

Wake County Board of Education
RETREAT
Friday, February 25, 2011 from 9:00am – 5:00pm
Saturday, February 26, 2011 from 9:00am – 12:00pm
Apex Town Hall, Apex, NC
4nd Floor Conference Room

Present: Chair Ron Margiotta, Vice Chair Debra Goldman, Kevin Hill, John Tedesco, Dr. Anne McLaurin, Chris Malone, Debra Prickett, Keith Sutton, Dr. Carolyn Morrison, Superintendent Tony Tata, Board Attorney Ann Majestic

Retreat started at 9:20am.

Introductions:

Jim Huges, independent consultant, thanked Terri Cobb for her efforts and also Melissa Allen. Mr. Huges's biographical sketch was distributed in materials.

Ashley Goolsby was Mr. Tata's assistant in DC, has family in Holly Springs- father and sister recent graduate of Holly Springs High, all welcomed Ms. Goolsby to WCPSS

Jasmine Pahnman works for the Broad Foundation with the Broad Center as Director of Network Services, before Broad she did consulting and education services

Agenda and packet of materials for meeting was distributed.

Vision Statement Discussion

Noting that the proposed Vision Statement omitted mention of any achievement gaps and that it did not stress the academic achievement of ALL children, Mr. Sutton launched an interesting dialogue about the need to include such language, and ultimately the support of Mr. Tedesco, in saying that different children have different needs, and WCPSS will ensure that all Wake County achieve their full potential.

Mr. Tata, as part of the discussion, recognized that with 80% white teacher population in a 50.5% minority population and the recent addition of EVAAS, there should be explicit emphasis on achievement for all our kids.

Core Beliefs Discussion

Ms Goldman remained unhappy with the inclusion of "regardless of socio-economic environment" in the first Core Belief, because in her reading, that limited focus on high achievement to SES issues. Others saw it as a point of emphasis, given the current situation, and important to include. Although she repeated her dislike for its inclusion, she said she could live with it.

Throughout the discussion, Mr. Huge utilized a consensus building approach, demonstrating in practice that although a board member may not *totally* embrace a statement (or, by extension, a motion or amendment), he/she can voice the concern, but can also decide that it's acceptable, for the sake of the group decision.

Each Board member had a copy of What School Boards Can Do, by Donald McAdams. Mr. Sutton focused on the statement that the academic achievement gap can and will be eliminated, and that all children will be at grade level. Both Mr. Margiotta and Ms Prickett responded negatively, even defensively, with the latter even questioning how to define "grade level."

There was also concern that the achievement gaps might be closed by lowering the performance of the top students, instead of raising that of the lower performing ones. Mr. Tata stated that that would not be allowed to happen.

Theory of Change

Mr. Tata recognized that in his visits to 34 schools at this point, he'd noted that principals have lots of autonomy. He envisions a centralized resource there every teacher could access the curriculum, lesson plans, evaluation—but is unsure whether Central Office is adequately supporting the schools and teachers. For example, schools need Hispanic teachers; advertising job openings in the southwestern US would lead to hiring more. It was pointed out for all that 8-10 years ago WCPSS did recruit nationally, but that has changed as a result of budget cuts.

Mr. Margiotta said that our county is so large; there is "no comparison between Wendell and Cary."

Mrs. Prickett said that on a state level we have common core standards for 2012.

She stated that she would like to see more involvement with business partnerships.

Mr. Tata added that he had seen a number of business partnerships in our schools; yet, there is no one in Central Office to manage these partnerships.

He emphasized that he does not want to decrease school autonomy **except** for underperforming schools. Underperforming schools would receive more oversight.

Board Versus Superintendent Role and Governance

Mr. Huge stated the Board sets policy and administration carries out the policy. The line can be blurry and is not straight; varies depending on BOE, superintendent and the subject; no right answer. Difficulty arises when not defined and not monitored. Boards are involved in the "what." What do you expect from the school district? The Board should direct Mr. Tata as to what they want done and the "how" is up to the superintendent. Work with Mr. Tata.

See First Retreat Governance Team – The Broad Foundation PowerPoint handout.

Mr. Huge stated:

Slide 2 – United in serve to children.

- Mr. Huge reminded the Board that all meetings focus on kids.

Slide 3 – Board and CEO have interdependent relationship.

