

MAY 4, 2010 - BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Wake Board of Education approved its revised Student Assignment policy, Policy 6200, which now no longer includes "maintaining diverse student bodies" as a factor in assignment. It also removed references to student achievement--the Board's policy will not longer work to avoid high concentrations of students performing below grade level in any single school. The policy was passed on a 4-3 vote, with Board members John Tedesco, Debra Goldman, Chris Malone and Deborah Prickett voting in favor; and Carolyn Morrison, Keith Sutton and Anne McLaurin voting against. Kevin Hill was out of town and unable to attend the meeting. In speaking against the policy, Dr. McLaurin said the revised policy does not protect against resegregation and does not "protect the students we need to protect."

Before that vote, Mr. Sutton passed out a substitute motion that reinstated diversity and the proportion of higher needs students (such as those performing below grade level, those with limited English proficiency and special education students) as factors in student assignment, as well as including proximity, choice, and stability as high priority factors in student assignment. He said all those factors could coexist. It was voted down by the same 4-3 margin. In speaking against the motion, Mr. Tedesco stated that by including this wording. the policy would give a false sense that assignment will solve academic problems. Decades of research have shown that assignment is in fact key to student achievement.

The Board also passed a policy governing public comment. The language states that members of the public speaking to the Board should refrain from personal attacks or insults to Board members or other members of the public. Despite lower attendance at meetings, the ticket process for

"seating vouchers" remains in effect. Four uniformed police officers also were at the meeting, as well as several plain-clothes security officers. Fewer than 35 members of the public were in attendance. In discussing the public speaking policy, Dr. Morrison expressed concern that policy might have a chilling effect on public participation and comment. However, Chair Ron Margiotta said "I'm sure the public won't feel chilled." Mr. Tedesco said he hopes the public continues to come and present their ideas, including criticizing him and the Board's ideas. Several civil liberties groups had asked the Board not to limit public comments, as described in a WRAL story.

Sixteen speakers presented during the public comment, all opposing the Board's expected actions. A WRAL blog on the meeting is online.

The News and Observer is reporting that the Board voted to consolidate its administrative offices in leased space at Crossroads in Cary and sell the offices it owns outright in Raleigh, specifically the building at 3600 Wake Forest Road in north Raleigh. A full story is online on the N&O site.

The Board heard a report on Title 1 schools that are under School Improvement requirements through the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Title 1 schools meet a federal threshold for having low-income students, and students are able to transfer out of Title 1 schools if those schools fail to meet goals under Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria. Four schools are on the "Watch List," meaning that they missed AYP in a certain subject in 08-09, so if they miss AYP in that same subject this year, they will be required to conduct further school improvement strategies. The four schools are Hilburn, Reedy Creek, East Garner and Timber Drive elementary schools. If they make AYP this year, they will be off the watch list. Several Title 1 schools are in Title 1 School Improvement--which means the schools have failed to make AYP in one or more subjects--Aversboro, Barwell, Brentwood, Briarcliff, Bugg, Conn , Creech, East

Garner, Fox, Hilburn, Hodge Road, Lynn Road, Poe, Reedy Creek, Smith, York , and Zebulon. Schools have to make AYP two years in a row to exit School Improvement. In 2009-10, 335 students opted out of 14 schools and chose to move from a Title 1 school. For next year, WCPSS will receive \$21.6 million from the Federal government for Title 1-20 percent of the funds are required to pay for choice-related transportation costs and supplemental support/instructional services.

Board member Deborah Prickett has stated that she supports having higher concentrations of Title 1 students in select schools. However, Title I status is determined by socio-economic status, the same statistic that the school board's majority say they will no longer use in student assignment.