

***HEALTHY SCHOOLS TASK FORCE***

**REPORT OF  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
AND PROCEEDINGS**

**February 17, 2004**

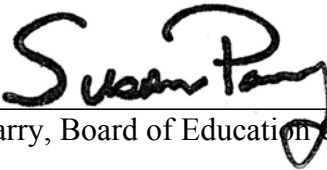
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## A Thank You

I am pleased to have this opportunity to express my thanks for the work of the Healthy Schools Task Force. The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an exciting and promising time for the Wake County Public School System, and the Task Force is an example of the community leadership that our school district needs if we are to fulfill the promise of providing each and every child with the highest quality educational experience. Now the 25<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the nation, our system's student population continues to grow by thousands of new students every year. The school district is widely respected in our region, state and nation. Amidst this population growth and the fiscal challenges that growth creates, student achievement continues to improve, indicating the district is carefully aligning limited resources with instructional needs. There is much that the community can be proud of in the district. The Task Force has helped us analyze the expectations the community has for its schools, evaluate these interests in keeping with what is currently known about best educational practices, and organize the community's concerns into a set of recommendations that will help guide the Board of Education as it faces the challenges of growth and academic excellence.

I extend my deep appreciation to each member of the Task Force for the dedication you have shown to public education and for the time and effort that you have invested in the work of the committee. Representing a diversity of perspectives, you have demonstrated the same clear thinking that we work to teach every day to our students. As co-chairs of the committee, Dick Daugherty and Dudley Flood deserve special recognition for providing the leadership that allowed the committee to produce a useful and comprehensive set of recommendations. The Wake County community is fortunate to have the kind of commitment to public education exemplified by this Task Force

The Wake County Board of Education is pleased to accept the recommendations of the Task Force. They will be given serious consideration in the future decisions that the Board will make in the interests of providing the highest quality educational program for every Wake County child...north, south, east and west.

  
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Susan Parry, Board of Education Chairman

February 17, 2004  
Date

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## Executive Summary

In the 1990s, the district made a commitment to undertake a program of continuous improvement, exemplified by the district's adherence to the principles and practices espoused in the Malcolm Baldrige *Education Criteria for Performance Excellence*. This commitment to continuous improvement is very much alive now, early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Recognizing that the community will always have concerns about the quality of its schools, the HSTF makes the following recommendations to the Wake County Board of Education.

The recommendations are organized under four headings: 1) Academic success for all students; 2) Diversity in schools; 3) Capacity utilization of facilities; and 4) Community expectations of WCPSS. A rationale and list of action steps is provided for many of the recommendations. Additionally, each recommendation is aligned with one of the eight healthy school characteristics identified by the Wake County Board of Education.

- High academic achievement by all students;
- Strong parental support and commitment;
- Strong community support and commitment;
- Highly trained and effective staff;
- Attractive and appropriate learning facilities;
- A safe, orderly, and inviting learning climate;
- Strong and effective leadership; and
- A diverse student body.

### **ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

1. ***Highly trained and effective staff.*** *It is recommended that the board of education improve teacher and administrator recruitment, retention and quality.*

Rationale: The Task Force finds that research clearly demonstrates that the single most important factor in students' academic performance under the control of a school system is the quality of administrative and teaching staff at the school. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Improve working conditions for classroom teachers by eliminating non-instructional duties and unnecessary paperwork. Provide support staff for lunchroom duty, bus and carpool duty, clerical work, etc.
- b. Action Step. Continue to base incentives on expected and high growth in students using appropriate guidelines.
- c. Action Step. Establish clear career pathways for teachers that define options for career growth in the classroom, and strengthen the role of teacher leaders in school success.
- d. Action Step. Provide leadership training with continuing support for administrators to improve their ability to recruit and retain high quality teachers.
- e. Action Step. Increase resources for schools with students facing greater academic challenges than is the norm for the school district through research-based strategies such as reducing class size, increasing support staff, and/or increasing instructional resources.

2. ***High academic achievement.*** *It is recommended that the board of education direct additional resources towards closing the achievement gap.*

Rationale: Annual data on academic achievement reveal a large and persistent gap between the achievement of White and Asian students versus other minority students and low-income students. The Task Force finds there is evidence that the school district is having some success in closing this gap; however, it is apparent that additional resources will be needed to continue making progress. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Provide greater resources for K-3, specifically screening and intervention for the early prevention of school failure (i.e., speech/language deficiencies).
- b. Action Step. Expand the Accelerated Learning Program to include summer camps, camps for limited English proficient students, and track-out camps for at-risk students.
- c. Action Step. Implement a countywide parent involvement standard with a contract focusing on home/school communication, parent education, and involvement in the school.
- d. Action Step. Educate parents on the adverse effect of excessive television viewing on academic achievement.
- e. Action Step. Enter into partnerships with relevant child advocacy groups (e.g., worship, LimiTV, SAFEchild).

3. ***High academic achievement.*** *It is recommended that the board of education direct additional resources towards closing the achievement gap among limited English proficient students.*

Rationale: Similar to recommendation #2, the Task Force finds that here too data reveal an achievement gap. The fastest growing student population in the school system, limited English proficient students are a diverse group of students and require specialty services that are unique. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Direct additional resources towards the hiring of more highly qualified English as a Second Language teachers, in keeping with the earlier recommendation of the Citizen Advisory Committee.
- b. Action Step. Provide greater resources for K-3, specifically screening and intervention for the early prevention of school failure (e.g., speech/language deficiencies)
- c. Action Step. Expand the Accelerated Learning Program to include track-out camps and summer camps for limited English proficient students.

4. ***High academic achievement.*** *It is recommended that the board of education enhance programming for high achieving students (e.g., academically gifted students, Level IV students).*

Rationale: Recognizing the importance of improving the achievement of low achieving students, it is the Task Force's position that it is also imperative to assure that the school system provide the highest quality educational programming for high achieving students. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Ensure that additional resources are directed towards increasing the quality and quantity of academically gifted programming in all schools. Provide no less than one full-time AG teacher per school.
  - b. Action Step. Identify advanced curricula and coursework that will challenge the high achieving student in the classroom. Provide classroom teachers with annual comprehensive training to equip them with the skills and the curricula to be able to challenge gifted students.
  - c. Action Step. Ensure that classroom teachers and AG specialists provide enrichment activities for gifted students of all ages.
  - d. Action Step. Partner with parents to explore accelerated learning opportunities for their children outside the school day.
  - e. Action Step. Explore greater use of nontraditional means (e.g., work portfolios, teacher recommendations, observations) by which academically talented students may be identified so as to better identify students among under-represented populations such as minority students, low-income students, and limited English proficient students.
5. ***Safe, orderly, and inviting learning climate.*** *It is recommended that the board of education develop and implement plans for high school reform so as to provide every child the opportunity to earn a high school diploma.*

Rationale: This recommendation of the Task Force is grounded in data that reveal that many students fail to earn a high school diploma. Data indicate the dropout rate has been decreasing over time. However, over the period of time when students enter high school as freshman and four years later when they are expected to graduate, there are many thousands who do not earn a diploma, even with an additional fifth year. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Convene a study group of citizens, educators, community, and business leaders to research models and strategies of high school reform.
- b. Action Step. Provide additional intervention and support (e.g., academic coaches, quarterly meetings with counselors) for students at risk of dropping out, beginning in the sixth grade.
- c. Action Step. Improve the rigor of vocational education, and enhance partnerships with the community college.
- d. Action Step. Ensure adequate resources for remediation and/or recovery of course credit through strategies such as NovaNet and afterschool tutorials.
- e. Action Step. Provide alternative means for students who have dropped out of school or are out of school with a long-term suspension or expulsion to achieve a high school diploma on time with their age cohort.
- f. Action Step. Examine how well the middle school curriculum is preparing students for high school, and implement findings of this examination to improve academic rigor at middle schools.

6. ***Safe, orderly, and inviting learning climate.*** *It is recommended that the board of education make the changes necessary to align school hours with students' optimal learning times.*

Rationale: Referencing research that suggests biological changes in adolescents affect sleep patterns to favor morning sleep, the Task Force finds that it could be advantageous to give high school students a later morning start time. In contrast, research suggests young children are most alert in the morning and are often too tired to absorb new information in the afternoon. Elementary students would possibly benefit from an earlier school start time and earlier dismissal. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. The school district should conduct a detailed review of the research literature and opinions of the community to ascertain how bell schedules may be optimized for students at different developmental ages, and implement findings of this review.

7. ***High academic achievement.*** *It is recommended that the board of education enhance programming for the arts in grades K-12 (e.g., drama, theatre, music, visual arts).*

Rationale: The Task Force finds that academic excellence can be demonstrated through the arts, noting how research indicates that students' participation in the arts is positively associated with academic performance in traditional subject domains such as reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Increase outreach efforts to engage all students in the arts so as to increase the representation of traditionally under-represented populations such as minority, low-income students, and limited English proficient students.
- b. Action Step. Increase the school system's financial support for arts education.
- c. Action Step. Develop increased strategies for integrating the arts into the core curriculum.
- d. Action Step. Expand arts elective opportunities at all middle schools, in keeping with improving academic rigor.
- e. Action Step. Evaluate the advantages/disadvantages of establishing 7-period days at all middle schools with respect to improving academic rigor at traditional and magnet schools, make these advantages/disadvantages known to the public, and implement recommendations that come from this evaluation.

8. ***High academic achievement.*** *It is recommended that the board of education show substantial progress towards adherence to existing guidelines for economically balanced schools.*

Rationale: Based upon research and experience, the Task Force finds that a high concentration of students in poverty in a school can have an adverse affect on the academic achievement of all students at that school. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include all of the steps outlined in the following section, Diversity in Schools.

## **DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS**<sup>1</sup>

9. **Diverse student body.** *It is recommended that the board of education continue its commitment to maintaining diversity in all schools.*

Rationale: It is the Task Force's position that this commitment is important to maintaining a healthy school system and providing all students with the opportunity for a high quality education, recognizing the value that a diverse student population at a school contributes to healthy child development as well as academic excellence for all students. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Define diversity to include research-based factors that contribute to student success.
- b. Action Step. Implement strategies designed to make diversity a community value.
- c. Action Step. Continue to focus on providing parents with choices, ensuring that these choices remain strong and viable instruments for achieving diversity in schools.
- d. Action Step. Continue to support magnet programs as a strategy to achieve diversity.
- e. Action Step. Continue and enhance staff development on diversity.
- f. Action Step. Continue to develop strategies and fiscal resources needed for attracting economically diverse populations to year-round schools.

10. **Diverse student body.** *It is recommended that the board of education employ a strategy of assigning base populations to non-traditional schools that are not representative of diversity in the transportation area, so that the composition of those schools generally reflects the other schools in that same transportation area.*<sup>2</sup>

Rationale: The Task Force recognizes that non-traditional schools without assigned base populations are often not reflective of the diversity in their surrounding community. Economically disadvantaged students, for instance, may find it difficult to attend these schools due to unique financial considerations during intercession periods. Further, year-round schools that are not representative of nearby schools can have negative effects on these nearby schools (e.g., contributing to under-enrollment, higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, decreased parental support). Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Add and/or increase base populations to non-traditional schools to ensure that each of these schools is reflective of other schools in the transportation area.
- b. Action Step. Continuously monitor school enrollment to ensure that schools in close proximity have similar demographics, whether program magnet, traditional, or year-round schools.
- c. Action Step. Use data from Action Step B to implement a more specific, individualized admission policy to non-traditional schools. The policy would be set yearly for each individual school and may fluctuate based on the health of the sending and receiving schools.
- d. Action Step. Provide assistance and help identify community resources that will create opportunities for economically-disadvantaged base populations to take advantage of programs at non-traditional schools.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, in keeping with Wake County Board of Education policy, diversity is defined to include two factors: 1) the mix of students at a school representing varied socioeconomic levels, and 2) the mix of students at a school representing varied academic achievement levels.

