

Good evening. As a parent of a student at Carnage MS, I am here to share my concerns about express busing for magnet schools. My message is simple: for my family and many other magnet families, an express bus is the same as no bus at all. Because both my husband and I have full time jobs, we are unable to pick our son up from school or an express stop in the afternoon. We need a residential bus to drop him off within walking distance of home. As I have spoken with other parents from Carnage, they have shared with me that parents with children in more than one magnet school face an even greater challenge with express busing.

The second issue that I would like to raise is the reason for the long magnet bus rides. Many people in the community are under the impression that lengthy bus rides are simply a result of the distance between the school and where the students live. I believed that until my child attended Carnage.

However, the length of the ride is actually a result of the design of the bus routes. In spite of the fact that we are the first residential stop in the afternoon, my son's bus ride from Carnage takes an hour and a half. Driving a direct route from Carnage to our house takes less than 15 minutes, so the long ride is not due to distance. His bus ride takes so long because it must first make stops at Mary Phillips HS, Longview School, and Enloe HS. At Enloe alone, his bus must wait 30 or 45 minutes to pick up students. The bus routes listed on the Wake County website do not include these school stops, so community members may not be aware that most magnet busses make multiple stops before they reach the first neighborhood.

Express buses alone will not solve the problem of long bus rides for magnet students. There is an express bus from Carnage right now that doesn't arrive at its stop until 4:00 – an hour and 45 minutes after school dismisses. In order to shorten magnet bus rides, the design of bus routes and the bottleneck at Enloe must be addressed. Perhaps Enloe could create a second bus area or send some students on shuttles to the middle schools. Middle school and high school routes could be separated. The WCPSS transportation department has done the county a great service in saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuel costs again this year. I am certain they can come up with an innovative solution to address the bus congestion at Enloe.

Residential busing is crucial to the magnet program in Wake County. Without it, I fear we will have many more schools like Walnut Creek ES with very high percentages of low income students. Wake County has made a concerted effort to make that school successful, but at a very great cost and with no guarantee of success. By contrast, we have nearly 30 years of evidence to show that a strong magnet program produces strong schools and efficient use of resources.

I implore you to continue providing residential busing for magnet schools. Thank you.