

TEACHING

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one on one side of the hall makes up a question, and hands it over to someone else on the other side of the hall and if it wasn't "tricky" enough sends it back to be rewritten. That was a comment made by a Raleigh official who came to speak at one of our staff developments! I was amazed and continue to be amazed and shocked at what I have heard and experienced being on the inside.

I was always a parent advocate for the rights of the kids in my classroom, which was quite telling as to whose "side" I was on. I was always coaching parents on what to say, what to do, who to contact in order to get something done because I knew it wasn't going to happen if I asked for it. Parents have more power than they realize.

So, I began researching ... What are the criteria for opening my own school? Pretty simple actually; fire drills once per month, attendance records, immunization records,

standardized tests in grades 3, 6, 9 and 11, yearly inspection by the NC Department of Non-Public Instruction and a county health inspection. Hmm, is this what I'm supposed to be when I grow up?

We had a little capital because of my extremely talented husband and the incredible house he built for us and the question of what I wanted to be when I grew up seemed to be taking shape. My mind and my heart were telling me to cook, my soul was telling me to teach. Then one night in 2005 I woke up in the middle of the night, sat up in bed, woke my husband up and it all came pouring out of my mouth in about 30 seconds! A school, where the kitchen is a pizzeria, where middle-income parents can afford to send their kids because the pizzeria will help fund the school. I lay back down and the next morning started doing what it was that I was supposed to do when I grew up. Our Neighborhood School and Pizzeria. It's a school. It's a pizzeria. We teach reading, math, science, history, cooking, life skills,



COMMUNITY

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than enrollment. Focus on increasing the teaching staff rather than bureaucracy. School districts need to have the freedom to devise innovative ways to allocate salaries. The state needs to develop performance measures and hold people at all levels accountable to achieve them. Pay should be tied to these specific performance measures rewarding successful teachers and administrators. Local administrations should be free to use funds to attract high performing teachers in math and science, especially in schools that are underperforming.

Debt service is the other large expenditure by the state to build and maintain facilities. Serious consideration needs to be given to adapting and reusing existing buildings at a much smaller cost than building new ones. The economic downturn has left many chicken plants, big box stores, and strip malls empty throughout the state. Let's use them.

Charter schools are a success story. Waiting lists to get into these public schools are many years long in

some cases. They are held to the same standards as other public schools and are accountable for results. Unlike a traditional school, they can be shut down if they don't meet the standards. That's accountability in action yet we cap the number in the state at 100. They give parents a choice to choose the school that best meets the needs of their children and they don't cost a dime for the facilities. Much of the bureaucratic red tape has been removed allowing for local decisions. Why would there be such opposition to increasing charter schools and other ideas that provide districts and parents a choice, are accountable and achieve high academic standards?

As long as the existing power structure continues to resist real change in the system, higher achievement will be nearly impossible regardless of the amount of money we spend.

Brian Bock is chairman of the Chatham County Republican Party. A Northern Chatham resident, he is employed as Managing Director with SunTrust Bank's Wealth Management department.

public relations, we are community minded. The list is endless. I believe that the Lord has guided me my entire life to do exactly what I am doing now. I can see all the patterns of choices I have made to bring me to this one place. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher of children in a self-funded environment, where diverse learners can come to learn, work, play, cook, grow and have fun.

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