented or overrepresented.

In all three meetings, the participants were placed at round tables of 8–10 people with a facilitator and a recorder. Included were tables for Spanish-speaking participants and for students. Each meeting began with an introduction by one of the Task Force co-chairs. Participants were asked to address four key questions:

- What has been your best experience with CMS related to governance or management?
- What has been your worst experience with CMS related to governance or management?
- What is the most important single action that could be taken to improve governance or management in CMS?
- What other issues not in the mission of the Task Force should be brought to their attention?

In the case of question three, participants were asked to vote on which ideas were most important. For the other questions, a list of was developed by each table but not prioritized.

Major Findings

Findings are arranged according to the four questions asked of the participants. In some instances, items will appear in more than one section as participants did not always clearly separate the responses according to the question. In all instances, a sampling of responses has been provided, along with an analysis of responses to each question. The full text of what was recorded in each session is available.

Question One: What has been your best experience with the system's (can include schools) management and governance?

The preponderance of comments from all three town hall meetings (there were no discernable differences across meetings in responses to question one) regarding individuals' best experience with the system's management and governance focused on the school level. Responses related to schools tended to cluster around specific actions that various principals had taken to intervene on behalf of parents when they had particular issues or concerns, mostly about student needs, such as special education. Other responses focused on the quality of teachers at individual schools. Many people also mentioned great experiences with specific schools, without necessarily mentioning the principal or teachers.

In addition to praising individual principals or schools, a significant number of town hall meeting participants commended the School Board and district administrators, often by name. A number of comments praised either the School Board or individual members of the board for their openness, their responsiveness, and their willingness to listen. Others praised the board for encouraging the work of the task force.

As was the case for all four questions and in all three town hall meetings, responses often contradicted one another. For example, some people liked the choice plan, others clearly did not. Similarly, although many participants praised, for example, the School Board and district or school communication with parents when addressing question one, even more participants criticized the board and communications when responding to question two (see below).

In two locations, there were separate tables for Spanish-speaking parents and for young people. Their responses are both interesting and informative. The Spanish-speaking adults felt that the system was to be commended for its outreach value of cultural diversity, willingness to hire bilingual speakers, creation of a Pre-K program, and development of an international center. Many Spanish-speaking participants also praised efforts to establish good communication with parents. This praise was typically directed at the school level, although positive mention was also given to the CMS planning and transportation departments.

The young people, ranging in age from about 12 to 22, praised guidance counselors for efforts to establish personal relationships with students, and schools in general for applying policies consistently, identifying special needs and rewarding good behavior.

Question Two: What has been your worst experience with the system's management or School Board?

Like those addressing question one, responses to the question about individuals' worst experience with the system's management or School Board ranged far and wide with a fair number being unrelated to management and governance. There were no discernable differences in this question relative to the site of the meeting.

The School Board was the subject of many comments. Among the criticisms offered were lack of respect for one another, personal agendas, the unprofessional nature of the meetings, and disrespect shown to parents by some board members at both public and private meetings. Other participants noted that members were too removed from issues and too disconnected from the needs of the community and individual schools. Many individuals commented on what they perceived as the board's lack of a clear strategy or focus, particularly with respect to issues of student achievement. Race was also mentioned by participants as an issue that seemed to motivate board members.

District management also received a significant number of complaints. Many participants criticized the central office—and some criticized the School Board—for its lack of planning for or managing of student enrollment growth. Both the central office and School Board were criticized for their failure to project growth accurately and to build schools in the geographic areas of greatest need. That also related to school boundary changes, which required some students to enroll in different schools each year even though they had not moved.

Management also received significant criticism for poor communications with and lack of responsiveness to the public, micromanagement of schools, bureaucratic rigidity, and the rigidity and prescriptiveness of its curriculum. In addition, some complaints focused on the district management's failure to fire principals and their shortcomings in human resources and transportation systems.

The Hispanic participants voiced concern about the curriculum, with one individual saying that the academic levels in CMS are lower than in other countries. Communications issues were also mentioned, especially for parents who are not fluent in English. Several also commented on unequal resources, lack of student discipline, and crowded buses and foreign language classes.

The students' comments focused on the lack of resources, poor student discipline, and what they saw as a poor attitude of teachers and school officials towards students. One student mentioned attending three different middle schools because the school boundary lines kept changing; other students noted the excessive cost of extra-curricular programs such as band.

Question Three: What should be done differently that would improve the system's management and governance?

For purposes of the work of the Task Force, question three is the most important as it asked community members to recommend ways to improve Charlotte Mecklenburg schools. In this instance, there were some regional differences among mention of decentralization and/or breaking CMS into smaller districts; those issues were more notably mentioned in the Cornelius and Matthews meetings than in the meeting held in downtown Charlotte.

While several people voiced support for dismantling CMS, far more participants favored the idea of keeping CMS unified but decentralizing its management. For example, many called for granting authority to area superintendents and principals for everything from hiring to developing and implementing curricula. Also mentioned was the idea of having local area boards with the central board having more limited authority over certain aspects of policy and budget.

Finance was a more divisive issue. While several individuals advocated granting CMS board authority to establish the tax rate to support schools, an almost equal number were decidedly opposed to that idea. Most participants did not take a position on this issue, and few votes were cast on either side of the issue. Frequently mentioned and voted for, however, was the need for developers to pay fees or donate land for new schools.

With respect to the School Board, some of those who attended the meeting recommended having all at-large seats, while others thought that all seats should be elected by region. There was not a preponderance of opinion on either side of this issue. There were suggestions that members be required to have management, education, budget, or community experience; some voted for the recommendation that the board clarify its responsibilities, especially as they relate to the superintendent. A specific recommendation was made that the board should set policy, principals should run schools, the central office should support the principal, and input from teachers must be sought and respected.

Also frequently mentioned was the need for greater accountability for the adults in the system, including the recommendation to pay central administrators and principals according to student results.

Hispanic participants commented that diversity was not consistent across CMS; more Spanish-language immersion programs should be offered, especially in the southern part of the county; more bilingual staff were needed in the central office; Latino representation was needed on the board; and efforts needed to be made to involve Hispanic parents.

The young people at the town hall meetings recommended that a diverse advisory board of students be created to assist board members, an honor council be created at each high school to create greater student involvement, and student focus groups be used to provide feedback to the school system.

Question Four: What are the other important issues the school system should address that are not part of the focus of the Task Force, but are important to you?

By its very nature, question four elicited a wide range of responses. The issue of discipline was the most frequently raised issue at the Matthews and Cornelius meetings. It was raised less frequently at the meeting held in downtown Charlotte. There were so many other issues mentioned across all three meetings, however, that getting any clear idea about those with popular support is difficult.

Often cited were issues related to the district curricula, such as the need for more vocational programs, individualized instruction, more—or less—AP programs, more IB programs, more writing in classes, after-school programs for gifted students, more alternative education programs, updated textbooks, more math and science, more arts programs, more Spanish classes, and more life-skills programs.

The burden on teachers of too much testing, too much paperwork, and other requirements were cited, as well as the belief that teachers should have higher expectations and that grading should be more consistent across CMS.