<sup>2</sup> The term, "transportation area", is defined in keeping with the common use of this term in the WCPSS.

*11. **Diverse student body.** It is recommended that the board of education research the factors that would attract a diverse population to enroll in any school, and continue to support programs that attract diverse populations.*

Rationale: The Task Force recognizes there are numerous factors that parents find attractive when selecting a school for their child(ren), that these factors are different for different parents, and that these factors will vary over time. To the extent the school system is able to identify these factors, whether collectively for all schools or individually for specific schools, then it is better able to improve the allure of its schools. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. The school system should research reasons why parents elect to educate their child(ren) outside the school system (e.g., home school, private school, charter school).
- b. Action Step. Continue to support and increase the magnet program as a strategy to achieve academic success and diversity within schools.
- c. Action Step. Situate magnet schools based on the goals and objectives of the magnet school program, including revitalizing healthy school characteristics.

*12. **Diverse student body.** It is recommended that the board of education continue to provide transportation in support of parent choices and balancing diversity at schools.*

Rationale: While offering parental choice through the magnet program creates diversity in many schools, the Task Force finds that there are still unbalanced areas that require additional interventions to provide for healthy schools. Although busing students to achieve diversity goals is an extremely small portion of the county's transportation program, representing approximately 3% of the district's student enrollment, it is a crucial element in helping to provide academic success for all students. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Continue to provide efficient means of transportation.
- b. Action Step. Continue the practice of limited busing of students to achieve diversity goals, while continuing to analyze geographic and practical limitations.

## **CAPACITY UTILIZATION OF FACILITIES**

*13. **Strong parental support.** It is recommended that the board of education adopt a long-term view of student assignment to enhance the stability of school assignment for children.*

Rationale: This Task Force recommendation recognizes that parents desire stability in where their children will attend schools. For many parents, the very act of choosing a neighborhood and place to live is predicated on what school their child will attend. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Expand public participation in the student assignment process to increase understanding of and support for assignment decisions.
- b. Action Step. Adopt a policy instituting a 10-year plan for accommodating growth, reflecting best educational practices and subject to annual revisions based upon the latest data available to the school system.
- c. Action Step. Ensure that any student subjected to reassignment in his/her school career is not subsequently again reassigned for at least four school years.

**14. *Attractive and appropriate learning facilities.*** *It is recommended that the board of education regularly evaluate facility utilization to assess the economic viability of maintaining equity of existing school facilities with new school construction.*

Rationale: It is the Task Force's position that renovation and/or maintenance expenses at aging schools need to be evaluated so as to consider all viable alternatives of providing the most cost effective utilization of school facilities. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Conduct a costs/benefits analysis for any aging school being considered for significant renovation, weighing renovating the school against closing the school, with costs and benefits to include consideration of educational priorities and community health, as well as economic factors.
- b. Action Step. Move aggressively to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog and fully fund ongoing operating and maintenance needs.

## **COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OF WCPSS**

**15. *Strong community support.*** *It is recommended that the board of education develop a plan to increase communications to all stakeholders in the community, including non-English speaking parents, taxpayers without students in the public schools, and legislators.*

Rationale: The Task Force recognizes that stakeholders in public education include the traditional audience of school staff and parents with children attending district schools, as well as other audiences including all taxpayers, elected officials, business, and community agency leaders. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. Seek to increase the involvement of the Wake County community through varied means to evaluate community needs and views, and involve the community in planning activities.
- b. Action Step. Conduct a communications assessment to determine how Wake County citizens prefer to provide input to the board of education and local schools, and how they prefer to receive information from the board and schools. The assessment should focus on identifying and developing innovative ways and means for listening to the community.
- c. Action Step. Seek ways and means of increasing communications with the community and gaining community input into school decision-making processes.
- d. Action Step. Make frequent and focused presentations on short-term and long-range plans to diverse groups of community, business, and agency leaders.

**16. Strong parent support.** *It is recommended that the board of education develop plans to increase parental involvement.*

Rationale: The Task Force recognizes that parental involvement is one of the most important factors in student achievement outside the schools' control. Action steps that the board of education should consider in light of this recommendation include the following:

- a. Action Step. A parent/teacher/school contract, individualized to the needs of each student, should be established to which all parties agree to abide.
- b. Action Step. Electronic communications through the Internet and email should be developed for widespread use at all schools as soon as possible so as to provide parents timely information on their student's progress.
- c. Action Step. Adopt the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs of the National PTA.<sup>3</sup>
  - I. Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
  - II. Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
  - III. Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
  - IV. Parents are welcome in school, and their support and assistance are sought.
  - V. Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
  - VI. Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.
- d. Action Step. Develop a sound infrastructure to aid in the communication with parents of limited English proficient students and low-income students.

**17. Strong and effective leadership.** *It is recommended that the board of education increase the utilization of volunteers and community groups representing diverse perspectives when significant issues will impact the community.*

Rationale: The Task Force recognizes the responsibility that school leaders, including principals and PTA members, have in reaching out to involve a greater number and more diverse members of the community so as to best ensure that every voice has the opportunity to be heard. For instance, school leaders have a vested interest in the student assignment and facility use decision-making processes. These individuals are in frequent contact with and best suited to engage and communicate with the staff, volunteers, and community populations that are impacted by these and other significant issues.

**18. Safe, orderly, and inviting learning environment.** *It is recommended that the board of education continue to support, reinforce, and enhance the district's existing Character Education program.*

Rationale: The Task Force finds that the district's existing Character Education program contributes to the well being of individual students and overall health of the school.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: National PTA. (1997). PTA guide to the national standards for parent/family involvement programs. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

*19. **Strong and effective leadership.** It is recommended that the board of education advocate to be given taxing authority on school matters, rather than current law wherein this resides with the county commissioners.*

Rationale: Recognizing varied opinions on this matter, the Task Force questions the advantages and disadvantages of the current taxing authority for school funding, and recommends the board of education examine whether having taxing authority would allow the school system to better match responsibility with accountability through communicating its case for any needed resources directly to the public.

*20. **Strong community support.** It is recommended that the school system review the magnet school program and explain to the citizens of Wake County how the magnet schools support and promote the educational health of all schools in the district.*

Rationale: Magnet schools in Wake County have been operating for more than 20 years, and the program has grown significantly in size as well as complexity. This Task Force recognizes the important role magnet schools have had in the school district, advancing the health of all schools. This rationale also recognizes that there is a need to review the purpose and role of magnet schools and clarify for the citizens of the county the goals, objectives, and policies of the magnet school program now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# Section I. Introduction, Background, and Purpose

## ***INTRODUCTION***

This report documents the history of events leading to the formation of the Healthy Schools Task Force committee, and reports on the committee's work, findings and recommendations. The report is produced in two volumes with Volume II being a collection of source documents. Volume I is organized in five main sections. This first section provides the reader with information that describes the background events leading to the formation of the Task Force, and the purpose of the Task Force as set forth by the Wake County Board of Education.

Section II reviews the presentations made at each of the meetings, discussions among the committee members, analyses arrived at by the Task Force, and decisions made at the meetings. The content and organization of Section II provides a detailed and sequential record of the Task Force deliberations, documenting the information upon which, and the process by which, the Task Force arrived at its recommendations. Section III presents the recommendations the HSTF made to the Board of Education; Section IV describes some of the media coverage of the Task Force; and Section V lists the Task Force committee members along with some of their demographic and geographic characteristics.

## ***BACKGROUND***

It is important to have an understanding of the context and history of significant events leading to the formation of the Healthy Schools Task Force for a full understanding of the committee's work. The social-political context in which the committee conducted it's work can be summarized in a number of undisputed facts.

FACT: WCPSS is the second largest school district in the state and 25<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation.

FACT: WCPSS enrollment has been growing by 2,000 to 5,000 students per year since the middle 1980s.

FACT: WCPSS last closed a school in 1982, while opening 53 new schools since the 1989-90 school year.

FACT: WCPSS student membership is diverse, representing all racial groups and many cultural groups, all income strata and many abilities, talents and skills.

FACT: Amidst this growth in students, construction of facilities, and diversity in membership, WCPSS student achievement on state and national measures has steadily risen to the highest level ever by 2003.

FACT: Annually, the Wake County Board of Education has found it necessary to reassign some students for the purposes of balancing population growth, facility use, diversity and student achievement.

Within the context of these facts, the history of events leading to the formation of the Healthy Schools Task Force committee can be sequenced and interpreted, as follows.

- September 26, 2002      In a news release, Wake County Board of Education Chair Quigg and Superintendent McNeal call for the creation of a county-wide Healthy Schools Task Force. The release quotes Quigg saying, “The Task Force can bring us together to find solutions to the concerns that are in the community”, and McNeal saying, “...the community can work together to find answers and make recommendations to the Board of Education that will strengthen all of our schools and benefit all of our children.” A point was made that the task force would be representative of the county’s geography and demography.
- October 8, 2002      The Wake County Board of Education creates the Healthy Schools Task Force. At its regularly scheduled meeting, the Board of Education indicated the Task Force would be comprised of 18 to 25 people with membership approved by the Board. Characteristics of Task Force candidates were described including being a citizen of Wake County, being open-minded and objective, evidencing a proven interest in issues concerning the school system, being focused on student success, and willing to meet monthly for the duration of the Task Force.
- A list of issues for the Task Force to consider was presented and the Task Force was charged with bringing recommendations to the Board for the purpose of:
- Ensuring continued growth in student achievement;
  - Increasing the satisfaction of parents and key constituencies;
  - Addressing facilities issues, including decisions related to Plan 2004; and
  - Increasing community support for the Wake County Public School System.
- October 2002      During October, over 200 names of prospective Task Force members were collected by a variety of means (e.g., nominations from school board members; nominations from elected officials, business and community leaders; self-nominations from community members collected by telephone and an Internet website).
- October 25, 2002      Deadline for nominations to the Healthy Schools Task Force.

- November 5, 2002 At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education, Superintendent McNeal shared with board members a package of information that would be given to members of the Task Force.
- November 18, 2002 At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education, Board Chair Quigg shared an article that appeared in the News & Observer, “*A good school plan comes under fire.*” Superintendent McNeal shared another article from the News & Observer, “*A task force for strong schools.*”
- December 3, 2002 The Wake County Board of Education names 28 members of the Healthy Schools Task Force. At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education, Board Chair Quigg introduced the Task Force members and named Dick Daugherty and Dudley Flood to co-chair the Task Force.
- December 2002 Healthy Schools Task Force Planning Document produced. The Planning Document serves a number of functions:
- Identifies names and contact information of Task Force committee members;
  - Provides some background information on formation of the Task Force;
  - Establishes a set of criteria by which to measure a healthy school;
  - Reproduces a number of articles from the News & Observer; and
  - Prioritizes a set of four issues with associated questions for the Task Force to consider.
- In the Planning Document, the four issues that the Board of Education posed for the Task Force were:
1. Academic success for all WCPSS students grades K-12
  2. Diversity in schools
  3. Capacity utilization of existing and future facilities
  4. Community expectations of our public school system
- December 12, 2002 The first meeting of the Healthy Schools Task Force is held, and monthly meetings continue through November 2003.
- January 22, 2004 The Task Force finalizes its work on a set of recommendations and committee members adopt the recommendations by unanimous consensus.
- February 17, 2004 Dick Daugherty and Dudley Flood present the Healthy School Task Force recommendations to the Wake County Board of Education.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Task Force is identified in a number of documents and a variety of statements made by different individuals. At a September 26, 2002, Board of Education meeting, Board Chair Quigg noted that, “The Task Force can bring us together to find solutions to the concerns that are in the community.” In the Healthy Schools Task Force Planning Document, it is indicated that “The Task Force will examine the educational issues and concerns of the entire Wake County community and its impact on the future of public education in the county.” At the first meeting of the Task Force committee, Co-Chair Daugherty indicated the purpose of the Task Force was to “...observe what is taking place within the school system and to make a determination as to whether it is succeeding.” At this same meeting, Superintendent McNeal stated his view of the Task Force was for it to provide recommendations that would put the school system on course for the next five to ten years.

