

## OUR VIEW

# School's In

Today, Clark County School District Superintendent Walt Rulffes is holding a press conference at the newly rebuilt Booker Elementary School in which he's discussing "Keep Your Eye on the CAP, a new education initiative for the upcoming school year. Additionally, the superintendent will present updated information on the state of education in Southern Nevada, including student achievement, teacher recruitment and new school openings." So says a press release issued this week. On Monday, 314,000 students will report for the start of the 2007-08 academic school year in the district. What a mind-blowing number that is, 314,000. Good enough to make our school district the fifth largest in America. Were the district a municipality, it would be the state's third largest, bigger than Henderson and North Las Vegas but behind Clark County and the City of Las Vegas.

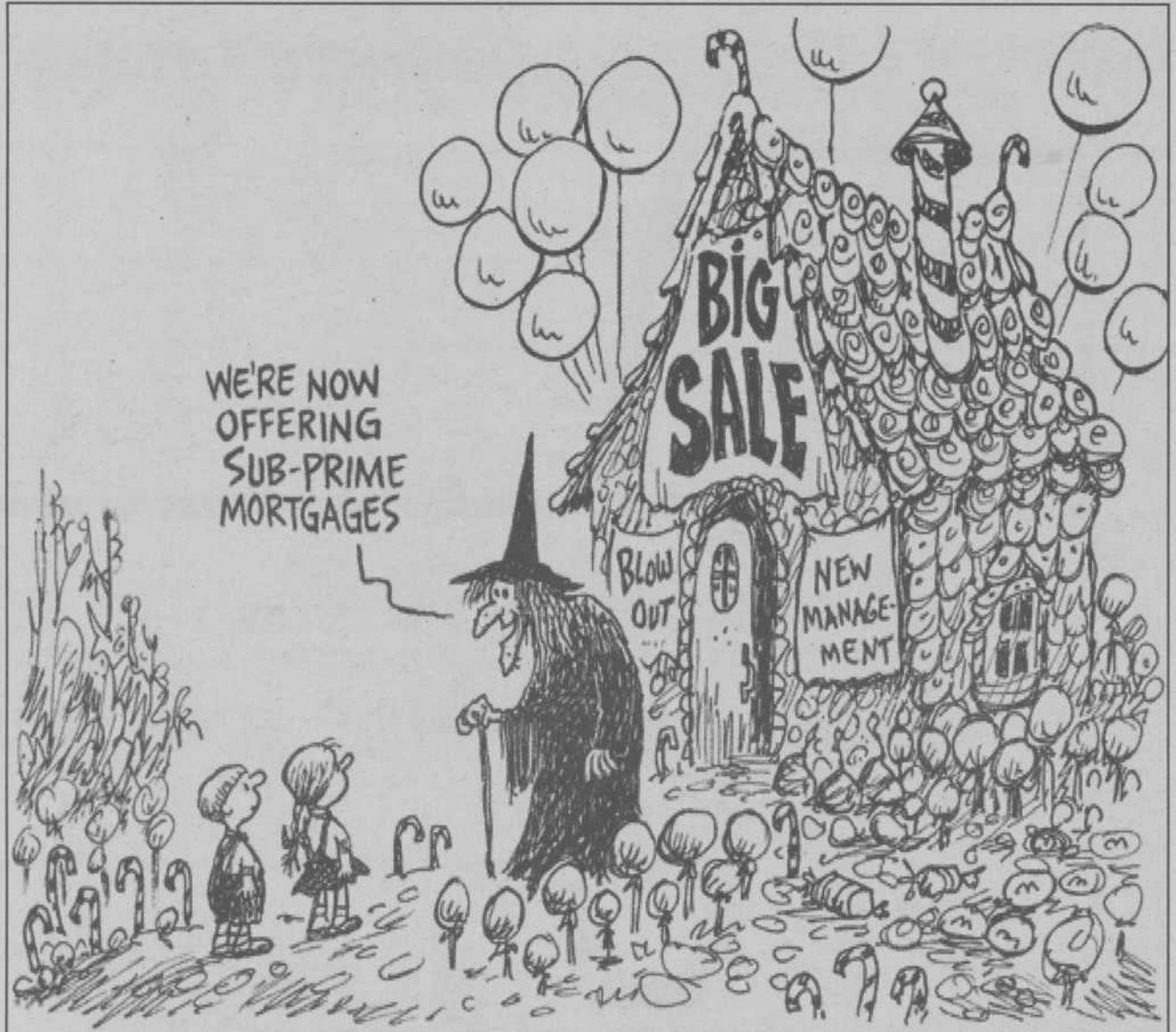
At various times during the year, we'll learn more about the 2007-08 academic year, about how the district is dealing with onerous federal mandates to lift overall student achievement and how it's handling the issues that have traditionally bedeviled it: high truancy and dropout figures, middling graduate rates and the like. Earlier this month, we got some good news from the Nevada Department of Education: in 2006-07, more schools (69 percent) met federal standards set by the No Child Left Behind legislation than in the previous year (64 percent); 432 of the state's 630 school met the benchmarks; in addition, Elko was the only school district (Nevada has 17) to fail to meet the guidelines.

