

Student Assignment Committee - August 31, 2010

The Student Assignment Committee of the Wake Board of Education agreed to use the current high school attendance zones as a rough "shell" to develop their Student Assignment Plan. Committee Chair John Tedesco, and committee members Carolyn Morrison and Chris Malone agreed that the committee will base its discussions and data analysis on the [high school map](#). Preliminary data presented revealed that a plan designed along high school lines would create a zone in central Raleigh with a high concentration of low-income students as well as a high concentration of African American students. In the past, WCPSS used socio-economic diversity as a factor to reduce high concentrations of low-income students as well as reduce the isolation of racial minorities. A detailed map in Adobe Reader is attached.

Board Chair Ron Margiotta attended the start of the meeting, and board members Keith Sutton and Kevin Hill also attended. One community representative from each of the nine Board of Education districts also serves on the Committee.

Public comment on the maps has been open since late July, and overall the website has received about 700 comments. Many comments asked for more information, and others stated that they could not read roads or streets or make out where their current node was located. The public can [still comment on the proposals](#) through September 6. Mr. Tedesco said some form of online public comment will be available throughout the nine- to 15-month process projected for developing the new Student Assignment plan.

In response from a request from Chair Margiotta, who had asked the committee to determine whether some magnet schools could be converted to year-round, David Ansbacher, director of magnet

programs, said that operating four tracks of the Gifted and Talented and the International Baccalaureate programs (at the middle school levels), would be expensive because of the costs of staffing four tracks of electives. IB at the elementary level may be more possible but would require restructuring units of inquiry that make up their curriculum. The magnets based on pedagogical themes, such as the Leadership, Engineering and Museum magnets, would be easier to convert to year-round, but physical space may limit some of those magnets being converted.

One Committee member asked about the goal of the magnet system and asked how magnets were chosen. Dr. Ansbacher said the Board of Education determines which schools become magnets, and in the past they have been selected for a variety of reasons, including maximizing the use of facilities as well as to reduce high concentrations of poverty and racial isolation. Smith and Brentwood elementary schools recently became magnets based on the high concentration of low-income students, for example, he said.

Two committee members noted that the role of the magnet schools should be solidified before any new plan is developed. Mr. Tedesco said that the magnet system would remain largely unchanged, although some schools may lose magnet status--he did not name specific schools. He also noted that he and Interim Supt. Donna Hargens had discussed other models, such as community-based schools and "reverse magnets." He also spoke again of building more capacity for adding seats downtown. Mr. Tedesco said that the magnets would be used to "reduce minority isolation" through "[voluntary desegregation](#)."

Board member Keith Sutton noted that returning thousands of children back to downtown schools would increase minority isolation. He proposed creating more magnet options along the rim of the Beltline, closer to downtown neighborhoods, giving

those students more choice nearer to their homes.

As the Committee moved to next steps, Mr. Tedesco listed data the committee should assemble: financial data, program data, magnet application numbers, magnet academic results, course offerings across the districts, and costs.

Mr. Malone then made a motion to use the high school attendance map as the basis for future discussions, which was approved. Mr. Tedesco voiced support for moving to a regional model to give more choice for middle and high schools. Dr. Morrison noted that even on a regional level, there is a concentration of poverty in the Central region, particularly compared to other regions.

In data presented, the zones were not uniform demographically. The following are highlights of data, which reflect students residing in the zone (not attending school in the zone):

Enloe/SE Raleigh Zone: 68 percent Free and Reduced (FRL) lunch at the K-5 elementary level; 70 percent African American.

Knightdale Zone: 44 percent FRL at K-5 level; 42 percent African American

East Wake Zone: 55 percent FRL at K-5 level; 38 percent African American

Green Hope/Panther Creek Zone: 7 percent FRL at K-5 level; 9 percent African American, 26 percent Asian, 56 percent White

Middle Creek Zone: 17 percent FRL at K-5 level; 75 percent White

Apex Zone: 11 percent FRL at K-5 level; 72 percent White