Spanish-speaking participants felt that the system was not doing enough to focus on the high drop-out rate among Hispanics, that a variety of teaching styles were required, that discipline was a problem, and that schools should be open on the weekends to become true community resources.

The young people wanted clean, safe restrooms, lower food costs, and permission to use cell phones during non-class times. They also felt that high expectations should be set for all students, teachers in different schools should grade equally and believe in all students, students should be permitted to tutor other students in class, cost should not be a factor in limiting participation in extracurricular activities, and vandalism damages should be repaired more quickly.

Analysis

While the Town Hall meetings can hardly be considered conclusive given the self-selective nature of those who attended, it is clear that a number of themes emerged that are consistent with those raised in interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Issues around the size and complexity of the district were often mentioned. Some participants wanted the district dissolved and smaller districts created in its place, but far more respondents urged a greater degree of decentralization of management, better relations with communities, and better planning in placing schools where growth has or is likely to occur so as to mitigate frequent school boundary changes. The most often mentioned single change that might be made in CMS governance and management revolved around this type of decentralization.

Reactions to the CMS board were quite strong. While a number of people did comment that individual board members were accessible and responsive, many more comments focused on the perception that the board members failed to treat one another with respect, work collaboratively and professionally, distinguish between governance and management functions, or focus on the needs of all students. Recommendations related to the board were numerous and contradictory, addressing everything from the size of sub-districts to the balance of at-large versus district representation, taxing authority, and outright abolition of an elected board.

APPENDIX 8
SUMMARY OF DATA FROM
COMPARISON DISTRICTS

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Methodology

As part of the study of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system, Kate Neville and members of the AIR-Cross & Joftus team examined the governance and management systems in four similarly situated districts to provide benchmark information on how those districts have managed their growth and learn from the governance and management systems in place. Each of the four comparison districts serves over 100,000 students and includes both a metropolitan area and suburbs within district boundaries that are contiguous with a county. The four districts examined are the following:

a) Broward County Public Schools (Ft. Lauderdale),
b) Clark County School District (Las Vegas),
c) Duval County Public Schools (Jacksonville), and
d) Wake County Public Schools (Raleigh)

To gather this information, the research team developed a protocol of questions to ask in each district and wrote a letter to each of the district's superintendents explaining the purpose and asking them to appoint a liaison for the study. Wake County and Duval County each assigned a representative of their research division who provided information. Clark County is undergoing a transition in their superintendent office, and a former assistant superintendent, now a professor at the University of Nevada who is leading the district's search for a new superintendent, provided information about Clark. Despite numerous requests, Broward County never assigned a liaison, and no interviews were conducted. Consequently, some data are not available for this district.

In addition to telephone interviews, data were gathered through researching each district's Web site, each county's Web site, the state education agency's Web site, and the Standard & Poor's SchoolMatters.com Web site.

Standard & Poor's (S&P) uses the most recent data available in their reporting and in the construction of their performance indicators, regardless of varying timeframes, keeping analysis as timely as possible. As a result, for the comparison districts, S&P currently uses achievement data from 2002–2003 and financial data from 2001–2002 to compute their measures of Return on Spending Index and the Performance Cost Index for 2003. The rationale for the different years between the financial data and the student performance data is that the "return" timeframe on spending decisions may not be immediate (e.g., an investment in improving the school-readiness of pre-K students may not be reflected in student achievement for several years).

S&P is in the process of updating the site with 2003 financial data and 2004 performance data on a rolling basis but does not yet have updated information for all of the comparison districts and CMS. Therefore, in order to compare the districts accurately, the charts below include student performance data from 2003 and financial data from 2002.

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Major Findings

Findings from the benchmark districts are grouped in five categories: (1) demographics, performance, expenditures and revenue; (2) governance; (3) district management; (4) managing growth; and (5) local education foundations.

Demographics, Performance, Expenditures, and Revenue

The population of the benchmark counties varies, as Broward and Clark counties each have twice the population of Mecklenburg and Wake counties and almost twice that of Duval. The number of towns or cities within county lines varies as well, ranging from five in Clark to 31 in Broward. Clark County has a great deal of land that is unincorporated within its boundaries. In terms of high school education, the counties were very similar, with approximately 80 percent of the population having a high school diploma. Wake has the highest percentage of its population with a bachelor's degree, followed by Mecklenburg.

Figure 1. County Information

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	Mecklenburg
Population	1,764,311	1,637,621	830,101	716,526	769,744
# Towns/Cities	31	5	6	12	6
Adults with HS School Diploma (%)	81.9	79.5	82.7	89.1	86.0
Adults with BA (%)	24.5	17.4	21.9	43.3	36.7
Median Household Income	$45,364	$49,401	$43,908	$59,834	$54,783

Note. 2004 data.

The school districts operate within these counties, and information on each of the district's student demographics follows. Among these districts, the CMS system has the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students as well as the highest percentage of African American students, though Duval's percentages are comparable.

Figure 2. 2003 Student Demographic Data

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
Number of Schools	235	278	175	122	133
Students Per Teacher	20.2	19.6	19.2	15.4	15.1
White %	36.6	46.0	47.3	59.6	41.9
African American %	36.0	14.0	42.8	27.6	44.5
Hispanic %	22.3	31.7	4.4	6.1	7.7
Asian/Pacific Islander %	2.9	7.4	3.0	4.2	4.3
Economically Disadvantaged %	39.6	35.2	41.8	24.3	42.9
English Language Learners %	11.4	18.3	2.1	3.5	6.3
Students with Disabilities %	11.9	10.8	16.2	16.1	12.1

Note. All information for the table above comes from the S&P SchoolMatters.com Web site.

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Measures of student performance across the districts reveal that CMS has a higher reported graduation rate than the comparison districts, though Wake's percentage is very close. CMS is third—behind Wake and very close to Clark—in terms of SAT scores and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reading proficiency, and is second in AYP math proficiency.

As S&P defines it, AYP is a measure of improvement on annual academic performance goals. The No Child Left Behind Act requires each individual state to define AYP goals, or targets, for test proficiency and other academic indicators such as attendance and graduation rates. For this reason, comparisons across states should be read with extreme caution.

Figure 3. 2003 Student Achievement Data

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
Graduation Rate %*	64	71.7[i]	57.0	96.3	98.3
Reading Proficiency (All students) %	52.0	79.09[ii]	50.0	87.0	77.7
Math Proficiency (All students) %	58.0	52.06[iii]	48.0	89.0	83.1
Average SAT score	944	1018[iv]	985	1063	1005
Average ACT score	19.7	21.2[v]	20.0	N/A	N/A

Note. All information for the table above comes from the S&P SchoolMatters.com Web site unless otherwise noted.
*As described in numerous national reports, district and state calculation of graduation rates varies tremendously and are often inaccurate. Therefore, these rates should be read with skepticism.

Among the comparison districts, student enrollment has increased more quickly than CMS only in Clark County over the last 4 years.

Figure 4. Student Enrollment

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
Student Enrollment 2004	271,339	267,858	133,376	108,970	121,640
% Change from 2001	8%	16%	6%	10%	11%

Note. 2004 enrollment figures come from district or state Web sites, and 2001 figures come from Schoolmatters.com.

