

August 10, 2010 – Board of Education Meeting

Board of Education Limits Action Meetings to Once a Month:

The Board of Education followed through on plans to reduce their action meeting schedule to one meeting per month and suspend [all standing committees](#), while condensing the work of those committees to a once-a-month work session with all nine members in attendance. As a result, the public will only have one meeting for public comment. Chairman Ron Margiotta said the changes were a "work in progress" for streamlining the Board's work, although some Board members expressed concern with the reduction in public input. An amendment to add public comment to the work sessions was turned back by a 5-4 vote, with Mr. Margiotta, [John Tedesco](#), Debra Goldman, Deborah Prickett and [Chris Malone](#) voting against adding public comment.

Mr. Malone said he was concerned about adding more time to the work session and said it was "much ado about nothing." Ms. Prickett said the Board "has never cut people off" who are speaking. (However, the Board has limited the public to two minutes to speak and has ended public comment before going to their action meeting, and as a result many speakers were left to speak at the end of the Board meeting, after they had already voted on all their business.) Ms. Prickett also said that she has listened the public, "although it's been hard." Dr. Carolyn Morrison said the Board of Education is spending public dollars and so she wanted to hear from the public.

A [full running blog](#) of the meeting is available at WRAL, and recordings of the meeting also are on WRAL's site.

Mr. Margiotta opened the meeting by stating he wanted the Board to focus on student achievement, given that they now have a student assignment plan in place "without the distraction of diversity quotas." He stated a desire for the Board to move

forward to "jointly seek strategies" for increasing achievement. Mr. Margiotta referred many times to a hope for greater consensus, but the evening contained several [split votes](#).

2010-11 Budget Approved: Board members, including Dr. Anne McLaurin, [Kevin Hill](#), Keith Sutton, Mr. Tedesco and Mr. Margiotta, noted that while they recognized the budget was less than ideal, containing more than \$20 million in cuts from state funding, they were voting for the best budget possible at this time, in order to have a budget in place in a timely manner. The budget was approved 7-1, with Ms. Goldman voting no, although she did not state why or speak against the budget during discussion.

Partial funding was restored for Project Enlightenment's parent counselors, after job cuts in April from the first Reduction in Force carried out by the district. The services will now be funded through a contract with the Wake County Department of Human Services, and parents and families will go through that agency's screening process before receiving services from [Project Enlightenment](#). Interim Supt. Donna Hargens said she hopes the services will reach more families this way, and she said it will align the various services of the school district and the county more fully.

Mrs. Prickett asked for a break out of per pupil spending for the next meeting. She also asked administrator Darryl Fisher about per pupil spending for the Academically Intellectually Gifted program. Mr. Fisher said the district spends \$302.59 per AIG student. Almost all of the cost, 98 percent, is in staff salaries, he said, with \$6 million coming from the state and \$1 million from local funds.

Test Scores Presented: During a presentation from Asst. Supt. David Holdzkom, the Board learned that [Wake County students](#) scored gains in almost all categories in the 2009-10 school year,

and the [achievement gap](#) between white students and students of color lessened during the past three years. More than 85 percent of students were performing at grade level. Declines in achievement were evident, however, in students with [Limited English Proficiency](#), which Dr. Holdzkom cited. (Some of that may be explained, he said, due to lowering the threshold for having students in that category--that is [higher level students](#) may be pushed out of the category sooner than in the past.) He noted that 38 percent of WCPSS schools met Annual Yearly Progress goals, while an additional 34 percent missed 100% AYP by only one or two categories. Full data sets from the presentation will be available on the [WCPSS website](#) on Wednesday, Aug. 11.

Dr. Hargens said a Strategic Plan is in place to address the data reflected in the test scores as well as provide updates on the Curriculum Management Audit. One strategy includes Professional Learning Teams of teachers and administrators meeting regularly on ways to improve achievement.

One of those PLTs on the Suspension Rate presented a proposal to change the definition of long-term suspension in [Wake County](#). By a rare unanimous vote, the Board approved changing the definition of long term suspension to between 10 days and 180 days, instead of the current definition of "removal from the school system for the remainder of the school year." The change allows for more equal consequences in discipline.

Future School Construction: Asst. Supt. Don Haydon presented a proposal for using \$2.4 million savings from the last construction bond to begin design plans for three new schools, which were approved at the [Committee of the Whole](#) on July 20. Land has already been banked for E-20 (an elementary school in North Raleigh near the N. Wake Landfill), E-32 ([Scotts Ridge Elementary School](#) in Apex) and M-8 (a middle school in northwest Raleigh, near Leesville Road and I-540). Member Chris

Malone, former chair of the Facilities Committee, made a motion to add an Elementary School north of [Wake Forest](#) to the list, using savings now apparent from the Lacy Elementary school renovation. That motion was defeated 3-5, with only Mr. Malone, Mr. Sutton and Mr. Hill voting in favor. Mr. Tedesco and Ms. Goldman expressed concern about adding the fourth school without proper discussion, and both stated a need to wait until the Student Assignment plan was in place before building more schools. Mr. Tedesco expressed a need for more schools in downtown Raleigh, citing capacity issues in many downtown schools. For at least the next three months, there will be no Facilities Committee meetings to iron out details of such construction plans. Such work will be done in the once-per-month whole Board work sessions.

Mr. Haydon said startup funds were needed given the current projections for student growth--additional schools will be needed to accommodate growth projected for 2013-14 as well as for schools overcapacity now. The Board voted 6-2 in favor for spending the funds for startup design plans for the three schools initially proposed, with Ms. Goldman and Mr. Tedesco voting no.

More Police, More Arrests: At the end of the public comment period, six people were arrested for refusing to leave the speaker's podium. [Middle Creek High School](#) student Seth Keel finished speaking and was joined by five others before the group was led away by police. "I will not rest until there is quality education for every student in Wake County," Keel said. They peacefully went with [law enforcement officials](#) soon after being told to leave. The arrests came after Keel refused to leave, saying "in good conscience, I cannot leave" this podium. At least five uniformed police were in the Board room during the meeting, with at least five additional officers and other security officials outside the meeting room and in the parking lot. About 40 people attended the meeting.

OpEd in *News and Observer*: Tony Habit, president of the NC New Schools Project, has an [opinion piece](#) in the N&O today concerning lessons learned from other school districts in the state.