



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREAT SCHOOLS IN WAKE WEIGHS IN ON STUDENT ASSIGNMENT COURSES OF ACTION

Raleigh, NC—June 2, 2011—Great Schools in Wake (GSIW) applauds the efforts of the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) Student Assignment Task Force in the development of multiple “courses of action” for public consideration.

Given the information provided to-date, GSIW members feel that the Task Force has done an excellent job modifying and enhancing the current assignment model in its Green Course of Action.

The Green Course of Action goes beyond the “status quo,” and is visionary in its design, which has no school with a proficiency level more than ten percent below the system-wide average. It gives families the security of base assignments, reinvigorates our focus on student achievement, and will be a much more cost effective solution than the Blue Course of Action, owing to the greater predictability of transportation costs. WCPSS is recognized for its transportation system efficiency and receives the highest marks (and, as a result, significant transportation funding) from the NC Department of Public Instruction.

The Green Course of Action also offers a "modified choice" plan, as families will have calendar choice and magnet options from which to select. The 94.5% of parents already satisfied with their children's school assignment will find the Green course of action very appealing, and many of the 5.2% of parents who were dissatisfied will likely see benefit to this alternative assignment model.

On the other hand, there is great concern over the Blue Course of Action. The lack of a guaranteed base assignment in the Blue Plan is a very significant departure from our current assignment plan and also a big difference from the Green Plan.

Specific concerns raised over the Blue Course of Action include:

- The odds that families will not get their first or second school choice and will be

forced into their fourth or fifth choices. Will popular schools be capped? Families in cities where controlled choice plans have been implemented compare their experience to playing the lottery—some children are lucky and others are not.

- The substantial cost of community outreach. We may be grossly underestimating both the cost of community outreach and the level of commitment required to follow through with it. Sadly, without robust community outreach, children whose parents fail to choose will be left with the least attractive schools.
- Prospective homebuyers often make decisions based on the schools their children will attend if they live in a particular neighborhood. That security is no longer guaranteed in the Blue Course of Action.
- Taxpayers who have lived in school districts that have a controlled plan have seen a dramatic decrease in their property values because of the uncertainty of school assignments in a controlled choice model.

A disadvantage specifically called out in the Green Course of Action is that it is allegedly "Unable to respond easily as population grows or declines." Yet, if the Blue Course of Action leads to the capping of popular schools, that plan will be equally unable to respond to changes in population.

Board Student Assignment Policy 6200 states as its first goal: "Achieving academic success for ALL children." Student achievement is the one priority almost all parents rank highest. A third Course of Action—"Red"—which gives greatest priority to achievement should be reconsidered as a third viable option. While Superintendent Tony Tata indicated that elements of the Red Course of Action are contained in the Blue, the public needs to understand how this is the case. It would serve the community well if this plan could be modeled so we can see why this plan is thought to be more costly than the blue plan.

Given the information currently available, GSIW believes that the Green Course of Action offers the best chance to get it right: to prioritize achievement for all students in Wake County while maintaining the greatest stability for our community and our children.

###

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:
greatschoolsinline.org.