A summary of expenditures and ratios regarding each district's return on spending and average cost of student performance for each of the districts is presented in Figure 5. Comparing this data demonstrates that CMS spends more per student on both operating and instructional expenditures than any of the comparison districts. CMS's return on spending index is lower than Wake's but is higher than those of the other districts examined. CMS's average cost of student performance is lower than 3 of the 4 districts when adjusted for student needs and geographic costs.

S&P calculates these ratios and defines the return on spending index as "a measure of the average number of Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP) points that a school district or state achieves per $1,000 spent per student on core operations. Although the index is not specifically a measure of marginal return, it is a proxy for exploring the relationship between achievement and

spending." S&P defines the performance cost index as "a measure of the average amount of money per student that a school district or state spends on core operations, per point of Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP). The PCI is intended to serve as a starting point for further examination of the impact of spending decisions on student outcomes" with lower PCI ratings being more favorable once adjusted for demographics and local costs.

Figure 5. Expenditures and Return on Spending

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
2002 Spending Summary					
2002 Total Expenditures ($/Student)	7,738	8,349	6,880	8,480	9,198
2002 Operating Expenditures ($/Student)	5,877	5,799	5,689	6,612	6,946
2002 Instructional Expenditures ($/Student)	3,320	3,590	3,336	4,070	**4,413**
District Return on Spending					
2003 Return on Spending Index (RoSI)—Adjusted for Student Need	12.8	N/A	12.4	18.0	16.4
RoSI—Adjusted for Geographic Cost	10.4	N/A	9.2	15.9	13.7
RoSI—Adjusted for Student Need and Geographic Cost	13.3	N/A	12.3	19.7	17.4
District Average Cost of Student Performance					
2003 Performance Cost Index (PCI) — Adjusted for Student Need	78	N/A	81	55	61
PCI—Adjusted for Geographic Cost	96	N/A	108	63	73
PCI—Adjusted for Student Need and Geographic Cost	75	N/A	81	51	57

Note. All information for the table above comes from the S&P SchoolMatters.com website unless otherwise noted.[vi]

Total expenditures and expenditures broken down by function are laid out in Figure 6 for each district. CMS spent the most total amount in each category, but when operating expenditures are broken down by specific function, CMS spent less per student on instructional staff support than any of the districts except Wake, and spent significantly less on general administration and operations and maintenance than any of the other districts. CMS spent the most in total capital expenditures, but less on instructional equipment than Clark and did not purchase land or other equipment that year.

Figure 6. Expenditures by Function ($/Student) 2002

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
Total Expenditures					
Total Expenditures	7,738	8,349	6,880	8,480	9,198
Operating Expenditures	5,877	5,799	5,689	6,612	6,946
Capital Expenditures	1,455	2,077	1,097	1,409	1,771
Interest Payments	174	439	89	383	474
Non-K–12 Expenditures	231	35	5	75	7
Operating Expenditures					
Instruction	3,320	3,590	3,336	4,070	4,413
Instructional Staff Support	419	240	352	220	239
Pupil Support	334	190	331	399	414
General Administration	53	85	55	88	38
School Administration	382	443	253	482	503
Operations & Maintenance	683	578	479	521	355
Student Transportation	234	228	306	323	355
Food Services	234	189	306	260	368
Other Expenditures	218	256	272	251	260
Capital Expenditures					
Construction	1,047	1,612	823	1,297	1,654
Instructional Equipment	5	216	4	109	117
Land & Existing Structures	123	176	107	0	0
Other Equipment	281	73	164	4	0

Note. All information for the table above comes from the S&P SchoolMatters.com Web site.

Total revenue per student and revenue by source for each district are laid out in Figure 7. CMS has the highest total revenue per student but received fewer federal dollars than Duval and Broward. When broken down by source, CMS tied with Clark for the lowest interest earnings. Neither CMS nor Wake received revenue from student activity receipts. The difference in revenue from property tax among the districts is due to the fiscal dependence of Wake and CMS on their counties for local revenue.

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Figure 7. Revenue ($/Student) 2002

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
Total Revenue					
Total Revenue/Student	7,370	7,176	6,809	7,740	**8,407**
Revenue by Source					
Local	3,115	2,505	2,697	3,090	3,541
State	3,686	4,283	3,463	4,232	4,373
Federal	569	387	648	418	493
Local Revenue by Source					
Property Tax	2,675	2,040	2,148	0	0
School Lunch	86	87	116	164	188
Interest Earnings	81	102	80	35	35
Student Activity Receipts	89	171	224	0	0
Parent Government Contributions	0	0	0	2,740	3,199
Other Local Revenue	180	86	127	141	117

Note. All information for the table above comes from the S&P SchoolMatters.com Web site.

Governance

Board Structure

Board members in all four comparison districts serve 4-year terms. All four districts stagger the terms so that approximately half the board members are up for election every 2 years. While each comparison district has numerous incorporated towns or cities within their district boundaries, none of the mayors of those towns has an official role in governing the school systems. Three of the 4 comparison districts elect board members exclusively from geographic districts and have no at-large members. Two of the comparison districts have seven board members each, and the other 2 have nine. Duval County limits its board members to serving only two terms.

Figure 8. Board Structure

	Broward	Clark	Duval	Wake	CMS
# Board Members	9	7	7	9	9
Representation	7 by District, 2 At-Large	By District	By District	By District	6 By District, 3 At-Large
Length of Term	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years
Staggered Terms	Yes. Detail NA	4 at once, then 3 two years later	4 at once, then 3 two years later	4 at once, then 5 two years later	6 at once, then 3 two years later
Term Limits	NA	No	Two terms	No	No
Governance Role of Mayors	None	None	None	None	None
# Superintendents in Last 10 Years	NA	3, including current interim	4, including current interim	2	4, including current interim

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Board Meetings and Use of Committees

Information about board meetings in Broward could not be collected. Of the remaining three comparison districts, all hold bi-monthly board meetings, with Duval using one of those meetings as a preparatory Committee of the Whole meeting to streamline the agenda and prepare for the single official monthly meeting. In addition to its bi-monthly meetings, Wake County holds a Committee of the Whole meeting two times per month during which the board solicits information but does not make decisions. Similarly, Clark County and Duval County hold one or more "special" board meetings or "workshops" per month to address particular topics as needed.

All three comparison districts (information about Broward was not available) use board committees to focus on particular topics, such as purchasing, transportation, and serving as a liaison to the city. The frequency with which these committees meet ranges from weekly to every other month. Some board committees in the comparison district include citizen appointees; of particular interest is Clark County's designated Attendance Zone Advisory Committee made up of community members appointed by the board. Rather than making decisions regarding changes to attendance zones alone, the Clark County board involves community members explicitly to advise the district and share responsibility for the outcome.

District Budget: Operating and Facilities

Among the four comparison districts, Wake County is, not surprisingly, comparable to CMS in its dependence on the county for operating budget and issuing of bonds for facilities. Duval County's board has its own taxing authority, sets its own millage rate for its operating budget, and can issue its own "certification of participation," which is similar to bonds. Clark County school district receives its operating funding directly from the state through a formula driven by tax capacity and costs, and the district uses bond initiatives for facilities funding. Through an agreement with the state, however, Clark County school district can retain a portion of its property taxes to retire bonds and thus free up funds, requiring the district to issue bonds less frequently. The county, however, must approve any new debt the district issues.

