

**Facilities Utilization/Forced Bussing**  
**Jim Martin 12/7/2010**

I would like to commend the school system for sustained efforts to efficiently utilize facilities. This is particularly important as we all witness declining budgets.

Specifically I would like to comment on the efficiency in the use of school busses throughout the system...since I keep hearing about a problem of "Forced Bussing."

The description of Forced Bussing in Wake County is somewhat confusing since with our strong magnet program we have one of the most extensive voluntary bussing policies around.

Forced Bussing arguments imply that if we would "end it" we would be more efficient in use of bussing. This argument lost validity with me, when I observed that the bus to our 5-mile away "neighborhood" high and middle schools came only 15-20 min after my kids got on the bus to go to magnet schools in Southeast Raleigh.

That made me think about the physics of filling a school bus.

- If we assume that the average middle/high school bus holds about 45 students (capacities range from 24 to 52 students *R&P 7125*);
- and that an average of 5 students board the bus per stop;
- and generously assume that it takes only 5 minutes to load those children and get to the next stop;

The physics of filling that bus require 45 minutes! If instead only 3 students board per stop, the time increases to 75 minutes. Just to fill the bus! (Ever wonder why busses don't run at full capacity?)

After it is full the bus travels its distance to school. Wake County is just really not that big. Thus travel of a full bus to a school in almost any part of the county is not the major part of a bus ride...and it is an even smaller percentage of the cost of operating the bus.

So with no fiscal legitimacy to the rhetoric to end "Forced Bussing," I had think further about what "Forced Bussing" actually is.

Oh yes..., "Forced Bussing" is how you implement diversity in schools. But isn't it also how you would Force Students into high-poverty schools? (Not enough students live less than 1.5 miles from schools, so even neighborhood schools will require extensive bussing.)

Wake County has done a commendable job utilizing its transportation facilities to create an effective voluntary bussing system that supports strong magnet schools, and works toward ensuring quality educational environments for all of its schools. While there is room for improvement, lets be careful not to create a repressive forced bussing system that forces children to be bused to high-poverty schools.