



Contacts: Yevonne Brannon/Patty Williams
Tel: 919-244-6243/919-696-8059
Email: info@greatschoolsinswake.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREAT SCHOOLS IN WAKE FAVORS COMPREHENSIVE, STRATEGIC APPROACH TO STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

Raleigh, NC—April 25, 2011—Great Schools in Wake (GSIW) urges the School Board to consider deferring changes to scheduling at 14 schools next year.

Students, parents, and taxpayers would be best served if this decision was postponed in order to comprehensively address countywide adjustments necessary to appropriately accommodate a growing student population.

“A piecemeal approach to assignment is precisely what got previous Wake School Boards into trouble,” said GSIW Chair Yevonne Brannon. “As Superintendent Tata and his staff are currently working on a long-term plan, it seems logical to look at the bigger picture before impacting overall school capacity,” Brannon continued. “We are sensitive to the desire of parents who wish to have their children on a single calendar, but we don’t want projected growth to cause another upheaval when we need room for new students.”

In total, the construction of 40 year-round elementary schools and nine year-round middle schools has saved Wake County taxpayers \$316 million in today’s construction costs. While some year-round schools are operating under capacity today, saving \$50,000 in annual operating expenses is negligible when compared to the capital expenses incurred when building a new school (\$22 million per elementary school, \$47 million per middle school).

Many of the schools being considered for calendar conversion are in high growth areas of Wake County. For example, converting Highcroft Elementary to a single track would fill the school to 98 percent capacity, including the use of nine mobile units already on campus. With several new neighborhoods within two miles of Highcroft approved for construction, the school will soon be overcrowded.

Lynanne Fowle, a Holly Grove Middle School parent weighed in with her position on converting her school to a single track: “Holly Grove Middle is only *temporarily* under capacity. It was built to help accommodate some of the 2,000 middle school students

expected to move to western Wake County over the next five years. Imagine the disruption that moving *again* from one track to four will cause neighborhoods. It would cost less to promote the benefits of a year-round calendar to attract new families than it would to repeatedly reassign students to new tracks.”

At a time of tight budgets and a bond referendum looming in 2013, the fiscally responsible action to be take would be to fully utilize current school facilities, rather than build new facilities or buying additional modular units (at a cost of upwards of \$50,000/unit).

Further, the Student Assignment Policy 6200, approved last year by the School Board majority specifically states: “Student assignment will seek optimal utilization of each school’s capacity.”

For additional details on GSIW’s perspective on school calendar conversion, visit: <http://bit.ly/YRconversion>

###

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. For more information on the Coalition or to join, please visit: greatschoolsinswake.org.