Also, a review of the history leading to formation of the Task Force, along with an analysis of presentations made to the committee and discussions at committee meetings suggests some less explicit purposes of the Task Force recognized by committee members include:

- Serving as a vehicle for collecting, organizing, and reporting on the perspectives, opinions, and ideas that are representative of the entire Wake County community;
- Finding a consensus on school practices that the Wake County community will support as the district continues to grow and requires additional resources;
- Finding a consensus that will galvanize the political will among policy-makers in the community to continue the pursuit of academic excellence for all students; and
- Ensuring that the most effective and efficient educational programs and economic practices are implemented.

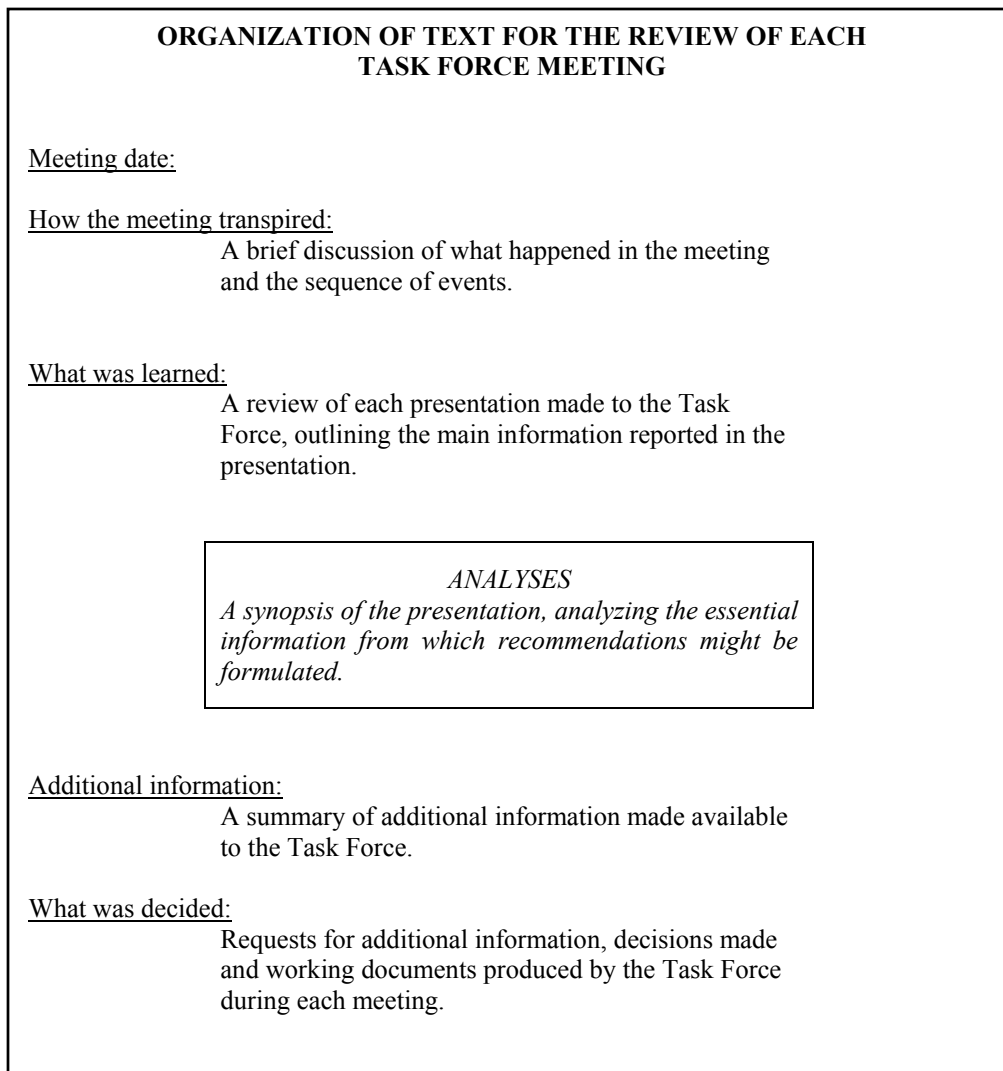
There is an overall consistency to these pronouncements that suggests the Wake County Board of Education, the WCPSS central office administration, and members of the Task Force had a common understanding of the committee's purpose. The statement of purpose given by Board Chair Quigg on September 26<sup>th</sup> best captures this common understanding in all its guises: To bring us together to find solutions to the concerns that are in the community.

Along with the purpose, an objective was described for the Task Force to study, investigate and otherwise take into consideration four "issues" and make recommendations to the Board of Education on courses of action associated with these issues. The four issues served to guide Task Force discussions, with separate meetings of the Task Force devoted to each issue. The four issues, and the order in which the Task Force took them into consideration, were:

1. Academic success for all WCPSS students grades K-12
2. Diversity in schools
3. Capacity utilization of existing and future facilities
4. Community expectations of the public school system

## Section II. Task Force Meetings, Information Learned, and Decisions

This section is a summary of the meetings the Task Force held, the information presented at these meetings, and the deliberations and decisions made by the Task Force over the course of the meetings. The figure below is a visual depiction of how the text in this section is organized, with each meeting being separately described.



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## ***FIRST MEETING - DECEMBER 12, 2002***

### *How the meeting transpired.*

The first meeting of the Task Force was largely organizational in nature. Each Task Force member received a notebook with information on the school system. Co-Chair Daugherty stated the Task Force's purpose and noted that Task Force members would not be responsible for implementing any of the recommendations it makes. Ground rules which had previously been established for how the Task Force would discuss issues, respect confidentiality, and arrive at consensus were shared with committee members. Board Chair Quigg made a presentation with examples of progress that the school system had recently made. Superintendent McNeal made a presentation on the history of the school system. The four major issues that the Task Force would address were reviewed.

### *What was learned.*

Two of the ground rules generated the most discussion--one pertaining to consensus and one pertaining to confidentiality. Regarding consensus, members of the committee questioned whether the committee would actually arrive at consensus. Regarding confidentiality, it was explained the confidentiality rule was meant to apply to the work of subcommittees which should not state a resolution had been made without consultation and discussion with the entire group.

Collectively, the ground rules had a number of central features. One feature of the rules addressed how committee members were to interact and participate in discussions so as to support a risk-free environment, for instance, through being positive, respectful and constructive. Another feature of the rules was that all committee members were encouraged to share information openly and participate in all dialogues. A number of ground rules addressed being efficient through channeling requests for information to the co-chairs and adhering to time limits for discussions. Among all the rules, a rule to "Model the 8 Character Education traits" which the WCPSS has adopted for students seems to capture the spirit of the Task Force to 'practice what we preach.'

### ***ANALYSES***

*Substantively, the first meeting focused chiefly on "process"—how the committee would function. With the diverse nature of committee members, it was important to establish a common set of expectations among the members for how discussions would proceed and decisions would be made. The first meeting set the tone for future meetings and, in retrospect, was very successful. Subsequent meetings were orderly, encouraged the airing of differences of opinion, permitted the sharing of much information and, ultimately, resulted in a set of recommendations that the committee of the whole was able to endorse.*

### *Additional information.*

None.

*What was decided.*

- Committee members suggested that a comparison should be made between Wake County and other school systems in the state and nation to determine "...what is a reasonable goal for the school system."
- So that future meetings could proceed efficiently, it was decided that Task Force members should receive the meeting's information one week ahead of time.

## **SECOND MEETING - FEBRUARY 27, 2003**

### *How the meeting transpired.*

At the second meeting of the Task Force, members not present at the first meeting were introduced and the minutes of the December 12<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved. A role for a timekeeper was established to keep discussions on time, and the ground rules guiding committee procedures and discussions were reviewed and amended to delete the rule on confidentiality. The first order of business was to revisit the four major issues assigned to the Task Force and consider if there should be any revisions to these. Following this discussion, a presentation was made by Chuck Dulaney, Senior Director of School Accountability, on WCPSS testing outcomes for the 2001-2002 school year. As the meeting closed, discussion again entertained how to make meetings proceed smoothly and utilize time more efficiently.

### *What was learned.*

In the presentation made by Chuck Dulaney, "WCPSS Testing Outcomes For The 2001-2002 School Year", some of the main points of information were:

- An overview of the state's testing program including its purpose; the distinction between End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) tests; how tests are designed; and how tests are interpreted;
- The distinction between students' performance scores (Levels I, II, III or IV) in the state's testing program and growth scores (scale score changes over time);
- A comparison between EOG scores for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2000-01 and a year later for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2001-02, showing growth that this cohort (a single group of students followed over time) made in the one-year interval;
- Results of the state's EOG testing program for WCPSS in 2002:
  - EOG tests showed increases in 2002 at all grade levels in both reading and mathematics;
  - The percentage of students on grade level varied widely across demographic groups, although there was evidence that the achievement gap was narrowing over time; and
  - The three groups of elementary students in grades 3-5 showing the least growth, albeit positive, were Level IV students (the highest achieving students in the state's ABC accountability and testing program), Free/Reduced lunch students, and Black students.
- Results of the state's EOC testing program for WCPSS in 2002 showed increases in eight out of ten courses, and were the highest since testing began;
- WCPSS has a much higher percentage of schools recognized as Schools of Excellence and Schools of Distinction than other schools statewide, and a much higher percentage of schools achieving High Growth for their students, as indicated in the following table:

**Chuck Dulaney**  
**WCPSS Testing Outcomes for the 2001-2002 School Year**

<b>Percentage of Schools Recognized in the 2002 ABC Accountability Program</b>		
<b>ABC Recognition</b>	<b>WCPSS</b>	<b>NC</b>
Schools of Excellence	44%	14%
Schools of Distinction	32%	30%
High Growth Schools	55%	36%

- Average SAT scores in the district (1067 in 2002) have been rising over time and exceed those for the state (998) and nation (1020).
- WCPSS students taking Advanced Placement exams earned a higher percentage passing rate (77.2%) than for comparison school districts in Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Virginia.
- Addressing questions about ability grouping, Dulaney indicated that research suggests the needs of all students are better met in heterogeneous groups than in ability-separated groups. He noted that grouping for temporary purposes is fine, but that long-term separation by ability has overall negative results. For instance, assigning by intellectual levels may contribute to an increase in the achievement gap associated with teacher expectations and limited role models for students.

### ***ANALYSES***

*When all the data on student and school performance are distilled, two factors seem most prominent:*

- 1. On the whole, WCPSS students are very successful and becoming more so over time; and*
- 2. In the midst of this success, there remain groups of students that are not achieving at a desirable level of performance (e.g., low-income students, minority students, underachieving high achievers in the state's Level IV of academic performance).*

*Additional information.*

None.