District Management

Decentralization

All four comparison districts have regional superintendents who oversee specific geographic areas, though the specific nomenclature varies slightly. These area boundaries are separate from those that delineate the districts represented by board members and are not contiguous with them. In all four comparison districts, regional area superintendents are primarily responsible for selecting and evaluating principals. Regional superintendent offices are physically located within their geographic area and maintain a small staff, typically devoted to special education and student services within the region. In Clark County, since each of the regions contains more than 60,000 students, the district divides the regions into sub-regions and appoints assistant area superintendents to oversee schools within them. Duval County last year created an additional regional superintendent to oversee low-performing schools.

<u>Area Superintendents by Geographic Region in All Four Comparison Districts</u>

- Broward has four area superintendents.
- Clark has five regional superintendents, each of whom has two to three assistant area superintendents reporting to them.
- Duval has five regional superintendents based on geographic lines and a sixth regional superintendent for schools on the state supervisory list.
- Wake has six area assistant superintendents.

School Accountability

Each comparison district tracks student performance carefully and intervenes when performance is lower than expected. In Clark County, the district uses practice performance tests as benchmarks in addition to statewide tests. Every school must develop an annual school improvement plan based on performance scores. Low-performing schools are subject to state takeover and reconstitution, and the regional area superintendent takes responsibility for these schools. Resources at the district level are devoted to those schools through the office of the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, who is responsible for both curriculum development and staff development.

Similarly to Clark County, Duval County uses its own practice tests that mirror the state mandated tests. Each principal is responsible for addressing any problems revealed by those scores, and regional area superintendents track those efforts. Duval County has created a separate regional superintendent position to oversee schools on the state supervisory list. Those schools receive extra money allocated by the district, and principals have the option to reconstitute staff and to give salary bonuses to effective teachers. A director of instructional support services at the district is responsible for schools that are "challenged" but not labeled by the state. These schools are not grouped in their own region but only separated for planning purposes, and the director's office decides the amount of supplemental instruction money these schools receive in relation to what they request.

Wake County relies primarily on the state system of accountability that has been in place for 12 years and does not administer benchmark assessments other than the statewide performance tests. School performance is tracked by an "accountability czar" in the district's research office. The district has no schools considered low-performing by the state. When schools do not produce expected AYP growth, the department of curriculum and instruction is ultimately responsible for programming support, both initiating the conversation and supporting the school community through innovative programs. Area superintendents continue to supervise schools that are working to improve AYP but are not involved in the day-to-day programs at the schools.

Resource Allocation to Schools

Wake County and Clark County both allocate resources to schools using a baseline formula based on headcount. Wake develops formulae for additional funds above the baseline amount to be distributed, and Clark County adjusts its formulae for new growth. Duval and Broward Counties use a weighted student formula developed by the state and based on student

demographics and characteristics to distribute resources. All the districts use discretion in distributing additional funds such as state remedial monies, Title I funds, and other allocations.

School Autonomy

Information about school autonomy in Broward was not available. Of the remaining three comparison districts, all require schools to follow the same curriculum, though Duval offers schools a choice among limited district-approved options. Each district gives schools some limited choices in how to implement that curriculum, such as allowing the purchase of a program as long as it comes from school funds and is in addition to the adopted curriculum. Each comparison district gives principals a much higher degree of autonomy in managing the funds allocated to their schools than CMS. Clark requires that specified amounts be spent for certain items such as furniture, library supplies, and textbooks, but generally each district allows principals to move money from one account to another. Clark County requires principals to consult with teachers on spending. Wake County requires school-based councils to approve how funds will be spent to implement the school improvement plan, but final decisions are made by the principals.

Three of the four comparison districts have collective bargaining agreements for school personnel, but Wake County, like CMS, uses the state teacher contract and established procedures. Of the comparison districts, only Clark County hires teachers centrally, although principals select whom to interview from a pool of hired teachers and recommend that the new hire be assigned there. The other three districts use the central Human Resources office to screen applicants, but candidates are selected for interviews and hired by individual schools. In Wake, once employed, any teacher can apply for a transfer, and principals are required to interview them but are not required to hire them. In contrast, both Clark County and Duval County require a teacher to be in a school for 3 years before allowing them to transfer. Duval can move teachers wherever it chooses and does it for budget purposes so that if a school has fewer students than expected after 10 days, a teacher is moved to a school through "surplusing." In all four comparison districts, the regional area superintendents hire and supervise principals.

Broward, Duval, and Wake are required by state statute to have school-based councils that include parents and reflect the demographics of the students in the school. These councils have specific limited authority, approving or developing the school improvement plan. In Duval, the committee must approve how funds will be spent to implement the plan, and in Wake County the committee has authority to spend a small amount of specifically allocated funds. Clark County is required to have a school-based council, which must have at least two parent representatives and is responsible for developing the school improvement plan.

Managing Growth

All four comparison districts have faced large increases in student enrollment over the last several years and have implemented numerous policies to manage that growth.

Attracting and Managing Personnel

<u>Clark County</u>: Clark County, while exempt from Nevada's class-size cap, needs between 1,500 and 2,500 new teachers each year plus support staff. Though the state legislature sets

parameters around collective bargaining, each district negotiates separately, and Clark has become "predatory" in its hiring practices. The legislature recently allowed for signing bonuses of a one-time payment of $2,000 for first-year teachers. The district also provides incentives for retirement to teachers in at-risk schools and in certain high-need subject areas. The pay level in the district is slightly lower than the rest of the state, but the district nevertheless gains teachers who want to move from other rural districts within the state. The district also recruits and hires significant numbers of teachers from the Philippines, Central America, Mexico, and Canada. The district recruits principals from outside the district but not internationally.

The district has developed an alternative certification program at several local higher education institutions and draws heavily from retired troops in the area. Despite these efforts, three weeks before the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year, the district was short 400 teachers. The district anticipates a shortage of 150 teachers when school opens and plans to hire substitutes, cajole teachers to come out of retirement, identify communities that are reducing their teaching force, and hire individuals laid off there.

Duval County: The district needs new teachers and principals to meet growth in student enrollment and will need even more to comply with the state's cap on class size. At the same time, Duval is losing teachers and principals to surrounding districts with less challenging student populations and to Georgia, which pays higher salaries. Duval created a leadership development program in partnership with the business community and local higher education institutions for teachers who are put on the eligibility list for assistant principal positions. Once an assistant principal, the candidate is eligible for vice principal and then principal. The internal program was not producing quickly enough to meet the district's needs, so it now recruits from outside the district as well, particularly in large urban districts in the north that were laying off teachers and administrators.

To recruit teachers, the district visits every state east of Mississippi as part of a consortium of recruitment fairs. The district also holds its own recruitment fair in June with over 1,000 candidates who are interviewed and hired on the spot. Duval recruits on-line as well. The district has also developed its own alternative certification program with an online course. One-third of the district's hires do not have a college of education background.

