

For the Record

Defining terms

We should never lose sight of the fact that the achievement gap is not by any means as innocuous as the phrase sounds. Achievement in this case means being proficient in reading, writing, math and a host of other skills critical to not only a sound education but a life more richly lived. We don't educate our children in order for them to prove they know something, but so that they will actually know it.

Gap in this case means the historic difference between minority test scores and those of the majority. Measuring this gap and seeking to close it has a long history as well. To their credit, our schools started breaking down and analyzing results by race, socio-economic status and other factors long before state and federal rules required them to do so. And while there has been progress, success is still far off by any measure.

We applaud the recent efforts by Rev. Gene Hatley and the NAACP to remind us that the goal is still unmet, that more needs to be done and that parents, students, teachers and the community as a whole need to rededicate themselves to this goal. Too often, victory is defined as moving in the right direction.

A debate worth having

Take either side you want, but show up at the Impeachment debate next Tuesday, January 15 at 7 p.m. in the Century Center. It's free. See live human beings discussing politics and why it matters. Bring the kids. Thrill to the sound of Constitutional questions, critical inquiry, reason and an unrelenting review of the current administration.

More importantly, no bloviating pundits and no commercials — truly a once in a lifetime experience.

Welcome back

The university is in full swing again as of this week so we're taking this opportunity to remind those of you who spent an extended stay elsewhere that we're still short on water around here. The lakes have refilled a bit, but the Stage 2 Water Restrictions remain in effect, limiting use of water for irrigation, washing vehicles and decks, filling swimming pools and other nonessential uses.

OWASA is also asking that we check for leaks and install low-flow fixtures if we haven't already.

There's no way to tell exactly when this drought will lift or how soon the next one will be upon us. Dealing with this one, and preparing for the next, requires not only emergency measures but a more water-conscious approach to how we live.

If you need some advice in this area, drop by the OWASA website at www.owasa.org. If you need a low-flow showerhead, you can drop by their offices at 400 Jones Ferry Rd. and pick one up no charge.

THE CARRBORO CITIZEN

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Public participation needed at Comprehensive Plan session

What's a comprehensive plan and why should you care about the one being developed for Orange County? Excellent questions both, and citizens deserve good answers.

A comprehensive plan serves as a public document that guides policy decisions pertaining to a wide range of local issues, from housing to economic development to transportation. The current Orange County Land Use-Comprehensive Plan was developed in 1981 and was only intended to cover 20 years. Given this, county staff has embarked on an update process, begun in 2006, to gather public opinion and data for inclusion in a new plan.

Maybe comprehensive plans often receive so little citizen attention because people don't know about them until they are approved. There are many things competing for our attention and this is just one, but comprehensive plans play an extremely important role in shaping the long-term future of a community and, therefore, should grab our attention.

We are writing to encourage you to voice your opinion at an important public input session that will be held in Chapel Hill at the Southern Human Services Building on Monday, January 28 at 7:00 p.m. The input session will begin with a formal time for citizens to speak at a podium about what they would like to see in the plan.

Afterward, county staff will be stationed throughout the room, each representing one of the seven plan elements: Economic Development, Housing, Land Use, Natural and Cultural Systems, Recreation and Parks, Services/Utilities and Community Facilities, and Transportation. During this period, staff will be in a listening mode, giving county residents a chance to talk about important goals they desire to see included within each of the elements.

Therefore, we hope citizens will come out to provide input and help shape the seven plan elements that will guide our county's fu-

ture. We think it is important for the plan to reflect the collective opinions and visions of Orange County residents.

The Community Action Network (CAN) and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce are two of the seven organizations in the Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition, a broad coalition of community and business organizations, which — in addition to encouraging public participation in the planning process — is interested in ensuring the Comprehensive Plan Update will engender sustainable, just and equitable outcomes.

CAN and the chamber both believe that the Comprehensive Plan needs to be an affirming document, directing appropriate forms of commercial and residential development to designated areas. Further, CAN and the chamber believe it is important that the Comprehensive Plan recommend enabling ordinances and administrative mechanisms that encourage, reward and expedite desirable development.

Your participation in forging Orange County's goals is important, and we all know what happens if we as citizens fail to participate. If you are interested in learning more about the Comprehensive Plan Update Process, please visit the County's dedicated website at: http://www.co.orange.nc.us/planning/compre_cpupdate.asp. If you would like to provide feedback to the Comprehensive Plan Coalition or receive more information, please send an email to the following address: cpufedback@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you on Monday the 28th at 7 p.m.

Fred Black is Chair of the Community Action Network.

Adam Klein is Director of Government Relations and Economic Development at the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce.



FRED BLACK



ADAM KLEIN

Governor Easley should just say no to feds' "abstinence-only" education dollars

PAIGE JOHNSON

What do North Carolina's signature Smart Start and More at Four programs for preschoolers have in common with comprehensive sex education? All three efforts do what sound public policy is intended to do. They make wise use of our investment in preparing young people for future success.

More at Four and comprehensive sex education also provide Gov. Easley with an opportunity to make a lasting impact on the well-being of North Carolina's young, the way Smart Start did for Gov. Hunt.

Gov. Easley has championed More at Four, aimed at preparing four year olds to succeed as students throughout their academic lives. Our middle and high school students deserve the same attention and preparation for future success.

