

NAACP NEWS

Newsletter of Alexandria, VA Branch #7043

Spring 2010

NAACP reacts to school's poor rating

Federal education officials have singled out Alexandria's only public high school as one of the nation's poorest-performing schools, putting it on track for dramatic instructional reforms fueled by new federal funds.

T.C. Williams has been designated a "persistently low achieving school". That's a new designation created by an Obama administration effort to funnel more money to troubled schools. Under a definition of "persistently Low achieving" created by the Virginia Department of Education and approved by the federal government, T.C. Williams was singled out for reform after two consecutive years of poor standardized testing results. The new federal label highlights the extent to which it has failed to lift the achievement of its large population of minority students, whose performance lags behind those of white students at the school.

T. C. Williams landed at the bottom of Virginia schools with 84 percent of students scoring proficient in reading and 77 percent in math.

NAACP Branch president Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl attended a breakfast meeting Mar 10 with the Superintendent of Schools Dr. Morton Sherman, Alexandria Mayor Bill Euille, Northern Virginia Urban League President and CEO Ms Lavern J. Chatman, Chairwoman of Alexandria City Public School Board Ms. Yvonne Folkerts and the first African American school board chair in Virginia Mr. Ferdinand Day to discuss the issue of the under performance of the school system.

Joyce Sanchez and Sallie Craft, co-chairs of the branch's education committee and others have also met with Dr. Sherman to discuss several education issues.

T. C. Williams boasts a \$100-million state-of-the-art facility with a rooftop garden and green technology. Participation in Advanced Placement courses ranks among the highest in the country. And more than 80 percent of graduates last year went to college.

Yet, in March, it became one of 17 in Virginia - and the only one in Northern Virginia - to be dubbed a "persistently lowest achieving school," as determined by standardized test results.

"We are almost a bimodal school division. Three-quarters of our kids do extraordinarily well, but we have traditionally underserved huge portions of our population," said Dr. Sherman.

The 2,900 student school, which is divided into two campuses, has never met all federal testing benchmarks required by the No Child Left Behind law. In 2009, 78 percent of students graduated from T.C. Williams in four years, compared with 83 percent across the state. Just 65 percent of Hispanic students graduated in the same time.

The school qualifies for the federal grant because standardized test scores in 2008 and 2009 fell in the lowest 5 percent of 128 Virginia high schools that have similar poverty demographics but do not receive funding under Title I, a federal program that provides extra resources to schools with large numbers of poor and at-risk students.

About half the students at T. C. Williams receive free or reduced-priced meals, an indicator of poverty.

In 2008, 82 percent of T.C. Williams students passed the state's standardized reading test and 79 percent passed the math exam. In 2009, the pass rate was 84 percent in reading and 77 percent in math. The average pass rate for the state in 2008 was 87 percent in reading and 84 percent in math; in 2009, it was 89 percent in reading and 86 percent in math.

The school's performance makes it eligible for a piece of a \$3.5 billion program that is a cornerstone of the Obama administration's efforts to spur change

in the nation's weakest schools. The school could receive as much as \$500,000 a year.

T. C. Williams has challenges familiar to many urban schools, including high mobility rates and large numbers of students who don't speak English or who live in poverty, said Mel Riddile, former principle at T.C. Williams and association director of high school services at the national Association of Secondary School Principals. But many things set it apart, he said, including highly engaged parent groups, a cadre of very talented teachers and an impressive array of college-level classes.

To qualify for the additional federal funding, which Sherman estimates could total \$1.5 million over three years, the school will have to undergo a radical transformation.

The Obama administration has identified four options: closing the school and sending its students elsewhere; reopening it as a charter school; firing the principal and at least half the faculty; or submitting to a host of instructional changes that include lengthening the school day or year and expanding professional development.

Sherman said he is inclined to choose the least drastic option: revamping instruction and expanding professional development. But he has not ruled out the possibility of replacing a significant portion of the faculty. In February he announced his support for the concept of charter schools.

Alexandria City Public Schools has eight weeks to respond, although school officials aren't sure if a final decision requires School Board approval or not.