*What was decided.*

- During the discussion on ground rules an amendment was offered and approved by unanimous vote to delete the rule, "Maintain confidentiality of discussions."
- Following discussion of the four issues identified by the Wake County Board of Education for the committee's consideration, a motion to approve the four "Issues to Consider" with no changes was accepted.
- To facilitate the committee's work, the committee reiterated that Task Force members need to receive the meeting's information one week ahead of time, and agreed that future meetings would be extended to three hours and divided in nature with 50% given to presentations and 50% given to discussions.
- A request was made for information on the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

<b>Ground rules, As Amended February 27, 2003.</b>
• Good attendance is expected by all members
• Send only positive nonverbal messages
• Respect time commitments of participants
• Bring agenda items to the table early in the process
• Exhibit only behaviors that support a risk-free environment
• Participants accept and are open to new ideas
• All participate in all dialogues
• Everyone owns everything
• Provide information so that all can participate
• Constructive suggestions and disagreement are welcome because they are part of an improvement process
• All decisions will require a consensus by the task force members
• Model the 8 Character Education traits
• Implement a timekeeper and possible limits to comments
• Process all requests for information through co-chairs

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## **THIRD MEETING - MARCH 27, 2003**

### *How the meeting transpired.*

Minutes of the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved with minor corrections. Walt Sherlin, Associate Superintendent for Administrative Services, gave a presentation on "Keeping All Our Schools Strong." Cyndi Soter O'Neil, with the Wake Education Partnership (WEP), gave a presentation on the WEP report, "2002 Wake Public Education Community Assessment." Following these two presentations, the Task Force broke into four subgroups with each group discussing the academic success of WCPSS students in order to compile a list of factors that either contribute to or impede academic success. Reconvening as a full group, the committee identified and prioritized those factors they feel the school district can impact (change).

### *What was learned.*

In Walt Sherlin's presentation on "Keeping All Our Schools Strong", the school system's mission was identified: To educate each student to be a responsible and productive citizen who effectively manages future challenges. Characteristics of healthy schools were noted to include:

- High academic achievement by all students;
- Strong parental support and commitment;
- Strong community support and commitment;
- Highly trained and effective staff;
- Attractive and appropriate learning facilities;
- A safe, orderly, and inviting learning climate;
- Strong and effective leadership; and
- A diverse student body.

In the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, "Keeping All Our Schools Strong", the history of the WCPSS since merger in the 1970s was reviewed including the following information:

- WCPSS has two principle challenges: promoting academic success and responding to explosive growth;
- Before merger, schools in downtown Raleigh were being closed, and the Raleigh City population was dropping;
- The move to merge the Raleigh and county school systems was spearheaded by business and community leaders;
- In the initial years following merger, downtown schools continued to lose students, and a WCPSS policy reassigning students to downtown schools was unpopular and rescinded;
- The establishment of program magnet schools in 1982 successfully accomplished a number of objectives including offering parents voluntary choices, filling downtown schools, and relieving overcrowding in outlying schools;
- Population growth throughout the 1980s and 1990s continued to strain school facilities;

- The establishment of year-round magnet schools in the 1990s increased the capacity of the school system to seat students and offered a new choice for parents, but drew students away from program magnet schools;
- Amidst these developments, WCPSS student assignment policy was changed to eliminate race of the student from student assignment considerations. New targets were established for maintaining an effective, safe learning environment for every individual:
  - Students participating in the free/reduced lunch program would be no higher than 40% at any school;
  - Students performing below grade level would be no greater than 25% at any school; and
  - Facility utilization would average between 85% and 115% capacity at every school;
- Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, population growth continues, especially in the outlying regions of the county where there is greater land availability; and
- Data on student performance show increasing academic performance over the last decade, a narrowing of the achievement gap during this period, decreasing incidence of students dropping out of school, and increasing SAT scores.

#### ***ANALYSES***

*The school district has been fortunate in its 25-year history to be a growing district, and the relationship between growth and the quality of public education in the district is cyclical with each impacting the other...growth brings public demand for high quality schools (especially true in this region of the county with the Research Triangle) and high quality schools sustains continued growth (especially true for Wake when compared to neighboring counties). While growth and high quality schools present distinctly unique demands on facilities and programs, the school district views the two issues as inextricably linked...both must be successfully managed.*

*Maintaining diverse student enrollment throughout the district is one thread that the district has found is integral to both growth and quality programs. To the extent that the district can find strategies that will maintain diverse student enrollment, then it is believed that both growth and quality can be successfully managed. Over the 25-year history of the district, a number of strategies have been implemented with each being more or less successful. There is no perfect solution. Every solution introduces new problems, and new problems call for the next solution. Throughout this iterative process, community feedback functions to provide information on improvements that can be made to the next solution. The process is dynamic, not static, and adjustments must be made continually if the district is to remain academically and fiscally strong.*

In Cyndi Soter O'Neil's presentation, the Wake Education Partnership community assessment report was discussed: 2002 Wake Public Education Community Assessment: A Study of Citizen's Perceptions of Wake County Public Schools. Some of the main points made in the report were:

- Wake voters hold vague positive views of the school system, but are largely uninformed about the specific accomplishments of Wake County's schools. The information vacuum is filled with cynical views colored by national press, perceptions of "government inefficiency" and isolated/anecdotal experience;
- The challenge is to bridge the knowledge gap: Wake County Public School System performs well on factors the public believes are most important—test scores, financial efficiency, community/parental involvement, innovation and choice—yet community perception does not reflect these facts;
- Focus groups suggest that with knowledge of Wake County Public School System's performance comes:
  - Support for new revenue initiatives;
  - Justification for initial general positive feelings; and
  - More positive feelings about the overall community.
- Survey trends show an increase in performance gaps on a number of highly rated "importance" factors, including mastery of basics, students being challenged, high standards and physical facility. In most cases, "gaps" represent a return to 1998 levels. This trend mirrors the drop in positive perceptions that Wake schools are "improving over time," again suggesting that public awareness of real school system accomplishment is not being communicated; and
- Still, Wake voters show a strong level of potential support for a \$450 million capital bond. Direct tax increases for Wake schools are less popular.

#### **ANALYSES**

*The Wake Education Partnership community assessment for 2002 differed from earlier community assessments in a very important aspect: telephone surveys were conducted with only registered voters in 2002, while earlier surveys were conducted with citizens age 18 and over. This difference in survey methodology must be kept in mind when interpreting findings of the 2002 assessment in light of earlier assessments.*

*Among registered voters, when compared to earlier surveys, the 2002 survey found fewer respondents agreed that the school system was improving over time (36%) and fewer respondents agreed that maintaining racial and economic diversity in the schools was a high priority (20%). As noted, the 2002 survey population differed from that of earlier assessments; however, it is probable that some part of this change in perceptions reflects a true difference in the general public's opinion on these issues relative to previous years. The WEP interpretation of this finding is that the school district is not doing well at bridging the "knowledge gap" between accomplishments (that the district is doing very well) and perceptions (that the district is not*

*improving). However, a slightly different interpretation of findings in the 2002 assessment can be made. The drop in positive perceptions may in part be a function of the district's success.*

*Surveying only registered voters, the community assessment may be somewhat biased towards high achieving families. In the 2002 sample poll, there was 11 percentage points greater representation of college graduates and post-college graduates than in the 2000 sample. To the extent that the district is successful and is a magnet for high achieving families, it is probable that these families want even more for their students. Two findings of the report in particular lend support to this interpretation:*

- (1) The largest gap (between the community's rating the importance of an event and the rating of whether that event is happening) is reported for "students being challenged." The community is saying that students must be challenged more.*
- (2) Respondents to the community assessment indicate that "the high percentage of students who go on to continue their education at a higher education institution" is the most positive accomplishment of the school district. This rating is almost 20 points greater than the next highest rated accomplishment.*

*The drop in positive perceptions about the school system, may in part be a function of the district's own success if it should be that high success breeds demand for greater success.*

#### *Additional information.*

In addition to material associated with the two presentations, three other handouts were made available to the Task Force: 1) Four scatter plots showing the annual correlation between the percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch at a school, on the one hand, and the composite percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade students performing at/above grade level, on the other hand; 2) A report produced by the WCPSS Evaluation and Research (E&R) Department titled, The Effect of School Poverty Concentrations in WCPSS; and 3) An E&R report titled, The Impact of Poverty Upon Schools.

### **ANALYSES**

*Together, the four scatter plots (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002) and the E&R report on poverty concentrations in WCPSS schools demonstrate that there is a significant relationship between school poverty and student achievement: the greater the percentage of low-income students at a school, the lower the academic achievement of overall students at the school. In WCPSS, the effect of poverty is most notable for elementary schools. While this effect is relatively mild in WCPSS due to there not being a wide range of poverty among elementary schools, the report noted that, "Larger changes in the concentration of poverty in a school would likely produce changes in student achievement that would be both statistically and educationally significant."*

*In the E&R report on the impact of poverty upon schools, a number of factors contributing to lower student achievement were identified, including:*

- Less qualified teachers;*
- More time spent on classroom discipline;*
- Inequitable distribution of resources; and*
- Greater tendency to group students by ability level.*

*What was decided.*

The priority ranking of factors the Task Force believes contribute to or impede academic success is indicated in the following table.

<b>Factors That Contribute to or Impede Academic Success</b>	
<b>Factors the District Can Impact</b>	<b>Priority Votes</b>
Communication (lack of knowledge about the system, its history, etc.)	11
Diversity (shared challenge)	9
Parental involvement	9
Expectations (high and/or low)	5
Attract minority teachers (provide incentives for them to teach minority students)	3
Class size	2
Leadership in schools (principal and team)	2
Land use development	1
Teacher training for different learning styles	1
Lack of cultural awareness	1
Quality teachers	1
Funding	1
Language barrier	0
<b>Factors the District Cannot Impact</b>	
Socioeconomics	NA
State/Federal mandates	NA

At this third meeting, the Task Force also conducted a Plus/Delta analysis of the committee's working process to date with Plus signifying things about the committee process that are good and Delta signifying things that could be changed or improved, as indicated in the following table.

<b>Plus</b>	<b>Delta</b>
Opportunity to discuss ideas and concerns	Schedule a break halfway through the meeting
Getting minutes ahead of time; trying to stay on schedule	No cost information
Small group discussions	Not dealing with some issues that concern the community
Small group discussion REALLY helpful	
Breakout groups were helpful to build relationships and allow leaders to emerge	
Group work was an excellent idea	
Additional hour made it seem more productive	
Small group discussion	
Good information	
I love the caring attitude of the group in trying to reach its objective	
Very well planned; clear agenda; realistic time table; complete and well presented presentations	

A request for additional information noted that it would be nice to hear from WCPSS schools and individuals that “make it happen” (e.g., principals, teacher, parents).

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## **FOURTH MEETING - APRIL 24, 2003**

### *How the meeting transpired.*

Minutes of the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved. Maja Vouk, Director of WCPSS Demographics, gave a presentation on “Wake County Demographics, Growth and Diversity.” Dr. Ramey Beavers, Senior Director of the Office of Growth Management, made a presentation to the Task Force on the “Development of Reassignment Plans for Existing Schools and the Plans for New Schools.” Following the two presentations, the Task Force broke into four subgroups with each group asked to define the word “diversity” and to list advantages and obstacles to diversity.

