

The Reporting Entity and Its Services

The School System

The Wake County Public School System is one comprehensive school district serving the entire county; including Raleigh, Cary, Apex, Wendell, Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Knightdale, Rolesville, Wake Forest, Holly Springs, Morrisville, and Zebulon. The system was formed in 1976 with the merger of the former City of Raleigh and Wake County School Systems. The system and its school board are committed to providing the highest possible quality of education to Wake County students, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and accountability.

Wake County Public School System is a large, complex system that requires effective leadership at both the central and school levels to drive continuous improvements. Bill McNeal, superintendent, is the chief executive officer of Wake County Public School System. He and his senior leadership team set system direction, implement policy, and manage systemwide operations. In addition to the superintendent and his leadership team, principals, assistant principals, and central-level administrative staff comprise the district-wide administrative team. School leadership teams, of which principals are members, oversee school improvement planning and other site-based management responsibilities.

One of the superintendent's responsibilities is to serve the board of education. A nine-member elected lay board is the policymaking arm of the school system. Board members represent geographical districts of the county and serve four-year terms. The board of education meets at least three times per month to consider policy issues and review system performance. Senior leadership is aligned to support the board of education's decision-making structure. The board has budget review authority, but it is not a taxing body and must submit its annual budget requests to the Wake County Board of Commissioners which controls allocation of funds to the schools. In North Carolina the basic public education program is funded by the state and is augmented with local funds.

Opportunities for public comment are provided through a public hearing at the beginning of each regular board meeting for items on the agenda and at the end of each regular board meeting for items not on the agenda. Each participant is given three minutes to address the board.

Principals are legally responsible for the operation of the schools in the district. Principals work collaboratively with leadership teams at their schools to develop, implement, and monitor school improvement plans (SIPs). All school staffs are involved in the school improvement process.

Section

The school system has over 12,500 full- and part-time employees and is the third largest employer in the Raleigh-Durham area. The system has nearly 7,000 regular classroom teachers, not including media specialists, counselors, psychologists, etc., and allots regular classroom teachers at a teacher/student ratio of 1:21.5 for grade K, 1:23 for grades 1-2, 1:25.5 for grades 3-5, 1:22.5 for grades 6-8, and 1:24 for grades 9-12. Most students are assigned to and attend their “base school”—the school assigned based on the parent’s or guardian’s home address. In some instances, the base school may be a magnet or year round school since these schools have base populations in addition to accepting applications. Transportation is provided for students living at least 1_ miles from the base school or outside a safe walk-zone. For the magnet program, the same guidelines apply if the child is accepted into the program.

Forty-three of the school system’s 120 schools are magnet schools, which offer unique educational alternatives. All students are eligible to apply, and the network features the following distinct programs: academically gifted basics program, centennial campus, center for accelerated studies, classical studies, creative arts and science, community model, global communications, gifted and talented, international baccalaureate, international studies, language explorations, leadership, montessori, university connections, and year-round schools. The magnet network was established 19 years ago to offer a choice in instructional opportunities, to fill inner-city schools, and to racially balance schools. The program has proven to be highly successful and contributes to Wake County’s stature as a leader in education.

Reporting Entity

The board is the basic level of government exercising oversight responsibility and control over all activities related to public school education in Wake County. Because its members are elected by the public and have decision-making authority, the power to designate management, the ability to significantly influence operations, and primary accountability for fiscal matters, the board is recognized as a separate government reporting entity, as defined by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The board receives funding from county, state, and federal government sources and must comply with the concomitant requirements of those funding entities. While the board receives county funding, the county is not entitled to share in any surpluses nor is it required to finance any deficits.

Economic Condition and Outlook

The recurring publicity of Wake County as one of the most desired places to live and work in the United States, as evidenced by past surveys in magazines such as *Money* and *Fortune*, has continued to turn the spotlight on quality of life enjoyed by Wake County citizens. While quality of life is an intangible asset, there are many tangible attributes that we can point to in explaining the county’s attractiveness.

