

The magnet program was put in place in the early 1980s after the merger of the county and city schools with the express purpose to:

- Provide **optimal utilization** of school facilities
- Voluntarily promote diverse student populations and reduce high concentrations of poverty, and
- Provide expanded educational opportunities for students' academic and personal growth

Over the years, magnet programs have become increasingly popular. Today, demand has outstripped supply and a third of parents are turned away each year.

Opening Walnut Creek provides a unique opportunity to fill it smartly and ensure optimal utilization for the long term. With 600 to 800 new seats, you can give families nearby an opportunity to **CHOOSE** Walnut Creek—to **voluntarily opt in**—or allow them to **CHOOSE to remain** in their current schools, if **STABILITY** is a higher priority for them. I would expect that selections would be mixed—on an individual basis parents may have reasons for selecting one option over the other. The important thing is to **ASK** the effected parents and not guess or assume what they want or what is best for them.

Secondly, if you open Walnut Creek as a magnet, you can increase the number of magnet seats available to parents who value a diverse learning environment and ease some of the magnet supply constraints felt today at the elementary level. Magnet programs have been the **best** mechanism for FACILITY UTILIZATION, an objective of the assignment plan. **The icing on this cake would be to avoid creating a high poverty school.**

For those parents from the Walnut Creek area who **CHOOSE** to attend Walnut Creek Elementary, you can satisfy a PROXIMITY objective. However, massively reassigning hundreds of Southeast Raleigh children away from their current schools **without consideration or consent** of their parents provides neither **CHOICE** nor **STABILITY**.

I urge you to optimize **FACILITY UTILIZATION** for the long term at Walnut Creek by filling it wisely.

Unfortunately, last week's discussions of the Student Assignment Committee seem centered around *'moving those kids back to where they come from'*, sort of a reverse-forced busing move. Choice appears to mean *'giving others the ability to choose for my children'*.