### *What was learned.*

In Maja Vouk's presentation on Wake County Demographics, Growth and Diversity, four topics were addressed: 1) population growth in the county, 2) students and schools, 3) ethnic and racial diversity, and 4) socio-economic diversity. The main points of information on each topic are outlined below:

#### Population Growth

- Population in the county is expected to double in the next 30 years, from 650,000 to 1,400,000.
- Presently, the greatest growth is occurring in western Wake County and East Raleigh.
- Some parts of downtown Raleigh may see a decrease in population in the coming years.

#### Students and Schools

- Public and private school enrollment in Wake County mirrors that in other counties (e.g., Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg, New Hanover).
- Public school enrollment in WCPSS is predicted to grow by 2,000 to 3,000 additional students every year for the next 20 years.
- Western Wake (planning area C) is projected to surpass all other regions of the county in absolute number of students by 2015.
- 80 to 90% of all students attend school in the planning area in which they reside or the area immediately adjacent to it.

#### Ethnic and Racial Diversity

- While still relatively small in number (< 7,000), Hispanic/Latino students have grown most rapidly over the last 10 years.
- International migration has been a major growth factor in Wake County, with approximately 4% of WCPSS participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

#### Socio-economic Diversity

- Between 1990 and 2000,
  - average household income increased by almost \$20,000;

- the median house value increased by almost \$65,000;
- the median age in the population increased by more than a year;
- the percentage of adults with associate's or higher degrees increased by almost 10%; and
- the percentage of families living in poverty decreased by 0.6%.
- Planning area A (largely Raleigh) has more than three times the number of students participating in the free/reduced lunch program than any other area

### ***ANALYSES***

*Wake County's population growth will be unrelenting for the foreseeable future, and this population is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. Amidst this growth, public school participation in WCPSS is similar to that in other large school districts in the state. However, uneven growth (for example, high concentrations of low income and/or ESL students) creates special challenges for a district to maintain the same level of quality educational programs for all students in every school.*

## **Ramey Beavers Reassignment Plans for Existing and New Schools**

Dr. Beavers' presented an overview of the WCPSS student assignment process, including factors and terms anyone reviewing the process would need to know. He gave an example of how an attendance node might be reassigned, showing the impact of node reassignment on an individual school. Maps of reassigned areas were distributed, and flow charts depicting the reassignment process for new and existing schools were discussed.

The primary focus of Dr. Beavers' presentation was on the various factors that are considered in all reassignment decisions as well as the means used to include public input in the process. There was also a discussion regarding the stability of assignment and the infrequency of mandatory moves of students when they remain in the same residence. Dr. Beavers explained that a parent's notion of reassignment sometimes includes temporary moves such as when a school is being renovated or their child moves from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school. Other than these forms of assignment, Dr. Beavers explained that school policies such as grandfathering effectively limit the possibility of mandatory reassignment to no more than once during any individual child's K-12 history, provided the family can provide transportation while the student finishes that particular grade configuration.

Dr. Beavers noted that the entire process of student reassignment continues to evolve from years ago when the process was largely a closed-door and planned development process with very little input from outsiders. Presently, the process is becoming more and more open with parents having multiple points in time for providing input.

### ***ANALYSES***

*The reassignment process is lengthy, increasingly open to public input, and sometimes contentious. For the school district, seeking to balance numerous facility and programmatic factors, there is no simple solution that will satisfy all constituencies.*

#### *Additional information.*

A report produced by the Wake Education Partnership (WEP) was distributed: Making Choices: Diversity, Student Assignment and Quality in Wake's Public Schools. The report, published in April 2003, sought to:

- (1) Clarify facts about policies and practices by the public schools to address growth and to maintain balanced enrollment across the district;
- (2) Summarize research about the effects of school segregation on academic, economic and community trends in Wake County;
- (3) Introduce likely consequences to the calls for total choice or free market approaches to school enrollment; and
- (4) Pose key questions for school and community leaders to consider in identifying a long-term mechanism to address reassignment of students to accommodate growth and racial and economic balance.

The WEP report is highly detailed and information presented in the following discussion, while greatly condensed, is still lengthy. However, the WEP report is a comprehensive collection of information relevant to issues being addressed by the Task Force and requires careful review. Some of the key assumptions and findings in the report include the following:

- Issues surrounding student assignment in Wake County have taken on the weight of urban legend, where tales told and retold often have less to do with fact or policy than with politics and a general lack of knowledge;
- The choice parents make about where they enroll their children and the choice [the district makes] for how schools will be populated in response to growth and diversity will determine if some children get left behind or if some neighborhoods are relegated to second-rate status as isolated enclaves of poverty and crime;
- A definition of diversity was limited to that implied by "...economic differences such as pronounced variance in family income as defined by the access to free or subsidized lunches in the public schools";
- While no part of the WCPSS current system of student assignment and diversity has been ruled against by any court in other cases in the nation, still, the notion of diversity itself as a compelling reason to assign or reassign students has been left unclear by the courts;
- The Wake County Board of Education has provided evidence that it is working to make student assignment a more transparent process (releasing assignment plans early to permit public comments) and more stable process (allowing grandfathering and capping); and
- Case studies at home and abroad indicate choice models for student assignment result in either the stratification of communities along racial and/or economic lines or require the infusion of extra dollars to support low-performing schools.

- Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS): In the early 1990s, WS/FCS was "the most integrated district because of cross-district busing"; however, following introduction of a Schools of Choice plan,
  - More schools are racially identified today than they were in 1994;
  - While the Schools of Choice plan "...spends as much as 40 percent more money per student in high-poverty schools, the extra money has brought limited academic success. Fifteen of the county's 18 poorest schools are at the bottom of its academic rankings"; and
  - Many inner-city schools are under-capacity and suburban schools have exceeded capacity.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS): After 30 years of using race as a variable in student assignment decisions, court decisions led CMS to adopt a Family Choice plan beginning in the 2002-03 school year. Being only a year old, it is not possible to say if the new plan is having any different effects than earlier plans, but what is known about the district is that:
  - Almost half of CMS schools in 2002-03 were racially identifiable (75% or more either white or nonwhite);
  - The new plan is "phenomenally more expensive", creating the need for more mobile classrooms, more buses and more resources;
  - Some new center-city schools are "dramatically under-filled" while numerous mobile classrooms are "stretching new suburban schools far past their original capacity; and
  - Not all students are attending their school of choice under the new plan. After conducting the assignment lottery for 2003-04, 26% of students did not get their first choice or were assigned to their current or home schools.
- New Zealand: New Zealand launched "Tomorrow's Schools" in 1989 as part of a large scale decentralization of educational services.
  - Parental choice was replaced by school choice as the "better" students became more desired by schools;
  - Stratification of groups by income and race began immediately;
  - Equity funding to provide additional support for schools serving poor children became a guide for parents in how to avoid schools serving the poor;
  - Equity funding could not compare with the ability of schools serving higher income students to raise even greater funds for their students;
  - Local economies surrounding schools relegated to serving the poor quickly declined; and
  - Schools serving the poor were under utilized and fell into decline, while schools serving the more wealthy sought additional funding to expand campuses.
- Research findings on correlates associated with high poverty schools further inform decision-making processes associated with diversity.
  - Schools with high concentrations of poverty are less likely than other schools to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers;
  - Teachers in high poverty schools leave teaching earlier, have lower expectations, and are more likely to be teaching out of field, compared to those in low-poverty schools;

- o Middle class children attending high poverty schools perform worse, on average, than low-income children attending middle class schools;
- o One researcher finds that high poverty schools are 24 times less likely to be consistently successful than low poverty schools;
- o The expenditure of extra funding, in the context of isolated poverty, yields few academic gains;
- o Reducing class size can lead to more unqualified teachers in low-income schools;
- o Private school vouchers can create more economic segregation with private schools selecting the best students;
- o Varied studies have found that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, perform better in majority middle-class schools than they do in high-poverty schools; and
- o Race and class concerns are central to parental choices, more so than the quality of the school.
- Economic considerations must also be weighed in school choice plans:
  - o Choice plans that allow parents to choose their school can result in both under-utilized schools and over-enrolled schools in the same district;
  - o Compensatory spending--providing low-income schools with greater financial resources--does not result in a parallel improvement in academic performance; and
  - o Keeping all schools diverse and economically balanced also builds strong neighborhoods and businesses.

### ***ANALYSES***

*The WEP Making Choices report is comprehensive and detailed, and makes a strong case for judiciously managing student assignment policies and practices so as to keep all schools balanced...academically, culturally, and economically. Making Choices and the reports organized by the school district's Evaluation and Research Department address these issues at the local, state, national and even international level. At all levels there is a convergence in the research with the data pointing to the same conclusion - school performance is strengthened to the extent diverse student membership is successfully managed. The answer to how to keep public education strong and provide every child the opportunity to succeed lies in how well the district can balance the interests of the organization to maintain diverse and viable schools with the interests of the individual parent who desires unfettered choice.*

#### *What was decided.*

Two topics relegated to the “issue bin” for possible consideration in the future pertained to, 1) whether research shows that high achieving students are challenged in diverse classrooms, and 2) whether students in elementary feeder schools might be kept together in middle and high school.

During breakout discussions, the Task Force produced a set of working documents identifying various characteristics of diversity and how it could be defined, and listing the advantages and disadvantages to a community and/or school district of ensuring diversity in all

schools. The definitions of diversity posed by the Task Force varied along two principle dimensions:

- One dimension addressed the mix of different types of individuals in a population as indicated by obvious characteristics (e.g., race, religion, economic status, and ethnic/cultural heritage); and
- Another dimension addressed the value or importance placed on diversity (e.g., acknowledging differences, respect for all people).

In sheer number, the advantages of diversity identified by the Task Force were more than twice the obstacles; however, many of the advantages were difficult to interpret (e.g., “Does not live in diverse nodes”, “Lack of current social diversity”). The most common feature among the advantages appeared to be that of better preparing students to function in the future society. The most common feature among the obstacles appeared to be fixed variables that are difficult to alter (e.g., housing patterns, perceptions, educational level).

## **FIFTH MEETING - MAY 22, 2003**

### *How the meeting transpired.*

Based on a request for information at the last HSTF meeting, Walt Sherlin made a report to the committee on school enrollment. A handout was distributed to Task Force members with information on public schools, charter schools, private schools and home schools in the district, along with a map showing school locations. Task Force members raised some questions about the information pertaining to the racial makeup of private schools, the staff:student ratio at private schools, whether charter schools are racially identifiable, and the academic performance of charter schools. Following this discussion, a presentation was made by representatives of Assignment By Choice. Next, Mike Burriss and Clint Jobe with the WCPSS Facilities Department made a presentation on property site selection procedures and facility utilization.

### *What was learned.*

Walt Sherlin's presentation on public and private school locations in the county and enrollment data for comparable school districts provided a variety of information.

- Types of schools in Wake County and enrollment
  - 125 public schools (including two alternative schools), enrolling 104,373 students in 2002-03;
  - 50 private schools, enrolling 12,615 students in 2001-02;
  - 13 charter schools, enrolling 2,964 students in 2001-02; and
  - 2,140 home schools, enrolling 4,490 students in 2001-02.
- Locations of public, private and charter schools, showing a concentration in Raleigh, North Raleigh, and Cary;
- Location of public schools planned for the near future, showing the greatest number to be built in Western Wake;
- Racial composition of WCPSS students in 2002-03, showing
  - American Indian      0.3%
  - Asian                      4.2%
  - Hispanic                6.4%
  - Black                     26.6%
  - White                    60.0%
  - Multi-racial            2.5%
- Location of private schools, showing most located in the northern half of the county, and charter schools, showing half in Raleigh;
- Racial composition of charter school students in 2001-02
  - American Indian      0.1%
  - Asian                      2.8%
  - Hispanic                1.5%
  - Black                     29.1%
  - White                    66.5%
- Charter schools in Wake County tended to be racially identifiable in 2001-02, for instance, with Sterling Montessori Academy attracting a large number of Asian students; SPARC Academy and Hope Elementary being 99.6% and 100% Black,

respectively; and Quest Academy and Franklin Academy being 93.5% and 96.4% White, respectively.

- WCPSS's percentage of county students in public school membership, compared to other large school districts in North Carolina, showing all ranged between 82.4% and 86.4% in 2001-02, with WCPSS at 83.0%;
- Growth in private school enrollment, showing trends in Wake County parallel those in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district; and
- Median household in Wake County, compared to other populous counties, showing Wake is the highest in the state.

### ***ANALYSES***

- *There are geographical differences in the public, private and charter school locations in Wake County, with the WCPSS sites being spread all throughout the county; the private school sites being more often located in the northern half of the county; and the charter schools tending to cluster in Raleigh.*
- *There is also a difference in the racial composition of students enrolled in the WCPSS and those enrolled in the charter schools, with the charter schools having higher percentages of the two major groups (Blacks and Whites) and lower percentages of other minority groups, with the biggest difference being for Hispanics.*
- *Compared to other populous counties, Wake County households are wealthier, but other variables are similar (e.g., percentage of students enrolled in public schools, growth in number of students enrolling in private schools).*

**Dave Duncan, Cynthia Matson, Kevin O'Neal  
Assignment By Choice**

The Assignment By Choice (ABC) representatives briefly reviewed the history of their group, noting that their first meeting was held in September 2002. In May 2003, the ABC group was incorporated as a non-profit entity. The three ABC representatives then utilized PowerPoint slides to continue their presentation. The PowerPoint slides were not provided by the ABC representatives in hard copy format to distribute among the Task Force committee members. Following the PowerPoint presentation, the Task Force asked questions of the ABC representatives for the purpose of clarifying aspects of the information provided by ABC and sometimes challenged the ABC representation of facts and/or positions on issues. Questions that the Task Force sought more information on include:

- The cost to the district of implementing ABC's plan for school choice, such as:
  - o Increased resources to assist students at low-income schools;
  - o Increased expenses to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers in low-income schools; and
  - o Increased expenses to provide transportation to schools of choice.
- Whether ABC leadership was representative of the county's geography and demography; and
- Whether ABC members accepted the district's goal of 95% at/above grade level.

### ***ANALYSES***

*The ABC presentation was broad in scope and many issues of concern to ABC members were described. Solutions identified by the group tended to be single-dimensional and sometimes contradictory. The three representatives expressed a willingness to open their pocketbooks, even to the extent of paying higher taxes if necessary to support student achievement should some schools struggle under a school choice plan, but appeared to threaten more dire consequences should their plan not be adopted by the school district (e.g., non support for bond referendum, law suits, board members voted out).*

#### **Mike Buriss and Clint Jobe Facilities and Maintenance Operations**

In Mike Buriss and Clint Jobe's discussion on site selection procedures, a variety of issues were reviewed, including growth and enrollment projections; availability of land, public utilities, and transportation ingress and egress; costs associated with the land (e.g., property, site development, useable area); potential for partnerships; and impact on neighborhoods. It was noted that the Facilities Department is able to "plan with confidence" through the year 2008, and through 2012 with "measured confidence."

Some of the considerations and problems that a building plan must take into account include:

- Much of the new population growth is now occurring at the border of the Neuse River;
- The availability of adequately sized property is becoming increasingly scarce;
- Setbacks, wetland restrictions, and soil conditions can increase the size of a property;
- Site development costs can increase the cost of a property;
- "Gifting" of land to the district has not yet proven to be a viable option due to competing governmental regulations;
- WCPSS is competing with developers for good land;
- However, unlike developers, the school district must do "private" real estate business in the "public" realm; and
- Everybody wants neighborhood schools, but not in their neighborhood.

In additional discussion on facilities and maintenance, Buriss and Jobe noted that the school district currently operates 125 school sites and is among the largest land owners in Wake County with approximately 15 million square feet of building area. They reported that the insurance value of this property is approximately \$1.4 billion. Regarding maintenance, they indicated that the district is approximately 25% short on the number of needed maintenance personnel.

### ***ANALYSES***

*The challenges the district confronts finding property to build new schools to accommodate growth in student enrollment will only become more difficult in the future years due to this very same growth. Moreover, there may be an inverse relationship between building new schools and maintaining existing facilities...the more funds required to build new schools, the less is available to maintain existing facilities. Some solutions that appear attractive on the surface, such as year-round schools that can house more students, may only be short-term solutions as wear and tear on these schools is greater. As Wake County becomes increasingly "urbanized", examples for the future may lie in the solutions other large urban centers have found.*

#### *Additional information.*

The publication of the Wake Education Partnership, Quality Matters 2003: A Wake Community Review's of the Public's Schools, was distributed. As stated in the Introduction, the publication, "...seeks to educate Wake County citizens on many facets of school funding and critical issues currently being discussed by the citizens of Wake County...[and] help Wake County citizens better understand the process that is employed to determine funding for the schools and how the money is spent." The report is organized with chapters addressing Demographics, Finances, Closing the Achievement Gap, Diversity, Quality Teaching and Transportation. Some of the information reported under these chapters include:

- Demographics Matter
  - Comparing WCPSS to five other systems in North Carolina, one in Virginia and one in Georgia, the county's land mass (864 square miles) is largest and population (627,846) is third largest; average per capita income (\$27,004) is third largest while the cost of living index (100.4) is fourth greatest; percentage of high school graduates (89.3%) is second best and dropout rate (3.51%) is fourth best; and percentage of students participating in the free/reduced lunch program (26.0%) is fifth largest.
- Financing the Public's Schools
  - Revenue sources
    - In 2002, county revenue for WCPSS was \$194M (28.5%), state revenue was \$423M (62.2%), federal revenue was \$33M (4.9%), and other was \$30M (4.4%); and
    - Because of limitations on state and federal revenues, local revenues are used to support many school district initiatives to augment the district's effort to raise achievement for all students.
  - Expenditures
    - In 2002, approximately 72% of operating expenses were for instructional purposes, 16% for business and central support services (including transportation and nutrition), 7% for administration, and 5% for other;
    - Total per pupil expenditures in WCPSS are less than in Chapel Hill/Carrboro, Durham, Winston-Salem/Forsyth, and Fairfax, VA; and
    - A Citizens Advisory Committee on School Operations formed by the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education found that WCPSS is fiscally well managed and recommended \$149.3M of additional funding for a variety of purposes.

- Closing the Achievement Gap
  - While closing the achievement gap is uneven for some races, grades and/or subject matter, generally speaking, steady progress is being made on the state's EOG and EOC tests;
  - The gap in average SAT scores between black and white students has been increasing in the nation, in North Carolina, and in WCPSS; and
  - There is a significant gap in the number of minority students participating in AP courses, as well as taking and earning passing scores on AP exams. There is an \$80 fee to register for an AP exam but WCPSS offers no subsidy to students, while Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Guilford County, Chapel Hill/Carrboro, and Fairfax, VA, pay some or all of the costs.
- Diversity in the Public's Schools
  - Free/reduced lunch percentage and academic achievement are two factors in the district's reassignment policy; race of student is not a factor;
  - Less than one-quarter of one percent of students over the past four years were reassigned for socioeconomic reasons; and
  - In the 2002-03 school year, only 3.9% of students were reassigned for any reason (i.e., growth and new schools built).
- Quality Teaching in the Public's Schools
  - In 2001-02, there were more than 6,700 teachers in WCPSS and the average turnover rate that year was 9.5%;
  - In 2001-02, the system lost approximately 73% of its teachers with three or fewer years experience;
  - Approximately 8% of teachers and 40% of administrators are currently eligible to retire; and
  - Additional funding recommended by the CAC to support teacher recruitment and retention totaled \$50.5 million over the next four-year period.
- Transportation in the Public's Schools
  - WCPSS has the second largest school bus system in NC and 22<sup>nd</sup> largest in the nation;
  - WCPSS continues to maintain a near perfect efficiency rating per NC Department of Public Instruction guidelines, resulting in additional funding from the state;
  - WCPSS is currently on a modified three-tiered system with 10 different school dismissal times;
  - It takes an average 45 minutes for buses to load at one school, deliver those students home, and travel to the next school for another pick-up; and
  - Since implementing a school choice plan in 2002-03, transportation costs in Charlotte/Mecklenburg have increased 4% over that for 2001-02, adding more buses to travel more miles.
- Conclusion
  - Our community must be committed to the success of every student; and
  - Consistent with the CAC's report, it is clear the school district needs more funding if it is to continue meeting the demands of growth and expectations for a high quality public school system.

The Quality Matters 2003 report also reprinted the Executive Summary to the report produced by the Citizens Advisory Council. In essence, the CAC "...affirmed the proper stewardship of public funds by WCPSS, including the operations of central office/administration", commended the "strides made by WCPSS in approaching the 95% goal", and recommended an additional \$149.3M in funding over the next four years.

#### ***ANALYSES***

*The Quality Matters 2003 report reveals a number of hard choices and/or looming crises for the district. For instance, should the district adopt an open choice policy for school assignment, transportation costs are likely to rise. To the extent the district wishes to further reduce the achievement gap, then this too may cost more money, for instance, to support low income students' participation in AP coursework. If the district wishes to attract and retain high quality teachers, then additional funding is needed to reduce turnover and the loss of young teachers.*

#### *What was decided.*

- At the next meeting, the discussion on facilities would be continued, and the issue of community expectations would be addressed.
- A draft of the report to the board that the Task Force will eventually produce was under development, and this draft would be further discussed at the next meeting of the Task Force.
- The Task Force asked the ABC group to provide it with a copy of the PowerPoint file used in their presentation.

## **SIXTH MEETING – JUNE 26, 2003**

### *How the meeting transpired.*

Opening the meeting, Chairman Daugherty and HSTF members congratulated the Wake County Board of Education, Superintendent McNeal, and school staff on the recently announced achievement test results for the district, being the highest ever posted in the WCPSS. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and the agenda for the upcoming meeting was reviewed. Following this, HSTF member Curt Stangler made a motion that the committee consider a set of recommendations for presentation to be made to the Board of Education at their June 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. The motion was seconded, and discussion that followed revealed committee members were generally not prepared to entertain the recommendations on such short notice at this meeting, and the second to the motion was rescinded. Co-chair Daughtey indicated that plans for the July HSTF meeting were to begin discussing the recommendations that the HSTF would make to the Board. Don Haydon, WCPSS Assistant Superintendent then continued the presentation from the May meeting on WCPSS facilities, after which committee members broke into subgroups to identify their top three concerns related to facilities and strategies to address these concerns. Upon reconvening as a committee of the whole, each subgroup reported to the whole their prioritized concerns. Bill Carruthers reviewed for the committee a first draft of the report being prepared for the HSTF to present their recommendations to the school board. Following some general questions of the superintendent and staff members, the meeting then ended.

### *What was learned.*

Don Haydon distributed a handout to the committee members, addressing three principle topics: site selection procedures, Facilities Committee recommendations, and Plan 2004 Capital Improvement Program. Regarding site selection procedures, Don indicated there were three major categories of activities:

- Activities pertaining to demographic projections:
  - enrollment projections; and
  - current and future crowding projections.
- Activities pertaining to technical processes:
  - reviewing target area for land availability, public utilities, ingress and egress; and
  - reviewing land cost, site development costs, and associated costs (i.e., wetlands, soil conditions).
- Activities pertaining to community collaboration:
  - Potential joint partnerships; and
  - Impact on neighborhoods.

Regarding Facilities Committee recommendations, Don's handout summarized a set of 12 recommendations made to the school board by the Facilities Committee on March 13, 2003. Examples of the recommendations include:

- Health and safety issues should continue to receive the highest priority;
- The current prioritization matrix methodology for ranking specific unfunded facility repair projects is reasonable and effective and should be continued;

**Don Haydon  
Facilities Discussion, Continued**

- The school board should adopt a policy to require a review of the facilities equity impact of any future changes to the educational program standards so that long term equity gaps are not created;
- The design guidelines used for construction of new schools should continue to be used for renovation in existing schools; and
- The school board should consider using educational program enhancements to offset inherent inequities in certain facilities.

Regarding the Plan 2004 Capital Improvement Program, Don indicated the plan called for \$550M in construction and renovation projects. Don noted that the original proposal presented in April 2003 calling for \$867M had been trimmed to \$550M but would still permit the school district to progress towards a goal of ensuring 92% seat capacity.

In the breakout sessions and discussion period that followed, HSTF members raised numerous questions:

- Whether more year-round schools would make more efficient use of tax dollars?
- What is the optimal size of schools and whether there would be a savings if schools were larger?
- How the goal of 92% of students in permanent seats was developed?
- Whether it is more cost effective to renovate an older school or tear it down and build a new one?
- Whether the Board of Education should have taxing authority?
- Whether the school system should be in the landlord/property management business?
- What is the cost to operate year-round vs. traditional schools, which is most cost effective over the long-term, and what are the negative impact of year-round schools on surrounding traditional schools?
- What are the long-term effects of inadequate funding for deferred maintenance?

In Bill Carruthers' presentation to the HSTF committee, a first draft of the report being prepared for the HSTF was described and committee members were asked for their feedback on how they believed the report should be organized and the content that should go into the report. Bill described a number of dimensions by which committee members could determine how the report should be written, including:

- Audience, ranging from the Board of Education to the general public;
- Functionality, ranging from a listing of recommendations to a documentation of processes;
- Readability, ranging from difficult to easy; and
- Production, ranging from few copies produced to many copies.

In the following discussion, opinions varied widely among committee members with some liking the draft as it was, some suggesting how changes could be made to particular sections, and some suggesting the entire draft could be reorganized.

*Additional information.*

Dr. Tony Habit, of Wake Education Partnership, distributed a White Paper titled, "Admissions Decision Underscores Case for Healthy Public Schools." Points made in the paper include:

- That the recent decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Grutter v. Bollinger, provides "...an opportunity to revisit discussions about diversity in the public schools";
- That Justice O'Connor, writing the majority opinion, described the societal and educational benefits of student body diversity as 'substantial', 'important and laudable', and 'not theoretical but real';
- That Wake Education Partnership has called for a "...renewed commitment to ensure choice and stability for Wake's families, while also urging our leaders to remain focused on diverse, healthy schools";
- That "Research has shown that diversity--whether determined by race, as in the Michigan case, or by economics, as in Wake County--positively impacts student achievement, parent involvement and teaching quality, while also providing economic and social benefits to the community";
- That "Experiences of other communities have shown that open choice plans lead to segregated schools and increased costs;" and
- That "The Supreme Court's decision affirms Wake County's efforts to maintain student body diversity and serves to remind us of the benefits for all."

*What was decided.*

- Committee members asked that the funding list for Plan 2004 be distributed to the HSTF, and asked that a White Paper be developed compiling all facility cost analyses into a single document.
- Committee members reiterated their request to have additional information on whether research shows that high-achieving students are challenged in diverse classrooms, and whether elementary students in feeder schools might be kept together in middle and high school.
- A new request for additional information was made pertaining to the characteristics of students participating in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program (e.g., number of students, distribution and performance, adequacy of ESL classroom facilities).

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## **SEVENTH MEETING - JULY 24, 2003**

### *How the meeting transpired.*

Following the call to order, Dana Diesel Wallace and Tim Hart made a presentation to the committee with information concerning the district's English as a Second Language program, after which the committee approved the minutes of the June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. The committee then continued from a previous meeting their discussion of the Fairfax County Public Schools model for student assignment. As a group, there appeared to be little support on the committee to further investigate the model, although the committee agreed that the Fairfax model could serve as a reference document.

### *What was learned.*

Drs. Diesel Wallace and Hart distributed a handout with a variety of data and information about the district's English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

Information contained in the handout included:

- Definitions for acronyms: Language minority student (LMS); limited English proficient student (LEP); English language learner (ELL); and English as a second language (ESL);
- Data on the growth in the LEP population in the last decade for the nation, state and WCPSS:
  - In the nation, LEP doubled between 91-92 and 01-02 to almost five million in 2001-02, and North Carolina is among the states with over 200% growth in this time period;
  - Spanish and Asian/Pacific Islander are the two most frequently spoken first languages; and
  - In WCPSS, ESL students have grown from 602 in 1991-02 to 5,791 in 2003-04, with Spanish and Chinese being the two most frequent first languages.
- The WCPSS goal for ESL students--To teach the standard course of study while at the same time teaching the English language--was noted and programs to do this were described (e.g., pull-out, mainstream with assistance, content-based ESL, ESL class period, tutorial, dual language);
- End-of-Course high school data for 2002-03 were reported disaggregated by LEP and not LEP, showing that LEP students score the weakest in U.S. History (27.2% at or above grade level); Biology (34.4%), English I (39.2%), and ELP (48.2%);
- End-of-Grade data for the past five years were reported for mathematics showing the achievement gap is closing, with Hispanic students reducing this gap by more than half (27.6 point gap relative to White students in 1997-98 and 10.6 points in 2002-03); and
- End-of-Grade data for the past five years were reported for reading showing the achievement gap is closing, with Hispanic students also reducing this gap but less than for math (24.3 point gap relative to White students in 1997-98 and 18.4 points in 2002-03).

### ***ANALYSES***

*The Hispanic/Latino student population is growing dramatically, and expected to continue growing in the near future. As a group, Hispanic/Latino students score poorly on the state's various achievement measures; however, there is evidence that the achievement gap is narrowing over time. The challenge for the district will be to continue reducing this gap while absorbing increasing numbers of new, and largely academically needy students.*

#### *Additional information.*

Two documents were distributed for the committee members' attention. One document, prepared by Mike Burriss, addressed issues and questions that the committee raised in the prior discussions on facility issues. Twenty-eight issues/questions were identified and responses were provided for each in this document. The document also included a draft of the school building program detail for Plan 2004. This detail identifies the history of budget requests in Plan 2004 beginning in April 2003, as well as the current status of budget requests totaling \$550 million.

Another document distributed was the "Preliminary Key Findings of the Mayor's Task Force on School Assignment" (dated June 28, 2003), along with Board of Education Chair Parry's letter of response to Cary Mayor Lang (dated July 14, 2003).

#### *What was decided.*

Plans for the next meeting were discussed, and committee members were requested to submit HSTF draft recommendations by August 20<sup>th</sup> to Janice Shearin who would compile the recommendations and distribute them to committee members to permit their review before the August 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Committee members were to categorize their recommendations under one or more of the original four issues set by the school board for the committee to consider. Results of a survey conducted by Bill Carruthers to gather information on how the committee would like the final report to be prepared were distributed and discussed. General concerns expressed by the committee addressed the Executive Summary and how this should be prominent in the report, and that working documents produced by the committee during their meetings should not appear in the final report if these were only the result of brainstorming activities.

## ***EIGHTH MEETING - AUGUST 28, 2003***

### *How the meeting transpired.*

Co-chair Daugherty called the meeting to order, and congratulated the school district on the recent announcement of Scholastic Achievement Scores (SAT) for the district in 2003: 1067 for WCPSS, compared to 1001 for North Carolina and 1026 for the nation. Dr. Karen Banks gave a presentation to the committee on the new federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation, after which HSTF recommendations that had been collected from individual committee members since the July meeting were distributed to the entire committee. The committee then broke into four groups--one for each of the four issues--to discuss and prioritize the recommendations associated with each issue. Following the subgroup discussions, the members reconvened as a committee of the whole, and each group made a report on their priority recommendations. There was some discussion among committee members on various recommendations.

### *What was learned.*

In her presentation, Dr. Banks reviewed some of the major provisions in the new *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) federal legislation.

- All schools must have 100% of students proficient by 2013-14;
- Schools must make "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) each year, per standards set by the federal regulations and state guidelines;
- Annual AYP targets are the same for all schools, as well as 10 demographic groups; and
- The 10 demographic groups include:
  - Total school or total district;
  - Six racial groups (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Multiracial);
  - Limited English Proficient;
  - Special Education; and
  - Low Income (free/reduced price lunch students).

Dr. Banks noted that the NCLB legislation had some good features and some problematic aspects. Good features included an increased focus on groups of students that have traditionally not fared well in school, an expectation that improvement will be a long-term process; increased emphasis upon using research-based strategies and data-based decision-making; and a philosophy that is consistent with WCPSS's own goals for students. Problematic concerns are that the legislation may be confusing for parents in light of how it is not consistent with the state's own ABCs program; federal funding appears insufficient to carry out the program; and the emphasis on lower achieving students may be to the detriment of higher achieving students. Dr. Banks also described a number of methodological concerns with the legislations:

- Annual targets are the same for all groups regardless of the group's starting point in 2002;
- Diverse schools, with more subgroups, have a higher chance of being labeled as "needing improvement"; and

**Dr. Karen Banks  
No Child Left Behind Federal Legislation**

- The methodology is an "all or none" way of looking at schools--schools that just miss making AYP are grouped with schools that miss it by a wide margin.

Dr. Banks shared some preliminary NCLB data and results for the district from the 2002-03 school year:

- Middle schools had more AYP targets than other schools because they had more students tested;
- Fifty-two schools made all AYP targets, with the remainder missing as few as one to as many as nine targets;
- Twenty-nine of forty-eight Title One schools made all AYP targets; and
- Selected subgroups in WCPSS missing AYP targets for reading and math were noted, as indicated in the following table.

<b>Subgroup</b>	<b># of Subgroups for Reading</b>	<b># of Subgroups for Mathematics</b>
Students with disabilities	36 schools	38 schools
Free/reduced price lunch	33 schools	32 schools
African-American students	16 schools	22 schools
Hispanic/Latino students	9 schools	7 schools
Limited English Proficient students	7 schools	7 schools

### ***ANALYSES***

*The federal NCLB legislation has set a whole new standard by which schools will be measured, and it is uncertain if the standard is a fair measure of a school's accomplishments or even a realistic means by which to recognize a school's successes or failures. While all will agree with the goal of having 100% of students achieving at or above grade level, some provisions in the legislation appear to guarantee that most if not all schools will eventually fail. If true, the NCLB legislation may actually lower standards in the nation, as schools and states aim for the lowest common denominator of achievement rather than raising standards and setting higher aims.*

#### *Additional information.*

Dr. Banks distributed a handout with preliminary data analyses of NCLB results for the 2002-03 school year, disaggregated by school. Also included in the handout was a summary guide prepared by the Evaluation and Research Department indicating how AYP calculations are derived.

