

12-07-10 Board of Education Work Session & Meeting

WCPSS Growth and Planning Staff unveiled [the full list of proposed student reassignments](#) at Tuesday's Committee of the Whole meeting, sparking debate among Board members who wanted all proposals considered and those who only wanted those proposals that fit into the Board's current directives considered. The full list includes the moves proposed by three community representatives appointed to the Student Assignment Committee by Board members Deborah Prickett, Ron Margiotta and John Tedesco. Those recommendations would move between 4,000 and 5,000 students--about 80 percent of them nonwhite--from their current schools for the 2011-12 school year.

Ron Margiotta was absent due to a family illness and Vice Chair Debra Goldman presided. Board member Keith Sutton told his colleagues that they should consider only the moves that were presented by staff and those raised by Board members before [the October 5 directive on Student Assignment](#).

Limiting inclusion to those recommendations would exclude the expanded reassignments that involved thousands of minority students. Sutton said making such moves during a time when the District is under investigation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) would be unwise. Said Sutton: "For us...in the face of this investigation, to move 6,000 African-American kids, not knowing what the impact will be on integration or segregation would be totally irresponsible and downright stupid." Officials from OCR visited Raleigh all day Tuesday investigating a civil rights complaint of racial bias in the Wake public schools.

The Board will discuss the proposed reassignments during their work session next Tuesday, December 14. At the end of the Work Session, the Board decided 4-3 to only consider the recommendations proposed by staff and Board members before the October 5 directive.

At one point Ms. Prickett raised concerns about addressing under enrolled schools, including Hilburn Drive Elementary, in her district. She said Board members owed it to taxpayers to address empty classrooms at schools that are under capacity. One proposed reassignment would take 101 students from Hilburn--about 20 percent of its total student population of about 500--to Walnut Creek Elementary, a new school opening next fall and a school closer to the children's homes. This example illustrates the conflicts arising in student assignment--balancing proximity, family and student stability (these students were last reassigned in 2003) and the full utilization of existing school buildings at a time of anticipated growth. In addition, in a separate request, some parents in the district recommended to Growth and Planning that they reassign node 651 out of Hilburn (which is under enrolled) and into Leesville Elementary (which is over enrolled).

To address capacity issues, the Board decided to examine the impact of reassignments on schools that are **at 75 percent capacity, their agreed to definition for "under enrolled."** The staff recommendations also include opening Walnut Creek Elementary on a traditional calendar instead of the year-round calendar, giving families in that area

more calendar choice. Many surrounding elementary schools are on a year-round schedule, and because of stalled growth, many are not as filled as initially predicted.

In the main meeting, 24 speakers addressed the Board. A rundown of comments and video of the full meeting are available on [WRAL's website](#).

The Board was unable to approve revised policy to reinstate Board Standing Committees. With Mr. Margiotta's absence, board members Chris Malone and Mr. Tedesco wished to table the measure, and they voted against a revised version that failed in a 5-2 vote that required a two-thirds majority in order to waive the second reading. So for now, the Board still does not have Standing Committees, although the Finance Committee may still meet today, utilizing Mr. Sutton's role as Board liaison for Finance. The District faces a loss of at least \$70 million in federal and state funding next year.