

Board of Education
February 1, 2011

Presentation by
Lois Nixon

Chairman Margiotta and Board members. My name is Lois Nixon.

General Tata, welcome to Wake County. I was glad to see that you spent your first day listening to students and teachers to get factual information.

Here's a quick review of other facts that we know:

- Wake County has added an average of 5000 students per year in the last 10 years. That has required the building of 48 new schools for an additional 48,000 seats, and similar growth is expected for the next 5 years.
- If there were no growth, there would not be the need for reassignment.
- The Board's survey last year, with responses from 40,000 parents, indicated that 94.5 % of parents were happy with their child's current assignment.
- 91.4% of elementary students go to a school within 5 miles of their home, as do 82.2 % of middle and high students. 99% of all students attend school within 10 miles of their homes.
- The average bus ride in Wake County is 17 minutes. This is less than the average for all NC students.
- Less than 4% of students are bused to improve the diversity of our schools. This small effort has helped to prevent high poverty schools, where student achievement declines.
- Busing is also used as a tool to reduce overcrowding at some schools and to help achieve maximum utilization of school facilities.
- Transportation funds are provided by the state, but are supplemented with county funds for certain expenditures like bus replacement. Wake County's busing program has achieved a 100% efficiency rating for many years, and is one of the only school systems in the state to achieve that record.

So, in considering these facts, it was surprising to hear Mr. Tedesco say at last week's meeting in a discussion of transportation that, (quote) "If we are able to save resources on transportation, some of the dollars could realign to resources for kids,... since the Board is creating more schools that are identifiable by poverty and race."

How can the transportation department achieve better than 100% efficiency?

Based on the facts above, it seems to me that the savings by moving kids 1 or 2 miles closer to home will be in dimes and quarters, not millions of dollars, and most of that savings would revert to the state, as pointed out by another Board member.

These are the facts we know, but the Board and the community need more facts about balancing transportation efficiencies, if any, with the human and economic costs of creating high poverty schools.