#### *What was decided.*

The committee adjourned with the understanding that the September meeting would be entirely devoted to discussing, prioritizing, and working to finalize the recommendations that the HSTF will make to the school board.

## ***NINTH AND SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS***

The remaining meetings of the Task Force (September 25<sup>th</sup>, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, November 20<sup>th</sup>, December 18<sup>th</sup>, and January 22<sup>nd</sup>) were devoted to identifying, debating, and finalizing a set of recommendations to present to the Wake County Board of Education. The Task Force used as their starting point the work that was done during the August 28<sup>th</sup> meeting when four subgroups were organized to prioritize a set of recommendations for each of the four issues. Beginning with the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Task Force discussed each recommendation as a committee of the whole and adopted the following format for their recommendations:

- The recommendation;
- A rationale for the recommendation; and
- Action steps for the school board to consider associated with each recommendation.

Over the course of these last meetings, the Task Force accepted some of the recommendations that were first prioritized in August without much change; modified, combined or deleted other recommendations; and entertained new recommendations that committee members brought to the Task Force's attention. Following each meeting, a draft of the recommendations to date was distributed to all committee members for editorial changes and additional input prior to the next meeting. All new material submitted by committee members between meetings was discussed at the next meeting.

At the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Task Force commended Janice Shearin and Elwanda Farrow for their help and support during the many Task Force meetings. At the final meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, Superintendent Bill McNeal, Board of Education Chair Susan Parry and Vice-Chair Patti Head, and Task Force Co-chairs Dick Daugherty and Dudley Flood thanked the committee members for their dedication, time, and effort devoted to helping the school system become the best educational program for students in the county and nation.

The last meeting of the Task Force was held on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, and a final draft of the recommendations was distributed to all committee members for editing. The final set of recommendations for presentation to the board of education was adopted by committee members as representing the consensus work of the HSTF. The Task Force recommendations were presented to the Wake County Board of Education by Dick Daugherty and Dudley Flood on February 17, 2004.

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## Section III. Media Coverage

News media play a significant role in a community's knowledge and understanding of an issue. How the news is reported and/or what is reported can be important factors in guiding community opinions. Newspaper articles from varied sources covering the Healthy Schools Task Force are summarized below.

**November 13, 2002.** In the N&O column, Your Schools, T. Keung Hui reported that the school system would be establishing a Healthy Schools Task Force "...in response to public concerns about the direction of the school system." Hui noted that the Task Force would be charged with producing a written report to the school board that would address issues of concern to the district.

**November 18, 2002.** In an article authored by Richard D. Kalenberg (guest contributor to the N&O), "A good school plan comes under fire," the lead sentence is, "Wake County's economic school integration plan is under attack." The author quotes members of the Apex Board of Commissioners, the Garner Chamber of Commerce, and a local group called Assignment By Choice, indicating that each questions the school district's commitment to diversity and student assignment policies. However, the author notes that national leaders have praised the school district's approach for, "One very simple reason: it works." For evidence, Kalenberg notes that WCPSS students achieve at extraordinary levels, the achievement gap between black and white students has been narrowed, and population growth continues to favor Wake County over neighboring Durham. In support of high achievement for all students, the author indicates that research suggests "...the economic mix in a school, more than any other factor, drives what goes on inside the classroom." He notes that national studies suggest all students begin to suffer as the economic mix of low-income students in a school approaches 50% or greater. He distinguishes between the arguments advanced by the Apex Board of Commissioners and the Garner Chamber of Commerce, on the one hand, and that advanced by the Assignment By Choice group, on the other hand. Kalenberg says that the former two groups are "dead wrong to dismiss the importance of diversity" and the latter group takes a good idea (that busing is not good) too far when they envision that all parents should have the right to choose their child's school "because some popular schools will always be oversubscribed."

**October 2, 2002.** In an N&O editorial, Our Views, the byline read: Staying 'healthy': Given the benefits of Wake County's diverse schools, the system does well to stand by its principles even as it solicits feedback." The tone of the editorial was set in the first paragraph.

*Wake County's 13 cities and towns owe their prosperity, in no small measure, to the quality of public education offered here. And that quality has been enhanced by policies that have kept black-white student ratios relatively consistent in all schools, whether in the cities or suburbs.*

The editorial indicated that some suburban leaders, recognizing community discontent over mandatory busing, were "...riding it rhetorically for all it's worth", but commended the school district's intent to form a Healthy Schools Task Force, saying that "Listening is a smart response...." Briefly reviewing the efforts of the district to maintain diverse student enrollment at schools, the editorial noted that "The system's badge of courage has been perseverance, and its

reward has been academic gains for disadvantaged children as well as the privileged." Furthermore, the editorial noted correlations between the school district's efforts to encourage school enrollment diversity and economic strength in Wake County property values, along with the suburbs becoming more ethnically and socially diverse in residential patterns.

**October 10, 2002.** Staff writer Lea Delicio reported in The Cary News the series of events starting with parents forming a group to address excellence in the schools, followed by the mayor of Cary convening a task force, with school district subsequently convening its own Healthy Schools Task Force. Later yet, Delicio noted, the towns of Cary and Garner agreed to form a joint task force and explained that other municipalities were considering joining. Delicio noted that school superintendent McNeal explained one of the strengths of the Healthy Schools Task Force is that it was county-wide in scope, and that board member Susan Parry indicated the Task Force represents the kind of long-term strategic thinking that there is often not enough time for.

**October 16, 2002.** In the N&O column, Your Schools, T. Keung Hui noted that the school system was "...putting out a call for people to join its new Healthy Schools Task Force." Hui explained that committee members must be residents of Wake County, open-minded, objective and willing to meet monthly. Hui provided a phone number to contact.

**October 24, 2002.** A staff report in The Cary News reminded readers that October 25<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for applying to serve on the Healthy Schools Task Force. The article reviewed the qualifications to be considered for appointment to the Task Force, the purpose of the Task Force, and how an individual could nominate themselves.

**November 13, 2002.** In the N&O article, A task force for strong schools, authored by Bill McNeal, guest contributor to the N&O and superintendent of the Wake County Public School System, McNeal described examples of the leadership and support from the community that has kept Wake County's public schools strong:

- The courageous merger of the city and county school systems 25 years ago;
- The creation of magnet programs to revitalize inner-city schools, maximize school construction dollars, and create choices for families;
- The development of a strong accountability system; and
- The creation of a new student assignment policy focused on children's academic needs.

McNeal noted that bold community leadership is still needed, enabling the school system to continue its work with closing the achievement gap, with challenging the gifted student, with recruiting and retaining the best qualified teachers, and with managing explosive growth while meeting the challenge of educating a diverse student body. McNeal noted that the school district was responding to these challenges and convening a Healthy Schools Task Force that would:

*"...unite citizens from throughout the county to advise the Board of Education. From their different perspectives, its members will come together to help ensure continued growth in student achievement and identify the best way to continue having strong schools in every part of the county, while demanding that we utilize our public resources effectively and efficiently."*

**December 4, 2002.** The byline for an N&O article authored by T. Keung Hui read "Task force to examine schools: Supporters predominate on list of 28 to study issues in Wake." Text in

the article noted that “The 28 members...include highly visible supporters of the school system...[but] only two potential critics...”

**December 5, 2002.** An article in The Cary News adopted a neutral stance on the composition of the committee with the byline, “School Board Appoints Healthy Schools Task Force.” Text in the article listed all Healthy Schools Task Force members with a short description of each person’s career interests.

**December 13, 2002.** In another N&O article authored by T. Keung Hui, titled "Task force sets out to improve Wake schools: Leaders hope to restore confidence in system", the author notes that one purpose of the Task Force is to "help build public support and guide the school district over the next 10 years." Hui indicates that one opinion poll shows support for the school system is sharply dropping and other elements of the community are "...loudly voicing their frustration..." Hui notes that the school system picked the committee members "...which include a number of school system supporters and, say some groups critical of the school district, few critics."

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## Section IV. HSTF Committee Members

Dick Daugherty retired from IBM in 1994 after 37 years as the senior executive in the State of North Carolina. At IBM, he served as the Vice President of World-Wide Manufacturing for the PC Company. From 1995 to 2001, he served as the Executive Director of the North Carolina State Research Corporation, focusing on the development of Centennial Campus. He has been an active supporter of public education. In 1995, Daugherty ran the \$250 million bond campaign for the Wake County school district's building program. In 2002, Daugherty and his wife, Marlene, served as honorary chairs for Wake Education Partnership's fund-raising drive. Daugherty remains active in business and the community. He serves as Director on many industry boards, including Progress Energy, Wachovia Bank, Winston Hotels, Troxler Electronics and Micell Technologies. He also serves on numerous voluntary and charitable boards, including UNC Healthcare, CED, Research Triangle Foundation, Kenan Institute for Engineering, Technology and Science, and NCCBI.

Dr. Dudley Flood, retired school administrator, began his career as an eighth grade teacher and later a school principal. He earned his bachelor's degree from NCSU, his master's degree from ECU, and his doctorate's degree in educational administration from Duke University. In 1970, he joined the North Carolina Department of Public Education (DPI) as a specialist in school desegregation and race relations, rising to the level of Associate Superintendent during his 21 years there. After retiring from DPI, Dr. Flood served for five years as the Executive Director of the North Carolina Association of School Administrators. Since 1996, he has been a lecturer and consultant to groups across the country. Dr. Flood has been honored with more than 300 awards for civic service including the Order of the Longleaf Pine, North Carolina's highest civic award. He currently serves on the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina, the North Carolina Diabetes Advisory Council, the Substance Abuse Advisory Committee for the North Carolina Prison System, the Wake County Character Education Advisory Committee, the North Carolina PTA Board, and the Exploris Museum Board.

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How well the Task Force reflected the “geography and demography” of the county may be judged, in part, by the following table indicating some key variables associated with the composition of the Task Force.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Number or Member</b>
Gender	Female	12
	Male	15
Ethnic Identification	African-American	7
	American Indian	--
	Asian	--
	Hispanic/Latino	1
	Caucasian	19
	Multi-racial	--

Along with gender and race, diversity among the Task Force members was also apparent in their careers and place of residence. Task Force members were lawyers, educators, businessmen and businesswomen, researchers, and an assortment of other professionals. Task Force members were diverse in their place of residence as indicated in the following table.

<b>Geographical Distribution of Task Force Members</b>		
<b><u>Garner</u></b> Jim McClure	<b><u>Apex</u></b> George Wait Marco Zarate	<b><u>Holly Springs</u></b> Keith Sutton
<b><u>Fuquay-Varina</u></b> Wanda Denning	<b><u>Wake Forest</u></b> Tony Habit Debra Horton	<b><u>Wendell</u></b> Lori Millberg
<b><u>Morrisville</u></b> Doug Miskew Tammie Moore	<b><u>Cary</u></b> Becky Brady Ricki Grantmyre Liz Parry Hilda Pinnix-Ragland Ervin Portman Curt Stangler Reuben Young	<b><u>North Raleigh</u></b> Roxie Cash Dick Daugherty Patti Gillenwater Mike Mitchell Ralph Thompson
<b><u>Raleigh/Southeast Raleigh</u></b> Dudley Flood Barbara Freedman Janet Howard Marion Robinson Joel Rosch		

***ANALYSES***

*The Wake County Board of Education’s goal to create a task force diverse in demography and geography was largely successful.*

**BACK COVER**