

## **July 12 Board of Education Meeting**

At last Tuesday's Board of Education meeting, the Board cut Teacher Assistant salaries in order to balance the budget after the N.C. General Assembly made further cuts to Wake County's budget allotment. The Wake Board of Education voted 7-1 to reduce teacher assistant positions from 10 months to 9.25 months, meaning TAs will not report to work on teacher work days and other planning days. No TA positions will be cut, and their rate of pay will remain the same, but TAs will receive less pay, since they will work fewer days/hours for pay. They will retain benefits as "full-time" employees.

The budget passed by the Board in June assumed state budget cuts of 5 percent, but when the legislature's final funding cut WCPSS funding by 6 percent, the district was forced to come up with more cuts. Board member Anne McLaurin was the only "nay" vote, saying she'd hoped the Board of Education would have asked the County Commissioners to increase funding for the school system to avoid such cuts. In May, the Board voted 5-3 not to ask the Wake County Commissioners for an increase in funding for the schools. During Tuesday's meeting, Board member John Tedesco made a point to say he thought that the cuts in TA salaries will not affect the classroom or children.

More cuts are on the way. Next month, finance director David Neter said he will recommend cutting custodial jobs as well as imposing a \$45 fee for driver's education to all students to cut the budget. Those changes that will be brought forward at a future Board meeting.

"We're losing a lot of positions, we're losing a lot of jobs," BoE Chair Margiotta told WRAL after the meeting. "I don't see how it can be avoided." he added.

The Board also voted against renewing a contract for Blue Diamond assessments, a tool that teachers use to check whether their students have learned material taught in class. In presenting a recommendation that the contract be renewed for one year, Deputy Supt. Donna Hargens suggested that Blue Diamond be used until a new system is put into place by the Department of Public Instruction. Dr. Hargens said each school has the equipment for the system and teachers know how to use it. Dr. Hargens said the staff had looked into other systems, including one suggested by Board member Tedesco, and that Blue Diamond would serve as a good bridge before the state assessment is put into place.

Despite this staff input, Board member Tedesco said the contract was too high, and he, Chair Margiotta, Debra Goldman, Chris Malone and Debra Prickett voted to end the testing program, without putting another into place. When voting, Board member Debra Goldman said, "For Zach, I vote no." In December 2009, Goldman's high school son Zach Goldman spoke against Blue Diamond during public comment, saying he'd "never met a student" who benefited from the quick assessments.

At the end of the meeting, the Board of Education named Kengie Bass as principal at Moore Square Magnet Middle School, retiree Tom Dixon interim as principal at Wake

Forest-Rolesville High School, and retiree Bradford Shackelford as interim principal at Wake Forest-Rolesville Middle School.