Chartered in 1771, Wake County covers an area of 864 square miles and is the second most populous county in the state. Twelve municipalities reside in Wake County including Raleigh, the county seat and state capital. A unique mix of urban county with rural areas and small towns distinguishes Wake County from other counties in the state and provides something for everyone in choosing a lifestyle. Located in the north central section of the state on the piedmont plateau, Wake County is approximately half way between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. As well as being a part of that major industrial corridor, Wake County is also convenient to the recreation of the beautiful North Carolina mountains and serene North Carolina beaches. The county's topography is characterized by low rolling hills in the northwest changing gradually to level land in the southeast. The central North Carolina climate is relatively mild with moderate winters and warm summers. The location, geography, and climate make Wake County an enjoyable place to live and work while also contributing significantly to the economic viability of the region.

The economy of the area is stabilized by the presence of state and local government employment markets, the college and university employment markets, and the Research Triangle research facilities, all of which offer substantial employment opportunities to the county's population. No major specialized industry dominates the economy of the county, and as a result, the June 2000 unemployment rate was 1.7 percent as compared to 3.4 percent statewide and 4.0 percent nationwide. The unemployment rate continues to reflect stability in the local economy as economic recovery continues.

The Research Triangle, located on the Wake and Durham County line, was organized in 1959. It encompasses 6,800 acres of land set aside for research and research-oriented manufacturing. With the attractiveness of the Research Triangle and its proximity to three major research universities, it is no accident that medical and electronic industries flourish in the region. Glaxo SmithKline and Ajinomoto lead the medical research and production industry with IBM, Northern Telecom, and Microelectronics Center of North Carolina leading the electronics research and production industry, giving both industries major presence in the region. It is expected that these major corporations and centers will continue to thrive and offer employment opportunities to the county's citizens.

The Wake County Public School System works with a variety of agencies, suppliers, and partners to deliver the necessary programs, activities, and services of the school system. In many instances state law and regulations define the relationship between Wake County Public School System and their suppliers. For example, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) establishes the required curriculum to be taught in all North Carolina schools.

Student performance is assessed by the state in grades K-8 in the areas of reading, mathematics, and writing. In grades 9-12, the state assesses student performance in selected courses in the areas of English, social studies, mathematics, and science. Students must meet minimum competency standards in mathematics, reading, and computer literacy to receive a high school diploma.

Wake County Public School System maintains relationships with local colleges and universities, community agencies, businesses, parent organizations, and the Wake Education Partnership. The Wake Education Partnership is a community-based public school advocacy organization that links business and community resources to strengthen schools. The Partnership's efforts include sponsoring annual education summits and community-based technology forums, conducting the Gallup Poll on education, and awarding grants to teachers. The United Way of Wake County and the United Arts Council are also community partners that support students, families, and school programs. The Wake County Public School System values these collaborative relationships.

Wake County Public School System nurtures positive relationships with many local businesses. The Wake County Public School System, the Wake Education Partnership, and the Business Education Leadership Council created the JobReady Council now known as the School-to-Career Council. From this beginning seed, numerous business alliances evolved at the school sites. There are now 649 business alliances with our secondary schools.

The Wake County PTSA (Parent-Teacher-Student Association) coordinates activities through membership in the state and national organization and provides leadership to the individual school PTSA. Through the valuable work of the many active members, schools receive volunteers and enrichment programs. There is significant parent and volunteer involvement in schools on a daily basis.

Special relationships exist between Wake County Schools and the postsecondary institutions. Universities provide the system with licensed teachers and administrators, and Wake County Public School System provides opportunities for student teachers, graduate internships, and employment for their graduates. Other collaborations include programs such as the Math-Science Network, a pre-college program for minority students, summer enrichment programs, Governor's School, and partnerships with community and technical colleges to meet both student and staff educational needs.