Some folks have found in these numbers—rapid growth, improvement in meeting academic standards—reasons to celebrate. Progress made should be commended. You have to recognize the positive and appreciate the victories. Things are decent considering all the myriad issues the district has to deal with. Student population explosion. Overcrowding. Middle-of-the-pack teachers' wages. Classroom supplies shortages. Mediocre and nonexistent parent involvement in some schools. Growing numbers of English language learners. Homeless students and those from impoverished backgrounds. Mainstreaming the behaviorally challenged and disabled with regular students. It's a testament to the district and its hard-working employees that students do graduate. That's the glass-half-full assessment. For the glass-half-empty view, look at the work the district has ahead of it.

Only 38 percent of the middle schools in the district met federal requirements (21 of 56). That number dropped for high schools to 33 percent (13 of 40 made the grade). By comparison, elementary schools reached the benchmarks at a nearly 75 percent clip. Worse still, no middle school or high school earned exemplary status; 11 elementary campuses did. (Exemplary schools are named as such when a percentage of students in each student subgroup score significantly better on state assessments than the state's annual objective; the school also must reduce the percentage of non-proficient students by significantly more than 10 percent year-over-year.)

All the above-mentioned numbers point to the fact that education is a numbers game. Behind those numbers, though, are people. Students. Teachers. Parents. This year, the *Sentinel-Voice* is calling for parents to take on additional roles as students and teachers. Be students with regard to listening and learning. Listening to your children and to their teachers and administrators. This requires that you talk to your children, that is, really talk to them about school, about education, about life as a journey of knowledge. This also requires that you get to know the people to whom you are entrusting your most treasured gifts. Be teachers of your children as well. Lead by example. Show them that their education is as important to them as it is for you; that they're invested in the school as much as anyone else. Make sure not to ease up on parenting during this role-playing: homework must be done, research completed and study time established.

Parents, you must be your children's biggest advocate. Don't be afraid to tap the district's resources. If you can't find something, ask. If you don't know something, admit it. Because on Monday, you go back to school, too.



## 'Billary' Clinton disses Blacks

By George E. Curry  
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

Clinton is condescending to African-Americans. Which one? Billary. Translation: Both of them — Bill and Hillary. I am sick of it and even sicker over how Blacks respond to what should be perceived as a slap in the face.

I suspect much of this nonsense began with Toni Morrison proclaiming that Bill Clinton was the first Black president. Lesser lights in the 'hood put it another way: "He messes around on his wife, he plays a saxophone and he's always late. He must be a brother." Come on, don't act like you haven't heard that.

And in a meeting in Las Vegas with the Trotter Group, an organization of Black columnists, Hillary joked that she is involved in "an interracial marriage."

White woman, P-l-e-a-s-e (We can't say that other word anymore). It's time to call a halt to this foolishness. Granted, Bill Clinton looked great after four years of attacks on civil rights by George Herbert Walker Bush, who appointed Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. But he wasn't and isn't The Great White Hope.

We should not forget that



GEORGE E. CURRY

Bill Clinton was a key player in the Democratic Leadership Conference, whose main purpose was to nudge the Democratic Party to the right (they called it the center).

Clinton got elected by taking the issues of crime and welfare away from Republicans and portraying himself as tough on both issues. At the same time, he somehow convinced African-Americans that he was their best friend, a contention that does not square with his record. I'm not saying Bill Clinton was a bad president. I am saying he was not a great one on civil rights.

If any president deserves to be called Black — and that's a big if — it was Lyndon B. Johnson. Working with Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, more progressive legislation was passed during Johnson's presidency than under any other administration.

John F. Kennedy is the one who got his photograph hung in Black living rooms next to pictures of a blue-eyed Jesus, but it was Johnson, assuming the office upon the assassination of JFK, who did the most for African-Americans.

This isn't my only complaint against the Clintons. Whether it was Bill Clinton singing all stanzas of "Lift Every Voice," known as the Black National Anthem, or Hillary speaking in Selma to observe an anniversary of "Bloody Sunday," it was clear that they were no strangers to Black America.

But where were they when the original civil rights battle took place? Bill not only dodged the draft, he dodged the Civil Rights Movement. And so did Hillary.

With that record, why does Bill Clinton think he can attend the grand opening of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's new headquarters in Atlanta and lecture SCLC officials on what their agenda should be?

"America needs the SCLC as much today as it did 50 years ago," he said. "The agenda for the next 50 years is to marry civil rights with a campaign against poverty and for peace."

If he had not been a Billycome-lately to civil rights, Clinton would have known that there is no need for SCLC to marry civil rights with a campaign against poverty and for peace because there was never a separation, let alone a divorce.

At both the National Urban League convention in St. Hillary.

(See Curry, Page 9)

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