

## 11/4/10 - Superintendent Summit

Today's Superintendent Summit focused on strategies for providing parents with greater choice through offerings and school themes, such as those at magnet, year-round, and application schools like Partnership Elementary and the Early College programs. Interim Superintendent Donna Hargens asked participants to discuss innovative instructional models that expanded parental choice for schools.

The meeting began with an overview of the options already available in WCPSS. Magnet schools have historically been used in Wake County to reduce high concentrations of poverty and/or maximize the use of facilities, as well as expand educational opportunities. Currently, 21 percent of WCPSS students attend a magnet school, and magnet schools have utilization rates of 97 percent on average, compared with the district average of 91 percent. Free and Reduced lunch populations average 35 percent at magnets, compared with 28 percent district wide.

Partnership Elementary School and Wake Early College and Wake NCSU STEM Early College (which will open next Fall) are application schools available to Wake County students and their parents. Partnership has a small base population, with an overwhelming number of its students coming from the applicant pool. Parents who send their children there must volunteer at least four hours each month at the school. The Early College models, funded in part from a Gates Foundation grant, are five-year programs, with about 50 new students each year, that follow a specific curriculum and allow students to earn a two-year Associates Degree and/or college credits. Anyone can apply, but the target population for Wake Early College includes students who would be first-generation college students. STEM Early College will target students underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, the focus of that program.

Magnet administrator David Ansbacher gave a short review of "reverse magnets," schools that could attract students in racially isolated schools or high poverty neighborhoods to schools in the periphery of the County, as an effort to achieve diversity in student populations. Models included the CBALC (Community-Based Accelerated Learning Center) program of Wake County, active from 1998 to 2001. The program worked to attract Level 1 and Level 2 students to Green, Timber Drive, and West Lake year-round elementary schools, and it featured enrichment activities for those students during track-out periods.

[Duval County, Florida](#), in and around Jacksonville, FL, and [San Diego, CA, schools](#) also use reverse magnets. Duval County has 56 magnet schools, assigned in seven assignment zones that are pie shaped, and children identified as Title I receive high priority to attend select schools. San Diego has 24 magnet schools, within three clusters, that have Dual Language Programs and Academics and Athletics as themes.

Supt. Hargens stated that the standard course of study was like the cake of a cupcake--a sound foundation that all schools must have. Magnet and other choice programs were

like "icing." She said when she was principal at Green Hope and Cary high schools, she wanted to make sure her "cake" was strong, that folks who chose to attend magnet high schools did so because they wanted a type of "icing" offered elsewhere, and that they were not dissatisfied with the "cake" of her high schools. So she asked the groups to discuss types of "icing" that could be offered in other schools.

The issues were discussed at tables, broken into groups of six to eight participants; some of their views (some conflicting):

- K-8 education allowed for "looping" of students, having stability for students, with teachers following progress across eight grades.
- Extended learning through extended instructional days was often discussed.
- Foreign language offerings should be part of the "cake." Language offerings, particularly at the high school level, could be clustered on regional basis to grant greater access to students at various schools.
- The Arts should be part of the "cake." Others said the arts are "icing."
- Expanded technical and career-oriented education should be expanded, part of the "cake" of high schools; students should have some access to various technical programs at other high schools within the district.
- Expansion of Pre-k programs
- Two-tiered schedules should be explored, especially for high school students, allowing some students to attend school in the evening, giving them the opportunity to work, provide child care, or conduct community service or other work experience during the day.
- Weekend programs of enrichment and remediation, to maximize school building utilization and involve working parents