

January 3, 2012 – Summary of BOE Work Session on Student Assignment

Questions from BoE and public have been submitted; organized into 4 sections

1. Outreach/Marketing/Communication—Chris Mulder
2. Set-asides—James Overman & Susan Pulliam
3. Monitoring & Evaluation—Brad McMillan
4. Feeder Patterns

Outreach/Marketing/Communication

Efforts to educate parents about options and register students are extensive, and include widespread variety and collaboration among agencies, including multiple print, electronic, visual, and personal contacts. Early registration data will identify nodes where door-to-door contact will be needed.

Given that each school is a registration site, Dr. Martin and Susan Evans raised concerns about school data managers being asked to do the additional work and registering of students, on top of their current workloads. (Both Evans and Martin have spoken with data managers and registrars, who voiced these concerns.) With the added responsibility of helping parents choose a school for their child, is it realistic to put this burden on data managers and school counselors, office staff, etc. Laura Evans responded that central office never intended for data managers to be solely responsible for helping parents choose and register, and that their goal is to train as many school staff as possible on how to manage the new process.

Regarding public perception of the Plan, Mr. Tata and Ms Mulder stated that relatively few questions have been submitted, and the concern seems to relate to stability. Dr. Martin said that one of the best part of the plan was the communication effort to families. He stated that the worst part of the plan was certain area's participation or lack thereof.

Approximately one hour into the meeting, Debra Goldman questioned the intent of today's work session. Ms. Goldman said Mr. Tata and his staff should be left to do their work re implementing this plan without the BOE "getting down into the weeds" of the staff's work. Christine Kushner responded that it is the responsibility of the Board members to understand the implementation of the Plan and to be confident that it is both sustainable and the most effective plan for the Wake community.

Dr. Martin has heard concerns from data managers at some schools who feel their technology is not up to date enough to properly handle the new registration process. Mr. Tata said that after visiting more than 140 of the schools in the district, he has not heard that technology is a problem at any school. He encouraged Dr. Martin to contact him immediately if such an assertion is made and he will follow up w/ that school.

Set Asides

Mr. Overman reviewed pg. 11 of the Board questions handout re "What happens when parents don't choose," beginning an intense discussion.

At this point, a discussion about “equitable schools” took place w/ Dr. Martin raising concerns about under chosen schools. Ms Pulliam and Deborah Prickett observed that schools are educating their parents about sibling registration, and that pre-k programs are educating rising Ks. Dr. Martin insisted that high-needs students be assured seats at appropriate schools, and John Tedesco countered that all schools are good options. Dr. Martin responded that that is a fundamental premise of the Alves plan, but that Wake’s Plan is being implemented without ensuring that basic necessity is in place. Mr. Tata stated that that work is in process, with the Renaissance Schools’ development and attention to under-enrolled schools’ programming.

Dr. Martin also raised specific concerns about feeder patterns for Carnage and Joyner Elementary. In the case of Carnage, if they get too many students from Walnut Creek, the demographics of that school will change dramatically. This is a concern to many parents at that school. In the case of Joyner, many families enrolled at that school with the intention of returning to their base schools for middle and high. Now, under the new plan, they feel locked into a feeder pattern they do not want.

As a result of the Carnage discussion, the question of the PURPOSE of the magnets arose. Mr. Tata said it is time to do a magnet review. Christine Kushner pointed out one has not been done since 2008. Mr. Tata and Board members agreed this needs to be done again, especially in light of the new choice plan and how it could affect magnets.

In returning to the Set-Asides discussion, Dr. Martin said the Board needs to develop a rubric before moving forward. He likened this to needing a good “business plan” before a business moves forward with new programs, new innovations. Businesses create the business plan first, before implementation, and WCPSS should follow that model. Ms Prickett noted that any rubric should include “program equity.”

Dr. Martin asked James Overman if there would be schools (likely our achievement schools) that were full after the first selection round, thus shutting out higher needs students. Mr. Overman acknowledged that this could happen, and said that if the Board wanted them to, that staff would look at that issue.

Ms. Christine Kushner said ,” As I’ve heard you say, Superintendent Tata, it is important to offer good choices to displaced families.”

Ms. Kushner said that some parents felt that the rules had been changed on them- ie when they chose their elementary school, they didn’t want the middle and high schools in the current plan.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Page 14 of the hand-out of Questions from New Board Members includes lists of potential internal and external members of a proposed Community-Based Advisory Board. Ms Goldman suggested adding a County Commissioner.

Dr. Martin continued to press for stated goals so that success can be measured: for example, equity of AG and vo-tech teachers across the schools.

Mr. Hill questioned whether this rubric need be in place before the January 17 assignment process begins, or simply before school starts.

Feeder Patterns

Conflict seems to lie with stability versus questionable long-term results (calendar, proximity, node history, etc.) as well as recognition that feeder patterns MUST change as new schools open. Discussion of possibly delaying implementation of feeder patterns for one year ensued, countered by staff's list of pro's and con's on page 5 of the Board Questions hand-out.

Chris Malone addressed the current situation, reminding the BoE that we have a plan that can be tweaked for the following year, and that feeder patterns will always be a problem, and he advocated for immediate and complete implementation for the 2012-13 school year.

Dr. Martin argued that the district is in this difficult situation because of a premature decision to implement this Plan with many glaring and large questions. Mr. Malone questioned the time availability to answer these questions before 2012-13 implementation. Ms Kushner reminded people that assignments and reassignments have happened as late as April for the last number of years, and stated that we must discuss and define our goals.

6:00pm Mr. Tata and Mr. Hill ask Board for their "takeaways" from the meeting, and what each member needs to see before they can move forward.

Ms. Kushner said she needs to see student achievement become a higher priority in the selection process. Dr. Martin reiterated that he needs to see benchmarks and controls put into the plan before he can support implementation. Keith Sutton stated he'd like to see the unaddressed issues of student assignment and budget addressed. No other individual Board members listed additional concerns.

Everyone agreed that a magnet review must take place.