The Wake County Public School System was created as one countywide, comprehensive school district through a merger of the former Wake County and Raleigh City public school system in July 1976. The merger of the city and county school systems was not an idea easily accepted by many Wake County residents; however, county and school leaders pushed forward with this courageous

History of the Wake County Public School System

vision of a united community, full of educational opportunity, economic vitality, and an attractive quality of life.

As a result of visionary and bold leadership, the Wake County Public School System grew into one of the nation's finest large school district in less than a generation, establishing a tradition of superior performance.

Today, poised to lead the nation in narrowing the achievement gap and attaining remarkably high academic goals for all, the Wake County Public School System celebrates its first 25 years.

Our entire community can look forward to an equally bright and progressive future, driven by our traditions of solid leadership, quality teaching, academic excellence, parental choice and community involvement.

History of Wake County Public Schools	
Year	Data
1976	Merger: separate city and county districts become the Wake County Public School System. Dr. John Murphy is first superintendent of the newly merged district, April 1976 to June 1981.
1977	Lynn Road Elementary opens the first new school since merger.
1977-78	Magnet schools are introduced in the district.
1981	Dr. Walter Marks becomes the merged district's second superintendent, August 1981 to August 1984.
1982	Twenty-seven magnet schools established in less than one year.
1983	Wake Education Foundation is formed: evolves into the Wake Education Partnership.
1984	Dr. Robert Bridges is superintendent, August 1984 to June 1989.
1985	Eighty-six percent of voters approve \$70 million in school bonds.
1988	Service center opens at Rock Quarry Road, the largest and most comprehensive between New York and Atlanta. Eighty-five percent of voters approve \$125 million in school bonds.
1989	Dr. Robert Wentz is superintendent, August 1989 to December 1994. WCPSS moves to the middle school model, replacing the junior high concept. District moves to site-based management model of decision-making.
1989-90	Kingswood opens as the first year-round school in NC and the nation's first year-round magnet school.
1991	Local SAT scores top the national average for the first time.
1993	Fifty-six percent of the voters approve \$200 million in school bonds.
1994-95	District moves to flexible scheduling to reduce transportation costs and improve efficiency.
1995	Dr. Jim Surratt is superintendent, 1995 to July 2000.
1996	Hurricane Fran closes schools for six days and requires massive clean up. Seventy-nine percent of voters approve \$250 million in school bonds.
1996-97	State launches ABCs of accountability program. Enloe High introduces International Baccalaureate program.
1997	WCPSS becomes the first NC school system to reach an agreement with county government that ties minimum future funding levels to property tax revenue growth. Enrollment has to be capped for the first time at a local school. Dr. Surratt convenes a group of large, successful school districts, which eventually become the nation's first educational benchmarking network.
1997-98	First Martin Luther King, Jr. Lights of Hope convocation honors leading area citizens who exhibit Dr. King's spirit.
1998	Board of Education adopts Goal 2003 to strive for ninety-five percent of students achieving at grade level by that year. WCPSS earns the NC Quality Leadership Council's prestigious Advancement Award based on the Baldrige model for quality improvement.

History of Wake County Public Schools	
Year	Data
1999	Sixty-five percent of voters defeat \$650 million in schools bond; citizens committee appointed to examine facility needs and funding sources. WCPSS earns national School of Character Award for its innovative Character Education program incorporated in classroom instruction.
1999-00	Largest "grand opening" ever for seven new schools, 18 significantly renovated ones, and nearly 94,000 total students, making WCPSS the 27 th largest district in the country. School board adopts new diversity policy. WCPSS undertakes the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).
2000	Bill McNeal named superintendent in July. Seventy-eight percent of voters approve \$500 million bond referendum in November. WCPSS Project School Aid earns national recognition for helping four counties devastated by Hurricane Floyd.
2001	Wake County's 14 high schools graduate more than 5,000 students. Local funding for education increases to \$193 million as school board seeks funds to meet the Goal 2003. Wake County's students collect more than \$85,000 in the Pennies for Patriotism and Pride campaign, and additional school fundraising drives raise a total \$173,957.09 to support people affected by the September 11 attacks in New York City, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania.