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# The Durham News

SATURDAY-SUNDAY EDITION

**What a ride:**  
Two cyclists. Five days. 300 miles. **Page 2A**

## Growing the grapes

At a meeting where the Durham People's Alliance endorsed the four incumbents in this year's City Council races unanimously, a new member asked why we hadn't described the eight challengers'

MY VIEW



FRANK HYMAN

track records on local appointed boards. Our PAC chair's answer was succinct — "Because none of them have served on one." For some citizens, these appointed roles function as valuable apprenticeships in local government. Seventy locally appointed boards and commissions are where volunteer leaders perform the hard work of making the Bull City better. They advise staff and elected officials on our bus system, zoning requests, services for the elderly, environmental education, and numerous aspects of Durham civic life. Some members face being a white person in the minority for the first time or face working with people whose cultural or ideological views they don't share and can't ignore. They also gain relationships with people that don't look, sound or act like them.

I'm not saying that service on these boards should be the only criteria for endorsements. But it was still an important question that brought to mind some history.

I first moved to Durham in 1984. The following year Wib Gulley won the mayor's race. In a move that might surprise newcomers to Durham, the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People endorsed Gulley for mayor over African-American council members Howard Clement and Chester Jenkins. He was elected with a bi-racial coalition and became a leader in efforts to improve our bus system, gay rights, housing and recycling. He went on in the '90s to serve as our state senator.

Part of his political track record in that first race for mayor? A successful term on the Board of Adjustment, an arcane body that passes judgment on requests for minor tweaking of land use. Its members decide how close an addition can be to a property line or whether a fence can be 6 feet high instead of 4 feet for instance. Heady stuff.

Certainly most voters don't follow the Board of Adjustment's inner workings. But I believe that many, in considering Gulley's candidacy in '85, noted this apprenticeship. Some likely felt his quiet, but effective term on the board, working with people from every corner of Durham showed an ability to be an effective mayor.

Laboring in these appointed vineyards of Durham civic life — where you'll find red, white and scuppernon grapes all needing attention — citizens learn how to collaborate and compromise in a small 'd' democratic society. They also develop relationships that can keep them plugged into Durham's many communities and win personal as well as PAC endorsements.

With rare exceptions, winning an election in Durham has required getting endorsements from both a white group and a black group or from a progressive group and a conservative one. This political landscape has generally — but not completely — filtered out the gadflies and uncompromising candidates.

On Tuesday, Oct. 6, and in the November election, the fi-

## Can Durham close the achievement

# Gap?

BY SADIA LATIFI  
STAFF WRITER

Year after year, we hear the same thing. Test scores of African-American and Hispanic students remain far behind those of their peers.

Durham Public Schools are making some strides. The gap between African-American and Hispanic students and their white and Asian classmates in both math and reading shrank last year. But a two-digit difference between percentages of students passing remains.

So, what now? Durham Public Schools and the Durham Association of Educators are developing a proposal for a national grant to improve the academic success of African-American males, the group identified as needing help the most. They'll discuss the grant at a Kitchen Table Conversation Tuesday from 7

### MORE RESPONSES

Read what other community leaders had to say about the achievement gap on **page 8A**.

to 8:45 p.m. at W.G. Pearson Magnet Elementary, 3501 Fayetteville St.

If they get the National Educators Association Foundation grant, the school system would get money to develop new strategies to close achievement gaps between African-American males and their peers.

But is the problem bigger than the schools?

In advance of Tuesday's conversation, The Durham News asked community leaders what needs to be done. We also want to know what you think. Send a letter to the editor to editor@nando.com or e-mail your thoughts to me at [sadia.latifi@nando.com](mailto:sadia.latifi@nando.com).

### No, not alone!

It is imperative that schools work on trying to close the gap but they need the help of parents and the community. As it is said, "it takes a community to raise a child." It is important



that not only educators work as hard as possible to help all children but that the entire community help children achieve to the best of their abilities. Parents must encourage their children; churches must help the children of their congregations with tutoring and afterschool programs and businesses need to help schools with resources. Once we all take responsibility for the achievement gap it will begin to close.

**Kristy Moore** is president of the Durham Association of Educators.

### Yes!

Durham Public Schools can make a dramatic change in the lives of African American males. It may seem unattainable and arduous, but we have to remember what Nelson Mandela said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."



As we spend more awakening hours at our schools than we do in our own homes, we have no excuse not to be molded and transformed into better and more productive children. The concept is easy; teachers need to remember what it feels like to be a kid. Teachers should begin to establish a caring, receptive, and non-judgmental relationship with high expectations for each individual.

A big step in having a productive relationship is learning to listen, not hear but listen. It may take only one teacher's belief in a student to encourage the adolescent's appetite for his or her individual success.

**Racquel Bethea** is the student body president at Hillside High School.

### Without question ...

the academic achievement gap that exists among African American males and the rest of the student population can be narrowed. This is an issue we have been toying with for almost two decades; and we have lacked the verve, boldness of vision, and determination to institute a system wide strategy to help these young men succeed. Folks will argue that this gap exists because of limited school-time resources and that only an infusion of millions of state and federal dollars will remedy the problem. Hogwash!

There will never be enough funding for intervention at every grade level — Let's rework the structure we have. Sixth grade is the critical point on the K-12 academic ladder. Let's create Sixth Grade Academies system wide. With concentrated resources, extended days and a focus on academic and civil responsibility we can prepare these young men well enough to carry them through their 12th-grade year.

**Joseph Henderson** is the director of Walltown Children's Theater in Durham.

### Yes, we can!

And not only can we close the achievement gap, but it is indeed our responsibility as educators and supporters of educators to do so.



Durham Public Schools has put forth a multitude of efforts toward raising standards and supporting students with what they need to succeed academically. It is the heart of our mission and vision, and it is the core that drives everything we do. Within this overarching goal is the use of good data to discover where the most support is needed.

We have that data. We know where the support is needed. It is up to the parents of the students who come through our doors to work closely with and support the hardworking and dedicated professionals who are already inside. It is up to our community to realize that the future of our economic and cultural health depends on ensuring that we have a student population that is well educated and well prepared to prosper and lead in the decades to come.

**Minnie Forte-Brown** is chairwoman of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education. She is also a communications professor at N.C. Central University.

### Yes, schools can fix ...

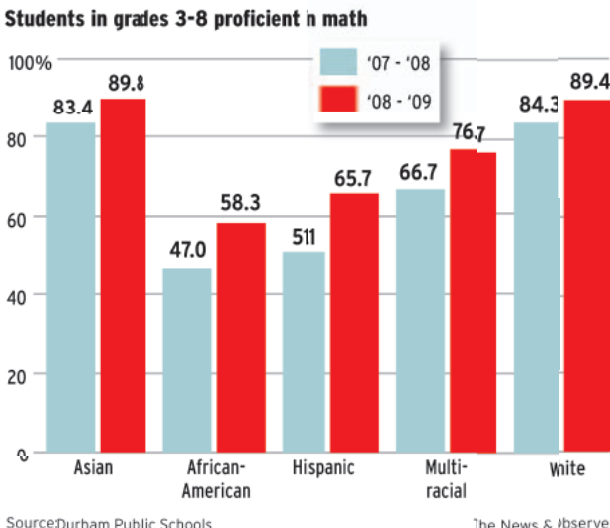
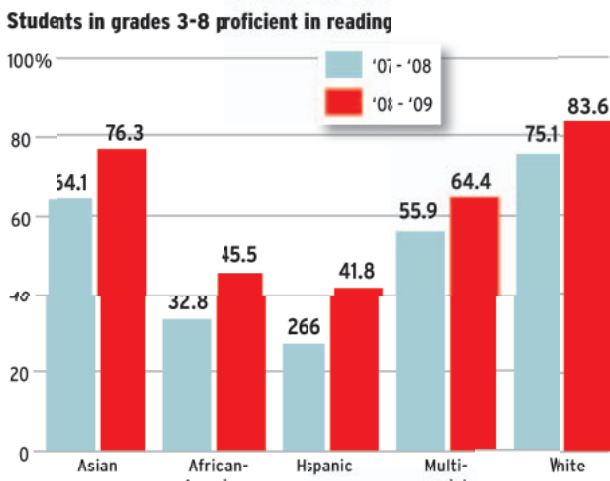
the achievement gap. Having grown up in inner-city Northeast Central Durham, I am the product of a community where so many students, particularly black males don't make it out of high school. Crime, drugs and poverty often prove too big of obstacles to overcome.

The truth is, however, that these obstacles are not too much to overcome. There are so many walking examples of this truth. Individuals that graduated from high school, went on to college and are now working to make society better each day.

Failure was NOT an option. With the support of family, community members and mentors from the Rites of Passage program, I knew that if I didn't succeed I was not only letting myself down, but letting down the people who cared about me the most. I also knew the key to rising from poverty was graduating high school, going on to college and giving back to my community.

**Donald A. Hughes** is a Durham native, a 2005 graduate of Hillside High and a 2009 graduate of UNC-Greensboro. He is also a candidate for the Durham City Council-Ward 1.

### DURHAM PROFICIENCY SCORES



## Council aspirants call for change

Ward 2 race highlights forum

By JIM WISE  
STAFF WRITER

The City Council's Ward 2 has more candidates than any other open seat in this fall's election, and they did most of the talking at a forum Thursday at the Durham Regional Association of Realtors.

Incumbent Howard Clement and three of his four challengers were on hand, while only one candidate showed up from each of the three other races: for the council's Ward 1 and Ward 3 seats and for mayor.

Clement, a council member since 1982, stressed his experience.

"Howard Clement is not a Johnny-come-lately," he said. "He's been here and he's done that and I can smile about it."

His challengers stressed the need for changes.

Matt Drew: "A lot of things we've focused on the last 26 years have been big and shiny and people like them. ... while the basics, things like ... our sewers, our stormwater system are neglected and sort of left to happen on their own. I don't think that's a good thing."

Sylvester Williams: "I've seen some of the distress in our communities and these things are not being addressed by the current City Council.... The only way that's going to [change] is if someone on the City Council willing to hold everyone's feet to the fire and say you cannot neglect this community because it's poor."

SEE FORUM, PAGE 3A

## Jordan Lake decision delayed

2 surveys draw 2 boundaries

By JIM WISE  
STAFF WRITER

The Haw River Assembly has questions the state has yet to answer, and so the Jordan Lake boundary hearing is delayed a month in Durham County.

Part of it, that is. "It's kind of a procedural kind of step," County Manager Mike Ruffin said.

The Durham County commissioners were to hold a public hearing Monday on relocating a watershed boundary between N.C. 751 and the Orange County line. Relocation involves two actions: a land-use plan amendment and a zoning change.

The Haw River Assembly, which opposes moving the boundary, asked for a 30-day postponement. By Durham's law, an interested party in a rezoning case is entitled to such a delay upon request. But there's no such provision for plan amendments.

So, Ruffin and City/County Planning Director Steve Medlin say, the amendment remains on the board's agenda — at least long enough to open the public hearing and immediately continue it with actually hearing from the

SEE LAKE, PAGE 3A

# St. Paul's to dedicate renovation

Patience and endurance, accompanied by symbolic blood, sweat and tears will be rewarded Sunday, Sept. 13, when members and friends of St. Paul's Lutheran Church gather to worship and to dedicate a newly renovated building.

The church at the corner of Pickett and Cornwallis roads in southwest Durham is a gem for sure with its striking sculpture on the Pickett Road side and its beautiful new stained glass window that filters beautiful colored light into its sanctuary where Holy Communion worship will begin at 10 a.m. Sunday. Lunch will be served in Trinity Hall at noon.

An exterior Creation Garden is still under way and is expected to be ready for use by November when both the garden and the stained glass window will be dedicated.

## Mount Zion turns 100

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class at First Presbyterian on the Five Wishes that concern people as they plan for the future. The class will meet on Sunday mornings, starting Sunday, Sept. 13, and continuing through Sunday, Oct. 18, at 9:45 a.m. in Watts Hill Hall. Ashby is the author of "Our Home is Over Jordan: A Black Pastoral Theology." For more information, call the church at 682-5511. The church is located at 305 E. Main St. in downtown.

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"I suppose this is what John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was trying to do when he moved from preaching in a church to preaching in the fields," said the Rev. Roger Owens. "I hope we are learning to have a front lawn faith."

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# ACHIEVEMENT GAP

## Absolutely!

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This is why Durham Public Schools is excited to partner with the Durham Association of Educators as we pursue the National Education Association grant. And it is why we are enlisting our parents and community supporters to provide input as we seek a \$1.25 million grant from NEA to close the gap. Our proposal seeks to implement strategies toward supporting African-American males — the audience identified as in most urgent need — in their academic success.

If teachers, parents and the community work together, we can do anything. This definitely includes closing the achievement gap. It is one of my top priorities, and I know that the broader Durham community shares this goal.

**Carl Harris** is the superintendent for Durham Public Schools.

## Searching for a singular solution ...

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first with acceptance that measurement of educational effectiveness can and will not look the same from student to student. We need to embrace individuality, promote personal interests and adapt to varying learning styles. That is of course, assuming that the goal is to produce life-long learners, good citizens, curious minds, and not cookie-cutter, robo-kids.

Secondly, we need to incorporate families. Without their investment, the circuitry is weak. There should consistently be information and ideas flowing between school and home. Finally, we need to provide teachers with a platform for exploration, experimentation and creation. Thus building progressive models for education, as opposed to prescribed ones, that insult the integrity of the craft. Life is a series of culminating events and education is no exception.

**Heather Cook** is a fifth-grade teacher at the Central Park School for Children in Durham.

## It will take ...

a more pro-active approach to students having academic and behavioral difficulties.

Of course we can all agree that the encouragement to prioritize education in our children should come first from their parents. But it is established in law that where a student is failing or chronically misbehaving or truant, the buck stops with the school. So, how are schools doing?

Almost none of the students I represent have been approached by school staff with a suggestion or service that might reverse the direction the student is heading.

Schools continue to commit glaring violations of their own policies concerning disabled students. I have had many learning and/or emotionally disabled clients suspended for minor infractions because it was expeditious for the school to do so, though such action was against the law.

There will likely not be a significant "closing of the gap" until schools address the issues of the students who really need additional assistance, as the law and good sense requires.

**Mark Trustin** is an attorney who has represented students suspended from public school systems in the Triangle for over 10 years.

## Of course we can ...

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reachable goal, such as Geoffrey Canada, Lorraine Moore and many others. However, it does take the efforts of the whole community over a sustained period of time to accomplish. In my brief time here in Durham working with community-based after-school and summer programs, I've observed the progress of minority males and females making steady growth in their academic endeavors. They have done so with the support of their parents, community members and tutors working alongside their classroom teachers."

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## Yes, only if ...

the efforts of Durham Public Schools to provide quality teachers, rigorous and culturally responsive curriculum and instruction and student support are reinforced by family and community partnerships. Parents must instill in their children a sense of personal responsibility and accountability, while teaching them the fundamental values on which to build their lives — self-worth, self respect, respect for others, the importance of education, time management, conflict resolution, how to make good decisions, and how those decisions impact their lives.

As a community, we must have more African-American mentors to provide the personal, academic and professional support required to help African-American students identify and achieve their goals. We must also support parents by establishing a parental mentoring forum where parents can solicit ideas on how to handle diverse challenges of parenthood and to serve as a support system. Yes, together, we can reach back and pull up!

**DeWarren K. Langley** is a Durham native and 2003 graduate of Jordan High School. He is currently a law student at N.C. Central University. He also serves as chairman on the board for Partners for Youth, a nonprofit that provides mentoring, enrichment and employment to economically disadvantaged youth in Durham.

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## Yes, they can -

with help from our community. By partnering with local businesses, universities, and organizations, schools can open doors to opportunities students may otherwise never have known existed.

Students who achieve more have been exposed to more. Connecting students with caring adults who share their professional pathways, expertise, and experience makes clear for kids the link between classroom learning and future aspirations.

At Citizen Schools, we introduce our students (who identify predominantly as African-American or Hispanic and come from low-income families) to new networks, careers, ideas, and opportunities. All students deserve the opportunity to discover a love of learning that inspires long-term success. To spark that passion, it takes more relevant learning activities, more time devoted to education, and more involved adults.

**Erik Turner** is the program director for Citizen Schools North Carolina, a national initiative that mobilizes thousands of adult volunteers to help improve student achievement by teaching skill-building apprenticeships after school.

## Yes, I believe ...

the schools can fix the achievement gap, but only if they are willing to make some changes.

The family, schools, and community must work together to provide the environment in which African-American males can transverse the achievement chasm. Some suggestions that might help schools make a difference are: redistrict to eliminate clustering of minorities in a few schools, allow students to choose a curriculum that matches career goals, recruit community volunteers to serve as mentors for students, redistribute guidance counselor responsibilities to allow more time for student counseling, provide cultural training for teachers and staff on how to interact with African American males (often they will risk suspension or expulsion rather than back down in front of peers), and require school uniforms to combat the label wars. Ideally these changes should start in the elementary school, but high school is not too late.

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## Good schools are necessary ...

but insufficient by themselves to close the achievement gap. Research indicates that up to 80 percent of the achievement gap is due to two factors that are outside the school system's control — early childhood cognitive development and the summer reading loss.

For instance, while teachers work feverishly during the school year to improve students' reading skills, students from low-income families lose an average of two months of reading every summer. Communities In Schools of Durham offers a unique summer reading program, Durham READS, where we mail books that are individually matched to each child's reading level. This program has been proven by rigorous research to work specifically with African-American and Hispanic youth from low income families.

To reduce the achievement gap the school system needs community partners like Communities In Schools that complement its work.

**Bud Lavery** is the executive director of Communities In Schools of Durham, a group whose goal is to increase the graduation rate in Durham.

## Yes, the problem ...

is bigger than schools. It is a parental, social, and community problem, as well. Most students' attitudes go back to what they see on television or the Internet. Unless parents take the time to help their kids distinguish between what's good and bad, or right and wrong, they will most likely be influenced by other sources.

Durham Public Schools offer many resources to help parents help their children succeed academically, but very few parents take advantage of the opportunities. Most children will not on their own make the right decisions as it relates to their educational needs. They need guidance all the way through 12th grade. Parenting does not end at the front door of the high school. Both parents and the community must be vigilant in their efforts to help all students succeed and willing to do whatever is necessary.

**Trilby McClammy** is president of the Durham Council of PTAs.

## FAITH IN FOCUS



Flo Johnston

The church at the corner of Pickett and Cornwallis roads in southwest Durham is a gem for sure with its striking sculpture on the Pickett Road side and its beautiful new stained glass window that filters beautiful colored light into its sanctuary where Holy Communion worship will begin at 10 a.m. Sunday. Lunch will be served in Trinity Hall at noon.

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the efforts of Durham Public Schools to provide quality teachers, rigorous and culturally responsive curriculum and instruction and student support are reinforced by family and community partnerships. Parents must instill in their children a sense of personal responsibility and accountability, while teaching them the fundamental values on which to build their lives — self-worth, self respect, respect for others, the importance of education, time management, conflict resolution, how to make good decisions, and how those decisions impact their lives.

As a community, we must have more African-American mentors to provide the personal, academic and professional support required to help African-American students identify and achieve their goals. We must also support parents by establishing a parental mentoring forum where parents can solicit ideas on how to handle diverse challenges of parenthood and to serve as a support system. Yes, together, we can reach back and pull up!

**DeWarren K. Langley** is a Durham native and 2003 graduate of Jordan High School. He is currently a law student at N.C. Central University. He also serves as chairman on the board for Partners for Youth, a nonprofit that provides mentoring, enrichment and employment to economically disadvantaged youth in Durham.

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## Yes, they can -

with help from our community. By partnering with local businesses, universities, and organizations, schools can open doors to opportunities students may otherwise never have known existed.

Students who achieve more have been exposed to more. Connecting students with caring adults who share their professional pathways, expertise, and experience makes clear for kids the link between classroom learning and future aspirations.

At Citizen Schools, we introduce our students (who identify predominantly as African-American or Hispanic and come from low-income families) to new networks, careers, ideas, and opportunities. All students deserve the opportunity to discover a love of learning that inspires long-term success. To spark that passion, it takes more relevant learning activities, more time devoted to education, and more involved adults.

**Erik Turner** is the program director for Citizen Schools North Carolina, a national initiative that mobilizes thousands of adult volunteers to help improve student achievement by teaching skill-building apprenticeships after school.

## Yes, I believe ...

the schools can fix the achievement gap, but only if they are willing to make some changes.

The family, schools, and community must work together to provide the environment in which African-American males can transverse the achievement chasm. Some suggestions that might help schools make a difference are: redistrict to eliminate clustering of minorities in a few schools, allow students to choose a curriculum that matches career goals, recruit community volunteers to serve as mentors for students, redistribute guidance counselor responsibilities to allow more time for student counseling, provide cultural training for teachers and staff on how to interact with African American males (often they will risk suspension or expulsion rather than back down in front of peers), and require school uniforms to combat the label wars. Ideally these changes should start in the elementary school, but high school is not too late.

**Dr. Susan Blackmon** is program director for YO:Durham (Year of Opportunity for Durham Teens), a program of Durham Congregations In Action. She has 32 years of experience in public education as a teacher and principal.

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## Good schools are necessary ...

but insufficient by themselves to close the achievement gap. Research indicates that up to 80 percent of the achievement gap is due to two factors that are outside the school system's control — early childhood cognitive development and the summer reading loss.

For instance, while teachers work feverishly during the school year to improve students' reading skills, students from low-income families lose an average of two months of reading every summer. Communities In Schools of Durham offers a unique summer reading program, Durham READS, where we mail books that are individually matched to each child's reading level. This program has been proven by rigorous research to work specifically with African-American and Hispanic youth from low income families.

To reduce the achievement gap the school system needs community partners like Communities In Schools that complement its work.

**Bud Lavery** is the executive director of Communities In Schools of Durham, a group whose goal is to increase the graduation rate in Durham.

## Yes, the problem ...

is bigger than schools. It is a parental, social, and community problem, as well. Most students' attitudes go back to what they see on television or the Internet. Unless parents take the time to help their kids distinguish between what's good and bad, or right and wrong, they will most likely be influenced by other sources.

Durham Public Schools offer many resources to help parents help their children succeed academically, but very few parents take advantage of the opportunities. Most children will not on their own make the right decisions as it relates to their educational needs. They need guidance all the way through 12th grade. Parenting does not end at the front door of the high school. Both parents and the community must be vigilant in their efforts to help all students succeed and willing to do whatever is necessary.

**Trilby McClammy** is president of the Durham Council of PTAs.



## Ladies' Night Out

Durham Regional Hospital is pleased to announce the return of Ladies' Night Out. This free health seminar series will help you and your loved ones stay on top of important health issues, make new friends, and just get away for an hour or so.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesdays, 7:00 PM

- The Benefits of Digital Mammography: September 15
- Ageing Gracefully: October 20
- STDs: Not Just a Teen Issue: November 17

**Ladies' Night Out**, presented by experts on women's health, is held in the First Level Classroom at Durham Regional Hospital. Refreshments are served in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Parking is free. For more information, call James Amos at 919-470-4278.

Durham Regional Hospital  
3643 North Roxboro Road  
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