

Board of Education Work Session – September 21, 2010

The Wake Board of Education met in a work session Tuesday, the first that replaces a regular meeting with public comment. Chair Ron Margiotta said he hopes these sessions streamline the Board's work. The Board now has no [standing committees](#) and these work sessions take the place of that structure. [WRAL has a running blog](#) of the discussions online. [Wake Education Partnership also has a summary](#) online.

Also note, the next Board action meeting will be held later in the day, at [5:30 pm, on Tuesday, October 5](#). Public comment is expected to begin at [6 pm](#). The [Committee of the Whole](#) work session is still slated to begin at 1 pm, extending the Board's time in work session, which usually ended by 2:45 pm.

On Tuesday, the Board discussed the timeline for developing the new Student Assignment policy--there was strained discussion regarding informational meetings that Board members Carolyn Morrison and Anne McLaurin have scheduled. Dr. McLaurin noted that she was holding a meeting to get community feedback on a plan that would affect all students and that was her responsibility as a public official. Dr. Morrison noted that principals and parents had invited her to discuss the plan and that she was gathering public input. Board members [John Tedesco](#), Debra Goldman and Deborah Prickett questioned holding such meetings. Mr. Tedesco said he was worried the Board was sending "mixed messages," and Ms. Goldman questioned why Board members were holding meetings in schools and questioned the cost of gathering public input. She and Ms. Prickett stated a desire to wait to hear from the public during formal Community Engagement Meetings. Mr. Tedesco has been meeting with several parent and civic groups discussing the zone plan, beginning as far back as a meeting at Combs Elementary in January 2010 where Mr. Tedesco spoke about moving to zones. As far back as that January 2010 meeting, he admitted that high poverty schools may be created under his plans.

In the end, many on the Board seemed to want to speed the timeline for implementing the Student Assignment plan, phasing it in during the next school year, 2011-12, before any capital plan has been developed. Facilities chief Don Haydon told the Board it will take about two years to develop the next facilities plan. That means the Board is moving to implement the Zone Assignment plan before a capital plan is in place. In addition, the Board wants Community Engagement meetings to begin in early winter or late fall. Chair Margiotta asked the Student Assignment Committee to bring a proposal to the full board after the committee meets [next Tuesday](#). The Ad-Hoc Student Assignment Committee meets at [11:30 am, Tuesday, September 28, at 3600 Wake Forest Road, in Raleigh](#).

The Board members began hearing background on the next capital/bond plan, with Mr. [Haydon](#) stating that the district may need to build approximately 33 schools over nine years, between 2011 and 2020, to accommodate new students enrolling over the next decade. The construction plan could cost up to \$2 billion and require a school bond of more than [\\$1 billion](#). This figure also assumes that all the elementary schools and middle

schools built would be four-track, [year-round schools](#) and that all existing capacity would be 100 percent utilized. Ms. Goldman noted that the current seats may not be located in schools where the growth in students occurs. Some members joked about the possibility of busing students to schools with capacity. In fact, Ms. Goldman, Mr. Tedesco, Ms. Prickett, and Board member Chris Malone passed notes and had side conversations during Mr. Haydon's presentation regarding the more than \$2 billion in capital needs and more than 40,000 additional seats needed for students by 2020.

Ms. Prickett continued to question spending on Special Education. Administrator Marvin Connelly noted the danger of breaking out per pupil spending on Special Education—some students only need consultation, while other students require highly intensive services. State and federal regulations require certain services. Ms. Prickett answered that “she was not afraid.” She wants to examine how the system spends its [Special Education dollars](#).

Ms. Prickett and Ms. Goldman have been pushing staff to break out per pupil spending on various types of students. School officials stated that the Wake school system spent an average of \$8,763 to educate each of the 140,000 students in the district in 2009-10, but actual spending varies greatly according to other programs. The cost for basic instruction is \$3,570 per student, staff reported. There are additional costs of \$303 per student for academically [gifted students](#), \$585 for each student in a magnet program, \$794 for a student who rides a district bus, \$4,183 for each student in an [alternative school](#) and \$8,957 for a student receiving special education. Wake residents who go to [charter schools](#) in or out of the county divert \$2,519 each from Wake's public school allotment, though that money is sent directly from the state to the charter school, the staff said.

Mr. Connelly noted that WCPSS cannot decrease local funding for special education by a certain percentage without being in violation of “maintenance of effort.” The State DPI only funds up to 12.5 percent of the overall district enrollment for [students with disabilities](#).

One possibility--it may become more difficult to have children identified as needing special education. Mr. Margiotta noted that the district may choose to not identify students as qualified for special education, in order to decrease or control spending on special education.

Also earlier in the meeting, the Board received an update on its Disadvantaged Student Supplement funds from the state, which should be about \$3.7 million this year. Administrator Dawn Dawson noted that new this year, the WCPSS Board Chair and the Superintendent must sign an assurance that the policies and financing of the school district "did not result in increased segregation" of students. This letter of assurance will be included in the district's application and plan for the funding. In discussing technology services available in WCPSS schools, Interim Supt. Donna Hargans mentioned that some of the federal stimulus money that came to Wake County was used to increase technology services. Board member Keith Sutton asked whether

there was an equitable distribution of technology across all schools and/or whether “low-performing” schools had the same technology as higher performing schools. Dr. Hargans said that there was not any study to determine the connection. Many PTAs augment technology hardware and software at their schools. There was a question about whether the Board could create a minimum technology standard for all schools. Dr. Hargans pointed out that there was a strong effort to mix technology and direct teaching and not to become too dependent on technology. Off agenda, at the 10 minute mark of the second half of the meeting's recording, Mr. Tedesco seemed to note to David Neter, finance chief, that WCPSS pays less money per pupil for charter school students. Mr. Tedesco has expressed a strong support for charter schools.