- Understand “ownership” role of board, elected by public, own school system, delegate “professional management” to superintendent.
- Example – Communication: a superintendent had been in his job for 15 years of a school system that grew from 10,000 students to 40,000 students; Board said he was a good communicator BUT previous superintendent called board members every single day because they were friends; the board expected this superintendent to do the same thing but never told him.

Slide 4 – Indicators of Success established for district.

- Mr. Huges stated that Mr. Tata has only been here for two weeks so board must discuss process and agree on metrics with superintendent.
- Mr. Tata stated he shared his 90-day Plan “with all ya’ll” (the Board) previously and will discuss with the Board how he will be evaluated on May 28. He will also have a Student Assignment Plan completed by this time. He stated that these are “two key inputs of what I ought to be about” as the new superintendent.
- Mr. Huges stated the Board did a good job handing over to Mr. Tata the Student Assignment Plan and that he embraced it.

Slide 5 – Relationships based on trust, loyalty and respect.

- Without trust and respect, cannot have effective organization;
- When trust is violated, must have:
 - 1) Point of demarcation where one of us has to say that you are not going to play this game anymore,
 - 2) Must have a way to monitor, sometimes a 3rd party is needed; and the last thing you want to do is have superintendent between two Board members. If do not have 1 and 2, this will not stop.
- Trust must be re-established and monitored
- Mr. Huges advised: Never talk “about” somebody, talk “to” that somebody.

Slide 6 – Strong and durable linkages with community.

- Mr. Huges said that they must be proactive not reactive; and
- A new superintendent needs to know topic so has clear understanding;
- Mr. Tata explained that the Board needs to let the superintendent know when they are at schools because he has nine bosses; schools need to also keep superintendent informed;
- Dr. McLaurin wanted clarification that area superintendents are who the board contacts with questions, concerns in district;
- Mr. Tedesco asked if the superintendent wanted to know about conversations with constituents and be cc’d. Mr. Tata stated yes so he can read and have an understanding of board and staff interaction and board and school interaction. Communication should come through Mr. Tata or be cc’d.
- Mrs. Goldman stated that Mr. Tata kept saying he had nine bosses, but to “please think of us on terms of one Board” and she appreciated the acknowledgement of all the Board of Education members. Mr. Tata realizes that the board is touching the public every day.
- Mr. Huges told the board that they cannot give direction individually to the superintendent but a majority could.
- Dr. Morrison asked if board members should send problems to Mr. Tata or area superintendent. Mr. Tata said to send to area superintendent with a Cc to him and he would follow up with area superintendent in a few days;

- Mr. Huge stated that they all understood they are the collective body of 143,000 students; board members do not solve problems in their own areas;
- The system does not work if a board member solves problems; there must be a way Mr. Tata and staff can monitor; constituents cannot think the board members can fix problems.

Slides 7 – 10 not discussed.

See Basic Principles of Board/Administrative Leadership Team Governance (See #1-10) (Adapted from the Carver Policy Model of Board Governance) handout.

Mr. Huge reviewed:

1. The Board “owns” the organization as elected representatives

4. The Board speaks with one voice or none at all.

- Mr. Huge said that no individuals have authority over the district. He explained the board speaks as one voice, one person. The spokesman on behalf of the Board is the Board chair.
- The spokesman for the district is the Superintendent.
- Once a vote is taken, the decision is supported. For example, the board discusses an issue, you are against, and it is approved. You must support the board vote. This is the democratic process
- Mr. Huge stated that Board members must promise not to block Mr. Tata’s implementations; there are devious ways to do this but cannot

9. The superintendent must assume responsibility for engagement of faculty and staff in the planning and decision-making processes, to the extent necessary to ensure ownership and successful implementation.

10. The Board and the superintendent are jointly responsible for developing and maintaining effective processes for communication, decision-making and handling of issues that may come before the board.