To help young adults gain access to life-saving information that will prepare them for a healthy tomorrow, Gov. Easley should reject the federal government's highly restrictive Title V Abstinence Only Sex Education money and establish state support for comprehensive sex education.

All young North Carolinians deserve the opportunity to succeed. Gov. Easley has proven himself a champion of education, taking controversial stands in support of access to education for all, including North Carolina's immigrant students.

In the sex education debate, Gov. Easley does not have to stand alone. Fourteen states, including most recently Virginia, have rejected Federal Title V money because they understand that it is tied to biased federal mandates

that do nothing to help prepare young people for a successful future.

Many of these governors publicly stated that they decided not to spend precious state dollars on unproven programs. The federal government requires states to match three of the four dollars they receive from Title V with state money.

States that receive Title V must adhere to "8 Points" as defined by the federal government. Not a single point, or mandate, includes providing young people with information on birth control or the prevention of sexually transmitted infections. In fact, in 2007 federal Title V administrators told state Title V recipients that they must ensure that funded programs and curricula "do not promote contraception and/or condom use."

Until 1996, North Carolina recognized and understood the need to teach students about the benefits of birth control and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Most North Carolinians who attended middle school or high school prior to 1996 remember receiving comprehensive sex education.

In 1995, the NC General Assembly passed legislation to do away with comprehensive sex education. In 1996, the federal government created Title V, a \$50-million-per-year entitlement program to fund abstinence-only sex education.

Recently, several major studies have demonstrated that abstinence-only programs are ineffective in changing teenagers' sexual behavior. Most notably, a 10-year federally funded evaluation initiated by Congress proved abstinence-only education makes little difference in the lives of young people.

Guest Column

MARY JANE P. BAKER

Tagging and gang graffiti in Carrboro has recently increased dramatically. Every time I drive by the empty Triem building at the bottom of Greensboro Street, there is more spray, especially on the warehouse. At the end of Hillsborough Street, where it meets Old 86, there are large gang signs. These signs are painted at the entrances of towns to mark them as the territory of particular gangs. Once you start looking, you can see smaller tags around town on buildings, road signs and other surfaces. The Carrboro police officer I talked with said there was an increase in the last months. When I asked what was being done about it, he had a disturbing reply. First, he suggested, Orange County and Carrboro law enforcement is not taking gang presence as seriously as Alamance, Chatham and Durham counties. And that this tagging was on private property where the Carrboro police cannot intervene unless property owners complain.

It would be naïve for Carrboro citizens to believe this is harmless fun or art—just Google "latino gang graffiti in Orange County, NC" for a reality check. On December 23, an increased amount of gang graffiti in several areas of Chatham County was reported by NBC17. Chatham authorities believe the spray-painted symbols represent nationally known gangs from Los Angeles, Chicago and Texas. You can read the story at <http://www.nbc17.com/midatlantic/ncn/news.apx.-content-articles-NCN-2007-12-23-0002.html>. The story was important enough to make the National Youth Gang Center website at www.iir.com/nygc/summaries.cfm

I don't believe the ugliness of gang tagging or the violence of gang activity is something we want to see here. And the people coming from Latin American countries don't want to see this happening to their kids. There are many families here with young teenagers susceptible to recruitment by criminal gangs. Having their kids recruited to gangs is not why they moved here to work.

The spray painting is ugly and it's dangerous, and it's not what Carrboro is about. I believe we should have a zero tolerance policy about it — these scrawls should be painted over as soon as they show up.

What can we do to address this growing problem? I have a few suggestions. Read up on gang-related activity in our area. Contact the Carrboro Police and Orange County Sheriffs Department and complain. If property owners will not take care of the graffiti themselves, as down at the abandoned Triem site, the Town of Carrboro should impose some sort of fine. If we can fine for oversized legitimate business signs, as down at the old depot site where there was a huge coffee roasting sign, we should be able to fine property owners for allowing these big ugly tags to remain on their buildings. These signs could be painted over by folks having to do community service for one reason or another. Paint could be donated by Home Depot or Lowe's or Fitch, or it could come from the paint recycling center at the Orange County Landfill.

This problem should be addressed now, before it gets worse. The graffiti only invites more graffiti.

In today's world of highly sexualized media and rising rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, it makes no sense to invest North Carolina's public dollars in a sex education program that tells teachers not to "promote contraception and/or condom use." Roughly one-half of our high school students admit to having sex even after receiving "abstinence until marriage only" sex education. Other statistics point to the consequences of this gap.

Every day in North Carolina, 53 teenage girls, 15 to 19 years of age, become pregnant. In 2006, 405 young girls in North Carolina aged 10 to 14 became pregnant. The HIV and sexually transmitted disease rates for African-Americans are approximately 10 times the rates of whites.

As Gov. Easley looks to make his mark on history, he might consider the future health and well-being of North Carolina's next generation.

Comprehensive sex education helps young people delay sexual activity while also providing them with information they need to make lifelong responsible decisions. Sometimes federal mandates are out of step with what a state really needs.

Title V is out of step with the nationally recognized progress North Carolina has made in creating effective programs that educate our young.

For a governor committed to preparing young people for their future, rejecting Title V and creating funding for comprehensive sex education offers a lasting impression.

Paige Johnson is the director of Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina