

MARCH 31, 2010 Work Session

In a 5-1/2 hour work session Wednesday evening initially scheduled to discuss the 2010-11 budget, the Wake Board of Education reassigned hundreds of students, discussed magnet assignments, and planned for the next federal magnet grant process. The Board did not discuss the budget or any financial considerations of the reassignments made. Among the reassignments were high school students, as part of adjustments to the current 3-year assignment plan. Decisions will be finalized at the April 6 Board meeting. WRAL has a story online.

The Board spent the bulk of the lengthy work session on reassignments, adjusting for calendar choices in some cases, but also reassigning base schools in other cases. Typically, in the past, months of public hearings, in-depth staff analysis, communications to principals and school level officials as well as to parents, are part of the reassignment process. Last evening, Board members looked at maps and relied on their own judgments to make adjustments to the reassignment plan without holding additional public hearings. The February public hearings were stated to be about calendar choice. There was no public input during tonight's work session.

One decision--whether to assign some Laurel Park nodes to Baucom for their traditional calendar option--was changed four times before deciding to leave it as it is and address it in the upcoming community zone plan. Many other requested reassignments also were not approved. One change that was approved was the reassignment of several nodes from Stough Elementary (which is underenrolled) back to Lacy Elementary (which is overcrowded), reversing a heavily contested reassignment that took place last year. Many parents in the affected zones had donated generously to the Wake Schools Community Alliance, which funded the four candidates elected to the Board in the fall.

Hundreds of high school students were reassigned, citing proximity in most cases. Several nodes were reassigned affecting Garner HS, Southeast Raleigh HS, Middle Creek HS, Panther Creek HS and Cary HS. A full detailed report on the nodes affected by tonight's lengthy discussions will be available on the WCPSS website in the next day or two.

These reassignments last night are in addition to the reassignments approved at the last Board meeting March 23.

The Board received an update on the Magnet and Calendar application process. There were 7,670 magnet applications and 4,589 of those students were placed in a magnet of their choice, according to Laura Evans of Growth and Planning. Families should be notified of their student's placement on April 8. Sibling and pathway priorities are still in place for magnet placements for this year.

The Board also approved plans for the staff to apply for a no-cost grant extension for current federal magnet grants at Southeast Raleigh HS, Garner HS, and East Garner MS, as well as apply for a magnet grant for next year for Brentwood ES, Smith ES and Millbrook HS. It was noted that a voluntary desegregation plan is required for this grant, and staff gave the Board examples of plans used by successful magnet applicants from two counties in Florida and from Winston-Salem/Forsyth schools, which all use a community zone model for assignment.

Board member John Tedesco said he would draft a resolution on a voluntary desegregation plan for Tuesday's meeting, and he invited Board members Keith Sutton and Debra Goldman to join him in drafting the document for April 6. It is anticipated that this document, drafted in the next five days, will serve as Wake's voluntary desegregation plan for the purposes of this federal magnet grant.