- Mr. Huge stated the only board standing committee is the Committee of the Whole or an ad-hoc committee for a particular issue
- Board members corrected Mr. Huge and stated the Board had several committees in addition to the Committee of the Whole and explained the current and past committee practices
- Mr. Huge suggested not adding anymore committees onto the board’s plate at this time
- Mr. Tata expressed that “the less meetings, the better.”
- Mr. Tata explained that the DC school system did not have a board, but a mayor instead
- Mr. Tata stated he will look at staff time and energy needed to prepare for board committee meetings before making any decisions on whether or not to have board committees. He asked if we are focusing on student achievement.
- Mr. Huge stated that research shows boards work better without committees; for the following reasons: board members can manipulate and commandeer committees; information is power and board members get the information by attending committee meetings and if a board member cannot attend a meeting, the board member does not have the information; case studies show this

- Mrs. Goldman stated in an attempt to eliminate the back log, committee work went to board liaisons. Interim superintendent did a great job but had two jobs within the system; would like to hear Mr. Tata's feedback
- Mr. Tedesco stated the board liaison role was not acting unilaterally; conduit to bring stuff to COW; in committees, presentations were done that the staff put together, not all members heard presentation.
- Mr. Sutton explains committees met to have in-depth discussions and bring report back to board
- Dr. McLaurin stated there was mistrust and that all of the board members were not getting access or being given all the information or the same information.
- Mr. Malone stated he had not had experienced mistrust. He stated that committees are an extra step; was concerned that committee meetings are a mini-COW meeting.
- Mr. Malone stated that everything discussed in committee needs to be discussed again at COW. Meetings were redundant because had to hear and discuss twice. He thought the liaison system was worthwhile and preferred it.
- Mrs. Goldman stated she does not care for the liaison or redundancy. She said that she voted to reinstate committees and that she wanted to ask Mr. Tata his preference
- Mr. Tata stated he has been watching committee meetings closely since his arrival. Would like to check the staff energy devoted to them, has attended 3-4 committee meetings and a few COW meetings, can see some value-added and some redundancy; currently staff must bring the superintendent up to speed before the committee meeting; questions include: are these progress reports he needs to get as superintendent for running a sound district or do we need board feedback
- Mrs. Goldman thanked Mr. Tata for attending the recent Policy Committee meeting
- Mr. Sutton stated the committees are manipulated. He stated in most levels of government, he had never seen issues that did not make it out of committee and then they still "magically appear" on the agenda. Also issues that did not even get discussed in committee have shown up on the agenda and issues are not vetted. This has created mistrust. He brought up the issue of committee chair and member appointments. The chair appoints the chair and members to committees; board members do not get their choices, no balance, unfair and causes disparity.
- Mr. Huge asked if the board has to have a committee structure or can five members bring an issue out; this needs to be determined
- Mr. Sutton stated all committees have had issues such as, should committees have 3 or 4 members
- Mr. Malone offered that when the Town of Wake Forest Board had issues, the Board sent it to the Planning Board for approval prior to coming to Board
- Mr. Margiotta stated his recommendation was to eliminate committees for the following reasons: rarely meet with only committee members (4-5 board members attend), issues are discussed, waste of staff's time; with budget situation, this committee needs to meet; ED task Force is ad-hoc; Superintendent Search Committee was ad-hoc, now board has developed work sessions
- Mr. Huge mentioned that Mr. Tata needs more time to evaluate staff investment
- Ann Majestic has sat in on many board meetings and has seen the inefficiencies, She stated when COW meetings were initiated several years ago, they were used to discuss only big issues not discussed at committee meetings; to deal with system-wide issues that

are not addressed at the committee level. Now there is duplication. She stated that committees are focused in areas of a core function of the Board: Finance, Personnel, Policy, Student Achievement; and if there is no committee, the issue may not be paid attention to

- Mr. Sutton gave an example of redistricting that is done once every 10 years
- Mr. Huge mentioned that Ann Majestic had a clear understanding of the purpose of COW and committee meetings
- Mr. Hill stated that years ago there was a type of graph that was distributed to new board members; Ann Majestic and Dr. Cobb will try to locate; many years ago, Policy Committee was ad-hoc because to was going to look at results of the Curriculum Management Audit
- Mrs. Goldman stated that the current Policy Committee does a lot of wordsmithing and this cannot happen at COW
- Mr. Sutton reminded the board that committee structure is “how” the board works and expressed concern in regards to leaving the decision of whether to have committees up to Mr. Tata. He agrees that the impact on staff time is something the superintendent should consider but the work done in committees is the Board’s job
- Mr. Tata agreed he owes the board feedback of the level of energy the staff puts into committees
- Mr. Margiotta stated, “Anything on the agenda is initiated by staff.”

See Suggested Protocols for Board – Superintendent Communication handout.

3. This communication will be provided through my office via the following methods: (a.-k.)

a. Monthly board meetings and board ~~study~~ work sessions

b. Quarterly governance team retreats

- monitor governance, Mr. Huge suggested quarterly retreats, must be revisited and must agree on protocol
- call Mr. Tata is have a problem in-between retreats

f. Periodic one-on-one face-to-face meetings as necessary

- Mr. Tata stated he wants to put time on calendar; wants to hold at regular intervals, like a routine; he thoroughly enjoyed visits into each of board districts and would like to continue
- Mr. Tata stated, “I appreciate being the voice of WCPSS.”
- Mr. Huge asked who takes the initiative for these meetings.
- Mr. Tata stated it was a shared responsibility

g. Urgent calls or emails to alert you to events you’re likely to hear about through the media or from your neighbors

- Mr. Tata has tried school messenger system, did not work but is working now; after discussion it was decided, Mr. Tata would use e-mail to update board members weekly each Friday and also school messenger (phone call)
- Mrs. Goldman stated that she does not get WCPSS emails on her phone
- Mr. Huge asked the board to not make weekly Friday update a priority for superintendent, but he would e-mail if one is not coming and why
- Emergency notification - Mr. Tata stated there is a quick system in place; wants board to know about situation as soon as possible; Mr. Tedesco suggested a personal phone call if it pertains to board members district

- Mrs. Goldman mentioned recently Cary High had a death of a student and she was on campus giving Mr. Tata information; at that same time, the school went into lockdown; recommends a personal call and follow up with the address system
- Mr. Tata asked if he was 100% engaged, could Ashley or Michael Evans make the call; board members responded yes.
- Mr. Tata clarified that the school messenger will go to board member's cell phone

h. Information requested by any member will be distributed to all members.

j. Media advisories and press releases

- Mr. Hill mentioned that board members receive calls from N&O
- Mr. Huge stated to let the superintendent know about press conferences
- Mr. Tata does not feel the national news attention has been fair to the school system. He publically invited President Clinton, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Stephen Colbert to come to Wake County and see the schools.
- Mrs. Goldman stated the board chair is the spokesperson for the board and the superintendent is the spokesperson for the school system.
- Mr. Sutton explained that board members are contacted by national media and want to talk to individual board members, would not want a member appearing on Letterman without others knowing
- Mr. Huge stated that when a statement is made by the board for the board, it must come from the chair. Individual board members can speak; it's a judgment call – let Board of Education and Mr. Tata know
- Mr. Margiotta reminded the board that in some instances, may want to refer media to board attorney
- Mr. Hill stated that The New York Times had contacted him and Mr. Tedesco about an upcoming article
- Mr. Huge stated it is ok for board members to talk to press as individual board members but not for the board as a whole.
- Mr. Tata mentioned that an earlier N&O article reported that on a recent visit to Carnage he did not eat his food but he actually did.
- Ann Majestic stated that earlier in the presentation it was noted that once the Board voted, then Board members must support the decision but now Mr. Huge is telling board members they can speak individually. This is a conflict.
- Mr. Huge stated that if the press asks a Board member right after a vote is taken, the response should be something like: It's obvious it is not what I wanted but the Board made this decision because ____ (fill in blank with reason).
- Ann Majestic stated board can show support but also express opinion
- Mr. Hugh cautioned the Board to always think about the impact on the district

See Policy 1035 Code of Ethics for School Board Members distributed.

Mr. Huge reviewed:

- In reference to code of ethics: What is the monitoring process? What is the punishment?
- Ann Majestic stated that unless there is action by the District Attorney's office, there is no established mechanism for removal. It is required that Board members sign a Code of Ethics; there could be public embarrassment by censure or "calling someone out"
- Mr. Sutton stated that nothing gives us the ability to police
- Mr. Huge spoke to a monitoring piece of talking to a Board member – peer-to-peer

- Ann Majestic stated that performance issues related to employees are discussed in closed session; But Board cannot speak about performance of a Board member in closed session
- Mr. Sutton suggested the chair convene an Ethics panel; in public – could censure
- Mrs. Goldman stated that since this item about policy was not publically posted as an agenda item, she did not know if the Board should be discussing; Ann Majestic said it was ok.
- Mrs. Goldman asked: Why was this not called an Advance instead of a Retreat?
- Mr. Tedesco stated that this is a slippery slope; Board members could disagree on a subject and make it personal and this is probably why legislature avoided this (putting in removal clause).
- Mr. Huge stated he watched three CDs of past Board meetings. He reminded the Board that a Board meeting is a meeting of the Board in public, in the sunshine and they do not have to have public hearings
- The Board has a system in place and if the situation gets hot, system needs to protect it
- Ann Majestic told Mr. Huge that BOE has a pending lawsuit (Open Meetings Law violation) and Board protocol is 30 minutes before meeting is time for public comment; the chair has been overly generous with length (up to 3 hours at times) because do not want to appear to be stifling comment
- Mr. Huge suggested at some point to go back to 30 minutes of public comment without looking like stifling
- Mr. Margiotta stated the public comment may influence Board’s decision before vote on Action Items
- Mrs. Goldman stated that on one hand the Board wants to listen but by the time they get to agenda items they are too exhausted to vote on serious matters, and on the other hand they do not want to make people wait to speak until after
- Mr. Huge asked if the public needs to sign-up on agenda or off; Ann Majestic explained the process
- Mr. Huge suggested asking people if they are going to say the same thing, to say they agree and not speak
- Mr. Hill explained that we already encourage people to combine speeches if similar
- Mr. Huge asked if Board had procedure to read before comment period; Ann Majestic explained and said they had fallen off reading it recently
- Mr. Margiotta stated he has been lenient
- Mr. Huge suggested that if people start to violate procedures, to cut off all comment
- Ann Majestic explained that we have had arrests
- Mr. Huge predicted that once Mr. Tata puts forth the right Student Assignment Plan, things will quiet down

See Policy 1200 Duties of Officers distributed.

A. 2. In order to address the Board, a member must be recognized by the Chairperson.

B. Duties of the Vice-Chairperson

- Mr. Sutton explained that the Board was looking into the Chair’s ability to cast a vote and asked Mr. Huge what he has seen in his experience; and if it limits chair’s ability to represent constituents
- Mr. Huge stated that usually if there is an odd number of members, the chair votes only to break a tie

- Mr. Margiotta explained that a General Statute governs Wake
- Ann Majestic does not know of any other local legislation that refers for only one county
- Mr. Tedesco stated that a quorum is a majority of those present, but during meeting some leave and there may not still be a quorum
- Mr. Huge clarified in Wake BOE - Board chair can only vote to break a tie NOT to create a tie (motion fails)
- Mr. Margiotta stated that chair's district does not know where the chair stands because only votes to break a tie

4:47pm – Debra Goldman leaves meeting.

- The Board Chair can state how would have voted so constituents know

Closing

- Mr. Margiotta stated he gained a lot of knowledge
- Dr. Morrison asked if the Board would receive credit for attendance
- Ann Majestic stated that the Board should vote on this at its next meeting because they were required to vote when they approved Civitas.
- Ann Majestic also stated that the work the Board did in the morning, i.e. creating mission, vision and core beliefs needs to come to the Board for a vote.
- Mr. Sutton stated the retreat was good.
- Mrs. Prickett stated it was a worthwhile presentation and she enjoyed hearing from Mr. Tata
- Mr. Malone stated Mr. Sutton did a great job, he was pleased with the morning and this process took 45 days in Wake Forest, so he commends BOE and superintendent for getting it done
- Dr. McLaurin expressed thanks for a valuable day, also thanked Ann Majestic and the audience
- Mr. Tedesco made a reference to Afghan warlords, expressed thanks to colleagues and Mr. Tata.
- Mr. Hill stated it was a good day; he appreciated the structure and thanked the superintendent
- Mr. Margiotta said he hoped there would be a photographer in the lobby to see them all hugging.
- Mr. Tata stated the retreat was great, a lot of hard work, he has seen people struggle with items they did today, he is happier to be superintendent of this great district
- Jasmine Pahnman stated she was excited to be here and is excited to see the progress
- Mr. Huge expressed appreciation, thanks, It is more about how we treat each other

Adjourned at 5:00pm.

Items on agenda not discussed:

- Discuss Consensus Building and other priorities of the Board
- Discuss the Superintendent's Performance Evaluation
- Recap the responsibilities and timeline of next steps

Additional information:

- N&O article 2-24-11:

Wake board wants crackdown on teachers' attire

<http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/02/24/1009699/wake-board-wants-crackdown-on.html#storylink=misearch>