Wake County: Teachers are employees of both the state and the local system. The only thing that varies in employment terms within the state is the local salary supplement among districts. Wake attracts a great number of teachers from surrounding districts, which the district attributes to paying higher teacher salaries as well as being a desirable place for teachers to work. This migration is not sufficient to fulfill the district's need for teachers, so it also recruits across the country, primarily in the southeast. The district has needed more principals in recent years and has developed them internally from assistant principals to principals at smaller schools to principals at bigger schools in order to develop a pipeline. Wake started the Wake Leadership Academy 4 years ago. A person in the district runs the program, but his salary is paid by a local foundation. Because the district needs more principals than it produces internally, Wake County also recruits principals from across North Carolina and neighboring states.

Broward County: No information was available.

Facilities

Facilities in all four comparison districts have been stressed by increasing student enrollment, and each has had to purchase new land, build new schools, renovate existing schools, and maximize the use of portables in high-growth areas of the county to accommodate the growth. Underutilization of some schools in all districts except Clark County has presented additional complications in allocating resources and student assignment. Duval County closed two schools in the last 4 years. These changes have required significant outreach and response to community concerns to clearly explain that there are limited resources with a growing population and that difficult decisions have to be made.

The rapid growth has also required coordination with other government entities involved in development, zoning, roads, and water lines to select sites for school construction. These changes have required the districts to develop sophisticated expertise in construction and facilities planning, either in-house, as Clark County has done, or through consultants, as used in Broward County and Duval County, to conduct detailed analyses and produce results as quickly as possible. All the comparison districts maintain a master plan for facilities that is updated annually with board approval. Significant funds have been required and more will be in the future, using the mechanisms described in the discussion of budgets for facilities above.

Clark County: Clark County opens a new school on the average of every 37 days, as it has done for the last two decades, so that 12 to 15 new schools open each year. Decisions about where to build new schools are based on sophisticated analyses of enrollment patterns and housing starts. The district works with the county's Geo file, and in-house district staff have become very sophisticated in geo-coding to calculate where students are going to be. The district is responsible for buying land in the area. To the district's advantage, developers are required to set aside land (that the district sometimes has to purchase) on which the district builds a prototype school. The district does not redesign each school but instead uses a single model for every school that is updated every 5 years. If the land is flat, the prototype can be built and opened as a new school within a year. The district manages construction itself after an ugly court battle over contractors, and they get their own permits.

Duval County: Duval County has pockets of the district that are exploding in growth where the district is maximizing their use of portables and seeking property as close to those schools as possible. The district has also added new wings to a number of school buildings each summer. Duval has not built many new schools in the last few years and is about to build the first new high school in 16 years. Many buildings are over 40 years old. Duval County is on the cusp of major changes as its facilities will become increasingly stressed when the district is forced to comply with state class-size caps by 2010 under which a school that had six classrooms of second graders will now have 12 to 14 classes. Those changes will require new buildings as well as reassignment and boundary changes that have not yet taken place. As the need for new construction intensifies, there is growing concern about finding land as the surrounding growth is shifting from previously rural areas to parts of the county that were already developed.

The district's Associate Superintendent for Support Operations develops and oversees a master plan for facilities including a 5-year capital plan that is updated each year based on demographic projections. While the district gets about $30 million in new capital dollars each

year, the Associate Superintendent believes a capital infusion of $150-60 million per year for 15 years is necessary to meet the district's growth needs.

Duval County has hired a national consultant, DeJong and Associates, on space management issues. Duval has asked this group to develop scenarios and options to be presented as part of a "solution document" to the board in May of 2006. Broward also hired this firm, whose services include developing models of growth by neighborhoods and by street, forecasting 10 years out. This information will provide the basis for decisions to be made about construction, boundaries, transportation, and portables.

As it develops its plans, the district has participated in the Jacksonville Growth Management Task Force, which was created by the mayor to involve all local entities interested in growth—including roads, water, schools, and transportation—to participate in joint planning efforts. During its 2005 session, the Florida legislature passed the Growth Management Act, which will require this type of coordination statewide.

Wake County: Wake County has had to issue a bond to build schools every 3 years over the last 15 years. Those funds have also included substantial renovations to existing schools, which the district has emphasized. The one bond that failed during that time included funds for technology upgrades, the need for which the district believes was not well understood in the community and has not been part of a subsequent initiative.

The district created a Growth Management Office 5 years ago under the Associate Superintendent for Facilities. The GMO staff has developed a tighter working relationship with the county planning office to determine the sites of new schools since state law requires counties to take responsibility for capital improvements and construction of schools. When land is needed for new schools, the county's role is to appropriate funds, but the district actually purchases the property. The school system is required to compete with any other purchaser for land in a tight real estate market.

The district GMO generates predictions for where the population growth will be and compares those to similar predictions by the County Commissioner's staff. Those numbers are then compared to available school seats, and decisions are made about where new schools are needed and where existing schools need to be expanded, either through portables or additions. The two offices are currently working together to agree on the same set of assumptions to be used in making these decisions (e.g., how frequently a school building needs to be renovated and how large a school should be). These assumptions will be incorporated into the district's master plan, developed by the Associate Superintendent for Facilities.

Broward County: No specific information about Broward was available.

Student Assignment

Student assignment presents an enormous challenge in each of the four comparison districts. All four districts have a well-respected magnet system that originated to avoid or get out from under desegregation orders, and all the districts have expanded their magnet programs since race was no longer a required consideration. Clark implemented a voluntary agreement in 1971 and was declared unitary in 1981. In Duval, busing ended in 1991 as a result of developing

a series of magnet programs in cooperation with plaintiffs that the court approved with ongoing supervision. That court supervision ended when declared unitary in 1999. Wake has never been subject to a consent decree; the district developed the magnet system as part of its efforts to avoid such litigation. No such information was available for Broward.

A primary goal of the magnet system in each of the districts remains to diversify the schools. All of these districts maintain both magnet schools as well as magnet programs within a school. These magnet systems are available to students across the district by lottery, and some special programs have entrance requirements. Once declared unitary, the only change Duval made to its magnet system was to take race out of the weighting for the lottery and replace it with SES. Magnet programs are highly desired placements within all the districts, and non-magnet schools in Duval recently demanded to be allowed to market their own programs to compete.

Other than magnet schools, student assignment in these districts is primarily based on neighborhood schools. Clark changes school assignment zones annually because it opens 12 to 15 new schools each year. Each year, the Attendance Zone Advisory Committee, comprising citizen representatives of the board, meets at length in public meetings to analyze detailed information and then makes recommendations to the board, which adopts or amends those plans. Particularly since it encompasses such a large geographic area, Clark attempts to pair schools with nearby feeder schools and use natural boundaries such as dangerous or wide streets. The district has also made a commitment to protect high school seniors and most juniors from reassignment.

Duval assigns students primarily to neighborhood schools, but it allows students to apply for "special transfers" on a case-by-case basis, depending on space. The board recently adopted a policy that removes receiving principals from the process so that they are no longer involved in approving special transfers into their schools. To date, Duval has had to make only a few boundary changes to neighborhood schools, which involved extensive public board debate and explanation, but the district anticipates having to make substantial changes in the near future as it has maximized the use of portables.

