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### **WAKE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD IGNORES COMPELLING FACTS, SQUELCHES PUBLIC DIALOG**

Raleigh, NC, March 24, 2010—Without consideration of an overwhelming body of conclusive national research that points to the negative effects of high poverty schools on student achievement and the economy of Wake County, the school board majority yesterday passed a resolution signaling the end of current student assignment policy. With continuing disregard for its own policies and procedures and in clear violation of the North Carolina Open Meetings Law, majority members were resolute in fulfilling campaign promises backed by less than four percent of Wake County voters.

“It is irresponsible of the board majority to dismiss the facts and completely ignore the financial implications of such a sweeping change,” said Yevonne Brannon, Chair, Great Schools in Wake Coalition (GSIW). “Every single person in our County—whether they have a student in the school system or not—will personally feel the pain of this decision. The greatest loss will be experienced by *each of our students*, who will be ill prepared for the diverse workplace that lies in their future.”

Former WCPSS Superintendent Bill McNeal echoed Brannon’s sentiments. Speaking at GSIW’s Forum this past Saturday, McNeal shared his concerns: “My fear...is that we’ll fall into the abyss with ‘have’ schools and ‘have not’ schools. That breaks my heart that could happen and would happen in Wake County schools.”

Representing more than 10,000 parents, students, business leaders, taxpayers and civic organizations who advocate for all students in public schools, GSIW strongly supports the evidence presented at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Wake County Board of Education. More than 50 articles and research papers from experts at Harvard, Yale, Duke, UNC-CH, and other universities all conclude that creating high poverty schools is a failed educational strategy and point to specific examples where such policy has led to disastrous results.

Education leaders who spoke in support of socioeconomic diversity at the meeting included: Dr. Julius Chambers, Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Civil Rights, UNC School of Law; Dr. Kathleen M. Brown, Associate Professor and Chair of the Educational Leadership Area in the UNC School of Education; Dr. Helen F. Ladd, Edgar Thompson Professor of Public Policy Studies and professor of economics at Duke University; Mark Dorosin, Esq., Senior Attorney, UNC Center for Civil Rights; Dr. Heather Davis, Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology at NC State University; Benita N. Jones, Esq., Education Fellow, UNC Center for Civil Rights and a graduate of WCPSS; Dr. Kirsten Kainz, Senior Research Associate UNC School of Education, and; Dr. Tom Munk, teacher, researcher, and consultant, whose work focuses on underserved children.

“The school board majority wants to stop using the very language that characterizes our county, our workplace, our country, and our world—socio-economic diversity,” Brannon said. “But denying the term exists will not make it go away.”

“Our ever-growing Coalition is equally resolute in its mission to ensure that the facts supporting an assignment policy that avoids ‘have’ and ‘have not’ schools remain in the forefront of the debate,” she added. “The passage of the resolution should not be construed as a signal that discussion is over. This Board may have limited public comment and keep their plans and associated costs a secret, but the community will insist that the details be disclosed.”

GSIW will continue to host discussion forums—the next are scheduled for April 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>—and make educational research and other facts available at our Web site, <http://www.greatschoolsinswake.org>.

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**About Great Schools in Wake Coalition:**

A project of WakeUP Wake County, Great Schools in Wake Coalition (GSIW) is a community coalition of organizations, business leaders, parents and citizen advocates who are working to ensure educational excellence in the Wake County Public School System. GSIW’s mission is to provide accurate information to educate the public about policy initiatives that would impact the quality of education, foster well-informed discussions about critical education issues, and advocate for policies that improve public education in Wake County. GSIW is a project of WakeUP Wake County. For more information on the Coalition or to join, please visit: [greatschoolsinswake.org](http://greatschoolsinswake.org).