Earlier this year, T.C. Williams Principal William Clendaniel announced his intention to retire, the third principal in the last four years to step down. The school board has launched a national search for someone who can lead the transition.

The school's staff began a series of reforms over the past year, including opening a college and career center and adding graduation coaches and tutorial services.

ROSLYN BROCK ELECTED CHAIR OF NAACP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On Feb 20 the Annual Meeting of the NAACP held in New York, Vice Chairman Roslyn Brock, 44, was elected the youngest chairman of the 64-member national board of directors of the NAACP.

CLOSE-UP

Place of birth: Fort Pierce, Fla.

Current home: Eckridge, Md

Marital status: widow

Education: VUU, bachelor's degree and master of divinity degree in theology; George Washington University, master's degree in health care administration; Northwestern University, master's degree in business administration

Career: Vice president for advocacy and government relations, Bon Secours Health System-Maryland. Prior employment: 10 years in health care programs with W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Mich

NAACP record: Active in civil rights group for 25 years, beginning at VUU; president of the Virginia NAACP's youth and college division. Precedent setting leadership positions in NAACP; Youth board member; board member; youngest vice chairman; youngest chairman.

VIRGINIA STATE CONFERENCE NEWS

The Virginia State Conference NAACP and the FBI Richmond Division hosted a town hall meeting Jan 13. Moderators were Michael A. Clancy, Assistant Special Agent in Charge and Michael R. Schuler, Supervisory Special Agent. The discussion focused on a brief overview of ponzi schemes, suggestions on what to look for, and a summary of some of the cases the FBI has investigated.

Ponzi schemes promise ridiculously high returns, taking money from new investors to pay dividends to some of the earlier investors. The bulk of the money is kept by the fraud artists. The scheme usually builds to the point where the swindlers either take the money and run, or the operation collapses because it can't sustain the growth needed to pay dividends.

The schemes are named after Charles Ponzi, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission, who defrauded thousands of New England residents in the 1920s with a postage-stamp speculation scam...

The Virginia State Conference NAACP sent a letter to Major General James E. Chambers, commander at Fort Lee U.S. Army Base after the organization received about 75 racial discrimination complaints from civilian employees. Fort Lee says it's investigating a discrimination complaint filed by a civilian employee. According to the organization's Executive Director Salim Khalfani, there have been allegations of cronyism where promotions are given to unqualified non-Black employees and allegedly

employees were retaliated against when filing complaints.

A press conference was held at the main entrance of Ft. Lee on Feb. 24. Khalfani said “we also have a complaint filed by a civilian, disabled employee who alleges that the Military Police used excessive force against she and her won this winter...The national realignment of military installations has created multi-million dollar development projects at Ft. Lee. African American businesses and the Black Business Alliance of Virginia have filed complaints alleging that Black businesses and contractors are being excluded from participation.”

In a statement, Fort Lee states it is an equal employment opportunity employer and “we pride ourselves on diversity of our workforce.

“We have policies in place to ensure opportunities are fair, impartial and equal for all applicants and employees seeking advancement,” the statement reads.

Due to the large number of complaints, VSC announced that it has created a hotline: 804-321-5678

Virginia State Conference NAACP received complaints about alleged hazardous conditions at the Salvation Army of Petersburg. At held a press conference held by VSC, Khalfani stated he toured the facility and shared pictures of what he claims to be “deplorable, unsafe and unhealthy conditions for human habitation, with missing ceiling tiles, leaking roofs and mold on the walls and carpet.” The 90-year-old building serves as an emergency shelter for the homeless and a temporary home for ex-offenders.

VIRGINIA STATE CONFERENCE NAACP STATEMENT ON THE GOVERNOR’S CHARTER SCHOOL IMPOSITION

The Virginia State Conference has observed the race by the McDonnell Administration to make charter schools the norm in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The NAACP passed a resolution in 1998 at its National Convention stating its opposition to charter schools. All State Conferences and local Units follow that dictum.

The VSC opposes the charter school initiatives launched by Gov. Bob McDonnell. The legislation, as introduced, seeks to strip power from local popularly elected school boards who are accountable to the community and give it to a nine-member board that is appointed by the governor. Decisions to deny charter school applications have been the providence

of local boards. The State Board of Education will now have more authority to make those decisions. It appears that this legislation will be used to coerce local school boards to accommodate charter schools regardless of whether they have popular support in the community.

The VSC takes the position that all schools should be Governor’s Schools, Magnet, International Baccalaureate (IB), Science, Mathematics, and Arts emphasized schools. There should not be schools for specific races, ethnicities, or classes unless they are privately funded. Do not use public funds for covert private academies.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

LEGAL REDRESS: Chair, S. Howard Woodson, III, Esq.

Assistance from the branch was requested in the following matters: complaint at a nursing home, discrimination, workplace issue, complaint against Alexandria police, etc.

EDUCATION: Our 10th Annual Black History Observance Program in cooperation with the Alexandria Black History Museum was held Feb 28 at Charles Houston Recreation Center. Theme was “The History of Black Economic Empowerment”. Dr. Ronald Walters, teacher, author, lecturer and consultant, was guest speaker. He was formerly the Director of the African American Leadership Institute and Distinguished Leadership Scholar at the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership. He retired from the University of Maryland in June 2009. A soul food tasting reception followed the program. Over 150 people attended.

HEALTH: Virginia’s General Assembly is the first in the nation to approve legislation that bucks federal health care reforms by banning mandatory health insurance coverage. Without debate, the House of Delegates voted 80-17 on March 10 to accept Senate amendments to a bill that supporters say preserves Virginia’s prerogatives as a state. Thirty-four other legislatures have filed or proposed similar measures rejecting health insurance mandates. But Virginia’s legislature is the first to finish work on a bill. The measure goes to Republican Gov. Bob McDonnell, who plans to sign it...

Healthcare for Women, a national women’s rights initiative, has recently launched a new program to help women find and obtain affordable health insurance. The program, available for single and married women between the ages of 18-64 years old

(with or without children), is a nationwide effort to protect disadvantaged woman from high medical bills and prescription payments.

Through their web site, www.HealthCareforWomen.org, women can apply by completing a brief form to obtain a free quote based on their age, weight, height, pre-existing conditions, and whether or not they smoke. They will then be presented with an objective, user-friendly format, enabling them to see and understand the available health benefit products that best meet their needs.

60% of women are unable to pay their medical bills. 48% of women have jobs that do not offer healthy benefits.

To learn more about why women need healthcare reform, visit: www.thenation.com/doc/20090831/lerner

ARMED SERVICES & VETERANS AFFAIRS: Employers and job-seekers are welcome to attend the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)/Corporate Gray career fair May 11 in Washington, D.C. Open to active duty, enlisted, officers and retirees and families. Check www.moaa.org/careerfair for details.

POLITICAL ACTION: Patrick Murray, GOP Alexandrian and retired U. S. Army colonel, announced his run for Congress in November to unseat Rep. Jim Moran (D-8), who has held a seat at the Capitol for 19 years. His four GOP challengers for the nomination are Matthew Berry of Arlington and Marl Ellmore, Will Radle and Laurence Socci of Fairfax.

ACT-SO: Jeanette Lightfoot, advisor, gave a brief orientation for youth council newcomers and a more in-depth exploration of competition requirements for the various categories at Charles Houston Center on Mar 13.

CALENDAR

April 15th, Deadline for Branch's Annie B. Rose Education Scholarship application, two letters of recommendation and an official school transcript sent to: NAACP, P. O. Box 1740, Alexandria, VA 22313

May 27-30th, 6th Annual NAACP Leadership 500 Summit, Westin Diplomat Hotel, Hollywood, FL

July 10-15th, Annual NAACP Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Theme: "One Nation, One Dream".

NAACP -Alexandria VA
Post Office Box 1740
Alexandria VA 22313
703-684-6190

www.naacpalexandriava.gov

President: Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl
Secretary: R. Theresa Hillian
Newsletter editor: Everett A. Lewis, Captain,
U.S. Air Force (Retired)