Wake revisits its attendance zones annually. In drawing school boundaries the district annexes "nodes" or small residential sub-areas into a school's attendance zones in order to maintain its policy of no school having more than 40 percent of its students qualify for reduced lunch and an achievement level of no less than 25 percent of students below grade level.[vii] As noted, the district changed the name of its student assignment office to the Growth Management office 5 years ago, which maintains a detailed Web site oriented to parents, explicitly listing criteria such as maximizing use of facilities as part of its assignment plans.

Clark and Wake maintain their own transportation systems, including hiring drivers and leasing buses while Duval outsources the driving to three different companies. The costs of transportation have risen significantly in all of these districts. These districts all offer transportation to magnet students but limit it either by geographic region or more remote pick-up and drop-off points.

Communication with Limited English Proficient Students

Three of the comparison districts—Broward, Duval, and Clark—have long experience serving a growing population of non-English speakers and have devoted significant resources to communicating with these families, including translating forms and publications as well as providing translators at the district and school levels. Wake County's growth of limited English proficient (LEP) students has been more limited, and therefore its services are not as extensive.

Clark County: The fastest growing portion of the student population is LEP, and the district serves students from all over the world. It is contingent upon each school to engage this population in activities. Translation services are provided though inadequately staffed because qualified individuals are difficult to find. A number of incentives and training programs are in place to fill those positions as well as hire bilingual paraprofessionals. They have a number of certified teachers in these languages, though they are difficult to find. Every form is translated and the front desk of almost all schools includes a staff person who speaks Spanish, which is the language of the majority of LEP families. The district has a specific point person for LEP speakers who heads the second language programs in the district and the intake center.

Duval County: Duval has 88 languages in the district and uses five different vendors to translate district and school forms as required by state law, including library forms, district plans, transcripts, and immunization records. If a form is sent home to parents, the district translates it into the top 12 languages, which covers 80 percent of families. A district newsletter goes to parents three times per year and is translated into four languages. Individual schools also write and translate newsletters if they have a large LEP population.

Any school can request a face-to-face translator, which is paid for by Title III and district funds. The district uses translation phone banks based in Portland if a person who speaks the particular language is not available. Every school that has 15 speakers of one language is required to have a translator on site. The district maintains bilingual staff to deliver tests that assess program entrance criteria.

Parents of limited English speakers have two choices—students may attend neighborhood schools and be served by a teacher with ESOL training, or the student is eligible for free transportation to a school with a concentrated population with a more intense program and level of resources, such as paraprofessionals and translation. There are 16 centers, and those schools have made significant NCLB progress.

Wake County: LEP speakers have not been a large part of Wake's growth in student enrollment as the demographics of the district's students have not changed drastically over the last 10 years. In that time, the district's LEP population has increased from 2 percent to 8 percent. As a result, they have hired additional ESOL teachers to teach students who speak a range of languages. The district has a full-time Spanish-speaking staff person in their Welcome Center, and district forms and test reports have been translated.

Local Education Foundations

Local Education Funds (LEFs) are community-based advocacy organizations that seek to engage local citizens in public education reform. Though independent of their local school

districts, LEFs work closely with public school administrators, teachers, and boards, and partner with parents, community leaders, businesses, and students. They work to actively promote involvement in public education by all segments of their communities, accountability and achievement of high standards by all students, and improvement in the quality of public schools. They also generate resources for public education by facilitating and managing investments from government, businesses, and philanthropic organizations. Neither Clark County nor Broward County has an LEF. The LEFs for Wake and Duval are described below.

Wake County: As a community-based public school advocacy organization, Wake Education Partnership links human and material resources to strengthen the district's public schools. In addition to fostering action-oriented community involvement in the Wake County Public Schools, the Partnership seeks to leverage the investment of private contributions to ensure the greatest possible impact in every school. Specifically, Wake Education Partnership targets efforts to strengthen the achievement of students by actively participating as an advocate, convener, coordinator, and facilitator of community involvement in the public schools. Three strategic goals guide the Partnership's intent to effect change in the community and the public schools and to improve the academic achievement of all students: (1) provide leadership and professional development for teachers, principals, and administrators to raise the performance level of those charged with educating students; (2) foster community engagement to build public understanding and create meaningful dialogue between schools and the community that leads to action; and (3) conduct research and advocacy regarding education issues to cultivate knowledgeable community members on fundamental education issues and needs.

The Partnership's goal of raising $1.14 million supports the innovative programs that strengthen student achievement, provide leadership development for teachers and administrators, and encourage action-oriented community involvement in Wake County's public schools. Eighty-nine percent of its $1.5 million budget goes directly into programs, while 11 percent goes into administrative and fundraising costs.

Duval County: The mission of the Alliance for World Class Education is to advocate Duval County Public School students, complementing the School Board and Superintendent by leveraging resources and influence in areas where it can provide the greatest impact to create a world-class education system.

As a venture capital fund for public education, the fund invests in strategically focused programs and ideas that align with the priorities of the Duval County Public Schools. Among its success stories are a campaign that raised $4 million for a state-of-the-art professional development facility; a 3-year program that brings together a senior level executive, a principal, and knowledgeable coach to improve student performance by infusing business strategies into school improvement operations; and a report identifying 150 recommendations for how to improve the district.

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[i] This data comes from the www.nevadareportcard.com Web site.
[ii] This data comes from the www.doe.nv.gov Web site and is for the school year 2002–2003 (which is what S&P refers to as the 2003 school year).
[iii] This data comes from the www.doe.nv.gov Web site and is for the school year 2002–2003 (which is what S&P refers to as the 2003 school year).

iv This data comes from **www.ccsd.net**, the Clark County school district Web site and is for the 2000–2001 school year.

v This data comes from the **www.nevadareportcard.com** Web site.

vi Standard & Poor's collects data from publicly available sources, and where data are not available publicly, they obtain data from the states themselves. While the vast majority of states have provided data for SchoolMatters.com, some states have not yet provided data. While Nevada has expressed an interest in providing their data, it has not yet been able to do so.

vii Wake County's 2005–2006 Student Assignment Plan Resource Center is located at http://www.wcpss.net/growth-management/student-assignment/2005-06/.

APPENDIX 9
CMS PROPOSED 2005 CAPITAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Charlotte-Mecklenburg School
Proposed 2005 Capital Needs Assessment
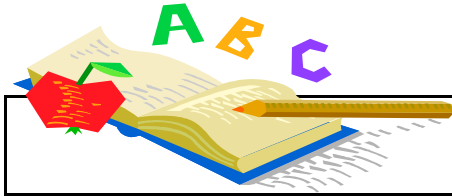
				Year 1-3 Budget Estimate	Year 4-10 Budget Estimate	Ten Year Total
A. LIFECYCLE RENEWAL/RENOVATIONS						
	1		**Lifecycle Replacement/Plumbing**	$1,585,000	$12,067,800	$13,652,800
	2		**Lifecycle Replacement/Roofing**	$597,000	$9,463,623	$10,060,623
	3		**Lifecycle Replacement/HVAC**	$6,207,000	$23,586,200	$29,793,200
	4		**Lifecycle Replacement/Paving/ Sitework**	$400,000	$3,295,250	$3,695,250
	5		**Lifecycle Replacement/Electrical**	$190,000	$4,310,000	$4,500,000
	6		**Lifecycle Replacement/Stadium Renovations**	$8,050,000	$18,627,550	$26,677,550
	7		**Lifecycle Replacement/High School Tracks**	$1,712,000	$3,063,000	$4,775,000
	8		**Lifecycle Replacement/Windows**	$0	$5,584,500	$5,584,500
	9		**Lifecycle Replacement/Wooden Gym Bleachers & Floors**	$335,000	$8,783,000	$9,118,000
	10		**Lifecycle Replacement/Auditoriums**	$3,000,000	$4,125,000	$7,125,000
	11		**Renewal and Renovations/Existing Schools**	$118,498,000	$372,861,709	$491,359,709
			Total Lifecycle Renewal	**$140,574,000**	**$465,767,632**	**$606,341,632**
B. MANDATES AND INITIATIVES						
	1		**Instructional Technology**	$3,500,000	$7,675,700	$11,175,700
	2		**Legal Mandates**			
		a	ADA Compliance	$800,000	$3,200,000	$4,000,000
		b	Indoor Air Quality/Asbestos	$3,200,000	$15,600,000	$18,800,000
	3		**Initiatives**			
		a	Surveillance Upgrades	$0	$4,331,983	$4,331,983
		b	Fire Alarm System Upgrade	$1,879,000	-$53	$1,878,947
		c	Structural Evaluation and Repair	$2,000,000	$8,289,000	$10,289,000
		d	Intercom Integration	$1,331,000	$1,870,000	$3,201,000
		e	Performance Contracting	$2,000,000	$3,000,000	$5,000,000
		f	Modular Middle	$10,200,000	$0	$10,200,000
			Total Mandates and Initiatives	**$24,910,000**	**$43,966,630**	**$68,876,630**
C. GROWTH NEEDS						
	1	**Existing Schools**				
		a	Additions	$36,754,000	$75,571,000	$112,325,000
	2	**New Schools**				
		a	New Elementary Schools (34)	$110,954,000	$431,982,000	$542,936,000
		b	New Middle Schools (7)	$51,334,000	$128,335,000	$179,669,000
		c	New High Schools (6)	$54,282,000	$271,410,000	$325,692,000
		d	New Special Schools			
			.1 Pre-K (3 addns, 2 ctrs)	$0	$32,782,086	$32,782,086
	3	**Expansion of Support Facilities**		$8,500,000	$15,050,000	$23,550,000
	4	**Site Acquistions**				
		a	Sites for New Schools (39)	$76,160,000	$0	$76,160,000
		b	Sites for Support Facilities (4)	$7,200,000	$0	$7,200,000
			Total Growth Needs	**$345,184,000**	**$955,130,086**	**$1,300,314,086**
			Grand Total	**$510,668,000**	**$1,464,864,348**	**$1,975,532,348**

APPENDIX 10
CITIZENS' TASK FORCE ON CMS STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE ON MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Citizens' Task Force on CMS
Stakeholders' Conference on
Management and Governance

Agenda

September 24, 2005
Charlotte Convention Center
7:30 AM–12:30 PM

7:30–8:00 AM	Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:00–8:15	Call to Order
8:15–8:25	Welcome and Introductions
8:25–9:25	Presentation of Data Collection & Models
9:25–9:35	Travel to break out rooms
9:450–10:30	Small group discussion of management models
10:30–10:40	Break
10:40–11:40	Small group discussion of governance models
11:40–11:45	Small group wrap up
11:45–11:50	Travel to main room
11:50–12:15 PM	Consolidated data on models presentation
12:15–12:30	Closing remarks
12:30	Adjourn

Thank you for your participation!

Citizens' Task Force on CMS

Stakeholders' Conference on
Management and Governance
Descriptions of the Management Models

The following stories offer a descriptive account of how implementation of this model could play out in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. It is based on the key elements that define each model and on trends occurring in communities with similar models.

Management Models

1. SINGLE DISTRICT: STRONG CEO/LIMITED BOARD

CMS remains a large, consolidated district composed of urban and suburban schools. A strong, decisive Superintendent leads the district and holds executive authority to make crucial choices aimed at raising the academic performance of an ever-growing and increasingly diverse student population.

Functioning as a Chief Executive Officer, or CEO, the Superintendent assumes a heightened leadership role on personnel and operational issues. This notable shift in power has freed School Board members to focus on education policy and empowered the Superintendent to become proactive about local educational needs. In return for increased autonomy, the Superintendent is contracted by the board to meet specific performance measures each year and is held accountable for results.

Adept at analysis and problem solving, the Superintendent draws on career experiences, strategic know-how and a leadership style acquired outside the traditional public education realm. A Chief Academic Officer, or CAO, reports to the Superintendent and complements the CEO's acute business sense with expertise in curriculum, instruction, learning and schools. This pairing is helping to bring best practices from both the education and business sectors to improve local public schools.

Managed instruction is the prevailing theory of action, and the Superintendent has an executive capacity to implement policies and programs more consistently at the school level than under previous management models. Schools once deemed under-performing are steadily improving under a centralized supervision and accountability system. Overall, parents and other stakeholders are beginning to see an increase in school quality across the district, in part, because the Superintendent has reduced variation among schools. From Kindergarten through 8th grade, instructional programs are uniform and parents know what reading or math curriculum to expect, no matter which school their children attend. In high schools, on the other hand, the district has introduced some variation in its programs as a strategy to raise student achievement.

Educators, parents and other community members recognize significant changes occurring in how things get done, as the Superintendent assumes more personnel and operational authority and public visibility compared to the School Board. Today's Superintendent can assign principals to schools without board approval and promotes streamlining measures, such as outsourcing transportation, food service, school construction and other non-core business areas that in the past often drained resources and delayed progress. On a variety of fronts, the Superintendent is asserting strong leadership and is equipped to make crucial decisions that re-focus attention and align resources to the core business of schools—educating students.

1. Single District: Strong CEO/Limited Board

- Uniform K–8 program; centrally managed high schools with optional programs
- Transfer authority for personnel and operations from Board to Superintendent
- Performance contract for Superintendent
- Non-traditional business leadership paired with Chief Academic Officer
- Transfer school construction to city/county agency
- Outsource non-core business functions
- Managed Instruction with greater Superintendent authority and focus on core business

Management Models

2. SINGLE DISTRICT: DECENTRALIZED GEOGRAPHICALLY

CMS remains a large, consolidated system, but it is now divided into geographic areas that operate like districts within the larger system. Each area comprises a cluster of about 40 schools and serves 20,000 to 40,000 students. Decentralization has occurred by releasing some control at the central office level and distributing control among several newly formed area offices.

While the Superintendent still leads the district, this chief position is flanked by a formidable group of direct-reports called Area Superintendents. One Area Superintendent is assigned to each geographic area and holds responsibility for school operations and student performance—pre-K through 12—in that area. The Area Superintendents and their staff work from area offices that span the county, bringing administrators who were once at the central office much closer to the schools and neighborhoods they serve.

The Superintendent, supported by a streamlined central office staff, retains authority for district-wide policies and programming yet sets only basic guidelines that allow for choice and variation across the areas. Each area has the freedom to decide its own programs, organization and resource allocation based on parameters specified by the central office—a blend of the managed instruction and performance management theories of action.

Such managed choice empowers each Area Superintendent to build a sub-system that reflects the identified strengths, needs and preferences of area students, families and educators. Distribution of funds and resources appropriately reflect student enrollment and program needs too. While these geographic areas acquire considerable autonomy under this structure, they remain accountable to the central office for the academic performance of students.

With this management model, parents, educators and other stakeholders gain access to administrators who are focused on only schools in their assigned area rather than the whole system. They also gain new opportunities to be heard and to influence decisions that have an impact on area schools, such as serving on Area Councils that advise the Area Superintendent on policy and operation issues. Overall, county residents find that groups of schools in district are obtaining the freedom to act in ways that improve student learning.

2. Single District: Decentralized Geographically

- Divide district into geographic areas with 40,000 +/− students
- Each area led by Area Superintendent and supported by an area office
- Area offices formed by reallocation of central office staff
- District Superintendent and central office set district wide parameters
- Distribute resources based on enrollment and program needs
- Areas decide program, organization, and resource allocation within central office parameters
- Create Area Councils to advise Area Superintendent on policy and operation issues
- Blend Managed Instruction and Performance Empowerment

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Management Models

3. SINGLE DISTRICT: DECENTRALIZED TO SCHOOLS

While CMS remains a large, consolidated district, far-reaching decentralization measures have devolved authority from the central office to individual schools. This structural change has transformed the district into a system of independent and autonomous schools.

The district has set standards for school performance and developed an overarching accountability plan under which every school must operate. Individual schools have the freedom to choose any innovative design or established program that will help its students meet the district's achievement standards. Variations in school-led choices about curriculum and instruction result in a diversified portfolio of school programs within the district. These systemic changes align to the performance empowerment theory of action.

Parents and community stakeholders serve on School Councils that guide and shape school development. Each School Council is responsible for allocating the operating budget, developing improvement plans, approving major program adoptions and policies, and advising district administrators on the hiring of the principal.

Principals hold considerable authority and are empowered to create their own staffing models, hire staff and pursue resources that serve the particular needs of their student population. A shift in the district's resource allocation method offers principals more flexibility on budgeting decisions than the previous staffing allocation formula. With a new weighted student formula, funding is linked to a student's demographic profile and allocated to a school based on the make-up of its student body.

Under this management model, the School Board functions as an authorizer of schools rather than an operator of schools. In addition to the district's traditional schools, new schools that operate autonomously but are held accountable by the district are opening in a variety of settings across the county. These publicly funded new schools, both large and small, have formed through community partnerships with museums, universities, Businesses, and parent and neighborhood groups. The district encourages such school creation and instructional innovation as a way to meet local educational demand and alleviate overcrowding.

3. Single District: Decentralized to Schools

- Independent and semi-autonomous schools
- Central office accountability

  1) Ensures equity
  2) Builds capacity
  3) Sets standards and holds schools accountable
  4) Provides central services

- Schools accountability

  5) Achievement of NC Content Standards
  6) Allocation of time & resources

- Equity achieved with weighted student funding
- Create school councils

  7) allocate operating budget and approve policies, programs and improvement plans
  8) advise on the hiring of the principal

- District Accountability Plan
- Board develops community partnerships for new schools
- Board is authorizer rather than operator
- Performance empowerment theory of action

Governance Models

1. CURRENT MODEL

- 9 member board
- 3 members elected at-large and 6 members elected by districts
- Board elects chair
- 4 year staggered terms (6/3)
- Model in Broward County, FL and Fairfax County, VA

2. ELECTED AT-LARGE BOARD

- 5 or 7 member board
- All members elected at-large
- Board elects chair
- 2 year staggered terms (2/3 or 3/4)
- Most common model in U.S.

3. DISTRICT REPRESENTATION/ ELECTED AT-LARGE

- 7 member board
- Election process

  9) District primary election
  10) Top 2 move to general election
  11) 1 from each district elected county-wide

- 4-year staggered terms (3/3)
- Appointed Chair 7th member, 2 or 5 year term
- Model in San Diego, CA Unified District and Seattle, WA

4. DISTRICT ELECTED & APPOINTED AT-LARGE

- 9 member board
- 6 members elected by districts
- 3 members appointed by County Commission
- Board selects chair
- 3–4 year staggered terms (3 elected, 2 appointed/3 elected, 1 appointed)
- A form of model in Washington, DC

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Citizens′ Task Force on CMS: Governance and Management Structure Study

CITIZENS′ TASK FORCE ON CMS

In March 2005, Foundation for the Carolinas formed a task force of sixteen citizen leaders to oversee a study of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. The study would focus on the ideal governance and management structure requirements for CMS. The task force, co-chaired by Cathy Bessant, Bank of America's Chief Marketing Officer, and Harvey Gantt, former Ch9r1otte Mayor and Managing Partner at Gantt Huberman Architects, is working with national education consultants from American Institutes for Research and Cross & Joftus to identify and report the best governance and management structure for CMS and its extraordinary growth.

TASK FORCE CHARGE

With over 118,000 students enrolled, CMS is the 23rd largest school district in the United States and the largest school system in the Carolinas. A reflection of our high quality of life, people are pouring into Mecklenburg County and directly impacting our schools. In the next decade, total CMS enrollment is projected to swell by an additional 50,000 students.

This Task Force process has been designed to answer two strategic questions:

1. What is the ideal governance model for our public school system?

2. What is the ideal school management structure required to serve a rapidly growing Mecklenburg County?

TASK FORCE COMMUNICATION

To learn more about the Task Force, please visit www.fftc.org and click on CMS Task Force. A summary of comments made by participants of the Stakeholder Conference will be available on that website. You may also send an electronic message to the Task Force members at cmstaskforce@fftc.org, or send a letter to 217 S. Tryon St., Charlotte, NC 28202.

NEXT STEPS

Input gathered from the Stakeholders' Conference will be utilized by the Task Force to help guide their final recommendations, which will be reported to the public by December.

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Citizens' Task Force on CMS: Governance and Management Structure Study

Stakeholders' Conference

Thank you for participating in today's Stakeholders' Conference on the future of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System. Your opinions, thoughts and ideas are very important to the Task Force and will be of great value to their work. We appreciate your time and willingness to participate in this process.

The information in this packet will provide you with a description of the Stakeholders' Conference, background on the Task Force and ways to communicate with its members.

STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE

Today's conference will familiarize you with a summary of research conducted by the Task Force's consultants. In addition to presenting major themes that emerged from their study, consultants will also offer several management and governance options for discussion. After they present the models, participants will assemble in small groups and engage in a discussion about the options. Each group will have a professional facilitator who will help lead the conversation. Additionally, the consultants who have studied CMS will be available to answer specific questions. At the end of the meeting, participants will reconvene in the main room to learn about common themes that emerged throughout the day.

ABOUT THE TOPIC

For our purposes, school management means how schools are organized and supervised. Today's discussion may include the structure of school administration, how the district is organized and the superintendent's role in relation to the School Board.

When we discuss governance, we mean the organization and responsibility of the School Board and other elected officials. Today, we may consider how many members serve on a School Board, how they are elected and the role of the board in relation to the superintendent.