

## **MAY 18, 2010 – BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Board of Education, May 18:** Ending in chants from students exclaiming "Segregation has got to go," the Wake Board of Education gave final approval to a revised Policy 6200 that omits "creating and maintaining a diverse student body" from its Student Assignment policy. It also eliminates policy that uses assignment to avoid creating schools with high proportions of students with special needs, including high levels of low-income students and students performing below grade level. The Board also approved giving Broughton High School continued funding for its de-magnetized International Baccalaureate program, and they moved all Early Release Days for next year to Friday afternoons, despite a teacher and staff committee recommending Wednesday afternoons.

On **Policy 6200**, Dr. Carolyn Morrison challenged that the new policy does not allow fairness to all students, regardless of income level or special needs. She said fairness is reflected in the current policy through maintaining diverse schools, and the current assignment policy is supported by decades of research. Dr. Morrison and board member Kevin Hill said the Board should contact the federal magnet grant office and tell them that WCPSS is revising its policy to eliminate diversity as a factor. (Federal magnet grants are aimed at reducing racial isolation in schools.) Chair Ron Margiotta said "that might cost us our grant," but member John Tedesco said he was confident that the newly written Voluntary Desegregation Plan as well as the proposed Policy 6200 (omitting diversity) will be enough for the grant.

Board member Deborah Prickett supported eliminating language that previously worked to avoid schools with high concentrations of students with failing test scores. She said that EOGs and other state test scores should not be used to assess schools since so many students move in from out of state and those scores are thus not appropriate to have in policy. "How can label students with higher needs? All of us have higher needs" at some point, she said, listing divorce, job loss and other needs that could be considered. Board member Anne McLaurin said the current policy lists fewer definitions of "higher needs" that are more relevant and appropriate to student assignment policy. Dr. Morrison moved that the policy proposal be tabled, but her motion failed 4-5, with Chair Margiotta, Vice Chair Debra Goldman, and members Chris Malone, Ms. Prickett and Mr. Tedesco voting against tabling the revisions.

Member Keith Sutton said that diversity is being blamed for the faults of the current system, and he asked all Board members to come together and include proximity, choice, community, as well as diversity into the system's assignment policy.

Ms. Goldman moved acceptance of the revised Policy 6200, and it was seconded by Mr. Malone. Dr. McLaurin proposed an amendment: "School assignments will not allow schools to be segregated on the basis of socioeconomic status or race. No school should have more than 50 percent poor or minority students." She offered the amendment saying the public needs the Board to work together and have some consensus. Mr. Tedesco said the amendment concerned him because the 50 percent cap seemed arbitrary. Mr. Hill said the 50 percent figure probably follows a determination by the

Swann Report (from Charlotte) that 50 percent is a tipping point, and having higher poverty rates leads to lower achievement. Fairfax County, VA, which has been cited as a model by Mr. Tedesco, uses diversity as a factor, Mr. Hill said. The amendment was defeated 4-5. Mr. Tedesco cited the anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education saying the child at the center of the court case was trying to go to her neighborhood school. A speaker during public comment later called it "blasphemous" for Mr. Tedesco to cite the Brown case while voting to eliminate diversity in the schools.

The revised policy 6200 passed 5-4, with Mr. Margiotta, Ms. Goldman, Mr. Malone, Ms. Prickett and Mr. Tedesco voting in favor.

**Early Release Days:** The Board voted 6-2 to move early release days to Fridays. However, Mr. Hill and Mr. Sutton voted against it, saying that teachers often work late on those early release days and it was unfair to ask teachers to work late on Fridays. The Time Committee, made up of teachers, administrators and parents, had recommended Wednesdays for the Early Release days.

**IB at Broughton:** The Board also voted 7-1 to continue funding to Broughton's IB program. In December 2008, the Board voted to remove the IB program from Broughton, then a magnet, and have a phase out plan that would run out of money after the 2012-13 school year. The change came after several neighborhoods had been redistricted out of Broughton to make room for more IB magnet students at the school. Those neighborhoods pressed to remain at Broughton, even if it meant giving up the magnet IB program, although others lobbied to keep IB at Broughton. Currently, Garner, Millbrook, and Enloe high schools have IB programs available to base students as well as magnet students who apply.

Ms. Prickett, as Chair of the Student Achievement Committee, recommended maintaining the program at Broughton for juniors and seniors past 2013, at a continuing cost of at least \$180,000 each year. The program will be available only to base students and transfers. There are 110 sophomores currently enrolled to enter the program next year, according to Broughton. Mr. Hill, who voted against the proposal, said it was setting a dangerous precedent. He said his vote was not against IB but for equity issues. Mr. Tedesco, in support of continuing IB at Broughton, said it continued a focus on student achievement and the investment in the school. One speaker during public comment noted that when the 2008 Board, including Mr. Margiotta, voted to remove Broughton's IB magnet program, they were told by many Broughton parents that they were willing to give up the IB program in order to maintain their current base population. The speaker noted that now the school has been able to keep those base students and also keep their IB program funded by the district.

**Still needed a Ticket:** The meeting was well attended, and at least 150 tickets were distributed to attendees, who filled the Board room. People were again turned away from the Committee of the Whole meeting due to space limitations. There were at least 10 uniformed police officers, many present because student protesters had obtained a permit to protest the Board's actions outside, before many of them moved inside to attend the

meeting. There were no arrests. The ticketing policy remains in effect for future meetings.

Thirty members of the public spoke at the meeting--two in support of Broughton's IB program, one opposed to maintaining Broughton's IB, and 27 against the Board's revised Policy 6200. No one spoke in favor of the revised student assignment policy.